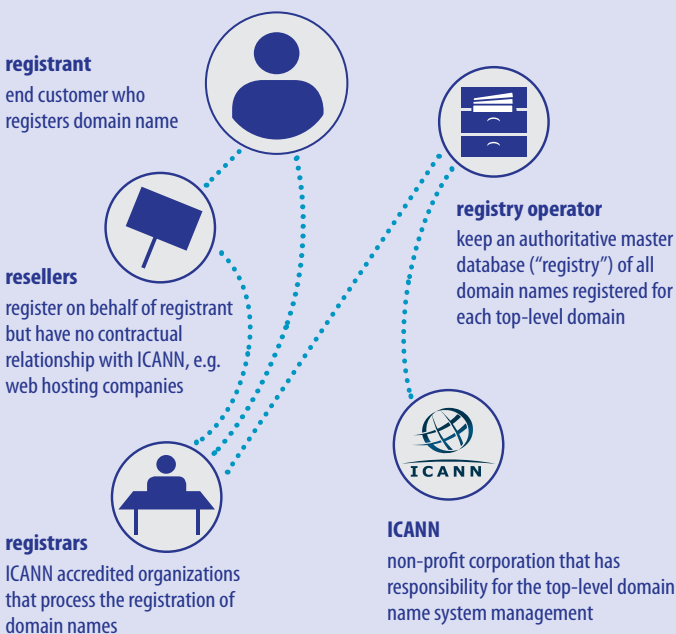# What does your domain name say about you?

Find out at WHOIS.ICANN.ORG.

ICANN's new one-stop website makes it easier than ever to learn about WHOIS, raise accuracy issues about WHOIS contact information and allow contributions to WHOIS policies.

What is WHOIS?

Every year, millions of individuals, businesses, organizations and governments register domain names through a process like the one below.

registrant
end customer who registers domain name

resellers
register on behalf of registrant but have no contractual relationship with ICANN, e.g. web hosting companies

registry operator
keep an authoritative master database ("registry") of all domain names registered for each top-level domain

ICANN

registrars
ICANN accredited organizations that process the registration of domain names

ICANN
non-profit corporation that has responsibility for the top-level domain name system management

Each registrant must provide identifying contact information which may include: name, address, email, phone number, and administrative and technical contacts. This information is often referred to as "WHOIS data." But the WHOIS service is not a single, centrally-operated database. Instead, the data is managed by independent entities known as "registrars" and "registries." Any entity that wants to become a registrar must earn ICANN accreditation.   Similarly, registries are under contract with ICANN to operate a generic top-level domain, such as .COM, .ORG, or one of the new ones that may soon be under operation.

ICANN's Affirmation of Commitments requires it to "implement measures to maintain timely, unrestricted and public access to accurate and complete WHOIS information…." To do that, registrars and registries provide public access to data on registered names. Anyone can use the WHOIS protocol to search their databases and identify the registered name holder or "registrant" of a domain name.

WHOIS data also allows network administrators to find and fix system problems, determine the availability of domain names, combat spam or fraud, identify trademark infringement and enhance accountability of domain name registrants. It is also sometimes used to track down and identify registrants who may be posting illegal content or engaging in phishing scams.

> WHOIS isn't an acronym, though it may look like one. In fact, it is the Internet protocol that asks the question, who is responsible for a domain name or an Internet Protocol address?

Below is a typical WHOIS entry for a registrant. There are actually two types of WHOIS entries – the "thick" WHOIS which looks like the one shown, with contact information for the administrator and technician. Some registries keep only "thin" WHOIS entries, which contain registrar, nameservers and registration dates. Registrars typically keep "thick" WHOIS records.

```
Domain Name: SAMIPLE.NET
Registrar: REGISTRAREXAMPLE
Whois Server: whois.registrarexample.com
Referral URL: http://www.registrarexample.com/en US/
Name Server: GREEN.SAMPLE.NET
Name Server: PURPLE.SAMPLE.NET
Name Server: BLACK.SAMPLlE.NET
Status: clientTransferProhibited
Updated Date: 09-jan-2008
Creation Date: 12-jun-2003
Expiration Date: 12-jun-2017

REGISTRANT: ILLUSTRATION, INC.
ADDRESS: 123 Street NW, City, State, Country

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACT: Beto Toros
EMAIL: btoros@sample.net
ADDRESS: 456 S. Avenue, City, State, Country
PHONE: +123 456 789
FAX: +123 456 987
```

While some registries (.COM and .NET) only keep "thin" ones, all of the new gTLDs will have "thick" records.

Because information can change, ICANN requires registrars to provide registrants with an annual opportunity to review and correct their WHOIS data. Conversely, Internet users who find that their WHOIS data is incomplete or incorrect can file a complaint with ICANN.

Some registrars offer privacy or proxy services to shield registrants who don't want their personal information to appear in the database. Likewise, registrars in countries where privacy laws restrict the collection and publishing of personal data may be eligible to apply to ICANN for a WHOIS waiver.

LEARN MORE
WHOIS.ICANN.ORG

Phase I of the website is dedicated to providing comprehensive information to consumers of WHOIS related to various aspects of WHOIS. Subsequent phases will provide additional features and functions that will make it even easier to use and to monitor the quality of WHOIS data.

WWW.ICANN.ORG

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