



# At-Large Community Guide to Generic Top-Level Domain Names

Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Domain Names</b> .....	2
What is a Domain Name And How Does It Work?.....	2
How Do I Register A Domain Name?.....	3
How Do I Select a Domain Name To Register?.....	4
What is a Registrar And How Do I Select One?.....	6
How Do I Find Out if The Domain Name I Want is Available?.....	7
What is The Registration Process Like?.....	8
How Can I Protect My Personal Information?.....	8
Can I Register a Domain Name in Languages Other Than English, or Using Characters Other Than The Latin Character Set Used in The English Language?.....	9
What Are My Rights And Obligations as a Domain Name Registrant?.....	10
How Do I Renew A Domain Name That I Have Already Registered?.....	10
What Happens if I Forget to Renew My Domain Name?.....	11
How Do I Transfer a Domain Name That I Have Already Registered?.....	12
Can I Buy and Sell a Domain Name?.....	13
Where Do I Go for Help With Domain Name Problems?.....	13
How Do I Handle Domain Name Disputes?.....	14
What is The Udrp (Uniform Domain-Name Dispute Resolution Policy)?.....	14
How Can I Help Protect Myself From Spam, Phishing And Other Internet Fraud?.....	14
What Do I Need to Remember About My Domain Name Registration?.....	15
<b>Additional Information</b> .....	16
<b>Glossary</b> .....	16

# INTRODUCTION

It used to be that few people outside of the technical community knew what a domain name was, much less how to obtain or use one. With the dramatic expansion of the Internet as the medium of choice for instant, global communications, many more people today are aware that such names help users direct email traffic, locate websites and establish an online identity.

Domain names – like *icann.org* – are essentially the address of a person or an organization on the Internet. It is where other people can find you. It can also become your online identity. For example, businesses typically register domain names with their company name and sometimes also register their product names. Individuals often register family names or other names that have personal meaning. But understanding what these names are, how they work, and how to obtain and maintain them, can be mystifying at first.

Given the role of ICANN's At-Large community in considering and providing advice on issues that relate to the interests of individual Internet users, we decided to publish *A Guide to Domain Names*. This guide provides basic information about what a domain name is, how an Internet user can obtain and maintain one, and related information of interest. It draws on publicly available information from the ICANN and InterNIC websites, as well as materials prepared by consumer protection authorities in several countries (see Additional Information). The focus of this guide is primarily on generic top-level domains (gTLDs), rather than country code top-level domains (ccTLDs). A separate *Guide to Country Code TLDs* will be prepared in concert with the ccTLD community.

Two important points should be emphasized at the outset. First, the advice in this guide is intended to assist Internet users, particularly new users. To remain relevant, it will need to be updated to reflect technological change, policy and other developments. We therefore seek your assistance in keeping this publication as up-to-date and useful as possible. If you have suggestions, comments or updates, please send them to [staff@atlarge.icann.org](mailto:staff@atlarge.icann.org) and we will ensure that they are taken into account in any revisions.

Second, this guide provides a summary of key aspects related to obtaining and using a domain name. Because domain name policies and procedures evolve, it is always important to check [www.icann.org](http://www.icann.org) or [www.internic.net](http://www.internic.net) for current and authoritative information. While care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this guide at the time of publication, users must exercise their own judgment in making decisions about registering and using domain names, and seek professional advice as appropriate. All responsibility for use of the guide for any purpose rests with the reader.

We hope you find this guide useful. We look forward to hearing about your experiences using it, and any suggestions for subsequent versions.

# DOMAIN NAMES

## 1. What is a domain name and how does it work?

Every computer on the public Internet has a unique numeric address – similar to a telephone number – that is a string of numbers that would be difficult for most people to remember. This string is called the IP address (IP stands for Internet Protocol).

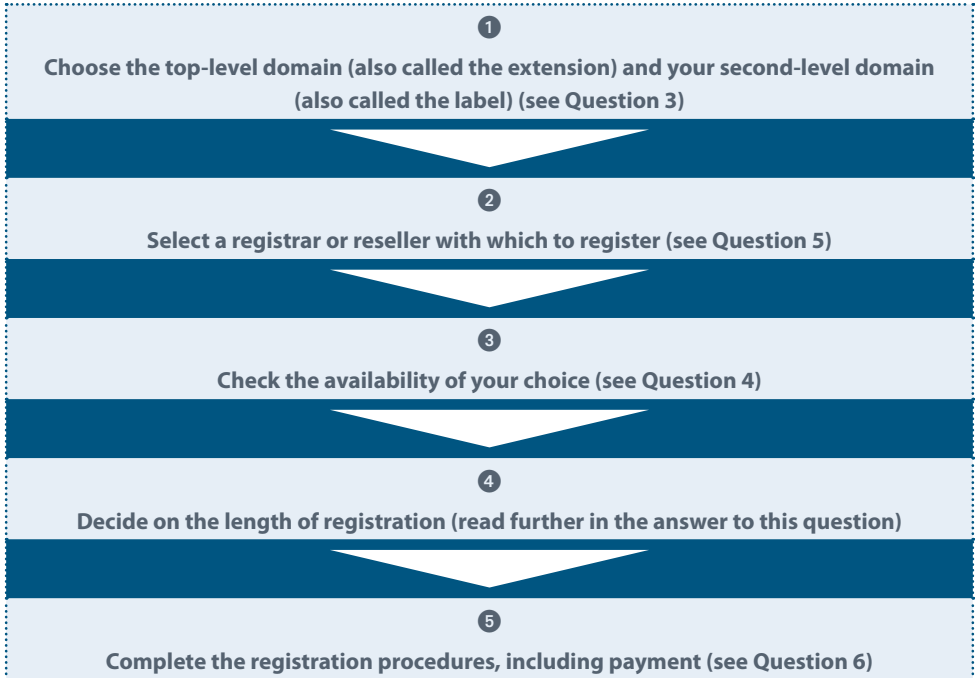
To make it easier to find a given location on the Internet, a new system was needed. As a result, the Domain Name System or DNS was invented. The Domain Name System translates IP addresses into a unique alphanumeric address, called a domain name that is easier to remember. If, for example, you would like to visit the ICANN website, would you rather remember the IP address 192.0.34.163, or type *icann.org*? By mapping a familiar string of letters – called a domain name – to an IP address, the DNS makes it much easier for Internet users to remember websites and email addresses. Instead of having to remember and type *http://192.0.34.163* into your browser, you can simply type *www.icann.org*. The *icann.org* part of the address is called the domain name. The *www.* part tells your browser that you are interested in the World Wide Web interface for that domain name.

Domain names can also be used for sending email. Whether you are sending business or personal communications, you want to be certain that your message will be directed to the intended addressee. To borrow an analogy from the phone system, when you dial a number, it rings at a particular location because there is a central numbering plan that ensures that each telephone number is unique. The DNS works in a similar way. Both the domain name and the IP address behind it are unique, just like a telephone number. The DNS enables your email to reach the intended recipient (*guide2dn@icann.org*, for example) and not someone else with a similar domain name. It also enables you to type *www.icann.org*, without having to enter its lengthy IP address, and get to the right website. Without this uniqueness, both the DNS and the telephony systems would be less predictable and reliable.

A domain name can remain unchanged even if a website is moved to a different host computer or server, as the DNS can be told to point an existing domain name to a new IP address. This is just like a household or a business moving its location — the family or business name stays the same, even if the street address has changed.

## 2. How do I register a domain name?

The registration of a domain name includes the following steps:



The first step in registering a domain name is to select the top-level domain (TLD) and the second-level name you would like to register in that domain.

Domain names have two parts: the characters that precede the dot, and the characters that come after it. The part to the right of the dot is called the top-level domain (TLD), or the extension. The part to the left of the dot is called the second-level domain, or the label. It is this part of a domain name that users are most likely to associate with your website or email address. Together, the *icann* and the *org* parts of *icann.org* are the domain name.

The next steps are to select your registrar (see Question 4) and decide the number of years for which you would like to register. Most registrars offer registration periods of from 1 to 10 years, often with discounts for longer periods. A multi-year registration means more of an initial financial commitment than a single year, but it reduces the risk that you will forget to renew your registration before it expires. Many registrars also offer discounts on each year of a multiple-year registration. Some people make their initial registration for one year and, if they find they are indeed using the domain name, then renew it for a longer period.

You will then want to see if the name you want is available – this is discussed in Question 5. Then, in the case of a gTLD, if the domain name is still available, you may register it directly with a registrar or via a reseller that has a relationship with a registrar (see Question 6). ICANN accredited registrars can be found at <http://www.internic.org/regist.html>. There is no authoritative list of gTLD domain resellers

as these entities are not accredited by ICANN and may have business relationships with multiple registrars. A reseller could be a web hosting company or ISP (Internet Service Provider) with whom you may already have a relationship.

If the domain name you are seeking is not available, you could modify the second-level part of the domain name by trying a different way to describe the same idea (e.g., try [icannDNS.org](http://icannDNS.org)). The search tools on registrar websites often have features that suggest variations on a name that might be available when the primary name selected is not – more information on this is in Question 5. Alternatively, if you are trying to register [icann.org](http://icann.org), you could change the top-level domain and try one other than .org. There are now more than a dozen generic TLDs, although some have eligibility requirements. The TLDs that are unrestricted are .com, .info, .org and .net. For a complete list of gTLDs and any restrictions, see <http://www.icann.org/faq/-gldrules>.

If the domain name that you are seeking is already registered, you may be able to acquire the right to register it from the current registrant (the person or company that registered it first). You can find out the registrant of the domain name you would like by using the Whois database. One way to search Whois across all generic TLDs is available at <http://www.internic.net/whois.html>. Some registrars and other companies offer services related to the reselling of domain names, which may involve a bidding or auction process).

The final step is to complete the registration procedures with the registrar that you have selected.

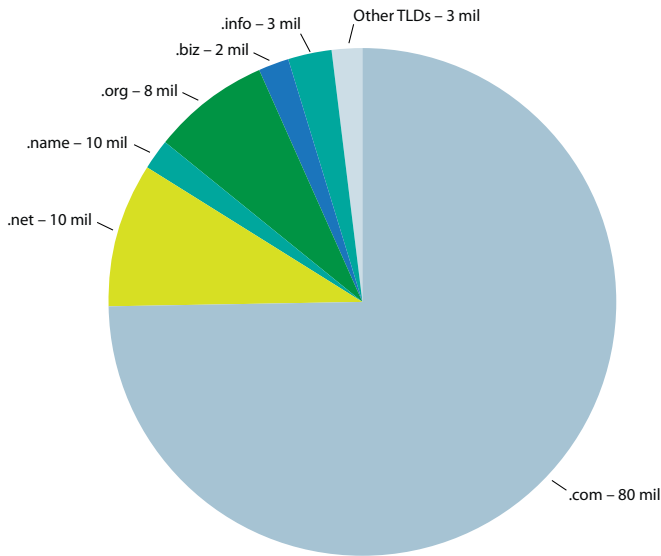
### 3. How do I select a domain name to register?

Domain names have two parts: the characters that precede the dot, and the characters that come after it. The part to the right of the dot is called the top-level domain (TLD), or the extension. The part to the left of the dot is called the second-level domain, or the label. It is this part of a domain name that users are most likely to associate with your website or email address.

**In selecting a domain name, there may be several issues to consider. These include:**

- Do I want my domain name to say something about myself, my organization or my business?
- Do I want a distinctive domain name that sets itself apart from others?
- Do I want a descriptive domain name that imparts important information?
- Do I want a second-level domain or top-level domain that is easy to remember?
- Do I want to register in a restricted gTLD (such as .coop, see below) that indicates my organization or I meet certain eligibility requirements and belong to the discrete community that the restricted gTLD serves?

With respect to the TLD part of a domain name, there are more than a dozen generic TLDs to choose from. While this guide covers only gTLDs, there are also more than 250 country-code top-level domains (ccTLDs), which are two-letter extensions that correspond to countries or territories around the world. The extensions .us, .de and .jp, for example, correspond to the United States, Germany and Japan, respectively. Some of these domains also have restrictions on who may register in them. You can find a list of these at <http://www.iana.org/domains/root/db/index.html>.

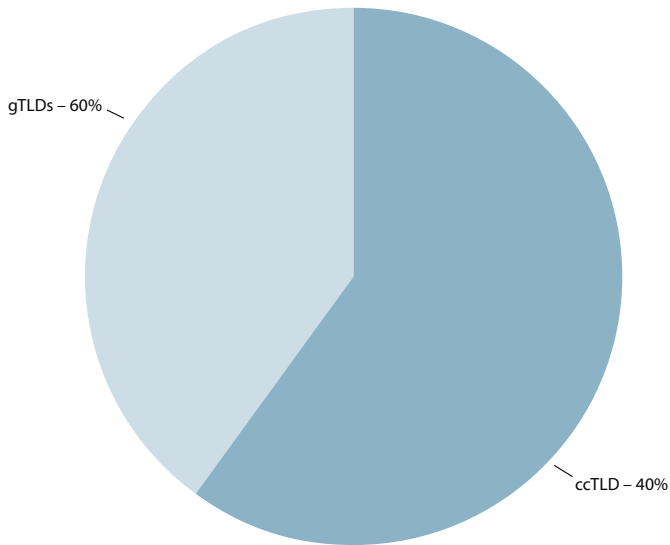


The gTLDs in which anyone can register include .com, .info, .net, and .org. Three other gTLDs (.biz, .name and .pro) have certain eligibility requirements (for example, .biz is intended for businesses).

There are additional gTLDs that are restricted to persons or entities that belong to the relevant community. These gTLDs include .aero, .asia, .cat, .coop, .edu, .jobs, .museum, .mobi, .tel and .travel. Some of these gTLDs tell Internet users about the qualifications of its registrants (e.g., to register in .coop, an entity must be a verified cooperative). Other gTLDs tell users about the kind of content they will find under the extension (e.g., .mobi registrants have pledged to provide content in a form suitable for mobile devices). It may be more expensive to register in one of the restricted gTLDs, in part because there may be verification costs associated with the registration process. On the other hand, registration in a restricted gTLD may be useful to you as it may help you to demonstrate that you have a certain qualification that has been verified by an authoritative source.

Some of the gTLDs are newer than others, and thus may be less familiar to Internet users – and as a result these may provide more availability for a domain you wish to register. With time and greater usage, this is likely to change. ICANN is also preparing for the introduction of additional gTLDs, so that Internet users will have more options to consider when registering a new gTLD domain name.

In the case of both generic and country code TLDs, the entity that maintains the authoritative record of all registrations for the TLD is called the registry.



With respect to the second-level part of a domain name, you may have many choices, depending on what others before you have already registered. As noted above, you might consider whether your primary goals are to have your domain name establish an online identity or brand, be distinctive, be descriptive, and/or be easy to remember. Many registrants seek a second-level domain name that is easy for others to recall and type, as well as descriptive. It may be easier to find your first-choice still available in a new gTLD, rather than in an established one. Or you may decide on a different domain name in order to register in an older gTLD.

#### **4. What is a registrar and how do I select one?**

A registrar for a gTLD domain is an ICANN accredited company that processes your registration for the desired domain name if it is available. The registrar does this through the registry, which is the entity that maintains the authoritative database for the gTLD that you have selected.

Domain names today can be registered through many different companies, which compete with one another on the basis of price, value-added services and customer service, among other factors. The InterNIC website ([www.internic.net](http://www.internic.net)) operated by ICANN provides general information regarding Internet domain name registration services. Though ICANN requires each registrar to provide Whois services, many Internet users find using the InterNIC website Whois more convenient to check. In addition to using the website to search availability through the Whois database, you can find registrar contact details in the Accredited Registrar Directory. You can search the directory of registrars alphabetically (Alphabetical Listing by Company/Organization Name), by location of registrar (Listing by Location of Registrar), or by the language(s) that are supported (Listing by Language Supported).

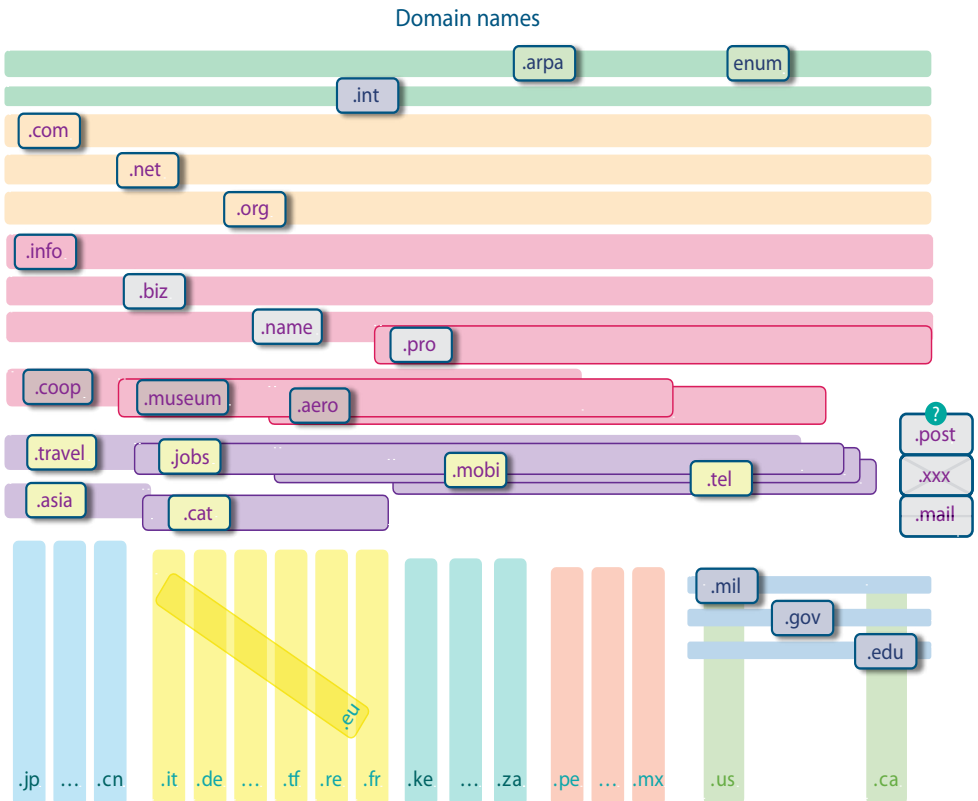
ICANN also provides a table listing all registrars, their location, and the various TLDs that they support. It is also possible to register a domain through a reseller, which has a business arrangement with a registrar. ICANN does not maintain a listing of domain resellers as it has no contractual relationship with them.

ICANN's Stability and Security Advisory Committee (SSAC), in cooperation with Consumer Reports WebWatch, has created a top 10 list of questions to think about when choosing a registrar. You can find this online at <http://www.consumerwebwatch.org/pdfs/domainname.pdf>.

## 5. How do I find out if the domain name I want is available?

Most domain names are available on a first-come, first-served basis. As of the end of March 2008, for example, there were nearly 75 million domains names registered in the .com TLD. If you have a particular name you would like to register in any top-level domain (TLD), you should do so as soon as possible. You can check the availability of the name you have chosen on the website of the registrar you wish to use. You enter your desired domain name to see if is available; many registrars' search systems will also allow you to search across many TLDs – both generic and country code TLDs – to see whether the domain name you would like to register is available in any, or all, of them. Some registrars have services which allow you to try and acquire the domain name you want from the current registrant. It is also not unusual to have the search system propose names which are similar to that you have chosen if the name you prefer is not available.

If you are interested in registering a domain name in a country code top-level domain (ccTLD), such as .uk for United Kingdom or .pe for Peru, you can check the IANA website at <http://www.iana.org/domains/root/db/> for the appropriate registration authority.



## 6. What is the registration process like?

The registrar that you select will ask you to provide contact and technical information, some of which is required by ICANN. The registrar will keep records of the contact information and submit the technical information to the entity that maintains the central directory for that top-level domain, known as the registry. Each top-level domain has only one authoritative registry, which provides other computers on the Internet with the information necessary to send you email or to find your website. The Public Interest Registry, for example, operates the .org registry.

As part of the registration process, you will be required to enter into a contract with the registrar that you or the reseller has selected, which sets forth the terms under which your registration is accepted and will be maintained. Once you have successfully completed the registration process, you become the registrant of your new domain name.

You are advised to avoid any domain name registration service that purports to guarantee availability of any particular domain names, or preferential treatment in registering any name, in any new gTLDs that is created. It is also suggested that you use caution when doing business with any unknown person or entity that sends you unsolicited faxes or emails inviting you to register or renew a domain name - regardless of the offer. (See generally, What's Dot and What's Not: Domain Name Registration Scams, at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/alerts/domainalrt.htm>.) As noted in Question 7, once you register a domain name, your fax number may be publicly available as a result of the Whois service the registrar is required to provide. See also the question on How can I help protect myself from spam, phishing and other Internet fraud?, which describes several steps that you can take to help protect yourself from other Internet scams.

## 7. How can I protect my personal information?

For most gTLDs, information about who is responsible for each domain name is publicly available in each registry's Whois database, which is used to facilitate the resolution of technical problems and the enforcement of consumer protection, trademark, and other laws. Two notable exceptions are the .com and .net registry Whois services, which list the registrar responsible for maintaining the domain registration record. Information about who is responsible for these domains can then be found by accessing that registrar's Whois database.

As part of the registration process, you must provide your registrar with accurate and reliable contact details and promptly correct and update these details as necessary. This information includes your full name, a valid postal address, email address, voice telephone number, and fax number (if available). As Question 9 notes, the willful provision of inaccurate or unreliable information, or a willful failure to update information provided to a registrar, can be a basis for cancelling your registration and the loss of any right to use the domain name.

Given growing concerns about identity theft and other criminal activity, many individuals are legitimately concerned about having their personal data publicly available on the Internet. One option for registrants is to use a valid postal and email address from their business or place of employment. Another option is to use what may be called privacy protection or proxy services, sometimes for an additional fee. Some registrars make these services available through a third-party proxy service, whereby you provide the required contact information to your registrar, and the proxy service becomes the registrant of record. You agree that the proxy service can disclose your personal data to respond to requests from law enforcement or conflicts with a third party's intellectual property rights, or when presented with evidence of actionable harm.

Another option is to register through an intermediary, such as an Internet Service Provider (ISP) or web-hosting company, which then becomes the registrant of record.

## 8. Can I register a domain name in languages other than English, or using characters other than the Latin character set used in the English language?

At present, generic top-level domain names can be registered using the 26 letters of the basic Latin script (A to Z), and may include the numbers 0–9. They may also include a hyphen “-” (although not as the first or last letter of the domain name).

This is often referred to as registering text in ASCII, which stands for American Standard Code for Information Interchange. Domain names may be a total of 63 characters long, not including the extension, i.e., 63 characters plus .com.

Internationalized Domain Names, or IDNs, are domain names represented by other scripts. Such domain names contain characters from non-Latin scripts such as those used by languages like Arabic or Chinese. The extensions for these domains are currently limited to those established in Latin script (e.g., .com, .org, info, .coop, and the like).

If you are interested in IDNs, one place to start in learning more is in the Policy Issue Brief on IDNs, which is found at <http://www.icann.org/en/policy/briefs/>.

Script	Language	SLD.TLD U-labels	SLD A-label	TLD A-label
Arabic	Arabic	مثال.إختبار	xn--mgbh0fb	xn--kgbechtv
Arabic	Persian	مثال.آزمایشی	xn--mgbh0fb	xn--hgbk6aj7f53bba
Chinese, simplified	Chinese	例子.测试	xn--fsqu00a	xn--0zwm56d
Chinese, traditional	Chinese	例子.測試	xn--fsqu00a	xn--g6w251d
Cyrillic	Russian	пример.испытание	xn--e1afmkfd	xn--80akhbyknj4f
Devanagari	Hindi	उदाहरण.परीक्षा	xn--p1b6ci4b4b3a	xn--11b5bs3a9aj6g
Greek	Greek	παράδειγμα.δοκιμή	xn--hxajbhheg2az3al	xn--jxalpdlp
Hangul	Korean	실례.테스트	xn--9n2bp8q	xn--9t4b11yi5a
Hebrew	Yiddish	פּרײַמפּלען.דאָקומענט	xn--fdbk5d8ap9b8a8d	xn--deba0ad
Kanji Hirigana, and Katakana	Japanese	例え.テスト	xn--r8jz45g	xn--zckzah
Tamil	Tamil	உதாரணம்.பரிட்சை	xn--zkc6cc5bi7f6e	xn--hlcj6aya9esc7a

Today it is possible to register the second-level of a top-level domain, such as the icann part of *icann.org*, in different language scripts. You should check with the registrar that you have selected to see whether it supports that kind of registration. If not, another registrar should be able to help you. As mentioned in the question on What is a registrar and how do I select one?, it is possible to search for a registrar by the language(s) it supports (see Listing by Language Supported). With some registrars, such support is limited to providing registration assistance in another language, whereas with others it means that you can also register a non-Latin script domain name. Note, however, that although it may be possible to register a domain in certain non-Latin scripts, it may not be possible to use the domain name for email because the technical standard for IDN email is not yet finalized.

## 9. What are my rights and obligations as a domain name registrant?

As the licensed holder of a domain name for the period of time for which it is registered, you have the right to use that name during that period, consistent with certain terms and conditions, and applicable laws and regulations. As a registrant, among other things, you are required to:

- Provide your registrar with accurate and reliable contact details and promptly correct and update them as necessary, including: your full name and postal address, as well as the name, postal address, email address, voice telephone number, and (where available) fax number for the technical and administrative contacts you list. The willful provision of inaccurate or unreliable information, or a willful failure to update information provided to a registrar, or a failure to respond for over 15 calendar days to your registrar's inquiries concerning the accuracy of this information, constitutes a material breach of your contract with your registrar and could be a basis for cancelling your registration.
- Represent that, to your best knowledge and belief, neither the registration of the domain name nor the manner in which it is directly or indirectly used infringes the legal rights of any third party.
- For the adjudication of disputes not prejudice to other potentially applicable rules, to the laws and authority of the courts (1) where you live and (2) where your registrar is located.
- Agree that registration of your domain name is subject to suspension, cancellation or transfer pursuant to any ICANN adopted specification or policy to correct mistakes or resolve disputes.

### Your registrar, among other things, is required to:

- Inform you of the intended purposes for which any personal data collected will be used.
- Take reasonable precautions to protect your personal data from loss, misuse, unauthorized access or disclosure, alteration or destruction. You should understand, however, that all registrars are required to make the Whois information for each generic top-level domain name registration publicly available. You can review this information by checking a Whois service such as the one available on the InterNIC website at [http://reports.internic.net/cgi/whois?whois\\_nic=icann.org&type=domain](http://reports.internic.net/cgi/whois?whois_nic=icann.org&type=domain).
- Take reasonable steps to correct inaccurate registration data that it learns about.

## 10. How do I renew a domain name that I have already registered?

You must contact your registrar before the expiration date of your domain if you intend to renew the registration, unless you avail yourself of automatic renewal services if offered by your registrar. When you first register a domain, you are given a choice of selecting a one-year, or longer, registration period. You should keep track of the expiration date and if you intend to renew your domain name do so before that date. Your registrar may also send you renewal notices, as long as your contact data remains accurate, which is an easy way to renew on time. You should be certain to check that a renewal notice is actually from your registrar of record, and not from a reseller or another registrar seeking to attract your business away from your current registrar.

Generic top-level domain names in gTLDs and sTLDs under contract with ICANN can be registered for a maximum of 10 years at a time and, consistent with these rules, you may increase the period of registration at any time. If you expect to want to use your domain name for a long time, you should consider registering or renewing it for more than one year.

Some domain registrants decide to transfer a domain to another registrar when it is time to renew a registration. As the domain name registrar marketplace is highly competitive, a new registrar may offer better terms for renewal if you decide to transfer your registration.

Finally, ICANN's Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC) has produced an advisory, *Renewal Considerations for Domain Name Registrants*, available at <http://www.icann.org/committees/security/renewal-advisory-29jun06.pdf>.

## **11. What happens if I forget to renew my domain name?**

It used to be that if you forgot to renew your domain name before expiration of your registration, you were out of luck if someone else immediately registered it. In the last few years, however, there were complaints about registrants losing the rights to their domain names as the result of mistake, inadvertence or fraud. To address these concerns, some, but not all, registrars have instituted a redemption grace period, sometimes referred to as RGP.

Under the RGP, deletion of a name – whether intentional or not – results in a 30-day Deleted Name Redemption Grace Period. The domain name is placed on registry-hold, which causes it to be removed from the zone. Once in this status, your domain name will not function, and you cannot send or receive email, thereby alerting you to the fact that your registration has lapsed. As long as you are within the 30-day period, you can retrieve your registration through your registrar if it offers the RGP service. Your registrar can then redeem the domain name from the registry by paying the renewal fee and a service charge, for which it will bill you. The total fee charged by a registrar offering this service may be many times the standard renewal fee, so it is advisable to remember to renew your domain name before its expiration date. If your registrar offers this service, your agreement with it should contain an explanation of the fees charged and the service itself.

Other registrars have adopted other ways to alert you if you have failed to renew your domain name, such as through an auto-grace period. You can refer to your agreement with your registrar to learn whether it has such a policy and, if so, how it works.

We strongly recommend that you carefully review the terms of the registrar's service before you use that service. You also need to remember that your registrar may change the way its service works over time, and the longer the term of your registration the more likely it is that changes in the terms of service will affect your registration. Your registrar is obliged to inform you of changes, but it is only able to do so if they can reliably contact you, so it is important that you keep your personal details up-to-date with your registrar and review the options that are available for being notified by your registrar of changes to its service that will affect you.

If your registrar offers services designed to auto-renew your registration (not all do), these services often depend on the registrar having a way to automatically charge you for the renewal. If, for example, that method of paying is a credit card, and the card has expired during the period from when you registered, or last re-registered, your domain name, your registrar will be unable to process the registration. At the same time, if your email address or postal address changes (for those registrars that offer reminders by email or by post; some only offer one of the two) and you do not keep these details up to date with your registrar, you may not receive the reminders your registrar sends to tell you that your domain name is reaching the end of the registration period.

You should also make sure you are familiar with the reminder services that the registrar offers if you intend to rely upon your registrar to remind you of the impending need to re-register your domain name, as not all registrars offer reminder services.

In general, we recommend that you keep track of your registration details and in particular when your domain name expires. You should go out of your way to make sure that any domain name that you wish to keep is always reregistered before it expires.

## **12. How do I transfer a domain name that I have already registered?**

You can freely transfer a domain name registered in a gTLD to another registrar as long as it is more than 60 days since it was registered or previously transferred. People consider transfers for a variety of reasons, including potential costs savings, value-added services and customer service. You should not, however, try to transfer a name shortly before a registration expires, or the transfer might not succeed. The transfer of a domain name can take five calendar days, and if the transfer fails, another attempt can be made, which could also take up to five days. Because of potential delays in the transfer process, we recommend that transfers occur well before the domain registration is scheduled to expire.

ICANN's approval of a transfer policy was intended to encourage registrars to compete for your business. The process was designed so that you can confirm that a transfer has been requested in a fashion that notifies both the gaining and the losing registrar of your intention, and reduces the possibility of fraudulent transfers.

Each registrar is allowed to develop transfer procedures and deadlines of their own, as long as they are clear, concise and meet certain ICANN contractual requirements. You should therefore check the relevant requirements with your current and proposed registrar. Depending on its procedures, you probably will need to initiate the request with the new registrar. Once it has confirmed the request, it will send a transfer request to the TLD registry involved. The registry then communicates with your current registrar, who may seek to confirm the transfer with you and then send an acceptance or rejection notice back to the registry, which notifies the new registrar. If your current registrar does nothing, the transfer will proceed. If it denies the transfer, it must give a valid reason for doing so. The new registrar then advises you when a transfer is complete. While this procedure may seem complicated, in practice it works relatively smoothly.

Note that to transfer any registered domain name in any gTLD, the registry requires that you confirm an authorization code (called an auth code). The auth code is unique to each domain name and is assigned by the registrar at the time of registration. You will need to check with your current registrar to determine your auth code if you do not know it, and you will need to provide it to your new registrar to initiate a transfer. Some registrars will give you access to the auth code via the domain management section of their website.

You should also review whether or not the domain name you wish to transfer is in a state called registrar lock. Your registrar may automatically enable registrar lock for a variety of reasons; in general, however, you should find that there is a way to unlock the domain name in the online interface for managing your registration at your registrar's website.

### 13. Can I buy and sell a domain name?

A person who registers a domain name owns the rights to use that registration during the period of time he or she chose when registering it or renewing the registration. Legal decisions differ on whether a domain name is considered property that can be bought or sold, but it is possible to change the registration record to indicate that another person or organization has become the registrant of record for that domain. There may or may not be a charge by the registrar for this process, although depending on whether an auction or aftermarket firm is involved, there may be other fees. The party who is receiving the domain registration must establish an account with the registrar of record. To deter fraud, most registrars will require some documentation from the current registrant that a registration change is their desire.

**Be aware, however, that when you register a domain name, you agree:**

- That the registration will not infringe upon or violate the rights of any third party;
- That you are not registering the domain name for an unlawful purpose; and
- That you will not knowingly use the domain name in violation of any applicable laws or regulations.

Some countries' laws prohibit registrants from registering specific domain names with the intent to sell the registrations to a company or individual that may have intellectual property rights to those names. Under ICANN's Uniform Domain-Name Dispute Resolution Policy, or UDRP, parties can challenge another party's domain name registration on similar grounds. These rules are intended to protect both the identity and intellectual property rights of others and to prevent consumer confusion. Violation of these rules can result in forfeiture of your domain name and, in some cases, also have consequences under domestic law.

You should carefully review the applicable laws and rules if you are considering registering a domain name in order to resell the registration, or if someone contacts you offering to sell you a registration in a name that seems quite similar to names associated with you, or the identity, goods, services or website of your organization or business.

### 14. Where do I go for help with domain name problems?

If you have a problem with your registrar, you should first try to resolve it directly. If you have been dealing with a reseller for a registrar, you should begin by working with the reseller. If the reseller is unresponsive or unavailable, then you should deal directly with the registrar of record for your domain. If you cannot resolve your complaint with your registrar, you should address it to the agencies involved in addressing customer complaints or consumer protection authorities in your area, or where your registrar does business. See Additional Information for references to materials on consumer protection.

While ICANN does not resolve individual customer complaints, it does accredit all registrars offering registration services in gTLDs. For this reason, it monitors complaints to discern if there is a trend with respect to a particular registrar. You may submit a complaint about a registrar to ICANN by using the form available at the InterNIC website, at <http://reports.internic.net/cgi/registrars/problem-report.cgi>. A copy of the complaint will automatically be forwarded to your registrar for review.

For further information, please review the How to Get Help When You Have a Problem with Your Registrar page on the ICANN website. ICANN also employs staff dedicated to helping ensure that registrars comply with the terms of their agreements with ICANN, including those intended to protect registrants.

## 15. How do I handle domain name disputes?

If the dispute is with a registrar, see Question 14. If the dispute is with a third party, then the remedy will depend on the nature of the complaint. Thousands of cases involving trademark disputes have been resolved by use of the Uniform Domain-Name Dispute Resolution Policy, or UDRP (see Question 16).

## 16. What is the UDRP (Uniform Domain-Name Dispute Resolution Policy)?

All ICANN-accredited registrars have agreed to follow a uniform dispute resolution policy to address disputes over the registration and use of domain names. During the registration process, each registrant agrees to abide by this policy. While litigation between the parties remains an option, use of this procedure to address allegedly abusive registration (such as cybersquatting) can resolve a dispute without the cost and delays sometimes encountered in court. To initiate the UDRP procedures in a situation where you believe that another party has engaged in an abusive registration, you would file a complaint with one of the dispute-resolution service providers referred to on the ICANN UDRP page. Should you become the respondent/defendant in such a proceeding, you should review these links to learn more information about the procedures of the provider selected by the complainant, and how you can defend your position. You may also wish to consult with a qualified attorney.

## 17. How can I help protect myself from spam, phishing and other Internet fraud?

**You can take one or more of several steps to help protect yourself from some of the risks of using the Internet:**

- Watch for unsolicited offers to register domain names as renewals or new registrations. You should not assume that a renewal notice is from your registrar, as it could be from another registrar seeking your business. If you receive such a notice, you should check all the details carefully. For example, does it have the proper name of your website address or domain name? Is the extension identical, or is the sender trying to get you to register the same second-level name in other TLD (or ccTLD) extensions? In some cases, resellers or registrars will send misleading renewal notices that, if paid, will initiate a transfer of the domain name registration to them.
- Keep a record of the details of your domain name registration(s), including each registrar of record and each date of expiration.
- Check the Whois database periodically to ensure that it reflects accurate information, including your contact data details. (Your registrar may offer you the ability to place a lock on your domain name registration, sometimes for an additional fee. This prevents changes to your registration record without your express authorization.)
- Avoid emailing personal or financial information. If you get an unsolicited email from a company or government agency asking for your personal information, contact the company or agency cited in the email using a telephone number you know to be genuine, or start a new Internet session and type in the Web address that you know is correct.

In addition, you can report spam, phishing and other Internet fraud activities to the consumer protection authorities where you reside.

One publication that contains helpful information is the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's notice on Domain name renewal/registrations – don't get caught, published at <http://www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/54057>. Consumer groups worldwide often provide comprehensive advice on how to protect yourself and your computer. Consumer Reports WebWatch provides one such resource at <http://www.consumerwebwatch.org/consumer-center.cfm>. Finally, 21 countries have combined together to provide an online resource where you can file complaints about online fraud and other problems. Called eConsumer, the site is available at <http://www.consumer.gov/econsumer/> in several languages.

## **18. What do I need to remember about my domain name registration?**

**As noted in the answers to the previous questions:**

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- Use valid address and contact information for the domain name registration.
  - Keep the information updated in the domain record should you move or change your email address.
  - Consider using a lock on your domain registration if your registrar offers it. This can help prevent inadvertent or fraudulent domain transfers or registration record changes from occurring without your express knowledge.
  - Check Whois information on a regular basis to verify the information presented.
  - You will – in compliance with ICANN's rules for registrars – be contacted annually by the registrar of record for your domain (even if you registered your name with a reseller affiliated with that registrar) to verify that the contact information for your domain registration record is accurate.
  - Keep track of your registration renewal dates to ensure domain name renewals occur before expiration.
  - Carefully review any domain name registration renewal offers to ensure that they are indeed from your registrar.
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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following organizations and websites are among several that contain useful information concerning domain names and the safe use of the Internet more generally:

Australia's Competition and Consumer Commission: <http://www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/142>

Australia's Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts: <http://www.dcita.gov.au/home>

(The website includes a business guide to registering a web address, called Staking your claim on the Web, available at [http://www.dcita.gov.au/ie/publications/2003/03/staking\\_claim](http://www.dcita.gov.au/ie/publications/2003/03/staking_claim))

eConsumer: <http://www.consumer.gov/econsumer/>

ICANN At-Large (individual Internet user) community: <http://atlarge.icann.org>

ICANN: [www.icann.org](http://www.icann.org)

InterNIC: [www.internic.net](http://www.internic.net)

United States' Federal Trade Commission: [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

Comments on and suggested updates to this guide may be sent to [staff@atlarge.icann.org](mailto:staff@atlarge.icann.org).

## GLOSSARY

**DN** – Domain Name

**DNS** – Domain Name System

**IANA** – Internet Assigned Numbers Authority

**ICANN** – Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

**IDNs** – Internationalized Domain Names

**IETF** – Internet Engineering Task Force

**IP** – Internet Protocol

**ISP** – Internet Service Provider

**RGP** – Redemption Grace Period

**TLD** – Top-Level Domain

**ccTLD** – Country Code Top-Level Domain

**gTLD** – Generic Top-Level Domain

**UDRP** – Uniform Dispute Resolution Policy

**URL** – Uniform Resource Locator



## About ICANN

To reach another person on the Internet you have to type an address into your computer - a name or a number. That address has to be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN coordinates these unique identifiers across the world. Without that coordination we wouldn't have one global Internet. ICANN was formed in 1998. It is a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation with participants from all over the world dedicated to keeping the Internet secure, stable and interoperable. It promotes competition and develops policy on the Internet's unique identifiers. ICANN doesn't control content on the Internet. It cannot stop spam and it doesn't deal with access to the Internet. But through its coordination role of the Internet's naming system, it does have an important impact on the expansion and evolution of the Internet. For more information please visit: [www.icann.org](http://www.icann.org).



Brussels	6 Rond Point Schuman, Bt. 5	B-1040 Brussels	BELGIUM	T +32 2 234 7870	F +32 2 234 7848
Los Angeles	4676 Admiralty Way, Suite 330	Marina del Rey, CA 90292	USA	T +1 310 823 9358	F +1 310 823 8649
Washington, DC	1875 I Street NW, 5th Floor	Washington, DC 20006	USA	T +1 202 429 2407	F +1 202 429 2714