

# Current status of the new gTLDs

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## New gTLD's Explained

ICANN, the organization that administers (rather than registers) domain names has been working for several years on extending the Top Level Domain names (TLD's). TLDs are extensions such as .com, .org or .net. At the start of the process there were 22 TLD's. This is going to be expanded to upwards of 1400, over the next few years. For the first time, domain names can also be in non-Latin scripts, such as Arabic or Chinese. As of January 2014, over 100 new generic -TLD's have been added to the IANA (Internet Assigned Numbers Authority) Root Zone Database. From February 2014, the new gTLD's were rolled out to the general public, to register as second-level domains, including:

- .bike
- .clothing
- .guru
- .holdings
- .plumbing
- .singles
- .ventures

There are 3 categories of new generic TLD, Open, Restricted and Closed: Open TLD's are available for registration in the same way as .com, .net or .biz. Restricted TLD's are mainly community based, for example .la, or .berlin – where you will need to live or own a business in the

location, in order to use it. Closed TLDs are ones that are owned by companies, and relate to a brand or trademark – .google or .microsoft. If these gTLDs are offered to the public, it will be done via the corporation or organization – the same way as you get shortened URLs on LinkedIn or Google+. So, Gmail users may be able to get a .gmail, instead of .com extension for their account.

Whatever category they come in, they are all classified as generic TLDs. Companies such as Amazon also applied for domains such as .book or .app. However, ICANN decided that these needed to be public TLDs, as they are non-exclusive, not linking to just one brand.

There is a difference between buying a gTLD and registering a domain name which uses a gTLD extension. Companies could purchase a gTLD for \$185,000, directly from ICANN (the process is currently closed). For example, Donut.com, a start-up created to apply for and manage new gTLDs, applied to buy 307 gTLDs. After purchasing the top-level domain names, Donut offers the gTLD for registration, as second-level domains, both on their website and via the existing Domain Name Registration Services (like GoDaddy, Enom or Tucows).

Before the gTLD extensions are available to the public to register (as second-level domains), there is a Sunrise period of at least 30 days, where companies can register their trademark second-level domains. Amazon has registered amazon.bike, amazon.clothing, amazon.guru and amazon.holdings. Companies can also apply for blocks (DPML) on new gTLD second-level domains. A permitted block would be apple.bike, or microsoft.holdings, but you cannot block spelling differences or typos – app1e.bike or micrsoft.holdings could not be blocked.

After the Sunrise period, the Open and Restricted second-level domains are available for pre-registration by the general public, before going live. Go live dates, for the different gTLDs, can be found on the various registration sites.

## Advantages

The new gTLDs widens the domain name market - allowing new start-ups to have meaningful domain names, and for companies to have domain names that are more closely aligned with their areas of business. A company with the existing domain of acmephoto.com, could register the domain of acme.photography. This will improve the ease of use of URLs, especially on social media, such as Twitter, where short URLs are a necessity. ICANN also believes it will lead to the development of new on-line communities based on common interests or geography (the restricted gTLDs).

## Disadvantages

The new gTLDs will bring additional costs for trademark owners – due to fees for registering or protecting brand names and trademarks. They also open up the danger of fraud, cybersquatting and confusion for consumers. For large companies, registering a series of trademarks and brands, as second-level domains, may be cost effective. Conversely, for SME's, it may be cost prohibitive to register or block every variation of their brand or trademark. Leaving it wide open for fraudsters to register and use the second-level domains. Companies will need to educate consumers about the new 'brand' gTLDs, so that they are aware they can trust the new names. There is also the risk that consumers may not view the new 'universal' gTLDs (.music, .bike, .app etc.) as legitimate.

## Unknowns

How the search engines will handle the gTLDs is not yet known. Given that both Microsoft and Google have purchased gTLDs, it is a good bet that having a gTLD, that is relevant to a company, will help in the search rankings. However, there is no guarantee this will be the case, and the possibility remains that having a gTLD may negatively impact a company's search ranking. It may also change the way search works – in the future people may look for local suppliers, using a geographic reference – such as .la, .nyc or .london. If this occurs, location based domain names may become highly desirable (and expensive) in the way .com is today.

## Protection in the Age of gTLDs

Security solutions companies are not to be left behind with the release of the new gTLDs. Whois API specializes in providing Whois database access that can be used in tracking cybercriminals and hackers. Whois API enhanced its scalability and product suite in preparation for the launch of

the new gTLDs, and provides critical data and tools to combat cybercrimes relating to the new gTLDs. Whois API's three major products are for businesses and companies with the infrastructure and expertise to carry out Whois database searches to track malicious activity on their sites.

### Hosted Whois Webservice

The Hosted Whois Webservice is an online-based service that returns well-parsed Whois fields for every URL request made in common formats, such as the XML and JSON.

### Whois Database Download

Whois API also provides an offline alternative to the hosted webservice in the form of the Whois Database Download. Organizations can opt to have access to downloadable archived historic Whois database. Records can be displayed in raw text or raw text and parsed formats, and are downloaded as database dumps (MYSQL or MYSSQL dump) or CSV files (Office Excel-based). This service offers Whois archived records for most of the major GTLDs (generic top-level domains) such as, .com, .net, .org, .us, .biz, .mobi, .info, .pro, .coop, and .asia.

Besides cybercrime investigation, the database download can also be used in statistical research analysis and in extracting fine-grained information even from archived Whois records.

### Reverse Whois

Tracking and investigating online crimes can also be a game of trial and error and random searches. In other cases, "inactive" cybercriminals and hackers may even be identified by a simple random search on the Whois database. And yet, in a few more cases, searches made on the Whois database are not to purposely track and investigate cybercriminals, but to simply look up and research on a domain name for business purposes.

Whether you're a company looking for a domain name for your site, or you're out to catch that hacker, the Reverse Whois allows one to make a search on the Whois database with a single piece of data to yield a wealth of information using the principle of keyword matching.