Thoughts & Theories

This lesson provides answers to some frequently asked questions based on domain name, DNS and web hosting.

Difference between a Domain Name and Web-Hosting

People often confuse these two terminologies mainly because the service provided by both parties are usually similar. Domain names and web hosting are two different services. However, they work together to make websites possible.

Basically a domain name system is like a massive address book that is constantly updated. Behind each domain name, there is an address of the web hosting service storing the website's files. Without domain names, it will not be possible for people to find your website and without web hosting you cannot build a website.

You can buy domain name and web hosting from two different companies. However, in that case you will have to point your domain name to your web hosting company by editing its DNS settings.

On the other hand, if you purchase your domain name and web hosting from the same company, then you will not have to change domain name settings. It

is also much easier to manage and renew both services under the same

dashboard. If you'd rather purchase a domain name separately, below are some popular domain name registrars to consider:

- GoDaddy
- NameCheap

How to associate your domain name with your web hosting?

If you've purchased a domain name at one company and decide to host it somewhere else, then you'll need to login to your domain registrar and modify the dns. This dns change just tells your domain registrar that the url you are using is now being hosted by someone else.

Before modifying the dns, be mindful of your email addresses. If you've set up email addresses with your domain registrar, you will need to set these up again with your hosting provider. Before making any changes, it's best to contact your web developer or IT department and make sure that any changes won't incur email loss.

Get Your Web Host's Name Servers

The first thing you'll need to do is to find out the list of DNS or name servers used by your web host.

The easiest (though not necessarily fastest) way to find out the name servers used by your web host for your domain is to ask them. A faster way is to look for the information yourself in either the email sent to you by your host when you first signed up with them, or from the documentation on your web host's site. If you have no idea where to get the information, contact your web host and ask them for the "DNS servers" or "name servers" to use for your domain.

The list of name servers will often look like `ns1.example.com`, `ns2.example.com`, and so on, where "example.com" will probably be replaced by some other domain name used by your web host for their servers.

Your web host may give you 2 or more name server addresses. Note down all

these names. Better still, keep the email or web page containing these names open on your computer so that you can cut and paste them later. You'll need to enter these names, exactly as given, into your registrar's system.

Enter the Name Servers into Your Registrar's Settings for Your Domain

Once you have the list of name servers, go to your domain name registrar and log into their system. You will obviously need the login name and password that you created when you first registered your domain.

Once logged in, you will need to look for some option to either set your domain's name servers or change them. Every registrar has a different way of doing this, and there is no standard method, so it's not possible for me to give you a detailed blow-by-blow account of how to get to the appropriate screen. (Even if I did, my description will quickly become out-of-date since registrars, like all webmasters, change their site design every now and then.) What I'll do instead is give you some idea of what to look for.

In general, try the following to get to the page on your registrar's site that lets you modify the name servers:

- Find a way to list all your domains in the registrar's site. Sometimes this can be found in a "My Domains" page, or a "Domain Manager" page, or something similarly named.

- Select the domains for which you want to set the name servers. Sometimes this involves checking a box beside your domain name in the list of names. Alternatively, if you only have one domain name, you may even be able to click the domain name to get to the settings screen.

- Some registrars have a "Manage DNS" menu link, or a "DNS" button, or a "Nameservers" button. If you see such a link or button, that's probably the one that you will need to click. Basically look for things that say "DNS" or "Name Servers" or "Nameservers", whether to "set" it, "change" it, "manage" it, "modify" it, "edit" it or some other thing to that effect.

Once you manage to find the correct page to change your name servers, you will probably see a form that lets you enter things like your "Primary Name Server", "Secondary Name Server", "Tertiary Name Server" and maybe even

more (like a fourth, fifth and sixth name server as well). The exact words used

may not be the same, but it should mean basically your first name server, second name server, and so on.

Is it possible to transfer from one Domain Registrar to another?

No matter where you registered a domain name from, you're free to transfer it to another registrar whenever you want. Users usually transfer their domain name if they're not satisfied with the service offered by their current domain name registrar.

Whatever your reason for transferring is, to initiate the transfer, we always recommend you to wait at least 45 days after the registration or renewal. ICANN, the international organization that oversees domain names, requires one year renewal whenever a transfer is initiated. By transferring your domain name before that period you could lose that year's renewal fee.

How to Switch your Web Hosting

In some cases, switching your web hosting is easier than transferring your domain name to another registrar. It's because most hosting providers offer free website transfer. If you're planning to transfer a website to another web hosting provider, the first thing you should do is ask your new hosting provider whether they offer a free website transfer.

If yes, you can hand over the required login credentials to the customer service for the free website transfer. Usually, web hosting providers only offer free cPanel to cPanel transfers. If your existing web host doesn't use a cPanel, then you might want to transfer it on your own.