

ISM BEST WESTERN CENTRALIZED ADVERTISING WEBSITE PROGRAM

Selecting A Good Domain Name

First of all, what is a Domain Name? A domain name is any name given to a specific computerized electronic networked entity typically synonymous with a website name. Domain names can refer to a bank of networked computers, a palette of network services such as file and print sharing, or be broken up into sub-domains that usually exist in very large corporate environment. For all intents and purposes, the term Domain Name, when used in conjunction with the ISM Best Western Centralized Advertising Website Program means website address (or the main part of it). For example: **bestwestern.com** is a domain name. You can tell this by what comes after the word, bestwestern. The “dot-COM” (or “.com”) is what is called a Top-Level Domain. The three most popular top-level domains are: “dot-COM,” “dot-NET,” and “dot-ORG;” there are others such as: “dot-GOV,” “dot-BIZ,” “dot-MIL,” and so on. You will probably never use anything other than “dot-COM,” but you are certainly free to choose the others if your specific domain name with that top-level domain is unavailable. For a description what each of the top-level domains are please see the table below:

dot-COM	typically used for commercial entities and businesses
dot-NET	typically used for networks such as ISP’s, cable companies, telecomm, etc.
dot-ORG	typically used for non-profit organizations
dot-GOV	typically used for government organizations
dot-BIZ	another lesser-used business-related top level domain
dot-MIL	typically used for military-related websites
dot-INFO	a newer top-level domain used for online information resources

There are many other top-level domains, most of which represent websites in other countries. Unless your property is located outside of the US and its territories you will probably never need to use any of them.

So after you have decided what Top-Level Domain you want to go with, now you have to decide what name should precede it. Below are a few guidelines that you can follow:

- Keep the domain name as short as possible—nobody wants to type in **bestwesterncentralizedadvertisingwebsiteprogram.com**—it’s just too long. And remember that there will be a “www.” (for World Wide Web) before the domain name as well.
- Use a domain name that best describes your property and its location that is easy to type, for example: **soldiersfield.com** (Best Western Soldiers Field Tower &

- Suites in Rochester, MN), or **pelicanbeach.com** (Best Western Pelican Beach Resort Hotel, in Fort Lauderdale, FL)
- Avoid dashes and other characters in your domain name. Though some may be allowable, no one really remembers to type them in. It is okay to have two or three short words mashed into one for the domain name.
 - You no longer need the words, “best” and “western” or the initials “bw” in your domain name. Just a simple name like **drycreekinn.com** (Best Western Dry Creek Inn in Healdsburg, CA) will do. However, they do have their uses as exemplified below.
 - Avoid trying to co-opt the local regional name or use a generic domain name. For example, **anytownusa.com** would not go over well with the local Chamber of Commerce. Or, **airportmotorinn.com** (if it were even available) will never let your guests know anything specific about your property to warrant them visiting your website and bringing in business.
 - Try not to use contrite or cheesy domain names like **theultimatestay.com** or **milkandcookiesinbed.com**, no one will take your property’s website too seriously if you go that way.
 - You can either use your property’s name or be creative and come up with a great concept name for your property. For example, **bestwesterncapecod.com** (though a little long, they should have used, **bwcapecod.com** instead) is a creative name that describes the Best Western Bridge Bourne Hotel in Bourne, MA on Cape Cod.
 - If you have more than one Best Western property using your singular Best Western website, you can use a “catch-all” domain name such as **bwprovincetown.com** (which represents three Best Western hotels in Provincetown, MA)

And remember; always check to see if the domain name is available before you try to register it. You can do this simply by going to any Internet Domain Name Registrar such as, Network Solutions (**www.networksolutions.com**). Right on their homepage is a place where you can input the name you want, check off the top-level domain you want, and submit it to instantly see if it is available. If it is not available, they will give you other available options and suggestions for you to consider. It is very easy to use and will save you a lot of trouble later.

Once you’ve selected your new winning domain name and know that it is available, please refer to the *How To Register A Domain Name* document for the steps on registering your domain name.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the ISM webmaster at (617) 353-1822, x.189.