

# The Law & You: REALTOR® Trademark Says a Lot

Trademarks are useful tools. They help us distinguish between products, between services, and sometimes between people. When we ask for a Pepsi, we know we won't get a Coke. Similarly, when potential customers ask for a REALTOR®, they need to know they're getting more than a real estate licensee--they're getting a member of the National Association of REALTORS®.

When you tell someone you're a REALTOR®, you're saying you are well informed about the real estate business, you're a member of the largest trade association in the United States, and you subscribe to a strict Code of Ethics.

It's one word that means a lot--and it's important to keep it that way. Why? The term REALTOR® is the one universal way members can distinguish themselves from others in the real estate profession. If your board accomplishes something good for the community, for example, you can share in the goodwill that generates by using the term REALTOR® to identify yourself as a member.

Every time someone uses the term REALTOR® incorrectly, it allows the public to think the term describes anyone with a job in real estate, thus diminishing the word's ability to help you stand out. Here are some rules to help you protect your membership marks.

## **Rules of general use**

The terms REALTOR®, REALTORS®, REALTOR-Associate®, and the block "R" logo should be used only when talking about members of NAR. The terms refer to membership, not the jobs real estate licensees perform. So when you're asked what you do for a living, you should describe your profession by saying you're a real estate broker or salesperson. Then use the term REALTOR® to indicate you're also a member of NAR and committed to a strict Code of Ethics.

## **Other important rules:**

- Never use descriptive words to modify the term REALTOR®. Incorrect: commercial REALTOR®, full-time REALTOR®
- Whenever possible, set the term REALTOR® in all uppercase letters with the federal registration symbol, ®. When that format is impossible or impractical, all uppercase letters alone or an uppercase R followed by lowercase letters and the registration symbol are also acceptable. Incorrect: realtor; Acceptable: REALTOR, REALTOR®; Correct: REALTOR®

### **In company names**

REALTORS® often want to use the term REALTOR® as part of their company name.

Two main rules govern this use:

- REALTOR® may be used with a company name but may not be part of the name.
- REALTOR® must be separated from the company name by some form of punctuation, even when they appear on separate lines. Incorrect: ABCREALTORS® Correct: ABC Real Estate, REALTORS® or ABC, REALTORS®

### **On the Internet**

For cyber identities, keep in mind the following rules:

- As always, when used as part of a domain name or Internet address, the term REALTOR® must refer to a member or a member's company.
- Just as in printed materials, the term REALTOR® may not be used with descriptive words or phrases or used to describe another word or phrase. Incorrect: numberonerealtor.com, chicagorealtors.org, or realtorproperties.com For domain names and Internet addresses only, the term REALTOR® may appear in lowercase letters and doesn't have to be separated from the member's name or company name by punctuation. Correct: johndoerealtor.com and [jdoerealtors@webservices.com](mailto:jdoerealtors@webservices.com)

Protection of the REALTOR® membership marks depends on you. With proper use, the marks grow in value as they become more firmly connected in the public mind with quality and professionalism.

To Report a Trademark Violation please fill out the following form:

Type of Violation

Name of party (individual or company) that is violating the trademark rules

Contact information of alleged violator