Domain Name Fundamentals

Set of articles, covering the basics, domain life cycle, and a glossary of essential terms.

- What is a Domain Name?
- Life Cycle of a Domain
- What is a Domain Name Registrar?
- Who is a Domain Registrant?
- What are Domain Contacts?
- What is TLD or Top-Level Domain?
- What is the Domain Status?
- What is Domain Name Service (DNS)?
- What are IDN Domains?
- What is a Premium Domain Name?

What is a Domain Name?

A domain name is a unique, human-readable string of characters that represents the address of a website or web-based service on the internet. It serves as a memorable and convenient way for users to access websites without needing to remember the numerical IP addresses that computers use to locate each other on the internet.

Think of a **domain name** as the online **equivalent of a street address**. Just as a street address helps you locate a specific physical location, a domain name helps users find and access a particular website or web service on the internet.

Domain names are registered and managed by domain Registrars, which are organizations accredited by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to sell and administer domain names. When you register a domain name, you are essentially leasing the right to use that domain name for a specific period of time, usually ranging from one to ten years, and you need to renew the registration periodically to maintain ownership of the domain name.

In summary:

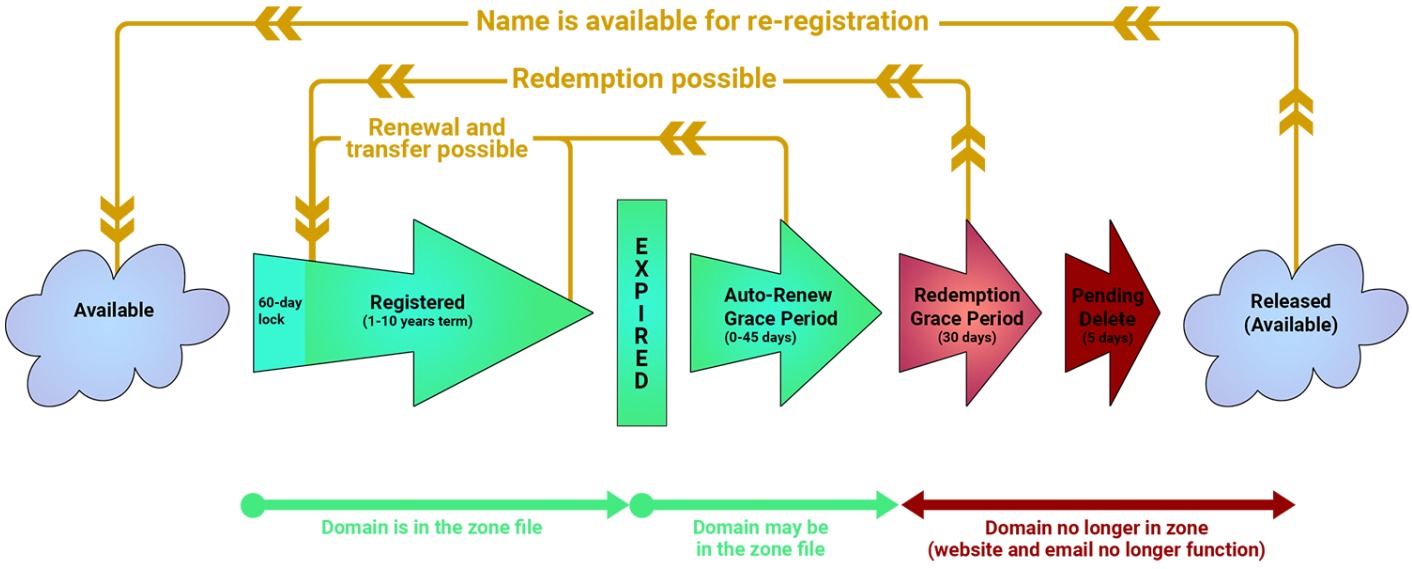
- a domain name is a **unique**, human-readable address
- it represents a **website** or web service on the internet
- it plays a crucial role in helping users **locate and access websites**
- users don't need to remember numerical **IP addresses**
- domain names are registered and managed by domain Registrars
- domain names are registered for a **specific period of time**
- you need to **renew** the registration periodically to maintain ownership of the domain name.

Life Cycle of a Domain

When you register a domain name, you are not actually buying it but rather paying for the right to use it for a certain period of time. When this time is up, the registration will expire. Of course, before it happens, you will be notified and given the chance to renew it for a further period.

Different types of domains have different life cycles, depending on how they are managed by the registry. The graphic below shows a typical life cycle for a generic top-level domain, but specific domains may have different time periods, so it's always important to check our Terms and Conditions

Life Cycle of a Typical gTLD Domain Name



Registration (1-10 years)

When you register a domain, you choose how long you want to use it, typically 1-10 years.

Auto-Renew Grace Period (1-90 Days)

When your registration period ends, your domain enters the auto-renew grace period, where you can still renew your domain name for a regular renewal fee. This period usually lasts between 1-45 days but varies depending on the registrar and registry.

Redemption Grace Period (up to 90 days)

If you don't renew your domain during the auto-renew grace period, it enters the redemption grace period, which can last up to 90 days. During this time, you can still renew your domain, but there may be an additional redemption fee.

Pending Delete

If you don't renew your domain during the redemption grace period, it enters the pending delete stage. This lasts for about 5 days, during which time the registrar requests that the registry delete the domain.

Released/Available to All

After the pending delete stage, the domain becomes available for anyone to register.

Examples of the approximate Joker.com TLDs Life-Cycle Periods *:

TLD	Auto-Renew/Expired Grace Period (days)	Redemption Grace Period (days)	Pending Delete (days)
DE	25	40	0
EU	20	40	0
AT	0	59	0
NL	0	40	0
UK	89	90	90
CH, LI	0	27	40
all other	29	30	5

* While the above-mentioned time periods are generally accurate, it's important to note that they are provided as estimates and may vary depending on the registry. Additionally, there may be technical requirements that necessitate processing within a specific time frame, which could result in a shorter time period for certain stages.

As a result, it's recommended that you **don't wait until the last possible moment**, such as the "expired grace period," before renewing your domain. Doing so could result in unexpected issues and potentially losing the domain altogether.

What is a Domain Name Registrar?

Joker.com is an ICANN-accredited domain registrar

What does it mean?

A domain **registrar is a company** or service that allows individuals or organizations **to register and purchase domain names** for their websites.

Domain registrars are accredited by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the organization responsible for managing domain names and IP addresses on the Internet.

They also provide other services related to domain names, such as domain name transfers, DNS management, and domain name renewal. It's important to choose a reputable and reliable domain registrar to ensure that your domain name is properly registered and managed.

When you want to register a domain name, you:

- go through a domain Registrar
- the Registrar helps you search for available domain names
- if the one you want is available, you can purchase it for a specified period of time
- registration period usually ranges from one to ten years
- the Registrar then **maintains a record of your domain name registration**, including your contact information and technical details, in a database called the domain name system (DNS).

Who is a Domain Registrant?

A domain Registrant, also known as a **domain owner**, is an **individual or organization** that has registered and **legally owns** a specific domain name. The domain Registrant is the entity that has the right to use and control the domain name for a specified period of time, typically through a contract with a domain Registrar.

When registering a domain name, the domain Registrant provides their **contact information**, including their name, address, phone number, and email address, to the domain Registrar. This information is stored in the domain name system (DNS) and is fully or partially accessible through a WHOIS lookup, which is a database containing information about registered domain names.

The domain Registrant has certain responsibilities and rights associated with their domain name.

This includes the ability to:

- configure the domain's DNS settings
- associate the domain with a website or email service
- manage domain name renewal and expiration.

The domain Registrants are **responsible** for:

- adhering to the **terms and conditions** of the domain Registrar and relevant domain name **registration policies**, such as those set by ICANN, the organization that oversees domain name registrations globally.
- keeping their **contact information** **up-to-date** with their domain Registrar to ensure that they receive important notifications related to their domain name registration, such as renewal reminders or updates about changes to registration policies.

What are Domain Contacts?

Domain contacts, also known as domain name contacts or WHOIS contacts, are the individuals or entities associated with a registered domain name who are designated as points of contact for administrative, technical, and/or billing purposes. Domain contacts are typically specified during the domain registration process and are stored in the domain name system (DNS) as part of the domain's registration information.

There are several types of domain contacts that may be associated with a domain name, including:

1. **Registrant:** The domain registrant is the legal owner of the domain name. The registrant contact typically provides their name, address, phone number, and email address during the domain registration process.

2. **Administrative Contact:** The administrative contact is responsible for managing administrative tasks related to the domain name, such as updates to registration information, domain name transfers, and other administrative matters.

3. **Technical Contact:** The technical contact is responsible for managing technical aspects of the domain name, such as domain name server (DNS) settings, DNS zone configuration, and other technical matters related to the domain's operation.

4. **Billing Contact:** The billing contact is responsible for managing billing and payment-related matters for the domain name, such as domain name renewal, payment updates, and other billing inquiries.

Domain contacts are an important aspect of domain name management, as they serve as points of contact for communication and administration related to the domain name. It's important for domain registrants to keep their domain contact information up-to-date with their domain registrar to ensure that they receive important notifications and can be reached for domain-related matters.

> For a complete list of contact handle prefixes used across all TLDs, please refer to the **Contact Prefix Reference Table**

What is TLD or Top-Level Domain?

TLD stands for Top-Level Domain. It refers to the highest level of the domain name system (DNS) hierarchy, which is the rightmost portion of a domain name. TLDs are the last part of a domain name that comes after the last dot (e.g., .com, .org, .net).

At Joker.com, you can register a big variety of TLDs, including:

- **Generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs):** These are the most common type of TLDs and are not tied to any specific country or region. Some examples of gTLDs include .com (for commercial purposes), .org (for organizations), .net (for network-related purposes), and .info (for informational websites).
- **Country Code Top-Level Domains (ccTLDs):** These are TLDs that are tied to specific countries or regions and are based on the two-letter country codes defined by the ISO 3166-1 standard. Examples of ccTLDs include .us (United States), .uk (United Kingdom), .ca (Canada), .au (Australia), .de (Germany), and many more. ccTLDs are often used by businesses, organizations, or individuals with a local presence in a specific country or region.
- **New TLDs (ngTLDs):** These represent a broader range of domain extensions that became available from 2014 onwards. Some examples of ngTLDs include .guru, .photography, .shop, .blog, .app, and .xyz. These new extensions offer individuals and organizations the opportunity to create memorable and meaningful domain names that align with their specific interests, industries, or branding. For example, a company named "ABC Corporation" could register the domain abc.corp instead of abc.com, emphasizing their corporate identity.

It's worth noting that different TLDs may have varying policies and regulations depending on the registry that manages them. Registries are the organizations responsible for managing and maintaining TLDs, and they may have their own rules and requirements for domain name registration, renewal, transfer, and usage.

For example, some TLDs may have specific eligibility criteria, such as requiring registrants to be located in a certain country or belong to a particular industry or community. Others may have different pricing structures, registration periods, or renewal policies. Additionally, some TLDs may have stricter regulations on content, usage, or trademark protections, while others may have more relaxed policies.

What is the Domain Status?

Domain status refers to the current condition or state of a registered domain name in the Domain Name System (DNS). It typically reflects whether a domain name is active, inactive, expired, or undergoing some other type of special status.

If you query the WHOIS ('Whois query') at Joker.com for a domain, you will get one of the following domain statuses:

- **Lock:** The domain is secured against unauthorized transfer attempts. To transfer the domain to another registrar, it must be unlocked under Domain Management section first, after which it will be in "production" status.
- **Production:** The domain is unlocked, and Joker.com will allow transfer requests to another registrar. To lock and secure a domain, it must be locked under Domain Management section.
- **Hold:** The domain will not be served by nameservers and cannot be used normally. This indicates that the domain name has been suspended or put on hold by the registrar or registry due to various reasons, such as non-payment, violation of terms of service, or legal disputes. Newly registered domains may have this status until billing is completed successfully.
- **Expired:** The domain has not been renewed and has passed its term, but it is not yet deleted and can still be renewed normally or using "simple renewal".
- **Transfer-prohibited-cor:** After a change of registrant (COR) or change of owner, the domain cannot be transferred for security reasons for a period of 60 days.
- **Invalid-address:** The WHOIS data validation has indicated incorrect registrant's data, and a process to correct it has been initiated. Please visit Ownership/Permissions under "Domains" menu to address this request.

To ensure optimal security, domains registered with Joker.com are typically set to **"lock"** status by default. This recommended status ensures that your domain is safeguarded against any unauthorized transfer or modification attempts, effectively preventing any fraudulent activities.

What is Domain Name Service (DNS)?

DNS stands for **Domain Name System**. It is a system used to translate human-readable domain names (like www.example.com) into machine-readable IP addresses (like 192.0.2.1).

When you **type a domain name** into your web browser, your computer sends a **request to a DNS server** asking for the **IP address** associated with that domain name. The DNS server then looks up the IP address in its database and sends it back to your computer. Your computer can then use that IP address to connect to the website you requested.

DNS is an essential part of the internet infrastructure, as it allows users to **access websites** and other resources using easy-to-remember domain names, rather than having to remember complex IP addresses.

Our free name service is included with all Joker.com domains.

What are IDN Domains?

IDN stands for **Internationalized Domain Name**. IDN domains allow for domain names to be registered using **non-Latin characters.**

Before the introduction of IDN domains, domain names were limited to the 26 letters of the Latin alphabet, along with the numbers 0-9 and the hyphen (-) character. This made it difficult for people who use non-Latin scripts to register domain names that accurately reflected their online identity or the content of their website.

With IDN domains, users can register **domain names** using a wider range of characters from different scripts, making it easier for people to use domain names **in their native language** or script.

For example:

- a **German user** can now register a domain name using characters with **umlauts (such as ä, ö, ü)** or the eszett *(ß)* character, which was previously not allowed in domain names
- a **Finnish user** can now register a domain name using characters with **diacritical marks (such as ä and ö)** that are specific to the Finnish language
- and **many more international users** can use language-specific characters in their domain names

With IDN domains, they can now **register domain names** using their native language characters, making it easier for them to represent their **online identity** and connect with their **target audience in their own language.**

Enabling IDN domains requires a technical process that involves converting non-Latin characters into ASCII characters, which is a standardized encoding system used by the existing internet infrastructure. This conversion is known as PUNYCODE, and it allows IDN domains to be processed and managed by existing systems that are designed to work with ASCII characters.

To simplify the registration process for IDN domains, we provide a PUNYCODE presentation of the domain name during the registration procedure. This allows users to easily see how their domain name will be encoded in ASCII characters and how it will be displayed in different contexts.

Web sites where you can verify PUNYCODES are (IDN-specific knowledge is required):

- Wikipedia
- https://puny.codes/

What is a Premium Domain Name?

Premium domains are domain names that have been previously registered and are considered **more valuable** than regular domain names due to their length, keyword relevance, or memorability. These domain names are often **shorter, more brandable, and more memorable** than regular domain names, making them highly desirable for businesses or individuals who want to establish a **strong online presence.**

Premium domains are usually not available at the normal/fixed rate, and their **prices can vary** widely depending on factors such as the domain name's length, its relevance to a specific industry or niche, and the demand for the domain name.

> *Some premium domain names have sold for **millions of dollars**, such as "business.com," "insurance.com," and "vacationrentals.com."*

Premium domains can be classified into three major types:

1. **registered domains** offered by global networks, run by companies, with individual prices; have to be purchased by transferring the domain
2. domains **offered by the registries at special rates**, which can be registered
3. **expired domains** that are currently at the end of the RGP phase.

Joker.com offers **all three types** of premium domains, with most of them available through the regular order process. However, for RGP expired domains, there is a separate section for ordering.

For domains of the first type, a transfer is required during the order process. The transfer usually occurs in real time as these domains are already prepared for fast transfers.

If you need an exciting domain name for your new business, you probably will find it here.