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How to change the domain on your hosting plan

Domains & DNS

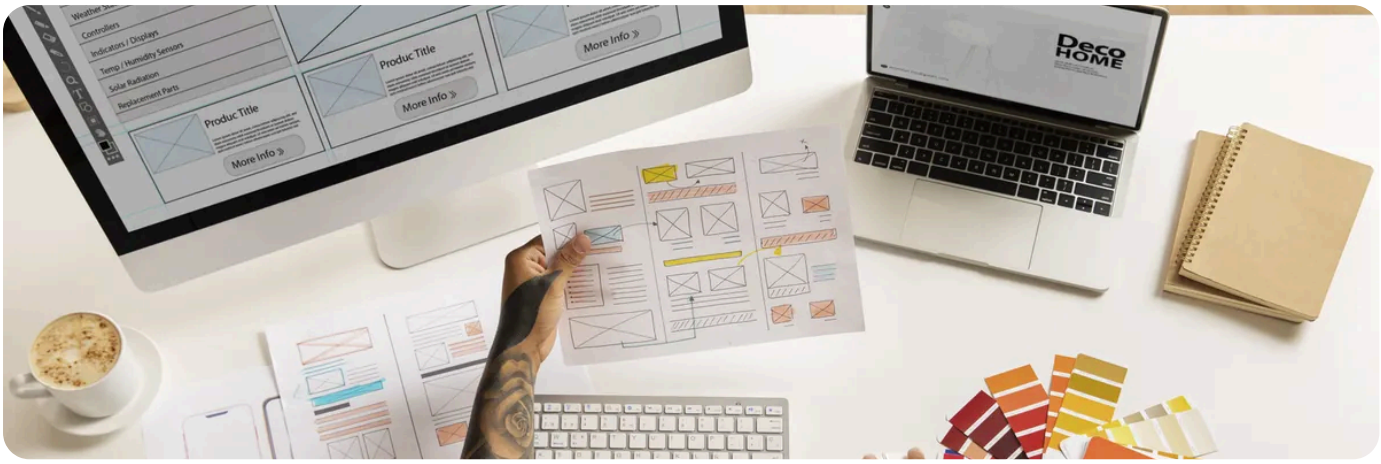
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How to change the domain on your hosting plan

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Every hosting plan has a **primary domain**: the name you typed when you ordered. It names the account, it owns the *public_html* folder, and the mailboxes belong to it. Changing that name is possible - but it is not a button on your side, and there are things to decide first.

First of all: do you actually need to change it?

If what you want is for the site to open on another name **as well**, change nothing - add an alias instead. It takes two minutes, touches nothing that already works and does not interrupt e-mail. See **parked domains: the same site on more than one name**. Changing the primary domain is only worth it when the old name really is going to stop being the name of the house.

What changes and what stays put

What	What happens
The site address	Becomes the new one. We handle that.
The files	Stay where they are. The folder does not move, nor does the content.
The databases	Stay. Their names do not depend on the domain.
The SSL certificate	The new name gets its own automatically. It can take up to an hour.
The mailboxes	This is the delicate part - they are tied to the domain name. More below.
What WordPress has stored	**Does not change by itself.** That part is yours, and we explain how.

Three decisions before you ask

1. **Does the new domain already exist and already point here?** It has to be registered - with us or with another provider - with its nameservers pointing at our server. See **how to configure a domain DNS**.

2. **Does the old domain stay or go?** In most cases it is worth keeping it as an alias: anyone with the old address saved still reaches the site, and search results do not vanish overnight.

3. **Is there e-mail on the old domain?** If there is, tell us how many mailboxes and whether you want them on the new name. It is the one point that can interrupt work, which is why we plan it first.

How to ask

The change is made in the server administration and in your billing record - two places, which is why it goes through us. Open a ticket with these four lines and nothing else is needed:

```
Current plan domain:        theoldsite.com
New domain:                 thenewsite.com
Keep the old one as alias:  yes / no
Mailboxes to migrate:       yes (how many) / no
```

Pick the hour.
Tell us if you would rather it happened outside working hours. The switch itself is quick, but between the name changing and the new SSL being ready there is a short window where the browser may warn about the site. At the end of the day that bothers nobody.

What is left for you afterwards

This is what surprises people most when they change domain: the site still knows the old name, because it stored it internally. There are four places, and all of them can be done the same day.

Where	What to do
The address stored in WordPress	Under *Settings → General*, the *WordPress Address* and *Site Address* fields. If the site will no longer open so you can reach the dashboard, tell us: we change it directly in the database.
Addresses written inside the pages	Links, images and buttons where somebody typed the full address instead of the path. A *search and replace* plugin sorts them all at once.
Rules in .htaccess	Old redirects mentioning the old name start pointing at the wrong place. It is worth opening the file and reading it.

Where	What to do
Outside services	Google Search Console, Google Analytics, forms, payments, social networks and anything else with the site address configured in it.

WordPress does not update itself.
Some providers advertise that the WordPress database is corrected automatically when the domain changes. **Do not assume that.** Here, the files and the database stay exactly as they were - and that is better, because an automatic mass replacement inside a database breaks as much as it fixes. Do it yourself, with a copy saved first - see **how to restore your data with JetBackup**.

The mailboxes, in detail

An e-mail address belongs to a domain. If the primary domain becomes another one, `hello@theoldsite.com` and `hello@thenewsite.com` are two different mailboxes - even when the person is the same.

In practice there are three routes, and one gets chosen before anything starts:

Route	When it fits
Keep the old domain as an alias	The old mail keeps arriving normally. It is the calmest route and the one we recommend nearly always.
Create the mailboxes on the new name and forward	You move to the new address without losing what arrives at the old one, for as long as you like.
Switch outright	Only when the old name really is going away. Warn your contacts well ahead - and expect some to keep writing to the old address for months.

Save the messages first.
If you use POP, the old messages are on your computer and not on the server. If you use IMAP, they are on the server and travel with the mailbox. It is worth knowing which case is yours before anything moves - see **POP or IMAP: which to choose**.

If it is a VPS or dedicated server

On your own server the primary domain is part of the machine's configuration, and there is also the *hostname* and the nameservers to consider - separate things, and they do not all change at the same time. Open a ticket telling us what you want to end up with, not only what you want changed: it is the order of operations that avoids the outage.

NEED A HAND?

Send us the current name and the new one - we do the rest.

Open a ticket →

MozOut International

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