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Top-Level Domains (TLDs) for the Chinese market

Choosing the right domain strategy for China is less about “getting a .cn” and more about ownership rules, search expectations, and performance.

A domain registered in China can enable Chinese name services (NS/DNS) and improve reliability — without needing to use a Chinese ccTLD.



Foundation Being seen in China articles

Discovery Being found in China article

Execution Start trading in China articles

Focus: domains + China rules

Audience: overseas businesses

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Summary: TLDs for the Chinese market

- **Do not** use Chinese ccTLDs (e.g. `.cn` , `.com.cn` , `.gov.cn`) for an overseas business presence.
- In **2022**, Chinese authorities changed ownership rules: **only Chinese companies and citizens can own Chinese TLDs**.
- Overseas companies can still **purchase a domain in China**, enabling the use of Chinese national name services.
- Chinese search engines prioritise traditional TLDs such as `.com` , `.net` , `.co` , and `.cn` .
- **Our recommendation:** keep your current TLD (`.com` / `.co`) and add `cn` to the domain label, e.g. `mydomaincn.com` or `mydomaincn.co` .
- Registering a domain **in China** can significantly improve online performance in China and local search visibility.

Practical takeaway: Being seen, being found, and starting to trade require using Chinese Name Servers to make your DNS records available throughout China.

Key terms: TLD, domain, NS and DNS

There are two main parts to a domain name you need to consider when making a purchase:

- **TLD (Top-Level Domain):** the part of the domain name that comes after the “dot”, e.g. `.com` , `.net` .
- **Domain:** the part that comes before the TLD, e.g. `mydomain` in `mydomain.com` .

The **domain name** is the domain + TLD, e.g. `mydomain.com` .

Top-level domains (TLDs): the three main groups

TLDs are broadly grouped as follows:

- **Country-code TLDs (ccTLDs):** two-letter TLDs assigned to countries/territories (e.g. `.uk` , `.cn` , `.de`) and managed by local authorities.
- **Sponsored gTLDs (sTLDs):** TLDs representing a defined community/sector (e.g. `.edu` , `.gov` , `.museum`), with sponsor policies.
- **Unponsored gTLDs (uTLDs):** generic TLDs managed by ICANN-accredited registries and open to general use (e.g. `.com` , `.net` , `.org` , `.info` , `.online`).



Quick checklist

Use this before purchasing a “China” domain.

- Are you trying to improve **performance** and **reach** — or just get a China-looking domain?
- Avoid Chinese ccTLD ownership risk: `.cn` / `.com.cn` are restricted.
- Prefer traditional TLDs (`.com` / `.co`) and add `cn` to the domain label (e.g. `mydomaincn.com`).
- Registering the domain in China can enable Chinese national name services (NS/DNS).
- Check China trademark/brand registrations before public launch.
- If you will publish content in China, understand ICP requirements and local compliance.

Reminder: A domain strategy is not only branding — it is also control, compliance, and performance.

Need help?

If you'd like help selecting a China-friendly domain strategy and setting up Chinese name services, contact support@accesstochina.com

Second-level ccTLDs under .cn

Within ccTLDs, there are also second-level ccTLDs. Examples under `.cn` include:

- `.com.cn` — commercial entities operating in China
- `.net.cn` — network-related organisations
- `.org.cn` — non-profits / organisations
- `.gov.cn` — government institutions
- `.edu.cn` — educational institutions
- `.mil.cn` — military organisations

Commonly used TLDs in China

Traditionally, commonly used TLDs in China include:

- `.com`
- `.cn`
- `.com.cn` (the original Chinese commercial format)

Chinese language domains and IDNs

You can register Internationalised Domain Names (IDNs) using non-Latin scripts, including Simplified and Traditional Chinese. Examples include:

- `.中国` — `.cn` in Simplified Chinese
- `.中國` — `.cn` in Traditional Chinese
- `.公司` — `.com` in Simplified Chinese
- `.网络` — `.net` in Simplified Chinese

You can also register the *domain label* in Chinese characters (e.g. 我的域名.com). While technically possible, we do **not** recommend it — its use is limited to people who can easily input Chinese on mobile/tablet keyboards.

Chinese ccTLD management and 2022 ownership rules

Chinese ccTLDs are operated and managed by the Chinese authorities. Since 2013, purchasing Chinese domains has been fully automated and typically involves a licensed Chinese supplier in the background.

In **2022**, Chinese authorities only allow Chinese companies and citizens to **own Chinese TLDs**. If an overseas business uses a Chinese TLD, the authorities can shut down the domain.

Important: Avoid building an overseas business presence on a Chinese ccTLD. Your control/continuity risk is materially higher than with a traditional TLD.

ICP rules and publishing content in China

Chinese authorities apply Internet Content Provider (ICP) rules if you publish content *within* China. When writing this paper, ICP rules do not apply if you use Chinese ccTLDs *outside* China, however policies can evolve.

We recommend refraining from publishing inappropriate materials for the Chinese market.

Brand registration checks

We always recommend registering your company trademarks and brand name(s) in China.

When publishing a domain in China, local authorities may check the Chinese brand registration database. If the name is a registered brand, you may not be permitted to use the domain name in China — even if you own it. You can still use the domain outside China.

Related reading: [Improving website performance in China](#)

Next step: [Chinese DNS and Name Server services](#)

 [Test your website from China](#)

 [Download "Top-Level Domain \(TLDs\) for the Chinese market" paper \(PDF\)](#)

Access to China — domain strategy and TLD guidance for being seen in China.

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