

## Domain Names

See [ICANN.org](http://ICANN.org) for authoritative information on domain names.

There are many issues to consider if you are using domain names to help you determine the validity and reliability of a web site. Anyone can register .org, .com, .info, .name, and .net domain names. The domains that are restricted, such as .edu, .gov, and .museum, can only indicate to you that the registering institution has a certain status; it cannot guarantee the quality of information you find on the site. Some frequently seen and a few new domains are addressed in more detail below.

### Background

Every computer on the Internet is assigned a unique internet protocol (IP) address. These IP addresses are numerical, for example 92.0.34.163. To make them easier to remember the domain name system (DNS) allows the association of strings of letters with the numerical addresses, for example [www.icann.org](http://www.icann.org). The domain names are just mnemonics for the numeric internet addresses.

The DNS is basically a directory of domain names and their associated IP addresses. When a domain name is registered the information is recorded in this directory system. To find out who has registered a domain name you use the InterNIC Whois search: [www.internic.net/whois.html](http://www.internic.net/whois.html)

### Country Code and Generic Domains

There are at least 244 country code domains. Examples include .us for United States, .ca for Canada, .UK for the United Kingdom, .za for South Africa (Zud Afrique), etc. There are also several new generic domains such as .biz for businesses, .name for individuals, .museum for museums, .mobi for mobile products, etc.

### Frequently Seen Domains

#### **.org**

The .org domain was originally intended for use by organizations that did not fit into the other categories available at that time (.edu, .gov, .com, .mil, .net). It became a miscellaneous category, and is now the fifth-largest domain with over 2 million registrations globally. It's available to anyone.

#### **.net**

The .net domain was originally intended for network service providers but also serves as a miscellaneous category. It's available to anyone.

#### **.edu**

Since 2001, only institutionally accredited 4-year post-secondary institutions can obtain the .edu domain. These institutions are primarily US-based, with a few international educational

institutions permitted to register the .edu domain. Any other type of institution (e.g., a K-12 school) who had the .edu domain prior to 2001 was permitted to keep it. The post-2001 restrictions ensure only the educational status of the registrant, not the content.

### **.museum**

The new .museum domain requires the registering entity to explain its museum status and has specific rules for the structure of the names. Art.museum, for example, is not allowed because it is too generic. All these restrictions make it a more reliable domain in terms of its usefulness in evaluating site reliability.

*\*While .edu and .museum registrants need to show that they are educational or museum entities, it does not guarantee that the information on those sites is reliable or of high-quality; you must still use your best judgment.*

### **.gov and .mil**

The .gov domain is reserved for the US government, and the .mil domain is reserved for the US military. The .gov and .mil sites are more restrictive than any of the other domains in terms of the actual content they make available to the public.

### **.name and .biz**

Individuals can obtain .name addresses, but there doesn't seem to be anything in place to restrict any other entity from registering a .name address. Businesses can register .biz addresses, although again, there does not seem to be any specific control over who can obtain the .biz domain.

## gTLDs - generic Top-Level Domains (examples)

see more @ <http://icann.org/registrars/accredited-list.html>

.name	Intended for individuals	.biz	Restricted to businesses
.info	Available to anyone	.aero	Restricted to the aerospace industry
.coop	Reserved for cooperatives	.pro	Restricted to licensed pros
.mobi	Reserved for "mobile" industry		
.jobs	Reserved for human resources		

## ccTLDs – country code Top-Level Domains (examples)

see more @ <http://www.iana.org/root-whois/index.html>

.ae	United Arab Emirates	.tp	East Timor
.jp	Japan	.vn	Vietnam
.gu	Guam	.zw	Zimbabwe
.se	Sweden		

## InterNIC Whois search

Use the **Whois** search to find out who registered a domain name

<http://www.internic.net/whois.html>