

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CHOOSING A DOMAIN NAME

Get online fast with a domain name you love

*choose*  
**CANADA**  
**CHOOSE.CA**

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# GETTING STARTED WITH DOMAIN NAMES

Chances are you spend a lot of time online. In fact, Canadians spend more time on the Internet than any other nation<sup>1</sup>. Yep, even more than our pals to the south.

All of this browsing has probably made you think about getting your own domain name and building a website. Many people aspire to start their own blog, create a website, manage an online store, and even post their resume – but they don't know where or how to get started.

If you have an idea and want to get online, registering your domain name is a great place to start. We know that this process may feel confusing, but don't worry, this e-book will teach you everything you need to know about registering a domain name, one step at a time.



<sup>1</sup> [comScore, as reported in CIRA's 2016 Internet Factbook](#)

<sup>2</sup> Source: CIRA Tracking Research 2016

# WHAT EXACTLY IS A DOMAIN NAME?

A domain name is an easy to remember name that translates into an Internet Protocol (IP) address. You type a unique string of numbers, letters, and hyphens into a web browser (like Chrome or Safari), and bam, you are connected to the website you were looking for. It's kind of like how if you're trying to text your friend Pierre, it's more practical and memorable to find him in your contact list than to remember the 9 digits in his phone number.

## Helpful-to-know terms from the domain name world:

**Registrant:** An individual that registers a domain name for personal or business use.

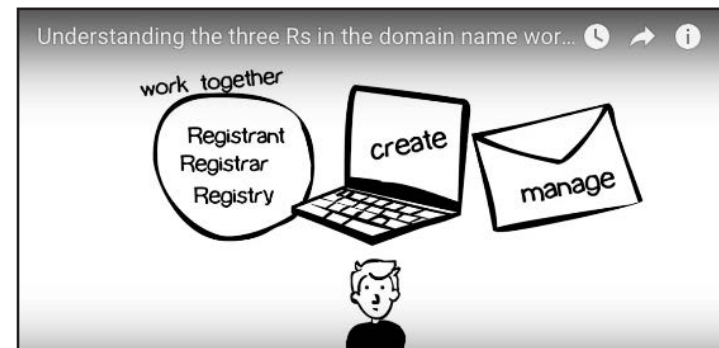
**Registrar:** A company through which you register, pay for and manage your domain name.

**Registry:** The entity that's tasked with maintaining the integrity of a top-level domain (more on those later).

The [Canadian Internet Registration Authority \(CIRA\)](#) is the Registry for the .CA domain. As a not-for-profit organization we also help build a better online Canada through other projects and programs.



[Watch our video](#) to learn more about the **3 R's of the domain name world.**



# WHY YOUR DOMAIN NAME MATTERS

Choosing the right domain name is the most important step to getting online. We're not just saying that because we manage the .CA domain; your domain name is the home to your online brand and where your website lives. It's where people find you with search engines and go to learn more about you and your business or idea.

## **1. Control your name online**

The most obvious choice for your domain name is the name of your business, blog, or idea. If it's available, you should definitely register it as soon as possible. If not, don't worry, there are plenty of other options. We will give you some tips on how to choose an alternative domain name later on.

Securing your domain name strengthens your brand and makes it easier for people to find you online.

If you don't register your domain name now, you run the risk of someone else registering it. This can be confusing for visitors and could put your brand reputation at risk.

## **2. It gives your business credibility**

A domain name will make your business appear more professional and credible, and it might even increase the likelihood of customers finding you online. With a domain name, customers know you are investing in your company's online presence and are here to stay.

## **3. Be findable in search engines**

Billions of searches are performed every day by people looking for something online.

When your potential customers are searching, don't you want them to find you? A well-chosen domain name can not only help you get found in a search, but can also increase the likelihood that a searcher will click on your website.

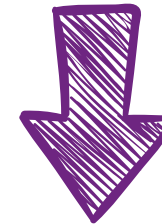
# DON'T HAVE A NAME FOR YOUR BUSINESS YET?

**No problem! Many people name their business based on the availability of a domain name.**

As a bonus, .CA domain names tend to perform better in Canadian searches, meaning you have an even better chance of being found by Canadian customers online.



A purple rectangular box containing a white icon of a computer monitor with a maple leaf on the screen. To the right of the icon, the word "Fact:" is written in a white cursive font. Below this, the text "CANADIANS PREFER TO VISIT AND SHOP ON CANADIAN WEBSITES³" is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font.



**CHOOSE YOUR .CA NOW!**

[3 The State of Ecommerce in Canada – CIRA Internet Factbook \(March 2016\)](#)

"I don't take anyone seriously who doesn't have a website. It's inexcusable to not have a website in 2016. And I think if your business is Canadian-based, you should go for .CA."

- Becky De Oliveira, [blushandbloom.ca](http://blushandbloom.ca)

# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Domain names are typically made up of two key pieces:

The **SECOND-LEVEL DOMAIN** is the part of the domain that comes immediately before or to the left of the dot. This is where you can get creative! It can be the name of your business, product, or next great idea.

The **TOP-LEVEL DOMAIN** (TLD) is everything after the dot. This is also referred to as the domain name extension. Popular top-level domains include .CA, .com, .org, and .net.

*second-level domain*

CIRA.CA

*top-level domain*

# TLD OPTIONS

When choosing your top-level domain, you have tons of options. Top-level domains can be categorized into two different types – **country code top-level domains (ccTLDs)** and **generic top-level domains (gTLDs)**.

Here's a quick breakdown for you.

**ccTLDs** are two-letter TLDs that are assigned to specific countries, like .CA for Canada, .fr for France or .uk for the United Kingdom. While some ccTLDs restrict registration to citizens, others are more lenient on who can register their domains.

**gTLDs** are not affiliated with a particular country. You are probably familiar with gTLDs like .com, .net and .org. In recent years, some new gTLDs have been made available, like .rocks, .pizza and .xyz, just to name a few.

With so many choices, it can seem overwhelming at first. Next, we'll look at the unique benefits of choosing .CA.

.CA IS THE COUNTRY CODE TOP-LEVEL DOMAIN FOR CANADA. THERE IS A CANADIAN PRESENCE REQUIREMENT FOR INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES TO REGISTER A .CA DOMAIN. IT'S THE ONLY DOMAIN NAME EXTENSION THAT IDENTIFIES A WEBSITE AS 100% CANADIAN. 



# HERE'S WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE .CA

## **It's 100% Canadian**

There is a Canadian presence requirement for individuals, organizations and businesses to register a .CA domain. .CA is the only domain that instantly identifies you and your website as 100% Canadian.

## **It's more likely to be available**

With only 2.6 million .CA's registered, it's far more likely that you will find the domain name that you want on a .CA than on other popular TLDs.

## **CA is safe, secure and trusted online**

.CA is a well-established and widely trusted top-level domain. For over 30 years, .CA has been a safe and secure resource for Canadians online.

## **Canadians prefer .CA websites**

79% of Canadians prefer to visit and shop on Canadian websites<sup>4</sup>. Your .CA domain can improve your performance in search engines, helping you attract and land new customers online.

## **CIRA membership**

Membership is open to all .CA domain holders and comes with a host of benefits. CIRA Members help advance the Internet in Canada and shape the direction of CIRA.

## **.CA gives back**

A portion of the proceeds of .CA registrations goes toward funding innovative projects that give back to Canadian communities through the [Community Investment Program](#). Just by registering a .CA, you're helping build a better online Canada.

**CHOOSE YOUR .CA NOW!**

[4 CIRA Internet Factbook 2016](#)



*Be the Choice team from left to right: Prof. Kristin Bright - Director of Research and Development, Barbara Francis - Director of Content Curation, Prof. Melanie Adrian - co-founder and Executive Director, and Robin Beasley - co-founder.*

While CIRA's number one priority is the safe and secure management of Canada's top-level domain, we also have a mandate to do good things for the Internet in Canada.

In early 2014, CIRA launched the [Community Investment Program \(CIP\)](#), which gives back by funding innovative community projects such as Be the Choice – a Canadian

non-profit organization dedicated to making breast cancer treatment information accessible and participatory by providing an interactive, fully bilingual, digital platform that enables patients and their advocates to navigate the labyrinth of clinical terms and pathways that accompany a diagnosis. The platform can be found at [bethechoice.ca](http://bethechoice.ca).

**BE THE CHOICE.**

# .CA IS THE IDEAL CHOICE FOR:



## Businesses

- ✓ Selling to domestic markets
- ✓ Developing a domain name portfolio for brand protection
- ✓ Offering professional services
- ✓ Local small and medium-sized enterprises and startups



## Individuals

- ✓ Job-seekers
- ✓ Professionals
- ✓ Freelancers
- ✓ Techies
- ✓ Athletes



## Institutions & organizations

- ✓ Canadian universities
- ✓ Medical establishments
- ✓ Community organizations
- ✓ Not-for-profits

SEARCH FOR YOUR .CA DOMAIN

"If you have Canadian customers – get the .CA domain name. It's quick, it's easy, it's cheap, and you can tailor your SEO to Canadian customers."

– Sandy Ahluwalia, [Secureship.ca](http://Secureship.ca)

# HOW TO CHOOSE A GREAT DOMAIN NAME

We've looked at the right of the dot, but let's turn our attention to the rest of your domain name. Choosing a domain name that meets your needs might require some time and thought.

**Let's walk through some things to keep in mind when choosing a domain name.**

## 1. Think brand and keywords

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, the best place to start is with the name of your business, project, or great idea. Our website has a handy search tool that allows you to check if the domain name you want is available or not.

**SEARCH FOR YOUR .CA NOW!**

Is it already registered? Don't worry. You'll notice that the search tool offers some suggestions of alternative domain names that are available. If none of those match your needs, try searching again. Think of other variations of the domain name you want. If you're a business owner, consider other brand terms, products,

services, or locations, like the neighbourhood or city where your business operates. Think about how people will search for you online and how you can help them find you. [Learn more about how to incorporate keywords into your domain name.](#)

## 2. Make it memorable

By choosing an easy to remember domain name people will never have an issue finding your website. Try to avoid dashes and numbers, as these can confuse people when you tell them your domain name. If you must have numbers in your domain name, register both the "2" and "two" versions.

### 3. Alternate spellings

Is your name often misspelled? Are there other variations that people use? For example, if your business name had the word "colour" in it, we recommend that you register both "colour" and "color".

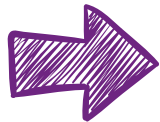
### 4. Build a portfolio

The last three points encouraged you to think about your products, locations and alternate spellings.

There's actually a strategy behind all of this:

**building a portfolio of domain names.**

Registering several variations of your domain name can help you build and protect your brand online, while attracting more visitors to your website. This doesn't mean that you need to create a new website for each domain name. Most website owners build their website on their primary domain name and redirect their other domain names back to that main website. You can easily do this in your domain account settings with your Registrar.



**SEARCH FOR YOUR DOMAIN NAME**

A photograph of the Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada, taken at sunset. The building's Gothic Revival architecture, including the prominent clock tower (the Peace Tower), is silhouetted against a warm, orange and yellow sky. The building sits atop a green hillside, with a body of water in the foreground reflecting the light.

"Our .CA domain has helped us brand ourselves as a proudly local source of news and event information. We've been able to grow our audience with a unique and memorable URL."

– Katrina Marsh, co-founder of [apt613.ca](http://apt613.ca)

# HOW TO REGISTER A DOMAIN NAME

Registering a .CA domain name is quick and easy. Keep these helpful tips in mind throughout the registration process.

## STEP 1

### Find an available domain name

Hopefully you have a lot of great ideas for domain names you want. If your top pick is available, then congrats! In a few short clicks, that domain name can be yours. If not, try searching for a few variations as we outlined earlier.

[SEARCH FOR YOUR .CA DOMAIN NAME](#)

*Keep in mind:*

- 1. THINK BRAND AND KEYWORDS**
- 2. MAKE IT MEMORABLE**
- 3. ALTERNATE SPELLINGS**
- 4. BUILD A PORTFOLIO**

# STEP 2

## Choose your Registrar

Once you find an available domain name, the next step is to choose a Registrar, the retailers that sell domain names. They're the ones you'll have the most one-on-one time with as you manage a website or forward a domain name.

When you search for a domain name on cira.ca, we display our certified Registrars with whom you can register your preferred .CA domain name. Your Registrar will be your main point of contact for the registration and management of your .CA domain name, so make sure you choose the right one for you.

If you're new to the world of domain names, you might not know where to start when choosing a Registrar. Here's our advice on how to choose the one that best meets your needs.

## Determine which services you require

If you're interested in additional services like email, hosting, a website builder, or if you require support in French, ensure that the Registrar you choose meets those needs. You can use the filters provided in our search tool to see which Registrars offer the services you require.

## Shop around

Shop around to get a good understanding of how much your domain name, and additional services, will cost. Registrars may offer bundles, packages, or special promotions. Keep in mind that cheapest isn't always necessarily best.

## Check references

Seek out customer reviews and testimonials, and ask friends or colleagues for a recommendation. You may find that some Registrars come highly recommended by your peers.



While choosing the right Registrar for you is an important decision, it's important to note that you can always transfer your domain to a new Registrar, with some restrictions. Keep in mind that there is a fee associated with transferring a domain and that transfers are not possible within the first 60 days of a newly registered domain name.

## STEP 3

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### Register the domain name

It's your moment of glory. Once you've found the right Registrar and the right domain name, simply register it on their website.

**CHOOSE YOUR .CA NOW!**

## Registration tips

- **ALWAYS REGISTER YOUR DOMAIN NAME YOURSELF**
- **CHOOSE A STRONG PASSWORD FOR YOUR ACCOUNT WITH YOUR REGISTRAR**
- **PROVIDE THE RIGHT CONTACT INFORMATION**
- **CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE TERM LENGTH (1-10 YEARS)**
- **PUT YOUR DOMAIN NAME RENEWAL DATE IN YOUR CALENDAR**

# WHAT'S NEXT?

Your .CA domain name has been successfully registered. Congratulations! But now what? Here are some common ways to use your domain name to its full potential.

## BUILD A WEBSITE

Domain names are most often used to host a website. In fact, research has shown that 94% of people who register a domain name plan on using it for their current or future website<sup>5</sup>. Even if this is your plan, you may not know where to start. Let's be honest, most of us aren't web designers or developers. But have no fear – there are several easy-to-use tools to build a website without breaking the bank.

**Option 1:** Many of our Registrars offer simple and affordable website builders to their clients. Check with your Registrar to see if they have their own proprietary tool or if they have a plugin with a website builder or content management system (CMS) like Weebly or WordPress, for example.

**Option 2:** If your Registrar does not offer a website builder, or if you want other options, there are several high quality platforms that make it easy to build the website of your dreams without having to know how to code. When choosing a website builder, make sure that

the platform offers what you need from a website. Some things you might want to consider are the design templates they offer, mobile platform, blogs, e-commerce functionality, and more. Some of the most well-known website builders are [Squarespace](#), [WordPress](#), [Weebly](#), [Wix](#), [Shopify](#), or [PageCloud](#), just to name a few. You will be able to connect your domain name with your website at some point during the set-up – the process varies according to the platform you choose. This is something your Registrar or the support team from the website builder can help you with.

**Option 3:** If you have the time and budget, there's always the option of hiring a web designer, developer or agency to build your website for you. Keep in mind that this will be a more expensive path, but it will ensure that you get a website that is custom built to your specific needs.

<sup>5</sup> Source: CIRA Tracking Research 2016

### Not ready to build a website?

You may not be quite ready to build a website, and that's okay. There are several other things you can do with your domain name in the meantime to ensure that you are getting value out of it.

## REDIRECT YOUR DOMAIN NAME

You can easily point or redirect your domain name to a website that already exists. This is something that you will have to do with your Registrar and can take only a couple of minutes to set up. If you run into any issues simply reach out to them via live chat or email and they will get you all set up!

### Here are some reasons why you would redirect your domain name:

- A small business redirects their domain name to their business Facebook page
- A job-seeker redirects their domain name to their LinkedIn profile
- A DIY or craftsperson redirects their domain name to their Etsy page
- An online retailer redirects their domain name to their eBay store
- A blogger redirects their domain name to their Tumblr
- A bakery that uses colourfulcupcakes.ca also registers colorfullcupcakes.ca and redirects it to their main page so that they don't lose any customers online

*Fact:*

**MORE THAN HALF OF SMALL BUSINESSES SAY THEIR BUSINESS GREW ONCE THEY BUILT THEIR WEBSITE, WITH 1 IN 5 SEEING MORE THAN 10% GROWTH.<sup>6</sup>**



<sup>6</sup> [GoDaddy & Redshift Research: Small Business Survey 2015](#)

## SET UP AN EMAIL ADDRESS

Whether you have a website or not you should consider creating your own custom email address on your domain name, like hello@yourdomainname.ca. Not only will this make you appear more credible and professional to potential customers or employers, but it also means that you don't need to fight for usernames on popular free email services like Gmail and Hotmail. Most Registrars offer email hosting services at affordable rates and can help you set it up in a matter of minutes.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Pandalytics Data

*Fact:*

**75% OF .CA DOMAINS  
HAVE A CUSTOM EMAIL  
ADDRESS ASSOCIATED  
WITH IT<sup>7</sup>**

### Become a Member for free

Once you've registered your .CA domain name you are eligible to become a CIRA Member, no matter how you plan on using your domain name. Applying for CIRA membership is easy, free and comes with a host of benefits. CIRA membership offers you a voice in the development of the Internet in Canada and an impact on the everyday lives of Canadians. [Learn more about CIRA membership.](#)

# CONGRATULATIONS!

Registering your first domain name is a huge step in growing your online presence and solidifying your brand.

## **Consider this:**

You now own your small piece of the Internet. No one else can register your domain name, and your visitors can trust your website.



"Get online! It's the easiest way to increase awareness and promote your business. Plus, it's where the party's at."

- Lizl Fleury, [ElevateYoga.ca](http://ElevateYoga.ca)

# ABOUT US

We're the [Canadian Internet Registration Authority](#) — but you can call us CIRA. We're the folks who manage the .CA domain name registry on behalf of all Canadians.







We're a non-profit, member-based organization that develops and implements policies that support Canada's Internet community. We also represent the .CA registry internationally, and fund innovative community projects and research to build a stronger, safer and more accessible Internet for all Canadians.



# STAY IN TOUCH

We would love to continue helping you grow your presence online. Follow us on social media and our blog for all of the latest news and tips for how to make the most of your domain name.

-  **Blog:** [cira.ca/blog](https://cira.ca/blog)
-  **Twitter:** [@dotcavoicedotca](https://twitter.com/dotcavoicedotca)
-  **Facebook:** [facebook.com/cira.ca](https://facebook.com/cira.ca)
-  **Instagram:** [choose.ca](https://instagram.com/choose.ca)



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