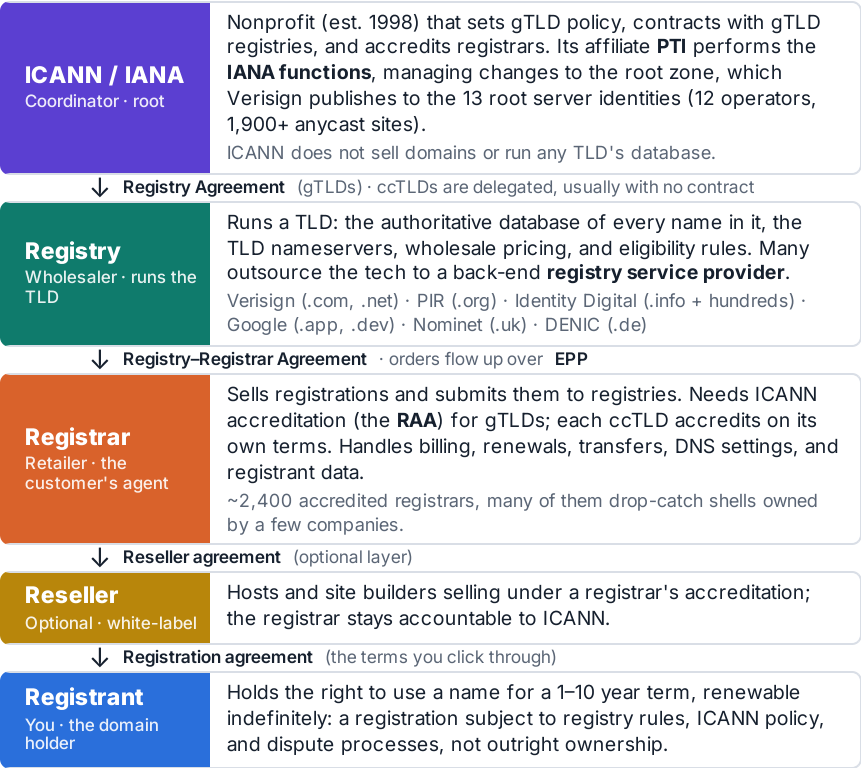


How Domain Registration Works

Who runs the namespace, who sells the names, who pays whom, and how a domain lives and dies.

www.example.com.
subdomain · domain · TLD · root

1 THE CHAIN OF DELEGATION



2 BY THE NUMBERS

360M+
domain names registered across all TLDs

~1,450
TLDs in the root zone

~160M
.com names: by far the largest TLD

~300
ccTLDs, incl. ~60 in non-Latin scripts (IDN)

3 FOLLOW THE MONEY

Registrant
pays retail

Registrar
pays wholesale

Registry
pays ICANN fees

ICANN

- Registrar margin** = retail – wholesale – ICANN fee. Thin on commodity TLDs; registrars make it up on add-ons and services.
- ICANN** gets **\$0.20 per gTLD domain-year** via registrars, plus registry fees. ccTLDs contribute only voluntarily.
- Wholesale price caps** apply to .com and a few legacy TLDs; most new gTLDs price freely, including "premium" names.

Who makes the rules

- GNSO** develops gTLD policy (contracted parties, business, IP, noncommercial users).
- ccNSO** is the forum for ccTLD managers; **GAC** advises on government concerns.
- SSAC**, **RSSAC**, **ALAC** advise on security, root servers, end users.
- Board** adopts policy; **Compliance** enforces contracts.

4 TWO KINDS OF TOP-LEVEL DOMAIN

	gTLDs: generic	ccTLDs: country code
What	Any string 3+ chars, e.g. .com .org .shop .app .bank	Two letters from ISO 3166-1, e.g. .uk .de .jp .ca .us, plus IDN versions like .ph
Flavors	Legacy (.com .net .org .info .biz) · Sponsored/restricted (.edu .gov .aero) · New gTLDs from the 2012 round (~1,200 delegated) · .brand TLDs (.google, .bmw)	Local (often require local presence: .ca, .eu, .au) · Open/"repurposed" sold globally as generics (.io .co .ai .tv .me)
Rules & disputes	ICANN consensus policy + each registry's contract. UDRP mandatory; URS for new gTLDs.	Local operator or government, under national law. Own dispute policy (some adopt UDRP).
Data & WHOIS	RDAP required (WHOIS obligations ended Jan 2025); personal data redacted by default since GDPR	Varies widely; many publish little or nothing
What's new	ICANN's 2026 new gTLD round took applications 30 Apr – 12 Aug 2026 (\$227,000 each); approved strings reach the root over the next few years.	

5 LIFE OF A GTLD DOMAIN (ccTLDs set their own)

Available anyone can register First come, first served.	Registered 1–10 yr term · renewable 5-day add grace period. Transfers need an auth code, add a year, and are usually blocked for 60 days after registration or a prior transfer.	Expired / grace ~0–45 days Parked or suspended; renewable at normal price.	Redemption 30 days Deleted, but restorable by the old registrant for a fee.	Pending delete 5 days Locked; can't be restored.	Dropped available again Good names go to drop-catchers.
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What happens when you type a domain

- Your device asks a **recursive resolver** (ISP, 1.1.1.1, 8.8.8.8).
- The resolver asks a **root server**: "who handles .com?"
- The **registry's TLD nameservers** reply with the domain's nameservers, which the registrant set via the registrar.
- Those **authoritative nameservers** (any DNS host) return the IP; answers are cached per TTL.

Under the hood

EPP – the protocol registrars use to create, renew, and transfer names at registries.

RDAP – the JSON-based successor to WHOIS for looking up registration data.

DNSSEC – signs DNS answers; the registrar passes a DS record to the registry to link the chain of trust.