



Who am I? Where am I? ...and what's the meaning of life?

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A short guide to domain names and web hosting.

You've decided to have a website designed. Lovely! That's the exciting bit.

This is a short guide to the boring technical bits.

You don't have to know much about them, but if you want to know something, here's a few pointers for the beginner.

1. What is a Domain Name?

A domain name is a unique address that can be used on the internet. It's what you see in the address bar after the "www." in your web browser and it's what comes after the @ sign in an email address.

Domain names consist of two parts. For example, in "wavingmoose.com" the ".com" represents what is known as the top level domain (TLD) and "wavingmoose" represents the second level domain and is the actual descriptive name. The same name can be used with different TLDs, such as .com, .org, and .net. There are also country specific TLDs, such as .co.uk for the UK, .fr for France and .de for Germany.

When a domain name is used in a web address, 'www' is usually put in front of it to indicate that typing that name into your web browser will take you to a website. Domain name holders can set up a website with that address and also use it for email addresses. When you are a domain name holder you get to decide what is in front of the @-sign in the email address.

2. Choosing a Domain Name

You will want to give this some careful thought. In theory you can choose any domain name you like that hasn't already been registered by someone else, but here are the key things to try to achieve:

- **Relevant** - eg your name or your business name or keywords related to your business.
- **Descriptive** - use your business name or a description of your product/service instead of abbreviations or initials. People would instantly know what a site called "LlamaProofFencing" is about (although they might be suspicious!). The full title is much more helpful than the acronym "LPFservices".
- **Short** - The maximum allowed size is 63 characters, but keep the name as short as possible, ie something that is easy to type and remember.
- **Memorable** - Consider both how it looks written down and how it is understood given verbally. Names with special characters like hyphens* and underscores are harder to describe to people verbally and are more easily forgotten or misunderstood. You may also inadvertently send customers to your competitors if they have similar names without special characters!

- **Look at getting a .com if possible.** If you have a unique name that you want to protect and are in it for the long haul, consider also buying the other extensions (eg .co.uk, .net, .org etc).
- **Copyright** - it is your responsibility to make sure your chosen name does not infringe any copyright. A Google search and the [Companies House website](#) are good starting points to determine whether another business is trading under the name or using the brand. A basic search of trademarks can be carried out on the [Intellectual Property Office \(IPO\) website](#), or there are Trade Mark agencies that can carry out a more detailed trade mark search for you, if you think this is needed.

** **Hyphens** - there is so much dispute about whether to avoid these or not, that it is probably best to focus on branding, relevance and ease of remembering first and only use hyphens if they give clarity to a domain name. (The much chuckled over website for Pen Island was a case in point where a hyphen would have been appropriate!).*

3. About Domain Name 'Ownership' and Registration

Much like a phone number, no one can actually "own" a domain name. However, for all practical purposes, by 'registering' a domain name the end result is much the same. You will be entitled to the exclusive use of it and automatic right of renewal.

Getting a domain name involves registering the name you want with an organisation called ICANN through a domain name registrar. You will have to pay a registration fee which varies depending on the registrar and the TLD chosen. That will give you the right to the name for a year, and you will have to renew it annually for (usually) the same amount per annum.

4. What is Web Hosting?

Web hosting refers to a service that makes your website available to the world. In order for your website to be visible at any time, it needs to be running on a computer which is connected to the internet 24 hours per day, 7 days per week - these are web servers. Servers are powerful computers that have extremely large hard drives, or an array of hard drives, space on which can be rented to those who want a website on the internet.

There are many different types of web hosting available, depending on the needs of a person or business. Prices also vary considerably, from free* web hosting services to very expensive bespoke commercial hosting packages.

**Free Web hosting can be appropriate but is limited in function and will usually include the presence of advertisements on your website, such as "banner ads" at the top of the page or "pop-ups."*

5. Arranging Domain Name Registration and Web Hosting

There is a huge number of domain name registrars and hosting providers to choose from and there is a lot of competition. If you have your website designed at Waving Moose, Sam will take care of the process of registration and provide hosting for you. For most people this is the most convenient option, has benefits in terms of ease of use and troubleshooting and is unlikely to cost you more than doing it yourself.

Details and costs can be found at www.wavingmoose.com/technicalissues.html

In Conclusion...

There's a bit to think about, but Sam is very used to dealing with people who are not confident with these issues and can help you with your decisions as well as take care of the technical side for you.

If you need any further help or advice, please do not hesitate to get in touch.