

Purchasing a Domain Name

Before you can publish your website for everyone to view, you need to buy a domain name and website hosting. Sometimes you'll purchase both of these from the same company. There are pros and cons to doing this sort of thing. (I'll go over these in another post, at another time.) However, I make it standard practice to NOT do this. I keep them separate so that if at any time I want to change my web hosting service, my domain name won't be tied to that company. I can just re-point it from my domain name host provider over to the new web hosting service.

I buy most of my domain names from GoDaddy (www.godaddy.com) because of their admin capabilities. It's easy and quick to make DNS (Domain Name System) adjustments and the downtime if you switch your website over to another server is very minimal. The cost associated with purchasing a domain name is exceptionally low. Lastly, you'll never have to worry about your domain expiring as long as you have current contact information on file with GoDaddy. They will send you several notices that you need to renew your domain, and even attempt to call you if you are on the verge of having a domain expire.

To register your GoDaddy domain, go to www.godaddy.com. Right on the front page you'll see a large text box that will allow you to type in the domain you're searching for, with the proper extension (.com .net .info) next to it.

Try to purchase the .com, and then perhaps the .net or .info if it makes sense to own more than one domain. If you are a non-profit charity organization, you should purchase the .org and use that as your primary domain.

If you're a small local business without a lot of competition, you only need to have a single domain. If you're a large corporation with multiple competitors out there just waiting to eat up domain names with your keywords in them, consider purchasing a package of domain names... you can use one for your primary domain and point the others to your homepage.

Can't find the domain name you're looking for? Try breaking up your words with hyphens. Although it may be harder for people to remember to type into their address bar, most of the major search engines will read your keywords between the hyphens and take them into consideration when you're optimizing your website.

I've noticed over the last year that GoDaddy really tries to 'upsell' new customers on a variety of products/services, as part of the regular domain check-out process. Make sure to look at all the checkboxes carefully as I noticed recently that some of those boxes are 'pre-checked'. You may get to the final checkout and notice that you've got more items in your cart than you really need. If you are just purchasing a single domain (standard-priced) for one year your check-out cart total shouldn't be over

\$20.00. Keep in mind that if you buy your domain for more than one year, the annual price is discounted.

Once you are finished paying for your domain name, make sure to write down your customer number and password. If you've set a telephone PIN for your account, write that down too. You're going to need this information to log back into your account, which you will need to do right after you set up your web hosting service.

Nameservers

After you've purchased both your domain name AND your web hosting, you'll need to set your DNS to point to Custom Nameservers. To set your nameservers, log into your GoDaddy account manager. Next to domains, click Launch. Select the domain you want to modify. Click on the Set Nameservers icon. Choose "I have specific nameservers for my domains". Put in the 2 nameservers that your webhosting company gave you, and click OK.

Each web hosting service has their own DNS address, but commonly it will look like this:

NS1.BLUEHOST.COM / NS2.BLUEHOST.COM

Once you've set your nameservers, it takes up to 24 hours for this change to 'propagate'. Fortunately GoDaddy is super quick, so the website domains I switch over are normally done within just a few minutes!

Email

Don't set up your email through your domain service. Wait until you have a web hosting account and set it up there. Domain hosting companies frequently try to upsell you on their 'email discount program' where you purchase a number of email addresses for a set price. Normally you already get this service for free as part of your web hosting account, and if you don't, you're probably with the wrong hosting service. You should be able to easily set up as many email accounts as you need, with no mailbox size limit, to use however you wish.