

# The Anatomy of a Web Address

## BREAKING DOWN A URL TO UNDERSTAND ITS PARTS

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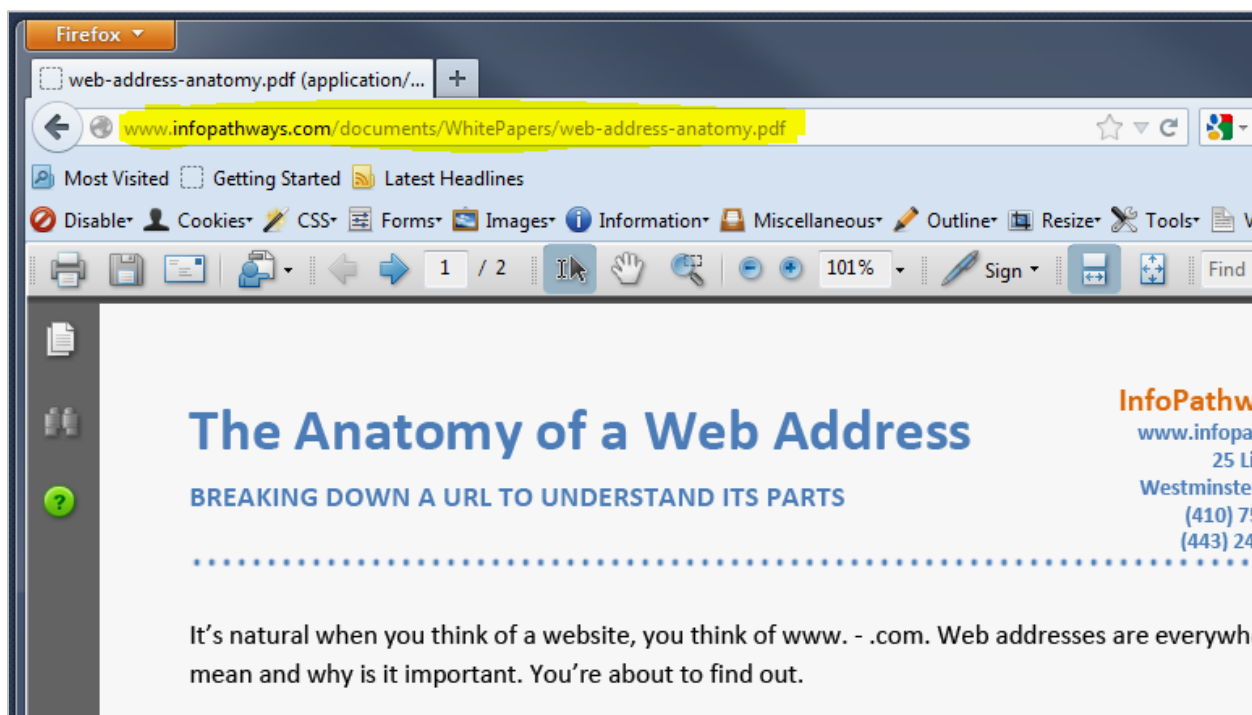


It's natural to begin with www. when you think of a website and to end with .com/.org/.net. Web addresses are everywhere. But what does it all mean and why is it important? You're about to find out.

"Web Address" is the layman's term for the technical term URL, which stands for Universal Resource Locator.

### Let's use the URL of this online document as an example:

<http://www.infopathways.com/documents/WhitePapers/web-address-makeup.pdf>



**http://** stands for "Hyper Text Transfer Protocol". http:// tells the computer to transfer a webpage (hypertext) from the internet to your computer. Now a days, you do not need to type "http://" before the rest of your web address because computers assume it. However, it is often necessary to create a properly working hyperlink (a clickable link on a webpage or in a digital document). You may also see https://, which represents a secure, encrypted webpage, often for sites that contain and/or collect confidential or sensitive data.

**www.** stands for "World Wide Web", and is also abbreviated as WWW or W3, and is often referred to as the "Web". Do not confuse the World Wide Web with the "Internet", as they are not the same. Internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks. The Web is made up of text documents hyperlinked together and is just a part of the Internet. The WWW denotes the subdomain. This is normally considered the default of a web site, but can be one of several subdomains for a site. Not every subdomain in a URL has to be "www". Subdomains are the third level domains

that can be used to organize your web site content. In <http://products.yoursite.com> “products” is a subdomain within “yoursite.com”. Subdomains can use the same design/layout as your primary domain, or it may be completely different.

**infopathways** in this instance represents a unique Domain Name used for one website. Every website has to have a registered Domain Name. Often the name chosen will represent the company, the product, the service, and/or location in some way.

**.com** (commercial) is the most common “Top Level Domain”; other common TLDs include .org (non-profits), .edu (educational), .gov (government), and .net (network). By top level, we mean it is at the highest level in the hierarchical Domain Name System of the Internet.

**/documents/WhitePapers/** represent folder levels within our website’s Root Folder (aka: the main folder holding all of the web files that make up the website... pages, images, documents, css, and other code). By looking at the full URL, you can begin to visualize the file structure of the website. In this instance, “WhitePaper” is a folder inside of “documents” which is a folder inside the main Root Folder.

**web-address-makeup.pdf** represents our final destination, the page or file we are looking at. This is the file name of the page or document. In this instance, we are looking at a PDF (Portable Document Format) File. You may often see that the home page of a website has a file name of index.htm, index.html, index.asp, etc. All represent a file type; HTML is the most common and stands for “Hyper Text Markup Language”, which is the name of the type of code used to build the web page. Today, there are various web-languages that make up the final code of a webpage. For example, <http://www.infopathways.com/index.aspx> is the home page of the InfoPathways website.

## How will this knowledge benefit you?

Many of these elements, though good to understand, may not impact the way you surf the web. However, there are important facts to reinforce:

When dealing with money online (banking, credit card or PayPal purchases, etc.), it is extremely important that the site read <https://>. That “s” could mean the difference between a secure transfer of money or a scam artist taking you for all you’ve got.

You also need to be cautious of spam emails. Many a time, an email may look legit – they ask you to click the link to reset your password or to log into your account. Look at the web address very carefully before you enter any data. For example, banks should never email you out of the blue to reset your password or to have you log into your account to check something. Again, these are often from scam artists looking to collect your sensitive data and deplete your account. If anything looks suspicious, such as the grammar of the email, the graphics, or if the web address is spelled incorrectly, get out and disregard the email.

Overall, an understanding of web addresses will make you a better web user.

## Surf safely my friends!