Choosing Your Domain Name

The domain name is the address of your website. When we talk about owning one's domain, we are talking about owning (technically renting) an address on the Internet.

You may also hear the term URL – Uniform Resource Locator - that is the technical term for the website address.

Domain names have three components: the top-level domain, mid-level domain, and subdomain.

Top-level domain. Historically, there were only a few that were 2 or 3 letters and each had a specific meaning. The most common one is .com which stands for company. You will also be familiar with .edu which represents educational institutions. There are also country specific top-level domains such as .ca for Canada. Now there are many more, some of which are gaining popularity but the most common is by far .com.

Mid-level domain. The main part of a domain name. It is the part that most people remember. When you purchase a domain, you are purchasing a mid-level-domain and top level domain combination (e.g. goingeast.ca).

Subdomain. When you own your own domain you can create as many subdomains as you like.

Setting up a Domain

The first step in setting up your website is to determine your domain name. You may want to have a couple of options as you cannot use a name that is already taken. Also, you may want to try googling common misspellings of your domain name, as that may happen - although really, most people find you via search or links you share on other social media profiles (e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook).

A creative domain name is always fun, but not always feasible. It can also be a challenge if your site speaks to different aspects of yourself.

The domain name for my professional site and blog has gone through many iterations. It started out as a subdomain of my travel blog, then moved to https://rjhogue.name, and has recently transitioned to https://rebeccahogue.com. However, I'm putting all my instructional design related materials on https://DemystifyingInstructionalDesign.com.

> **Tip**
>
> I recommend using a .com for your domain.

Google has a good page that talks about how to come up with a good domain name. I like the Google article in part because it talks about not stressing over the name too much. The name doesn't play a direct role in your searchability. You'll soon learn that most people just bookmark it or put it into something like Diigo or Feedly or subscribe to updates on things like Facebook or emails via WordPress (see Following Blogs).

You can change your domain name later for a small cost, but know that any work that you do to build your online image in one domain can get lost when you change domain names. It is also more difficult to track site analytics as they will be reset in the new domain. When I moved from rjh.goingeast.ca to rjhogue.name and then to rebeccahogue.com, I put forwarders in place so that when people went to my old URL they were automatically redirected to the new one.

> **Tip**
>
> If you change domains, put a redirect in place to ensure your followers can find you. You can redirect from cPanel as long as you own the domain names.