21 Tips on How to Choose the Best Domain Name for Your Website

Choosing a good domain name is like how you choose a name for your business. Picking a good domain name is very important because changing it later can be a lot of work and if you change it, it may lose some of its power. This article goes in depth explaining **how to choose a name for a website** so that you do it right and reap all the benefits of doing it right.

Don't Be Too Hasty to Register It

When you learn how to find the perfect domain name and come across that perfect name, you'll just know it but don't be in a hurry to buy it – **you have time**. You might think that someone is going to snatch it up if it's still available right now but that's just not true. That was back in 2001 when there were lots of good domain names available. The game has changed since then but that's really good news because there's a better way to choose a domain name now.

So when you think of one that's good and if it's available, then write it down and build a list because you might come across one a little later that's even better. That has happened to me many times before.

Where to Search for a Domain Name

As we go through this article, you're going to need to see if a domain name is available. If you're starting a new website, you're going to need hosting and the hosting that highly recommend is **A2 Hosting** because of how fast it is, how reliable it is and how good their customer support is. I have websites running on their hosting and they load quickly and are virtually always available.

Since you can order a domain name as you're setting up your hosting, just use **A2 Hosting** for both your domain name and hosting service. It'll actually be a good idea to have them both at the same place.

Cheap Domain Names

If you're looking for a cheap domain name, the place I love is NameCheap. It's probably about the cheapest out there and they give you privacy protection for free. That's pretty unbeatable.

The free privacy protection is important because if you don't do that, you'll get calls from web developers from India about developing your website.

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1. Do Not Use Just Keywords

This is probably the most important tip, so I want to get it out of the way, right away. **You may think that having a domain name with keywords in it will shoot you to the top of rankings but that's just not true.** It's the opposite, actually. I'll explain why in a minute but as I was doing some research for this article, I found a website that we all know about giving the opposite advice. They're wrong, so don't make this mistake.

Back in 2010 or so, you could rank what we call an "exact match domain name." That means it matched an exact search that someone would put into Google. This actually used to work. You would rank high in a matter of hours or even minutes. It was great, you could buy a domain name, put up 500 words of content with some ads and that website would rank instantly. It was like a gold rush back then.

Google caught on to that and ended that practice, so it's no longer what you should do. In fact, it can actually **penalize** your website because Google think you're trying to spam your way to the top. So, doing that is tempting but don't give in – you'll thank me later.

2. Use a Brand Name

What you want to do is **have a brand name as a domain name**. This is the absolute **best strategy** out there. This is how to choose domain name for SEO reasons.

The best advice on how to choose your brand name is to come up with a word that isn't even a word yet. This is safe and good for SEO (search engine optimization). The reason is because when you choose a word (or even 2-3 words) that people aren't searching for yet, you become that search. If someone searches, they're searching for you. **Google cannot and will not penalize you for trying to rank for your own brand.** It just works perfectly.

Maybe Avoid Your Instincts

I know of a local company who didn't choose a domain name. I won't say what it is but it really makes no sense except to them. What they did was take their company name and use the initials. They then included a city name, which is a suburb of the city that they really want the most business from.

They're too inward focused – that's really the problem here. On internal notes, emails and conversations, they refer to themselves with their company initials because that's what companies do but it's worth putting that aside when choosing a domain name. They didn't think about it and just thought that it made sense to them.

Brainstorm!

To find a good brand name is pretty simple. Come up with a word or two for your brand name and then do a search on it. Use both Google and Bing for your search because you want to make sure it's not being used. You'll see some results probably but see if those results contain the actual term(s) you're searching for.

Ok, so I like examples and I've come up with some.

Let's say your new blog, website or company is going to be about shoes. Here are some good names I found that are not being used:

- KalaShoe
- FootPosi
- HuhShoe

With all of these, the .com is available and there are no search results (at the time of writing this).

I do have the word "shoe" in them but because there's no space, it becomes a new word – a brand. Your brand should typically reflect what you do and the name should make sense somehow, too. Don't just pick a random name but think about it and have a reason for it when people ask why you used that domain name besides saying, "Well, it was available." There's no story there. People like stories so have a little story.

Other Ideas

Sometimes you can take a word and then just change a few letters. Car makers are famous for this. For example, they too the word "Integrity" and came up with the Acura Integra. See? A brand new word… that is SO easy to track.

If you do not have the luxury of renaming your company (and sometimes I really don't understand why some companies do that – they invest in a brand and then ditch it one day… duh) or if you're not in the brand new company / start up mode, then you might be able to come up with a new word for a domain name that's close to your company name or somehow integrated with your tag line.

You could also use a domain name that's your flagship product.

When you're doing your research for your new word (brand), do some Google searches, search at archive.org and everywhere you can to make sure the word is original. You might also want to make sure your domain name doesn't mean something in another language. You're going to invest a lot into your brand, so get it right.

Great Results and an Awesome Side Benefit

We picked a good name when we named my website design company. We called it "Webstix" because I liked website design and I was a drummer. It was a name I was using as an alias for myself online and it became the name of our company. It's great because it was a new word and when you use a new word, it's easy to track.

Did you get that last point? It's easy to track. I can basically type that name in and find out what people are saying about my company. And again, when I try to rank that website, it's easier because I'm trying to rank a brand and Google can't really penalize us for that. No, you can't go crazy and get 10,000 links the second day your website is up – that would definitely be suspicious and you'd get caught but you can easily build links over time and you don't have to worry about Google slapping you as much – hardly at all.

Use Your Own Name

You can always try to use your own name or a version of it. I like this approach, obviously, and it has some benefits.

Just like a unique brand name, Google can't really smack you for trying to rank for your own name. In other words, it's a safe domain name.

Then, for me, when I decided to stop hiding behind other website names and put my own name on my work, that made me start writing even better content. This was the final push I needed and one of the best decisions I've ever made with Internet Marketing.

3. Make Sure It's Easy to Remember

 Your domain name should not be complicated.

You shouldn't have to explain things like dashes and numbers. You should be able to say the name once and it should make sense. So this tip goes along with the next two, which I sort of already mentioned.

And my example above, "KalaShoe" doesn't actually work too well because people might not know if it starts with a"K" or a "C" when they hear it. So that one is out and I did that on purpose for this example.

The name you choose should **only have one possible spelling.**

The domain name should make sense, too. You don't have a strong brand right now because you're starting out. Brands like Google, Nike Monster.com and Zillow have had to pay extra in marketing dollars to get people to understand what they do. On the other hand, websites like CareerBuilder and AutoTrader have domain names where you instantly understand what they do. They essentially pay less to get their brand out there as they don't need to overcome the hurdle of educating their audience about what they do.

4. Do Not Use Numbers in It

Ok, you actually can have a number in a domain if you really need to but you'll have to buy different versions of the domain name because you never know what people might type. They might spell the number ("four") or they might actually use a digit ("4"). With "four" people might even think you mean "for" instead. You don't know what people will think, so you need to buy the extra domain name and make sure it redirects to whichever domain you're actually setting as the main one.

5. Don't Use a Hyphen

Having hyphens in domain names isn't good. Again, it takes too much explaining. Is it a hyphen or a dash? Well, they're the same thing, right? Is there a space? You're going to get all kinds of questions like that from people. Take that possibility out of the equation and keep it simple.

People might also forget to put the dash in and they might end up at your competition or never find your website. That's bad.

You also cannot use punctuation, characters (like: @, #, $, %, &, *, _) or spaces.

6. Look for Bad Words

What does that mean?

Ok, you might think of the domain name of one way in your head but try using all lower case letters. There are no spaces in domain names, so look at it in all lower case and see if there are any hidden words in there besides the words you want in it. This happens pretty often. It might be alright if some hidden words are there but just make sure they're not bad words.

Bad words might be slang, or curse words or words that mean, you know… something bad. Something that kids shouldn't type into Google – that kind of stuff.

Check your domain name over at Urban Dictionary to make sure you're not using a word you never heard before that's slang for something you might not want to be associated with.

Just this week, we had someone call and I can't say what their domain is but they dealt with car transmissions and they had the word "tranny" in the domain name and that's just not a good idea today.

7. Check for Copyright and Trademarks

With what we did in step #2, you should be covered here because you did a search on Google and Bing. If you want to be really sure, see if there is a lawyer in your area that can do this for you. If you're going to spend some dough on that, maybe also look into having them do a registered trademark for you.

You can search for a trademark here (USA):

http://www.uspto.gov/trademarks-application-process/search-trademark-database

I'm not a lawyer but what I learned in film school in college was that when you affix a name to a medium, it's automatically trademarked. Again, check with a lawyer to sure on that.

Also, I've done the "cheap trademark"

certification before. To help prove that I started using a word or series of words as a trademark on a certain date, I'd print up a document with the word in it saying that I'm using it, include the date, sign it and then seal it in an envelope and mail it to myself. I'd take it to the post office and mail it to myself with postage on it. That way, the US government stamped it with that day's date, which should stand up in court. Just don't open that letter until you actually get to court, of course.

Make sure your domain name can't be confused with another domain name out there. Run it past some friends, family and co-workers and ask them what they think. I do this all the time.

8. Go With a .com Domain Name

Honestly, the domain name extension (.com, .net, .org, .us and so on) don't matter a whole lot. One isn't favored over another too much. If any extension is, it's probably .com. That's the one people think of the most, which is why that is the one you should try to get.

I get asked sometimes if .net is a good domain extension to use. I think it's ok but only if you own the .com. Maybe you can use the .net version of your domain for something else related to your business but I wouldn't even do that. Just get everything under one domain name.

Some domain extensions now do have specific uses, so there are some that are off limits. You may have to apply to get some, too. This does not apply to .com domains, so again, go with a .com – that is what I suggest. If you want to know how to name your website, go with .com.

9. Protect Your Brand With Multiple Domain Names

Once you find a .com that you want, see if the .net, .org and maybe .us domains are available. If you're following what I'm talking about with brands here, they should be. You should buy some of those domain names as well. This ensures that others cannot buy them and claim to be you.

10. Register Your Domain Names for at Least 10 Years

If you just register a domain name for a year or two, Google's going to see that and see that your domain name and website might not be around too long. So instead, broadcast your intentions to have a solid, long-standing brand and register it for at least 10 years. If you cannot afford to register all your domain names for 10 years, at least register the main one that long. Later, you can register the other ones longer once you're making good money.

11. Still Stuck on a Name? How About Your Name?

Do what I did and buy your own name as a domain name. Your name works as a brand quite well.

For me, I use my own name as my brand <u>because I want to ensure high quality</u>. When I'm putting my own name on something, that helps me make sure that what I do here is top quality.

12. Buy the Plural Version of Your Domain Name for Protection

This doesn't apply to every domain name but buying different versions of your domain name is another way to protect your brand. I hear people mess this up all the time. They hear something and then think of it in the plural version. I'm more of an "exact" kind of person but I know some people are wired differently than I am (which is good) and this happens. Think about it.

When choosing your domain, you should buy the plural but it'll probably make sense to make the singular version the main one.

13. Buy the "Sucks" Version of Your Domain Name

If you think someone might attempt to post something bad about your business or website, then you may want to help protect yourself and add the word "sucks" to your domain name and buy that one. I've seen this happen. A disgruntled employee at a client's business did this and the website started to rank. There wasn't anything they could do – it was too late. I supposed they could have tried to sue for the use of their trademark but I don't think they did. They just wish they would have protected themselves better.

Domain Names?

I've done it. I've had clients do it for different

reasons, too.

If you really want the domain and someone has it, maybe make them an offer if they're not using it. If you have the cash, give it a try.

There's also the used domain name market where the domain registrar is still holding on to the domain name and trying to resell it before they let it go. If a domain name has good history and lots of good links pointing to it and if it's in a niche I'm in, then I might buy a used domain name. It has paid off a few times.

Do make sure you really study the domain and make sure you know all the domains pointing to it. For that, I use Ahrefs.com and Majestic.com for that research.

15. Shorter is Better

When it comes to domain name length, having a shorter domain name is better. If people need to type it in their phones, it'll be less work and they'll be more inclined to do it, too. Even try using the speech to text function on your phone and see if saying the domain works. One to two word domain names are fine.

16. Stay Away From Trends

Trendy domain names eventually go out of style. One that I remember is the "My" trend. Oh, I hated that one. It seemed lazy and too dumbed down or something. Ugh… like nails on a chalkboard.

17. Using "the" in a Domain Name

People wonder if they should do it. I've done it. I own 1 or 2 domains with "the" in it. You can. It has advantages. If you make your domain name a phrase, that can be good because it's easy to remember. If it's the first word, people might tend to omit it – so that would be a disadvantage. Think about it.

18. Still Stuck? Use a Thesaurus or Tools
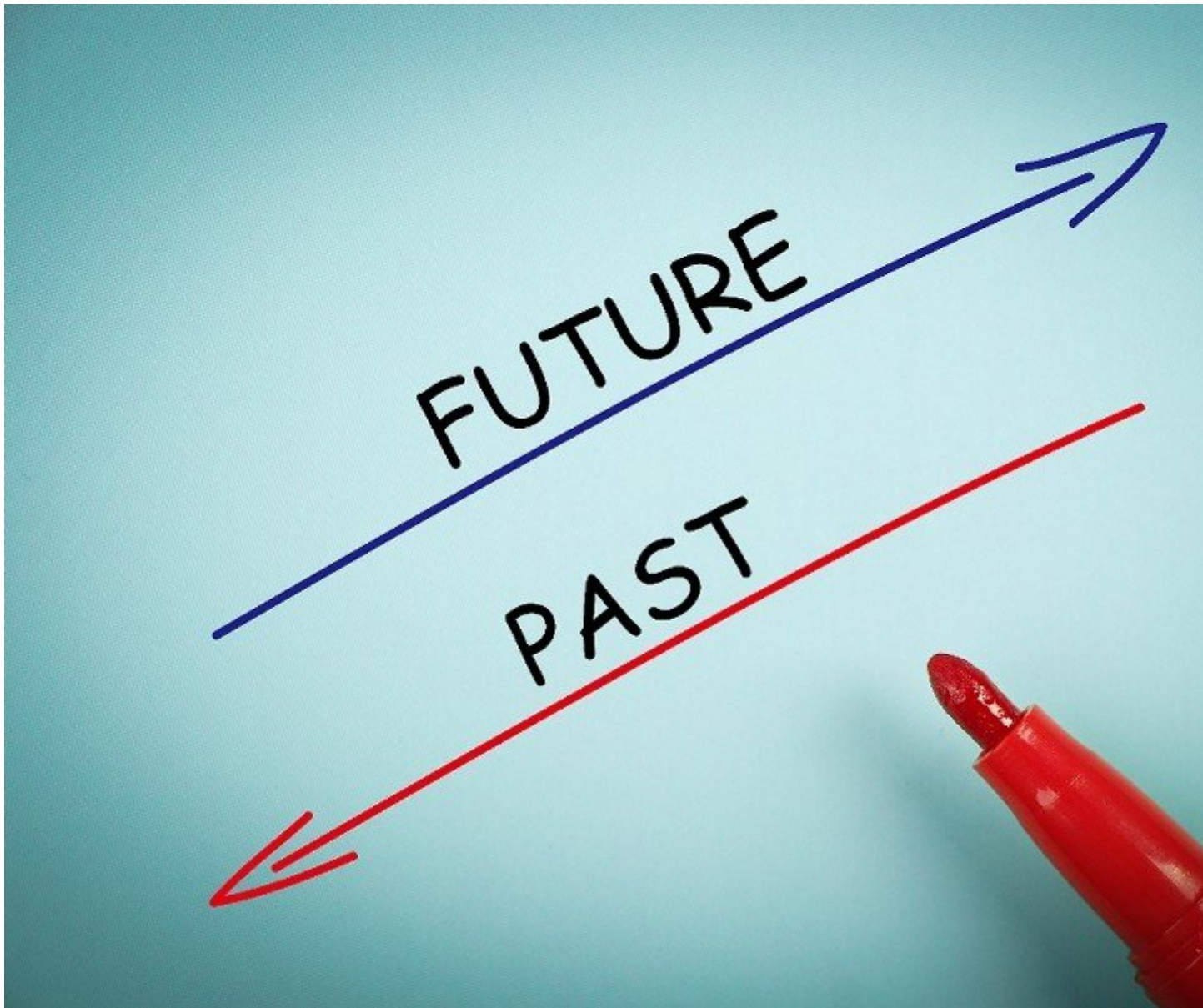
Finding synonyms for a certain word can help you find a good domain name that's open. I've done that many times.

Here are some websites that can help you find good domain names:

- NameStation.com
- Domainr.com
- NameBoy.com (older, but still works)
- NameMesh.com
- Bust A Name
- Dot-O-Mater
- Looka.com

Some (or probably all) of the services above will want you to register your domain name with them. You don't have to. You can register it where you want.

19. Make Sure it's Future Proof

This kind of goes along with the point about not going with a trendy name. Think 5 or 10 years ahead, does your domain name still make sense or will it sound old or outdated? You can't always know this but sometimes you can.

For example, I had a client that had "2000" in their domain name because that was popular to do in the late 1990s but as soon as 2004 hit, it really started to sound old and they had to change it.

20. Write it Out

Try writing it a bunch of times. Does it work? How about creating a logo – will that work?

21. Choose a Domain Before Starting Your Business

Make sure you buy a domain name before you start your business. You don't want to start filing incorporation paper and then find out the domain name has already been taken. I know a guy who got a lot of money that way. He owned a domain name for years and a company came out with a product with that name and they had to buy that domain name from him. So, as you can see, this even applies to products. Don't do a major product launch without domain a domain name search.

Conclusion

If you can't tell, choosing a domain name is an important step. This article aims to give you lots of ways to look at the domain name and how it will be used. I listed a bunch of things to check over before you make the final purchase. As I said, don't feel like you have to register one immediately. Think about it. I've bought a few in haste and then never ended up using them.

Remember:

- Don't be too inwardly focused. That's an amateur move that you'll regret.
- If you're not the greatest at marketing, consider hiring some help / a consultant for a few hours. If you've never done base jumping before, you'd want help or some lessons, right? When you get help, you're bypassing a lot of mistakes you would otherwise have to learn from and that eats up time and money
- Concentrate on a brand. There are SO many benefits to doing that. This is something you'll never regret. Invest in that brand.

When you build a house, the foundation needs to be solid and square. If it's off, even a little, you're going to have a crooked house. I've seen construction guys obsess about getting a foundation square. Today, your brand and your website are that foundation.

Who Owns a Domain Name?

Technically, nobody owns domain names. You're just sort of renting them. If anyone really owns them, it's the company or organization that is in charge of the top level domain or root – like the ".com" part, for example. When you buy a domain, you have the right to use it. That's really how it works. For all intents and purposes, you own it when you buy it.

One Thing to Remember

Remember that if you bought extra domain names to protect your brand that you point those domain names to your main one. It's important to use redirects (forwarding) and not have it set up in such a way where your website is running with each of those domains.

Check that URL in your browser's address bar. No matter which domain you type in, it should send you to just one domain and the website should not work with different domains in the address bar.

Good Luck!

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