

A website is known by its domain name. The pages and content may be held on a web server, but it is the domain name that identifies it all. With so many websites being developed it is becoming increasingly difficult to find domain names that haven't already been taken. There are however a number of tips and tricks that can be used to find domain names that are relevant to the topic, and make memorable names.

What type of domain name is the best to use? It is possible to use country level domain names such as 'mydomain.co.uk' or 'mydomain.fr', however the first port of call for anyone trying to guess someone's URL is that it will be a Top Level Domain (TLD) such as 'mydomain.com' or 'mydomain.org'. If you are hoping to register a domain name and the .com version has already been registered, it is better to look for another name. If you register a different extension, you will always be competing with the .com website, and there will be confusion as to which is the 'authentic' website. A .org domain name is used for non-profit organizations, and a .net is used for Internet based businesses.

The days are gone when you could choose a single useful word for a domain name, and find it hadn't been used already. More than one word must be used to form a unique combination. Imagination and effort are needed, but the results are worth it. The first task is to identify keywords that can be used in the name. These will usually be the same keywords that will be used on the home page. To find out if a domain name is available to register, use one of the services provided by a website hosting company, or do a search for 'whois' on a search engine. The websites listed will provide a domain name verification service. If you modify your search, and look for websites using the search terms 'domain name suggestions' or similar terms, you will find websites that will check multiple combinations of words at the same time. This can be a much faster process and also introduce some words you perhaps hadn't thought of.

Depending on your site theme, experiment with a mix of keywords and other adjectives and verbs. Variations on name can be created by adding words such as 'top', 'hot', 'best', 'land', 'universe', 'planet', 'country', and similar terms. Ask friends and colleagues for ideas and alternatives. As you test the word combinations for availability, it is important to keep a record of the names tested, and their success or failure. A spreadsheet is an excellent tool for this, as you can periodically rearrange the list in alphabetical order to make it easier to look up previous attempts. You may check availability of many combinations of words as domain names, and if you don't keep a record you will end up re-testing word combinations.

It is better to simply combine words, rather than connect them with hyphens or underscores.

Other characters such as these are viewed as 'stop' characters by search engines, and can reduce the impact of the domain name in promoting search engine optimization. They can also make it more difficult for people to type in the name as these characters require the use of the 'shift' key. This is not usually a problem in itself, but can introduce difficulties when surfing the web during lunch break in work while drinking coffee.

It is not easy to find good domain names, but they are always available for someone with imagination. You may have to check a large number of alternatives, but the reward is worth it. Website content can change, but the domain name will always be the first point of impact for visitors.