

Connecting an MIT URL to an Outsourced Website

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Context

If you've outsourced your web hosting, and you're working on behalf of an official DLC, you can request that we do a DNS mapping so that your site can be made visible under an MIT name.

MIT will not delegate name server control (so no NS records) but we will provide CNAME and A records, as well as any TXT validation records needed, AAAA records if requested, etc.

In general, look for language like "connect a domain" in your vendor's documentation or service descriptions to find out more about their offerings and processes for connecting an MIT URL to their web hosting services.



We will need a written request

We know these can be tricky. We still need you to make written requests with the technical details. Please read carefully below. If a certain website provider is too hard to get the details from, you may need to give up your hosting plan and choose something easier. Please do not ask us to get on a zoom call or read your hosting provider's documentation.

Is my project entitled to use MIT namespace?

The rules given for our CampusPress service for name allocation apply to all top level names: <https://sites.mit.edu/custom-domain-names/>.

MIT Departments, Labs and Centers are eligible for a custom domain name. All custom domain names are subject to yearly review. Personal sites, portfolio sites, and CV sites will not be given custom domain names.

MIT Student groups sponsored through formal channels (those that request and receive written approval to be sponsored by a department, laboratory, or center) or clubs recognized by the Association of Student Activities are also eligible for a custom domain name.

SSL/https certificates

Many commercial web hosting providers will also request an appropriate https certificate from [Let's Encrypt](#), once your DNS has been transferred over - the process will often take about 30min to complete. We'll try to note below if we encounter any providers who don't do this smoothly.

Providers

- **Github Pages (github.io)**

As of spring 2023, setting up a validation record is not optional; please follow the instructions here: [Github.io Verify Custom Domain](#)

You should establish a something.github.io hostname for the entire site; we will not be able to work with a requested path that is something.github.io/somethingelse.

Note also that we do not provide Github Pages functionality on our internal github (github.mit.edu) - you must use the externally hosted github if you wish to host web content there.

We will provide a CNAME record:

CNAME <mit sitemame> something.github.io

See also: [Using GitHub to Manage or Host an MIT Website](#)

• Gitlab (gitlab.io)

This will look extremely similar to github, with a non-optional TXT record looking like

_gitlab-pages-verification-code.something.mit.edu TXT gitlab-pages-verification-code=<string of hex>

as well as a single CNAME. Please be sure to provide both halves of the desired records in a format we can cut and paste.

• Google



Google is difficult to use for hosting

While some customers have been successful with Google Sites, we can't recommend this hosting, because the instructions seem to change frequently and have been difficult for many customers to follow. Please only proceed here if you have a strong ability to make technical requests.

You will likely need a verification TXT record first:

<your hostname>.mit.edu TXT google-site-verification=<some generated string>

After that has been provided (by us), you'll verify with google and perhaps your name will need to be a CNAME on GHS.GOOGLEHOSTED.COM.

Please beware that you should request something.mit.edu and not www.something.mit.edu - any request that includes the WWW part is probably wrong.



Tell us whose account this is tied to

If you go ahead with Google, understand that the site contents will be difficult to transfer to a new owner, and we cannot look up who owns a given URL. Please set these up on an MIT domain Google account, and document with us whose account is linked to the website, and document a transfer plan to another user if the site is to outlast your tenure at MIT.

• Heroku

There's several possible formats, but we will usually provide a CNAME to sitemame.herokuapp.com.

Please follow through enough with Heroku to get https certificates installed; this requires customer intervention.

• Netlify



Troubles as of 09/2023

While Netlify was once a reasonable place to use MIT domains against free accounts (and we have a dozen or so set up) recent contact with support has denied that setups are possible except on a case by case basis with paid accounts. Instructions below reflect the previous state.

You need to add a configuration in "Site settings -> Domain management" then we need to add a CNAME, usually just with a target of the netlify site name.

[Netlify Custom Domains](#)

[Netlify Configure External DNS](#)

• Pantheon

Pantheon is a strong provider with first class support; you will be asking for the MIT name to be a CNAME on something.pantheonsite.io.

- **Squarespace**

[Connecting a Domain to Your Squarespace Site](#)

Squarespace requires multiple A records, for the primary name, plus a CNAME record for `www.something.mit.edu` plus a verification code that will be `[hd:some string of characters].something.mit.edu` as a CNAME to `VERIFY.SQUARESPACE.COM`. We need to be told what the unique verification code is, but everything else is stock. Client MUST supply the verification string as copied text - screen captures are not acceptable.



No Email Sending

Please be advised that Squarespace's email sending service is something we won't support/allow with `mit.edu` email addresses; please use Squarespace as a website provider only.

- **Vercel**

We will provide a CNAME record and a validation record that looks like:

`TXT _vercel.mit.edu vc-domain-verify=something.mit.edu,nnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn`

Where you should copy and paste the exact code given.

- **WebFlow**

We will add a single CNAME record:

`TYPENAMEVALUE`

`CNAME <mit sitename> proxy-ssl.webflow.com`

- **Weebly**



Weebly/Square acquisition went poorly - Do not use

As of spring 2023, we've seen changes to the hosting that allows the `www.something.mit.edu` name to be taken over by spammers, and had no effective remediation. MIT names will not be mapped to Weebly going forward, and existing customers should plan for migration somewhere safer.

- **Wix**

[Wix Connecting a Domain You Purchased Elsewhere](#)

Additionally, we won't provide NS records, so from there you will need this option:

[Connecting a Domain to Wix Using Pointing](#)

Wix can provide the following information: an A record for `something.mit.edu`, and a CNAME record for `www.something.mit.edu` - the CNAME data is particular to the site in question and will be something like `WWWnn.WIXDNS.NET`, where `nn` is a two digit number. This information can be checked Escalations team and by then relayed to IDE for an update of MIT's DNS records.

- **WordPress.com**

We will add a single CNAME record to `wordpresssitename.wordpress.com`, but you will need to first follow the instructions here:

[Wordpress Steps for Mapping a Domain](#)

- **wpengine**

We will add a single CNAME record to `wordpresssitename.wpengine.com`, you will need to follow these instructions:

[wpengine Add Domain Site](#)

- **Microsoft Azure (azurewebsites.net)**

Free (F1) tier is not sufficient, need to upgrade to a paid tier. But name mapping by CNAME is available per:

[Azure Custom DNS Tutorial](#)

- **GoDaddy**



Don't use GoDaddy

We have had trouble getting this information from GoDaddy. Please avoid using GoDaddy, or proceed with extreme caution.

- **Other outsource providers not listed**

Look for documentation that matches to "connect a domain you already own" and "map a hostname". Steer away from a vendor who requires that they manage your DNS for you (or instructions for transferring your domain over to them). We're happy to update this documentation if you've successfully worked through this and have the links you used.

Making the request

We will need:

- Staff or faculty member's contact information and permission/sponsorship.
 - A cost object (which won't be billed) to track it under.
 - The technical DNS details.
- Let us know at servicedesk@mit.edu with all of the technical details in an organized manner.



Copy and Paste

Sometimes a screenshot helps us clarify the context of a situation, but if the vendor is asking for a validation string, please make sure that you also copy and paste that into the text of your question. It's not accurate or convenient to ask us to transcribe data out of a screenshot.

MIT owned web pages should comply with [MIT's accessibility agreement](#); please take care of this on the remote website before making your request.

Follow Up

Leaving an MIT hostname attached to a broken or absent website is not acceptable. It's your responsibility to:

- Complete any setup steps to attach the name fully in a timely manner
- Keep your hosting account organized and paid up
- Hand off hosting management to a suitable successor when you leave MIT
- Comply with MIT's branding and accessibility policies
- Inform us when you are done with the project.

Escalation information for Service Desk Staff



Service Desk staff must login to access internal links.

Overview and request template: [Can I have mything.mit.edu pointing to this other web site?]