

Domain Registration: When to Opt for Privacy Protection

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Domain names have publicly accessible records including the owner's personal information. Details such as name, address, city, state, zip, country, phone number and email address may find mention on the Whois record. The information shows when the domain name was registered, when it will expire, where the website is hosted as well as other technical details.

The records are available anytime to anyone who does a search. Domain registrars are required by ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) to make the contact information available, which can be used for legitimate purposes such as verifying ownership of a domain name in a transfer request. It can be used by law enforcement agencies as well when investigating illegal activities.

However, domain records may also be used in illegitimate or undesirable manner. Your personal information will be available to spammers, hackers, identity thieves and stalkers as well. Unethical companies may check domain expiration dates and attempt to get the domain owners to transfer domains to their company by sending official looking 'renewal' communication. Email and snail mail spammers use the Whois database to collect domain owners' contact information.

A service called privacy protection can shield you from such misuse. When you choose privacy protection, the personal information is not listed on the Whois record. Though you retain the ownership, the information of the registrar's privacy service will appear.

However, you need to be mindful that if you want the domain name transferred to another registrar, the privacy protection has to be removed. For that, you must be willing to deal with some red tape for that.

The process of domain privacy protection differs with every registrar. It may be included in the cost of your yearly registration or they may seek a small fee.

Some customers tend to dig into **Whois domain search** to verify the merchants' credentials before taking a buying decision. Missing contact information may create a red flag during this scenario. They may take it as evidence that the company is trying to hide something. A company can steer clear of such impression by providing all relevant information on the site itself.