

*Other Guides available in this series include:*

**Introduction to Nominet**

**Becoming a Nominet Member or Tag Holder**

**The Dispute Resolution Service**



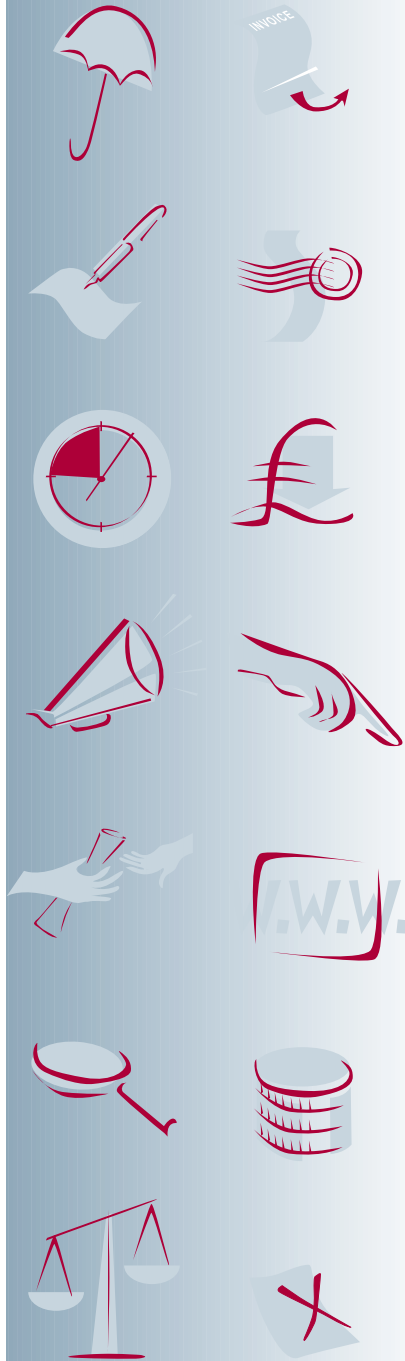
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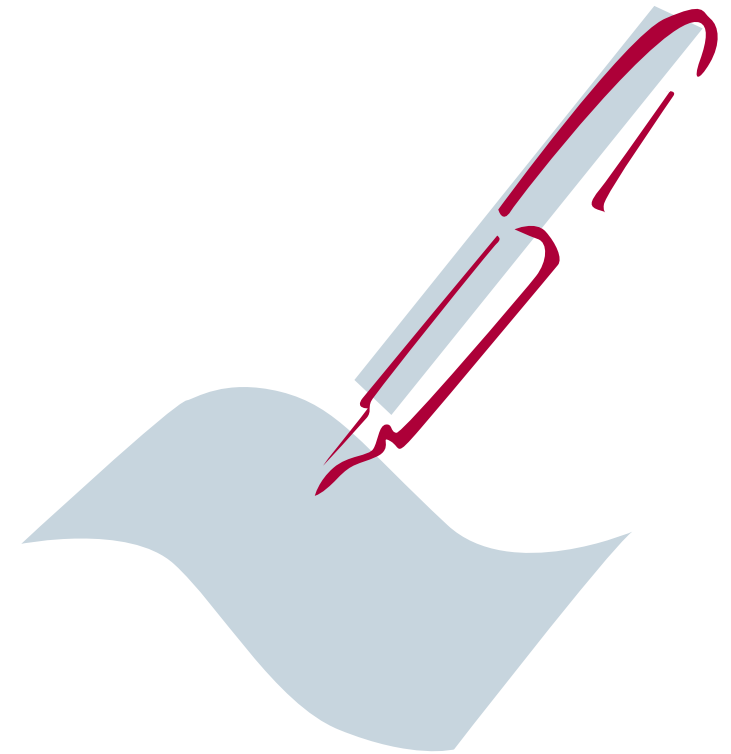
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## Registering a Domain Name



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### How does the Domain Name System work?

Just as postcodes are used for particular street names, computers connected to the Internet have unique numerical addresses so that electronic information is delivered to the right place. The Domain Name System (DNS) translates the numerical addresses of computers into more user-friendly names. Domain Names are easy to recall and help people to find information on the Internet.

Domain Names form part of web site addresses, for example, *www.bbc.co.uk/news*, and they are often used in advertising to point people to information about an organisation.

Domain Names are also used in e-mail addresses, for example, *john@nominet.org.uk*, that enable people to send and receive electronic messages.

### How to choose a Domain Name



Most countries or territories have been allocated a specific country code Domain Name ending, e.g. *.jp* for Japan, *.fr* for France, that are called Top Level Domains (TLDs). There are also several TLDs e.g. *.com*, *.net* and *.org* that are not specific to any geographical location, and are managed by a corporation in the U.S.A. Organisations usually select a TLD that corresponds to the country in which they are operating, and some companies register Domain Names with several different TLDs. In general, businesses based in or wishing to market themselves in the UK use a Domain Name ending *.uk*.

### How to choose a Domain name *continued*

Each country needs a corresponding national organisation, called a Registry, which is responsible for managing the registration of Domain Names. Just as Companies House keeps the national records for all registered company names, Nominet manages the Register Database for Internet Domain Names ending *.uk*. The Company is a not-for-profit organisation that does not have shareholders and does not sell Internet services. It provides the administrative and technical functions that are essential for maintaining the Domain Name System.

### The *.uk* Country Code

The *.uk* country code is separated into sub categories, called Second Level Domains (SLDs). People are encouraged to register a Domain Name within the SLD that corresponds to their type of activity:

- .co.uk* for commercial enterprises (the largest SLD in the UK)
- .org.uk* for non-commercial organisations
- .plc.uk* and *.ltd.uk* for registered company names only
- .net.uk* for Internet Service Providers
- .sch.uk* for schools.



The rules for *.ltd.uk* and *.plc.uk* registrations require that the Domain Name is the same as the company name that the organisation has registered with Companies House. However, the rules for *.co.uk* and *.org.uk* registrations allow for a wide, unrestricted variety of names, abbreviations and acronyms to be used.

### What if a Domain Name is already registered?

Because Domain Names can include letters, number and hyphens, there are many different ways of distinguishing between similarly named companies and creating a unique Domain Name. As the number of registered Domain Names grows, people are becoming increasingly creative in their choice of name. Indeed, the development of a business on the Internet is often about building a brand reputation around an entirely new name.



On rare occasions, however, there may be a clash between two people wanting to register the same Domain Name. In this instance, Nominet does not judge the legality of a claim, but instead tries to mediate between the two parties to bring about a mutually agreeable outcome. For further information, see the Nominet Guide to *The Dispute Resolution Service*.

### How to register a Domain Name



People are encouraged to register a Domain Name through their Internet Service Provider (ISP). The majority of ISPs are members of Nominet UK, and most offer Domain Name Registration services. An ISP will act as an agent for its customer, and submit a Domain Name application to the Registry on their behalf. Although the general public can register Domain Names directly with Nominet, this requires specialist technical knowledge and equipment.

ISPs offer a wide range of services over and above Domain Name registration and, as a result, their contractual terms and charges can vary. Customers should ask to see copies of their

### How to register a Domain Name *continued*

ISP's Terms and Conditions for Domain Name registration. Particular attention should be given to the customer's right to move their business to another ISP, and whether there is a financial cost for doing so. Nominet cannot recommend one specific ISP over another, but advises people to shop around in order to get a deal that suits their needs.

### What happens after Registration?



Great care is taken over the maintenance of the Register Database: to protect the contractual rights of the Domain Name holder (the Registrant), any changes that are made to the registration details must be carried out in compliance with the Registry's Terms and Conditions. A full copy of Nominet's Terms and Conditions can be found at <http://www.nominet.org.uk/ref/terms.html> and these should be reviewed by Registrants prior to making a Domain Name application.

Once a registration has been made, it is valid for two years, after which most people choose to renew their registration, and a fee is charged for a further two-year period. In most cases, ISPs will contact their customers in order to let them know that the Domain Name is due for renewal. If a Registrant does not wish to renew the Domain Name, the registration details are removed from the Register Database and the name becomes available for use by someone else.

### Registration Certificates



Once the registration details are entered into the Register Database and the Domain Name has been paid for, a Registration Certificate is issued for the Domain Name. The Registration Certificate will be sent either to the ISP or directly to their customer. Certificates are important documents that say who is the legal Registrant of a Domain Name.

Certificates confirm the registration details that are held on the Register Database, and it is important that the Registrant checks these details thoroughly on receipt of the Certificate. They should then complete and return the reply form attached to the back of the Certificate. It is also vital that the Registry and ISP are informed of any changes to the Registrant's contact details throughout the registration period.

### Cancelling a Domain Name Registration

Cancelling or surrendering a Domain Name before the two year registration period expires is straightforward. There is a surrender form on the reverse of the Registration Certificate that should be completed and sent to Nominet, along with a letter of authorisation on the headed paper of the Registrant. On receipt of these documents, Nominet will cancel the Domain Name, removing it completely from the .uk Register Database.

If a Registrant wishes to transfer a registration to someone else, they should complete the transfer form on the reverse

### Cancelling a Domain Name Registration *continued*



of the Registration Certificate. The existing Registrant must submit a letter of authorisation on headed paper agreeing to transfer the Domain Name. In addition, the new Registrant is required to sign the form and submit a confirmatory letter on their own headed paper. The two signatories of the letters must be different people.

In the case of a company name change, the Domain Name Registration Certificate, a confirmatory letter and a copy of the Certificate of Incorporation on Change of Name issued by Companies House must be included.

### The Future

Nominet is committed to providing an efficient, friendly and accurate registration service for .uk Domain Names. As the Domain Name System matures, the Company will keep pace with developments to make registration easier, thereby enabling ISPs and their customers to maximise the potential of the Internet.