

CHOOSING A DOMAIN NAME CHECKLIST

Keep it short.

Get straight to the point. This is not the time to get clever, you want your domain name to be you brand. Make it short and simple.

Make it memorable.

This is all about impact and recall. Remember that longer domains are often harder to remember.

Make it easy to type.

Your customers need to type your domain into the address bar. Even if they're clicking a link, that link needs to be typed in by someone.

Make it easy to pronounce.

People remember (and have more positive associations with) things that they can easily say and think about. If you can't easily say the name, you're going to lose memorability.

Use keywords where possible.

If there are relevant keywords that match your brand and what your business offers, this is a great opportunity for an SEO boost. Local painting business? JoesPainting.us is a solid keyword domain name.

Check for trademarks.

Make sure your domain isn't easily confused with other businesses in the market. Remember it's not whether you think your domain is confusing, but whether a company might take legal action against you, if they consider your domain name is infringing on their trademark. Get legal advice when in doubt.

Avoid numbers, hyphens and other symbols.

When trying to get around limited domain name availability, some people choose to include hyphens between words to create a more unique combination. While this strategy is understandable, the main difficulty with hyphenated web addresses is customer recall. They're trickier to say aloud and add an extra piece of information for customers to remember.

Remember to renew.

Don't risk letting your domain name renewal lapse. As soon as you miss that annual renewal your domain hits the market where anyone is able to scoop it up. Opt for auto-renew or 3-5 year renewal options with your hosting company.

CHECKLIST FOR LAUNCHING YOUR NEW WEBSITE

❑ Register a short and memorable domain name.

Remember, your domain name becomes your brand, make sure people can easily find and remember your web address. Register your domain with a hosting provider like GoDaddy, Bluehost or Name.com. Whoever you choose, test their customer support and ask about their options for securing your site and keeping regular backups.

❑ Pick a mobile-responsive design.

Most hosting providers have a selection of templated sites to choose from, or source one on your own. Whether it's a multi-page site or a single landing page, make sure to choose a **mobile-responsive design** (this means your website will function and read well on mobile devices as well as laptops and desktops.)

❑ Set up analytics.

There are several free services out there such as Google Analytics that allow you to track and monitor your web traffic for meaningful insights that can help with marketing and business strategy down the road. Integration is as simple as copying and pasting a small snippet of code on the backend of your site. Make sure to drop it in either the header or the footer if you have a multi-page site as you will want this to fire on every page.

❑ Create a clear 'About' page with key information.

Customers need to easily find opening hours, contact details, location. Make sure this information is all in text format so that it can be read by search engines and it's a better user experience for your customers. Not sure if it's text? Try highlighting part of your address or phone number on the live version of your site. You should be able to copy and paste the information.

❑ Publish & refresh content regularly.

Start small. You don't need to have a daily blog or multi-page website right away. Integrating your social channels through a feed of your posts is one way to keep the site up to date. Just make sure you strive for quality over quantity. Search engines are sophisticated enough to tell the difference and they will point users to whichever website offers the better experience.

❑ Keep important information "above the fold."

Everything customers need to know about your company at a cursory glance should be visible above the fold. Fill this valuable website real estate with brand imagery and messaging, site navigation, and your call to action. Don't try to jam everything above the fold - Group content into readable chunks with sufficient whitespace to ensure users can easily skim and scan.