

## Getting a Domain Name and Putting Up a Website



### A Blue Mouse Monkey guide

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Many clients ask the Blue Mouse Monkey a confused sort of question along the lines of, 'So do you keep the website, I mean, where is the website kept, and how do I get it in my name, you know, myname.com? Is that a separate thing? Or since I'm with Earthlink [for example], do I have to have it under Earthlink? How does that all work? And how do people find it?

It is a confusing issue, and attempts to research it can result in drowning in jargon. The Blue Mouse Monkey wishes the answer was simple, but she hopes the following explanation will sort things out.

### REGISTRATION AND HOSTING

Every website accessible over the World Wide Web is being 'hosted' on a computer somewhere that has a special hosting connection to the Internet. These computers are called 'servers', and while 'server' is a broad term that covers computers that do a variety of jobs, the servers that host websites are called 'web servers' and 'name servers' and 'domain name servers', to name a few names. They also get called 'DNS', which is short for 'domain name server'.

So, you say, how do I get `www.myname.com` hosted and accessible to web users?

You need to do two separate things. First of all, you need to register it as a domain name. Once registered, you own the rights to that name. Registering your domain name early is a good idea, even if you don't plan on getting a website right away, because you can hold onto the name until you need it.

The second thing you need to do to make your domain accessible over the web is to get the domain name hosted by a hosting company that will put your website on a domain name server.

Domain name registration without subsequent hosting of the domain means your domain name doesn't 'point' anywhere. 'Pointing' is the term used for how web users are directed to websites when they type in a web address or click on a link. Think of an unhosted domain as being like a person without a home. The person has a name, but if she doesn't have an address, no one knows where to find her. Once she settles down and word of her address gets out, then she can be found.

In recent years it has gotten easier and cheaper to register a domain and get it hosted. It is common to have your domain registration and hosting done by the same company.

However, it's also quite possible to register your domain through one company, then spend some time reviewing different hosting providers' service plans to find one that suits your needs. Once you do get your domain hosted, though, you need to go back to the folks who you registered the domain with and let them know the 'domain name servers' that your domain name is now to point to. And yes, the plural on servers is correct. There are two servers for every domain that is hosted, and your host will give you the numbers for those to give to the registration company. They will look something like this, (see below) and most registration companies have forms on their websites you can just input these numbers into.

But don't use these ones, okay? Use your own.

Primary Server Hostname:	NS1.IPOWERWEB.NET
Primary Server Netaddress:	63.75.61.170
Secondary Server Hostname:	NS1.IPOWERDNS.COM
Secondary Server Netaddress:	14.125.203.208

## STEP-BY-STEP

So, you ask, this is fine in theory, but what exactly do I do, what is the first step?

1. Go to hotmail or yahoo and get yourself an email account you don't mind getting spam at. This will be the email address you give to the registration company for domain registration.

2. Find a registration company and /or host for your domain. Now, the Blue Mouse Monkey would love to endorse registration companies and hosts but alas cannot in a format like this. Her best advice is this: Go to Google (or your other favorite search engine). Type "domain registration" in quotes. You will see companies come up like Network Solutions, register.com, Godaddy and others. Check out their offers. They change all the time.

3. Check whether the domain name you want is available. You can do this before committing to a registration company, because most offer domain name check as a free service. If your desired domain name is not available in .com, you can try .org and .net. There are also the other less popular domain families of .biz, .info, and .name, which you can go for as a last resort. Or, you can try a different spelling or a different domain name. Note that domain names are not case-sensitive.

4. Domain registration is often for 1, 2, or 5 years at a time, renewable. Just don't let the registration lapse at renewal time because a porn site might get it. Seriously. They wait to

snap up domain names that don't get renewed in time, then you can't get the name back.

5. The registration company's website will guide you through the steps to pay for your registration. You will need a credit card handy. At some point they will ask for an email address to correspond with you. Use the hotmail or yahoo one you created especially for this purpose. This email address becomes part of the domain name public records, and is accessible to the public, and therefore spammers. This is not an address that necessarily goes on your website, it is merely the official, public address that is attached to your registration of the domain name. Note: some registration companies now let you keep this address private, but you have to pay extra to do so.

6. If you have purchased domain registration separately from hosting then the next step is to find a host. In Google, type in "domain hosting". A million options come up. At this point it can be useful to ask around your friends who own websites for a referral. While domain registration is kind of like automobile registration in that it's distant and mechanical, domain hosting is something you want with good, responsive customer service. Sometimes the rock-bottom cheapest isn't the best, because they cut corners and have one poor kid tied to a phone in Calcutta dealing with all their tech support queries. Good service can cost \$20 per month. Mediocre but bearable service can be \$8 per month. The Blue Mouse Monkey recommends you don't go lower than that, unless the host comes recommended. By the way, sometimes the type of domain hosting you need is called 'Virtual Hosting.' Just to be confusing.

7. Most hosting packages are monthly or yearly. If you've found a company that offers hosting along with registration, then you usually have the option of having your name 'parked' before you start paying for hosting. There isn't much sense paying for hosting until close to the time your website is ready to go up.

8. Whether you get registration and hosting in the same package or separately, you will need to choose hosting terms. Most art professionals' websites don't need a ton of space (websites contain very compressed files so don't generally take up much room). You won't be running massive databases or daily changing content. Often 10 or 20 megabytes is ample for an artist's website. The exception is for sites that will contain video or sound files, because they can take up quite a bit of room. Even when compressed for the web, a two-minute video might take up 3 or more MB of space.

9. Many hosts today offer way more space than you will need for your site, and the Blue Mouse Monkey's advice is to take it. You may get 500 MB or 800 MB or 1 GB. And why do I need all this, you ask? The Blue Mouse Monkey replies, offsite backup. You can treat the non-public area of your web server space as storage for anything you want. You can keep all your images, all your documents, whatever you need to back up, on your domain. It is inaccessible to the public, and it means if your computer is stolen and your backup CDs are crunched under the burglar's boot, you still have copies of all your files in some other location.

10. Okay, so now you have a domain name and have it hosted. When the hosting is set up, and your registration company is informed of the domain name servers (remember those numbers up above?), it can take 24 to 48 hours for the domain name to 'populate' worldwide over the Internet. This means for the first day or two, when you go to myname.com, you'll see nothing. Don't worry, unless this goes on for more than two days. If that's the case, tell your host, tell the registration company, or, if you're a Blue Mouse Monkey client, you can tell the Blue Mouse Monkey and she will try to sort it out.

11. Once your domain name has populated over the Internet, then you will probably see there a default page put up by your hosting company, something along the lines of 'website coming soon'. And hopefully that's true!

12. Okay, you say, but that's not everything. When the Blue Mouse Monkey makes me a site, how does it get onto the hosting company's domain name server?

Well, she is able to transfer all the files that make up your website onto the host server through a process called ftp or 'file transfer protocol'. It's very easy, and she can teach you how to do it yourself if you want. Even if you don't want to maintain your website, you can still easily use ftp to upload a new pdf of your resume each time you make a change.

## **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

Many clients say their ISP (Internet Service Provider, e.g. Comcast, or Earthlink, etc) offers web hosting for free along with their service package. This is usually not a good idea for a creative professional's website, because it means you don't get to have your URL be [www.myname.com](http://www.myname.com). Instead it is something like [www.earthlink.net/~myname/](http://www.earthlink.net/~myname/). Yes, it is website hosting, but it's not domain name hosting. The ISP might, however, offer a professional level package which does allow for domain name hosting. You can evaluate your ISP's offer alongside the offers of any other domain hosts. If you're lucky your ISP offers a good deal because you're already a customer. However, you are under no obligation to get domain hosting through your ISP, nor will getting domain hosting elsewhere mess up your email or Internet service through your ISP.

Another question the Blue Mouse Monkey sometimes gets is, 'My friend is a computer geek. She says she can host my website for free on her own server. How cool is that! Will it work?'

Yes, it's extremely cool, but whether it will work for you depends on many factors that are beyond your control, and might cause headaches later on. For instance, how good a geek is she? Is she able to guarantee 99% uptime? What is security like at her house? Can you be sure the ceiling will never leak right above her server? Is she likely to be studying for finals sometime when your site goes down and she is too busy to fix the problem? And how fast is her Internet connection? Professional domain hosting companies have big fat connections to the Internet backbone. Your friend probably has DSL or cable, which can slow down with heavy usage. Regardless of how fast a web user's computer connection is when he wants to see your site, the files will exit your friend's server only as fast as *her* Internet connection will allow.

The Blue Mouse Monkey hopes this article relieves some of the confusion that can be so easily generated when you, dear reader, are facing the task of setting up your own domain name. If you have any further questions or comments, please email Julia at [juliax@bluemonkey.com](mailto:juliax@bluemonkey.com).

Thanks for reading!