

Defining Internet Addresses

Every computer on the Internet has two unique addresses. The *Internet Protocol (IP)* address is a series of four sets of numbers separated by periods, for example, 187.85.254.01. Because numbers are easy for computers to use, but difficult for humans to remember, the *Domain Name System (DNS)* was created.

The Domain Name System assigns a name, chosen by the site administrator, to each site's IP address. When you enter the domain name, it is automatically converted into the IP address, which is then used to route your information to and from the site. A typical domain name might be:

www.megacorp.com

The www prefix is often used to indicate that the site is accessible through the *World Wide Web*. This is followed by the remainder of the domain name. The portion of the name following the final period (.com in this case) is known as the *top-level domain* name.

The top-level domain denotes the type of organization maintaining an Internet site. Occasionally, the top-level domain identifies the country in which the computer is located. There are six top-level domains, as shown in Table 1-2.

Abbreviation	Domain
.com	commercial organizations
.edu	educational institutions
.gov	government agencies
.mil	military sites and organizations
.net	network centers and resources
.org	other organizations, generally non-profit

Table 1-2: *Top-Level Domains*

Commercial online service providers or Internet service providers usually use .com or .net as the top-level domain for their Internet addresses.