

Website Fundamentals – Domain & Hosting

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You have decided that you just have to have a website, but where to start? Whether it will be used to promote your business, or share your favourite craft patterns or recipes with family and friends, the process and the requirements are all the same. You need a website address, you need it registered, and you need to find a company to host your website. To paraphrase, if any of this sounds Greek to you, hopefully as you continue reading these posts over the next few days it will all become a lot clearer.

Everything starts in exactly the same place, with the **Domain**.

First of all, what is a Domain and why do you need it?

A **Domain** is basically a section or "home" set aside somewhere (website host) for you to store all your website files. A **Domain Name** is the unique address for this "home". It is this unique address that is entered in to the web browser to find your website, and is also commonly referred to as your website address or URL. (These terms will be used interchangeably throughout this post.) If you don't have a Domain then you don't have a place to put your website files and you don't have a website for people to visit. Simple?

Ok, so how do you choose a Domain Name?

Before giving any thought to what you may like your Domain Name or website address to be, it is important to be familiar with its structure and appearance. A typical website address will look something like this:

www.yourdomainname.com.

"**www**" stands for "World Wide Web"

"**domainname**" in this example will be the name you choose for your site

".**com**" is like a format or extension

This extension mentioned above is usually 2 or 3 characters in length and can be considered an extra designation to describe the type of site (eg **commercial** or **educational**), or location (eg **canada** or **usa**).

It is the middle part "**domainname**" that you will need to carefully consider, especially if this website is intended as your business showcase. Here are a few tips to help you get started:

A good Domain name is:

1. Concise and reflective of your business name and/or operations, or its purpose.
2. As short as possible.
3. Easy to remember.
4. Created so that the letters don't run together in an odd or profane way.

It should also roll off the tongue nicely, be "clean", and easy to pronounce.

Need ideas?

- Try using a keyword tool such as Word tracker or Google Analytics Keyword Tool.
- Use an online thesaurus or dictionary.
- Draw on past experiences, places you have lived or visited, or people you have known.
- Think about the thoughts or feelings you may want to convey when someone hears your domain name.

Don't be afraid to ask others for their opinion too. Remember it is these "others" that will have to remember your website address and type it in to the browser to find you.

Once you have chosen your Domain name, it is time to go searching to see if it is available and register it. Keep in mind that ".com" is the most common extension for a website address, and has been around the longest, so it may or may not be available. You may need to be flexible in either your Domain Name or extension when it comes time to register.

Which brings us to the next step. Registering your Domain Name....

Domain Names are purchased only from a registrar that is appointed by the International Corporation For Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). While there are many of these registrars out there, it is still a buyer beware market as some are more credible and reliable than others, and cheaper. It is wise to shop around, read the fine print, and gather referrals before committing. Here are some things to think about and look for:

1. Is the registrar a well-established business that has been around for a while and shows no sign of closing up shop any time soon?
2. Do they offer competitive pricing? The normal range is \$10 - \$15 per year.
3. What kind of customer service and support can you expect?

Not sure where to start, do a Google search for domain registration or domain registrar and see what comes up. Go Daddy seems to be a popular one and is well advertised.

As you visit the different registrars, do a search for your chosen Domain Name (with extension) to see if it is available and the cost. Keep some notes on each site to refer back to when it is time to make your decision.

Again do your homework and ask lots of questions. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't.

Some hosting companies (huh?) will also register your Domain Name for you which is a smart option because everything is in one place and you deal with only one company. Sometimes they will even offer this service for free!

What is a hosting company you ask? Well read on...

Remember this from the beginning of this article...*"section or' home' set aside somewhere (website host) for you to store all your website files."*

The website host is that section or home where all your website files are kept so they can be visible to the outside world. It is also where you upload applications to run on your site and set up your email addresses. And yes, *"Some hosting companies will also register your Domain Name for you"*.

Just like registrars, there are many hosting companies out there and it is important that you take some time to shop around. Some pretty much offer you the moon to get your business so knowing some key areas to consider in your search should make the decision a lot easier.

- **Technical Support:** Will support be available when you need it, and are the representatives courteous and knowledgeable? Are they reachable by a toll free number, or other means such as online chat?
- **Disk Space:** Does the host offer enough space for your website now and in the future, especially if you intend on uploading lots of pictures, videos, etc. (simple sites take considerably less space)?
- **Bandwidth:** How much data can routinely be transferred from your site to the viewer? If you have lots of photos or other downloads, this allotment can be used up fast.
- **Uptime:** What percentage of uptime can be guaranteed by the host? Although all hosts will go down from time to time, this should be less than 1-3% of the time. A host with guaranteed 97-99% uptime is a good choice.
- **MySQL:** Some programs that you may want to install, such as WordPress, require this application.
- **FTP Access:** Unlimited and unrestricted FTP access to your site is mandatory, as you will use this to transfer files, such as website files, photos, etc., up to your site.
- **Control Panel:** The engine behind the scenes of your site, allowing you to

install applications, set up email, add more domains, perform backups, etc., should be very easy to understand and navigate.

And if you would prefer to have your Domain Name registered with the same company that will host your site, you can add that to the list above.

One more thing, before deciding where you will host your site, put some thought and research in to what kind of a website you want and what you will need from the host to accomplish this. For example, if you plan on creating a blog site, being able to install a platform such as WordPress is a must.

Definitely do your homework, compare prices, read ratings and feedback, and gather referrals.

Here's to your success!!

About the Author:

Deborah Taylor is a diversified administrative professional with more than 25 years of varied and progressive experience in all areas of office management and administration. President of [AVA Business Services](#), Deborah and her team provide Virtual Assistance and local Freelance support for today's global marketplace.