

What's in a name? Making sure your website gets noticed for the right reasons

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Domain names web concept with Internet domains sign and text on colorful computer keys.

With more and more activities moving online thanks to coronavirus, this might be the perfect time to take the plunge and develop your own website – or even a set up a new one, if you are already active. So where do you begin?

It all starts out with the name. Facebook, Google, Amazon, Airbnb – they are all website names which have become part of every day life, and one thing they all have in common is that they are easy to read and easy to remember.

You may not have world domination in mind, but there are some simple things to remember when considering what url you should use.

If you live in the Netherlands, for example, the dot nl domain might offer you more options than dot com. In fact there are some six million websites in the Netherlands which end in dot nl – the Dutch domain which first came into being in 1986, making it the first active country domain outside the US.

One million

The very first dot nl website was cwi.nl, or the Centrum voor Wiskunde en Informatica, and is still in use today. The millionth was registered in December 2003, by an insurance company which adopted the somewhat clumsy moniker, verzekering-online-zelf.nl which, unsurprisingly, no longer exists.

It was not until 10 years later that the Stichting Internet Domeinregistratie Nederland (SIDN) took over the rights and now licences them to registrars such as [Domeinnamen](#) where companies and private individuals can buy names and organise webhosting.

This June, the six millionth dot nl name was registered, to fitness and coaching company deyoiclub.nl.

Amsterdam

Most dot nl names are based in Amsterdam, even though the city also has its own domain suffix dot amsterdam, which was introduced in 2015. Despite initially seen as a big money spinner for the city, it has not proved a success and even the local council still uses dot nl for its Dutch site and dot com for English.

The dot Amsterdam experience highlights the need to think properly about what you are going to call your website and perfectly illustrates some of the problems if you get it wrong.

Your url is the first thing visitors to your website will notice. It defines your brand and it is crucial, experts say, to make a positive and lasting first impression.

Key issues

So how do you come up with the right name? It is not always easy – particularly when you consider how many websites there are already out there.

Use dot com or dot nl if you are in the Netherlands if you can, but don't forget there are hundreds of other domains to choose from – dot website, dot group, dot charity and dot group, to name but a few.

You can check out some of the more popular alternatives on registration website [Domeinnamen](#). TV, by the way, is owned by the Pacific island of Tuvalu, which earns around €5m a year from the licence.

Some other things to think about when picking a name:

- The shorter the better and it should be easy to type – aim for six to 14 characters
- Go for a brand rather than a generic word – there are a lot of websites out there which have the word insurance in their name, for example, so you won't stand out from the crowd unless you combine it with something different
- It should also be easy to pronounce, so avoid dashes and hyphens. You want people to be able to tell others your name easily, and to be able to remember it
- Think about how your name will sound in five years time
- Make sure it is not trademarked

Once you've come up with some ideas, you need to check if anyone has been there before you, that you can do online via a registration company or SIDN.

One other thing to think about – make sure the registration company offers additional services as well as just domain registration. Think web hosting, technical back up, security tips and online tutorials to brush up your online skills.

Choosing the right name might be important, but you want to get the rest right as well.

