Before You Sign Up

Getting Started · https://umw.domains/guides/preparing-to-sign-up/

Whether you are signing up for Domain of One's Own in class, at a DKC appointment, or on your own, there are few things you'll need to do beforehand. You only get **one** free domain in your time at UMW, and you can't change it after you've signed up, so we don't want you to rush into that decision.

Before you come to a class or appointment where you'll be signing up for Domain of One's Own, you'll need to:

1. **Understand what you are getting into**
2. **Decide on your domain**
3. **Make sure your domain is available**
4. **Bring a computer**

You can find more information about each of these steps below.

Step 1. Understand what you are getting into

Domain of One's Own is a program, invented at UMW, that allows all faculty, staff, and students to claim a **domain** and start building their own digital space on the open web. Using **subdomains**, you can build as many websites as you want on your domain, for class or personal projects, and it is all **free** during your time at UMW. Everything you build on Domain of One's Own is **yours**, and you can take it with you when you leave UMW (if you want to).

What is a "domain?"

A domain is the URL, or web address, that allows viewers to access your website.

For example, **janedoe.net**, **google.com**, and **umw.edu** are all domains.

Remember, **you only get one domain during your time at UMW, and you can't change it once you've signed up!**

What is a "subdomain?"

A subdomain is a division of your main domain that functions as a completely independent website. Using subdomains, you can have separate websites for different classes, projects, hobbies, or activities you are involved in. Subdomains can look and feel totally different from you main domain, and from each other, but they will always have your main domain in the web address.

For example, **fsem.janedoe.net**, **photos.google.com**, and **careers.umw.edu** are all subdomains.

You can have as many subdomains as you want, and you can create them anytime after you sign up.

For more information on what you can do with your domain, see our Domain of One's Own Overview,

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Step 2. Decide on your domain

Before signing up for Domain of One’s Own, you’ll need to pick what domain you want.

You only get one free domain in your time at UMW, and you can’t change it, so think carefully! We recommend something with your name, or something unique to you.

You can only pick domains that end in **.com**, **.net**, or **.org**, and the domain must be available (not already claimed by someone else).

Do not choose a domain name that is specific to a class, club, or event. You can make **subdomains** (for example, **fsem100.janedoe.net**) later for things like this.

Some Good Examples

janedoe.net (good if that's your name, not so great otherwise)

jdoe.com (same as above)

janesays.org (good for all Janes everywhere)

Some Bad Examples

janedoefsem100.com (not useful once the class is done)

google.com (already taken, sorry)

zoodleracer.net (...what does this mean?)

For more advice on picking a quality domain name, see our guide on Best Practices for Choosing a Domain Name.

Step 3. Check if your domain is available

There are many sites that can help you determine if a domain is available, but one we recommend is whois.com.

Just type the domain you are interested in (e.g. janedoe.com) into the search window and it will tell you if the domain is available. It will also suggest some alternatives if the domain is not available.

NOTE: whois.com is not affiliated with Domain of One's Own or UMW. **Do not buy anything from this site**! We will buy the domain for you as part of your Domain of One's Own sign-up.

Step 4. Bring a computer

There are some things you just won't be able to do on a phone, so make sure you have a computer that can access the internet when signing up.

You are ready to go!

That's it! If you are ready, you can sign up on your own at umw.domains. If you'd rather go through sign up with a person who can help, feel free to book a Website Project appointment with a DKC consultant at dkc.umw.edu.

Reviewed by Abby Firestone 06/17/26