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# How to Choose a Domain Name that Will Drive Customers to Your Site

*By C S Wurzberger and Pam Foster*

When you're on business online, you're competing with literally millions of companies around the world. Your domain name (also known as your URL or Web address) is absolutely critical in helping your customers will find you in the Internet Jungle.

Simply put, your domain name identifies your company's address on the Internet. It's the [www.yourbusinessname.com](http://www.yourbusinessname.com) address that lives in the browser tool bar no matter what browser you're using (Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Netscape, etc.).

**Your domain name is one of the most critical factors in everything you do on the Web.**  
Here's why.

Think of easy domain names that you know or might use every day: [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), [target.com](http://target.com), [airtran.com](http://airtran.com) and [score.org](http://score.org). Or consider the following sites you haven't heard of, but which are very clear and memorable:

[www.houseremodeling.com](http://www.houseremodeling.com), [www.pianoplayingbyyear.com](http://www.pianoplayingbyyear.com) and [www.giftshopsofamerica.com](http://www.giftshopsofamerica.com).

These names represent their companies and/or services quite well, don't you think?

What if a marketing consulting firm chose to go by the partners' names or initials, such as [www.jonesfrankenchoateandsmith.com](http://www.jonesfrankenchoateandsmith.com), or [www.JFCandS.com](http://www.JFCandS.com)? How meaningful or memorable would that be for prospects who don't know the firm?

Not very.

Wouldn't it be better as [www.jonesgroupmarketing.com](http://www.jonesgroupmarketing.com) or even [www.jonesmarketingconsulting.com](http://www.jonesmarketingconsulting.com)? Probably. Because now you know what the firm does.

Therefore, it always makes sense to use your business name, but you can also choose another name that might be more descriptive, helpful or easier to remember, and direct that second domain name to your site.

## **Choose a domain name that is:**

- Easy for your customers and prospects to remember
- Easy to market
- Reflective of your business brand and what it offers
- Keyword-rich, meaning it includes one or two words your customers might use on Google and other search engines to find the products and services you offer.

By following the domain name rules listed below, you'll have a much higher chance of choosing and registering a name that boosts traffic—and sales—for your business.

- Make sure your name contains only letters, numbers and hyphens (-). No other characters are allowed.
- Your name can't begin or end with a hyphen. It won't be accepted.
- Capitalization does not matter. Even if you use initials such as JSHairfashions—your name will end up in all lowercase on the Web (jshairfashions). So be careful to view your chosen domain name in all lowercase to make sure it reads well. For example, a company called Blake's Tools might be interpreted as Blake Stools when you use it as a domain name: [www.blakestools.com](http://www.blakestools.com). You might even want to have someone else say it out loud so you don't overlook any strange interpretations of it.

**Important!** Be sure to lease your domain name from a reputable registrar that provides options for your lease terms and has a live customer support team available. *You're* leasing the domain name, so you'll want to register it under your name and keep the password information in a secure place. Don't forget to renew your lease within 30 days before the expiration date! Your domain name—and your business—could be at risk if you let the lease expire.

**These are just some of the ways you can boost your success on the Internet.** To learn more, you'll want to attend the three-part Web development seminars that Score offers.

You will also want to get your hands on the new Internet Jungle Guide book, *9 Easy Steps to Planning a Profitable Web Site: Your complete guide to navigating the Web development jungle and launching a site that sells!* This mini-course and workbook will help you launch a site that truly attracts prospects and customers who are ready to make purchases!

You can order this book online at [www.internetjungleguide.com](http://www.internetjungleguide.com). *The Internet Jungle Guide is a division of Premiere Visions, LLC.*

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The national SCORE Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to entrepreneur education and the formation, growth and success of small business nationwide. SCORE Portland is one of 389 chapters throughout the United States, with over 11,000 volunteers nationwide. SCORE is a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

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