



Encounter **Your Best Domain Name**

**Essential Tips For Selecting
The Best Domain Name
For A Website**

By Sandra Garcia

Marketing and Brand Elevation Strategist
Founder, Encounter Your Potential



ABOUT SANDRA

A Marketing and Branding strategist and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Consultant. Her corporate experience includes organizations such as Clear Channel Outdoor, Time Warner Cable Media, PEOPLE.com and CNNMoney.com developing marketing strategies and compelling sales programs. Sandra has strategized for brands such as Toyota, L'Oreal, Estee Lauder, Apple, Verizon Wireless, Sephora, Pepsi, and American Express to name a few. She is now the founder of Encounter Your Potential where she develops and executes strategies that use marketing as the pillar for achieving business goals and driving revenue. As a full-time entrepreneur Sandra's growing list of businesses served includes Google, JP Morgan Chase, HSBC Bank Toronto, Vevo, The Howard University School of Divinity, and Capco Consulting.



Sandra has led marketing teams at Clear Channel Outdoor and at Time Warner Cable Media developing strategic marketing programs that merchandised data driven products for use by sales to grow revenue. In her Product Marketing and Digital role at Time Warner Cable Media she implemented digital strategies and go-to-market

plans that differentiated the brand from the competition as a Product Marketing expert for all digital products: Online, Mobile, Social, Search, Addressable, and Video On Demand. She also spent time at PEOPLE.com and CNNMoney.com, the financial website for CNN and the online destination for FORTUNE Magazine and Money Magazine.

Two years after graduating college, Sandra co-founded and co-managed special events planning company, POSH Agency, LLC. The agency executed events for private clients including The Barclays Center and The New Jersey Nets NBA team as they transitioned from New Jersey to Brooklyn.

In 2012, she launched Afro-Latina- Beauty.com, an online destination for stories of Afro-Latinas sharing the same intercultural experience.

As a speaker, Sandra has spoken and moderated discussions at Google, Microsoft, BuzzFeed, General

Assembly, Young and Rubicam and at institutions including New York University, Pace University, Dickinson College, Baruch College, and Howard University to name a few.

She served as the NY Chapter President of the National Association of Multi-ethnicity In Communications (N.A.M.I.C) for 2 years where she was awarded Chapter of The Year and Chapter Leadership Team of the Year. She now sits on the Board of Directors of both N.A.M.I.C and Digital Diversity Network (DDN). She was part of America Needs You Young Leaders Board 2017 & 2018. Sandra was awarded 2018 Innovation & Inclusion Culture Catalyst by the Digital Diversity Network, Forbes 30 Under 30 2016 nominee, and was awarded by Latino Leaders Magazine, a Top 25 Future Latino Leader (ages 25-35) in 2012, National Association for Multi-Ethnicity in Communications, Leadership Seminar (2015), United Nations Association of New York, The Worldview Institute Graduate (2015).

**Connect with Sandra on
LinkedIn @SandraElisaGarcia**



CHECKLIST

Here is a check list of tips we will dive further into within this booklet:

- 1. Aim For The .com
- 2. When Not To Go For The .com
- 3. Purchase All the Domain Name Extension as Well
- 4. Choose A Brandable Name
- 5. Keep It Short, Simple, and Predictable
- 6. Buy the Common Misspellings of Your Domain
- 7. Use Domain Name Generators
- 8. Verify the Meaning of The Words Chosen for Your Domain
- 9. Choose a Domain Name You Can Legally Own
- 10. Don't Worry Too Much If Your Perfect Domain Name Is Taken
- 11. Don't Stress Too Much If Your Perfect Domain Name Is Taken and Can't Be Obtained
- 12. Be Careful When Buying Existing Domain Names
- 13. Check the Domain History via Wayback Machine
- 14. Check the Domain History via who.is
- 15. Register Your Corresponding Social Media Handles
- 16. Pick a Trustworthy Domain Registrar
- 17. Shop Around to Find the Best Price
- 18. Lock the Domain So It Can't Be Stolen
- 19. Always Register Your Domain Name Yourself
- 20. Consider Enabling Domain ID Protection
- 21. Set Your Domain to Auto-Renew





Landing on the best domain name for your website is extremely critical.

Your domain name requires thought as the wrong name or premature selection can cost you hundreds, maybe thousands, and maybe more!

Selecting a domain name is something every business owner (whether personal or professional) needs to make sure they get right before other business to-do's like branding. This is especially critical if the website will be serving a commercial purpose.

OVER 20 TIPS



To help you in your journey, we have summarized over 20 tips to take into consideration before selecting a domain name. Here they are in no particular order:

1. Aim For The .com

Whenever possible, always go for the .com version of your desired url. The .com is just one of many domain name extensions available. Other popular options include: .net, .org, .co, .edu, .biz, .shop, .blog, etc.

While these are all great and available options, getting the .com is always the best and most desirable option. People are the most familiar with .com domains than they are with any of the other extensions. People will organically default to typing '.com' into their browsers when searching for your website and are unlikely to remember your extension if it is too different. The natural assumption is for a website to be a .com.

If your ideal and desired .com is taken, we recommend dismissing that name and finding another. You can also try contacting the current owner to see if they would be willing to sell you the domain. GoDaddy.com offers users the service of attempting to win over already claimed domain names. It is important to note that this can be a very expensive option so we recommend landing on a unique name where you can own the .com.



2. When Not To Go For The .com

You should always aim for the .com unless your website is representing a local initiative like running for City Office or if you are purchasing a domain for a non-profit organization. In these cases, we say it is ok to go for the .nyc domain extension for example or the .org extension.

By doing this, your visitors will gain a bit of additional awareness about your type of business and this also helps to boost your trustworthiness by making it clear the kind of entity category you fall under.

Although so, we recommend that you still purchase and own the same .com extension so that no matter which address someone visits, they still end up at your website. You can always redirect traffic from the .com to the .org but it is best to own the .com as a complement to any other primary extension.

This is a good future plan should you decide to expand or grow your business or initiative. This also prevents anyone else from buying your domain extension and potentially causing confusion or preventable competition and loss of website traffic.

3. Purchase All the Domain Name Extension as Well

Having your main domain name extension secured whether a .com or a .org, is the first step. Next, we recommend that you get all of the other popular domain extensions, and then set them up to redirect to your main domain.

For example, if your desired address is MarketingConsulting.com, also consider getting:

- MarketingConsulting.co
- MarketingConsulting.net
- MarketingConsulting.org
- MarketingConsulting.nyc

Taking this recommendation will add to your overall domain bill at the end of the year but can be greater cost savings as it will be helping to prevent possible hurdles later on like competing with another site with the same domain name but ending with a different extension. Other things to look out for and avoid are:

- People registering some of those unclaimed extensions and then trying to sell them back to you at a much higher price.
- Genuine visitors mixing up your domain and not being able to access your website.
- People creating imposter sites — sites that look like yours but aren't (meant to trick people).

4. Choose a Brandable Name

We all know that branding is crucial to long-term success, but what exactly makes a domain name brandable? There are many factors that come into play here but the most important are as follows:

- A brandable name **has no specific meaning** (eg 'Google' is not a word, 'YouTube' is either).
- It's **unique** — the name isn't taken, hasn't been used and your competition doesn't use anything similar.
- It's **easy to memorize** — not too wordy and doesn't have complex vowel combinations.
- It's **easy to pronounce** and dictate over the phone and in person.
- It **sounds trustworthy** — some names can be a little shady by definition, for instance, WinTheLotteryToday.com may be too bold, but Lotterio.com sounds way better.

To make the brainstorming process easier, you can experiment with some combinations of actual words and random suffixes. The main goal is to come up with names that can **build brand value** over time.

As much as possible, try making sure the name has a good ring to it. It should be fun to say out loud, and not difficult to memorize immediately. Think about names like Airbnb and Uber. It is short and snappy, and there's no confusion as to how to spell it.

5. Keep It Short, Simple, and Predictable

So, we already talked about brandability, but there are also some other, more general, characteristics of a quality domain name. A few include:

- **Short** — preferably with fewer than 15 characters
- **Simple** — no hyphens, no underscores, no complicated words as part of the domain, or any other punctuations
- **Just words** — avoid using numbers unless absolutely necessary and it's part of your brand name
- **Predictable** — no weird spellings (for example, if your name is Sarah and you want to make it part of your domain — such as SarahSings.com — people may mistype it as SaraSings.com).

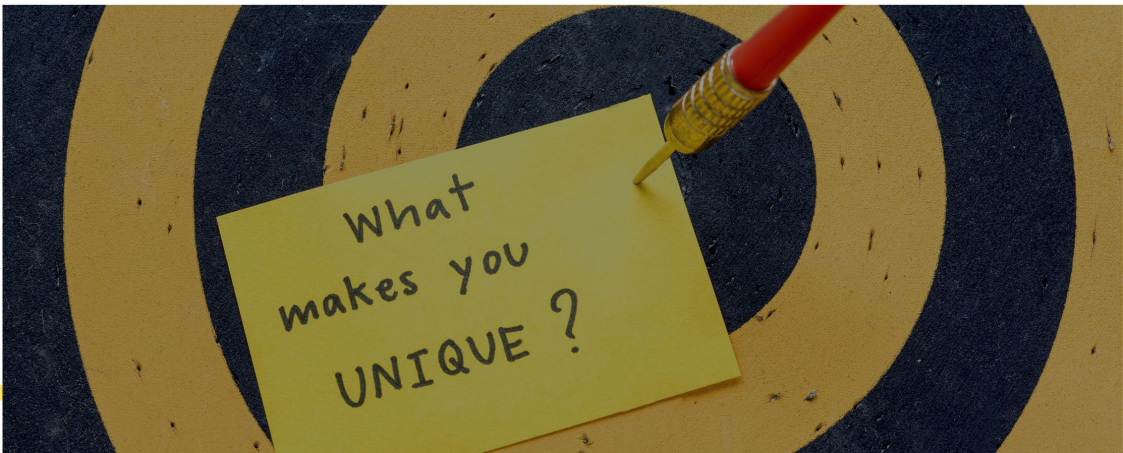
6. Buy the Common Misspellings of Your Domain

This again can add to your overall bill and we would say it is not absolutely necessary but if you insist on having a name that may be mistaken for yours like “Mike” rather than “Myke”, we say go for it.

Once you purchase the domains which your website may be mistaken for, redirect them back to your main domain name.

7. Use Domain Name Generators

If you are finding it hard to come up with a cool domain name and probably a good business name as well, we suggest using a domain name generator.





- Name Mesh
- Nameboy
- Namecheap

8. Verify the Meaning of The Words Chosen for Your Domain

Domain name generator sites will help you find synonyms and also provide quick definitions to help you avoid the mistake of building your domain name around a word with a meaning you've misunderstood.

It is not recommended to just go with a standard, dictionary word as your domain name, even if it comes from a thesaurus. Always add some modifiers to it, or turn it into something original by changing a few letters here and there.

9. Choose a Domain Name You Can Legally Own

To avoid legal troubles of purchasing a domain name which has also already been registered or trademarked as a business, do not skip this step which can result in a costly mistake.

Whenever you have a nice domain name idea and you are ready to purchase and register it, Google the name and look through all of the first and second-page results. As you do this, look for businesses that already use this name and that may be operating in a similar market or niche. If you find anything, you likely need to pick another domain name.

They are very simple to use and extremely helpful. All that is needed is a keyword or more from you and in return they give you several suggestions of valid and available domain names that you can choose from. A few domain name generators for you to explore include:

- **LeanDomainSearch**
- **Business name generator** by Shopify works similarly to the above, and also helps you build a Shopify store with the domain name of your choice.

10. Don't Worry Too Much If Your Perfect Domain Name Is Taken

If the domain name you really want is already taken, there is a chance you can still own it.

Here is what you can do:

- If the domain name is not in use (there's no website or the domain is 'parked' — features only ads), then there's a very good chance the owner only bought it to sell it later on. You'll likely find some contact information on that parked website. If there's no info, use who.is and get the owner's email.
- If there's a website on the domain, you can still try your luck and contact the owner asking if they're willing to sell the domain off. Low chance of success here, but still worth a try.
- If the domain is completely empty and there's no contact info to be found, try looking through known domain-flipping marketplaces, such as GoDaddy's marketplace (auction based), **Sedo**, **SnapNames**, or **Flippa**.

Buying an existing domain name is a different process from buying a new one, so it requires some additional caution.

Domains you buy from someone's hands also usually cost more. A safe estimate here would be a minimum of \$250, but more like \$1,000 or more.

11. Don't Stress Too Much If Your Perfect Domain Name Is Taken and Can't Be Obtained

Okay, so as much as domain names do matter, and having the right one can mean the world to you, if you can't get your hands on what you want (it's unavailable or the price is too high), don't stress too much about it.

First of all, more important than anything else, even than the domain name itself, is to actually get the idea behind your website or business right. If you dedicate yourself to executing that idea and do it deliberately, the lack of that 'perfect domain name' won't hold you back.

Secondly, domain names can be changed later on. Even if you don't have the right domain today, you can always get it later, and then just redirect your website to it.

12. Be Careful When Buying Existing Domain Names

As mentioned, buying an existing domain name is a bit different from buying a new one. First of all, since it's not new, this means it already has a history. And you can never be entirely sure what that history is.

- A positive is that the domain's history may give you a boost in Google since you're not starting from scratch — Google already knows the domain.

- But, if the domain has featured any kind of ‘non-kosher’ stuff (porn, gambling, spam content, email spam distribution), then it may be banned from Google entirely.

Buying your domain from a marketplace such as Flippa gives you some safety, since every domain is validated at least in the most basic way. However, to make things a bit safer, you should also perform checks of your own.

First, do a manual check by going to Google and searching for:

site:YOURDOMAIN.com

This will tell you whether Google has any pages indexed from that domain. Finding anything is a good sign. It means the domain isn't banned. Not finding anything doesn't have to be a deal-breaker, though.

- If the domain is blank — no website — then there's nothing for Google to find in the first place.

- However, if there is a website but Google can't see it (via the site:YOURDOMAIN.com phrase), this is a red flag.

You can also do checks via tools such as bannedcheck.com and ismywebsitepenalized.com. But keep in mind that these things are not foolproof. Consider them helpers.

13. Check the Domain History via Wayback Machine

This one is worth checking even if you're getting (what you think is) a new domain name. In some cases, the domain name you're trying to register may have been registered in the past but then abandoned by the owner. It's still good to have a look at what was on it.

There are a couple of ways in which you can look up a domain name's history. One of the more popular



ones and less technical is Wayback Machine.

This is one of the first tools of its kind. Quite simply, it lets you enter a time machine and have a look at how any website used to look in the past.

When we say 'any website', it's not actually any website. But you can expect to find most websites that had any noticeable traffic at any point in time. In this case, doing a check via Wayback Machine allows you to see whether the domain you're interested in has ever been used for anything significant, and, if so, whether the content history is something you are ok with.

If you're buying an existing domain name, it would be a good idea to go to Wayback Machine and browse through every month of the domain's history, just to make sure there wasn't anything shady going on at any point.

14. Check the Domain History via who.is

Right after Wayback Machine, who.is is your other go-to tool for getting to know the history of a given domain

given domain name. This one is very useful for at least two reasons:

- First, you can see the current domain info, things like who the owner is (provided they don't have ID protection), who the registrar is, and so on.
- Second, who.is gives you access to a 'whois history report'. This is a paid service but the price tag is rather small in relation to what you get in return, which is all the whois data associated with a given domain name from the very beginning. This means that you can see what the domain's history is, when it was registered, and how many times it potentially changed hands.

15. Register Your Corresponding Social Media Handles

Social media presence is beyond critical in our current digital age. People are much more likely to check what's going on with your brand on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc than by actually visiting your website. This is just one of the reasons why you absolutely have to have your professional profiles set up on the most popular social media sites.

Whenever possible, get the same handles as your domain name. If these are taken, be creative and use some suffixes or prefixes to create brand recognition.

16. Pick a Trustworthy Domain Registrar

The domain registrar is a company that registers a domain name on your behalf, and then gives you full access to that domain name.

The key with registrars is to only use respectable and trustworthy companies. You really don't want to run into any domain problems further down the line. Recommended registrars are:

- GoDaddy
- Google
- Wix.com (*hosting company that also sells domain names*)

17. Shop around to Find the Best Price

Even though all domain registrars offer the same product, which is that they register a domain name on your behalf, the pricing can sometimes be different. For that reason, it's always a good idea to shop around with different registrars and compare the prices of the domain name you want to get.

The price can depend on the specific *TLD* you want to get, so consider going to multiple registrars to compare.

Also, be sure to keep your login credentials to the registrar's user panel very secure. If anyone gets access to that panel, they can if

interested and moved to do so, transfer your domain to their account.

18. Lock the Domain So It Can't Be Stolen

Even though it may seem odd at first, domain hijacking actually happens more often than you'd imagine.

Your domain can be stolen via several ways. Most commonly, this involves either hacking your password or convincing you to give out your password via a phishing attack, in addition to other ways.

Basically, if someone gains access to your registrar's user account, they can do whatever they wish with your domains.

Some domain registrars offer a feature in which they keep your domain in Registrar-lock status, which prevents unauthorized attempts at domain transfers. In this state, your registration information and DNS configuration cannot be changed until you unlock your domain name.

Luckily, enabling this option is often very easy and only requires you to select a specific box in your registrar's user panel.

19. Always Register Your Domain Name Yourself

It's a good idea to not let anyone else (such as an agency) register a domain name for you. Even though it's slightly less hassle that way since someone else is doing the work, it can lead to trouble later on.

If someone else registers the domain, you're giving them a hold over you and your website. If you ever want to move away from their services, you can encounter trouble in terms of them not being too eager to transfer the domain over to you and give you full control of it.

Just to name a few bad things that can happen: They may take an awfully long time to complete the transfer, they may try to extort some fees from you to do that, or they may decline completely (based on some fine print in your initial agreement).

Perhaps most importantly, if the agency/person goes bankrupt or loses access to the domain registrar for whatever reason, you could lose your domain name entirely.

Long story short, always register your domains on your own.

20. Consider Enabling Domain ID Protection

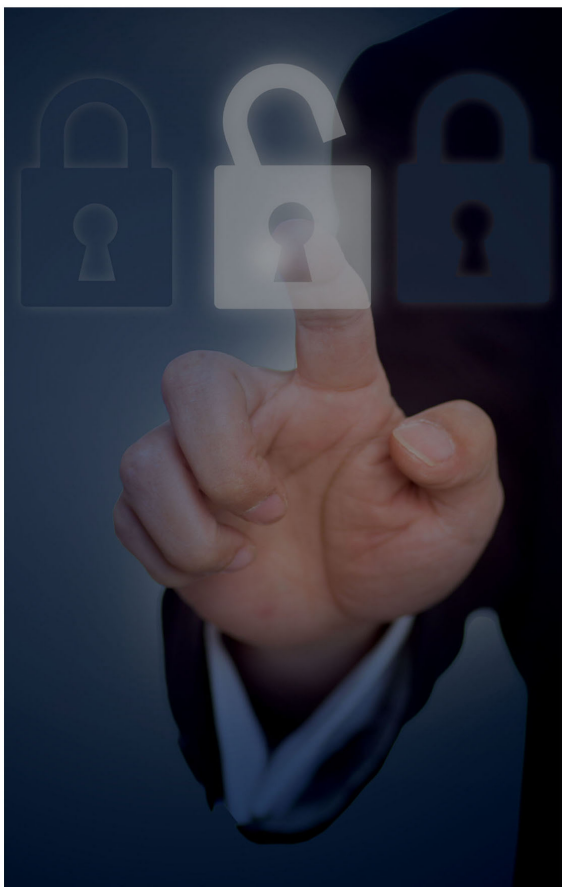
Domain ID protection masks your personal contact information from anyone performing a whois lookup on your domain name.

By default, and under ICANN rules (the organization that regulates domain names), all domain names must have publicly viewable contact information assigned to them — the same information you had to provide during registration. This includes your name, address, phone number, and email address.

Let me say this again, by default, all of this is visible to anyone who puts your domain name through a tool such as who.is.

This is not perfect. First, anyone can see this info, which means your personal details are exposed. You're basically sacrificing part of your privacy for nothing in exchange.

So, the way to solve this is to set domain ID protection with your domain registrar, all domain registrars offer this and is usually a paid feature. Once under domain ID protection, the whois details of your domain get replaced with your registrar's information.





21. Set Your Domain to Auto-Renew

Generally, when you register your new domain name, you get to choose the registration period which is the time span during which the registrar keeps the domain active on your behalf. Most commonly, everyone registers their domain names for either 12 or 24 months.

After that initial period, your domain name needs to be renewed for another number of months if not it becomes inactive. If the domain becomes inactive, after a short while the domain goes back to the pool of available domains which means anyone will be able to purchase and register it.

Before purchasing a domain name, we suggest conducting a thorough scrub of the internet. The following grid has been created to help guide you through this process.

Desired Domain: _____			
Platform to Search	Desired Name Available (yes)	Desired Name Available (No)	Alternate configuration of Domain Name if desired is not available
Registrar i.e. GoDaddy			
Google / Yahoo / Bing			
Instagram			
Facebook			
Twitter			
LinkedIn			
YouTube			
Pinterest			

Tally in each column, the total number of yes's and no's.	_____	_____	

Contact Details:

Our mission is to help businesses and individuals
Encounter Their Max Potential

www.EncounterYourPotential.com
info@EncounterYourPotential.com



© 2016 Encounter Marketing and Public Relations,
LLC. All rights reserved.