

CHECKLIST: Registering A Domain Name

Registering an Internet domain is a quick and easy process. A registrar (domain name registration service) requests information about you and the domain name. It keeps a copy of this information in its files and sends a copy to the central public database, which is open to anyone wanting to know who owns a domain name. The registration is usually for two years, but some registrars allow one-year registration or offer discounts for five- or ten-year registration. Below is a checklist to help you successfully register the domain name you have chosen.

_____ **Choose a registration service.** Not that long ago, only one central registrar, InterNic, operated in the United States. Now, the registration business is open and many firms are competing. Some registrars are accredited, and must follow certain standards, while others are not. Unaccredited registrars may offer less expensive registration, but may be less reliable.

Whichever registrar you select, you must carefully read and understand its terms and conditions. Most important among them are how long the registration period will last and how much it will cost. Some registrars who also offer web hosting services will pay for your registration if you agree to host your site through them.

_____ **Make sure your chosen domain name is available.** Registrars offer a domain name look-up tool. However, not all registrars' databases include names registered by other registrars. Instead, use BetterWhois (www.betterwhois.com), the central public database, to make sure the domain name you want is still available. If it is taken, you will either have to come up with another option or approach the owner to purchase the domain name.

_____ **When you are ready to have your site hosted, set up a host account at an Internet service provider.** If you are not ready to have your site hosted, you do not have to set up an account yet at an Internet service provider (ISP). However, before your site becomes available to the public, you will have to arrange for hosting.

_____ **Complete the registrar's on-line form.** Most registrars request standard information, including:

_____ The domain name you wish to register.

- _____ The name, physical address, e-mail address, and phone number of the organizational or administrative contact (the person that the domain name will be registered to).

- _____ The name, physical address, e-mail address, and phone number of the billing contact (the person or business that will be billed for the registration of the domain name).

- _____ E-mail-forwarding information. Many domain name registrars offer POP e-mail accounts. Choose a new e-mail address like yourname@yournewdomain.com, for example. Any time someone sends an e-mail message to this address, it will be automatically forwarded to another e-mail account of your choice, such as your current e-mail address.

- _____ Payment information, such as credit card type, number, expiration, name of cardholder, street address, and ZIP code.

- _____ A log-in name and password, which you choose.

- _____ Some registrars require that you provide host server names and IP addresses. Host servers are part of the Domain Name System (DNS), or the entire worldwide network of computers that essentially allows your browser to view Web sites using Web addresses. Host servers translate IP addresses (numerical strings of numbers, such as "208.201.239.35," which computers need to "talk" to each other) into their corresponding domain names.

If you only want to register a domain name, but don't want to have an actual web site hosted yet, most registrars will let you use their host server name and address. You may need to contact the registrar to arrange this. When you are ready to have your site hosted, you can edit your profile in the registrar's database to include the correct host server name and address of your Internet service provider or web hosting company.

Note: You should be aware that all the information on the domain registration form, except for your credit card information, will be accessible to the public simply by searching for your domain name in the central database.

- _____ **Periodically renew your registration.** You register a domain name for a finite period. When that period is over, you will have to pay a renewal fee to keep the domain name. If you fail to pay the renewal fee, the domain will become available to others. Although most registrars will contact domain name owners via e-mail or postal mail when it is time to renew the domain name, you should mark your calendar as a reminder.