

Choosing and Purchasing a Domain Name



One of the most important but least understood things for business owners to consider when marketing their businesses is choosing a domain name. It is very important that you purchase and own your domain name, even if you hire a web-development company to build your website. You may change web-management companies in the future, and you don't want the previous company to be able to keep your domain name from you.

To purchase a domain, you will need to visit a domain name registrar online. Some examples are NameCheap, GoDaddy, and HostGator, but many more options are available. You can search for "domain name registrar" in your favorite search engine for a comprehensive list and choose the one that you prefer. You can switch to a different registrar later if you want.

Once you access your registrar's website, run a search for the domain name that you are interested in. It's sometimes difficult to settle on a domain name, or the one you had your heart set on may not be available. If it is available, you can continue from there to purchase it. If not, you can either make an offer to the person who already owns it (by following the on-screen instructions) or search for a new domain name option. When you find an acceptable and available name, click the "add to cart" button and provide your purchase information. If you do not buy your domain name immediately, it is likely to be unavailable when you come back for it later.

Note that the domain-name registrar will offer you several upsells, such as private registration or email packages. Make sure you understand what you're purchasing; if you're not sure you need the upgrade, you can typically purchase it later. Finish the checkout process by providing your form of payment.

Congratulations! The domain now belongs to you! Remember, if you don't register your domain as private, anyone will be able to run a WHOIS search to see who owns your domain. Also, make sure you remember to renew your domain before it expires. If you fail to renew it, it can be released and sold to someone else.

Once you've purchased your domain, you will need to connect it to a hosting account. Your hosting account and domain name provider can be the same company, but it doesn't have to be. Typically, connecting the a host account is done in one of two ways, both starting from your domain name's DNS Management section:

Name Servers: Change your name servers setting to **yournameserver.hostprovider.com** where **yournameserver** is provided by your host and **hostprovider** is the host that you use.

Configuring DNS: Add an @ record with an IP address provided by your hosting provider.

Notes: Accessing domain management will look different depending upon your registrar; check the registrar's help section if you have trouble. Consult your hosting provider's help section for the preferred method of connection and preferred settings.

When thinking about what domain name you should buy for your business, there are three main points to remember:

1. **Keep it short.** It needs to fit on your business cards, marketing materials, radio and TV ads, and so forth. It should be no more than three easy-to-spell words. For example, www.example-marketinggroup.com or www.examplefoods.com.
2. **Make it easy to remember.** Imagine you're meeting someone briefly for the first time and you want them to visit your website. It needs to be easily remembered so that they can go take a look when they get a chance.
3. **Include your business name.** Your domain name is a search engine optimization (SEO) ranking factor. This means that it directly affects where you appear in someone's searches.

You may not know if a .com or a .net is most appropriate. See the glossary below for helpful terms you need to know. Everyone who uses the internet is familiar

with .com domains, so this is the most desirable option for most businesses. However, because the .com option is so popular, it may not be feasible for your business.

Do not include your business formation type in your domain (for example, LLC, Inc.). Most people do not understand these distinctions, and they only add confusion and unnecessary length to the domain name. Finally, if you want a domain name, go ahead and buy it! Most are \$20 or less, so buy it and hold it for a year. You might be glad you did!

Glossary

Domain name – The text you type into your browser to bring up a website (example: www.msstate.edu).

Registrar – A registrar is a company that manages the reservation of domain names.

WHOIS search – This is a search anyone can run to determine who owns a publicly registered domain name.

Hosting account – Your hosting account is where the content of your website (such as the images and text that make up your page) is stored.

Name servers – A name server translates domain names that humans can easily understand into IP addresses.

IP address – An IP address is a string of numbers that identifies a computer on a network, much like your home address identifies where your home is located.

DNS (Domain Name System) – A naming system for computers, services, or other resources connected to the Internet or a private network.

A record – An A record is a type of DNS record that points a domain to an IP address; an @ record is a type of A record.

Publication 3235 (POD-04-18)

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Produced by Agricultural Communications.

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Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. GARY B. JACKSON, Director