

Search Off the Record - 62nd episode

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[00:00:10] **Gary Illyes:** [00:00:10] (softly) Hello, and welcome to another episode of Search Off the Record, a podcast coming to you from the Google Search team, discussing all things Search and having some fun along the way. My name is sometimes Gary and I am joined today by the John and the Martin from the Search Relations team, of which I'm also part of. Now you may say hi.

[00:00:36] **John Mueller:** [00:00:36] (softly) Hi.

[00:00:37] **Martin Splitt:** [00:00:37] (softly) Hi.

[00:00:38] **Gary Illyes:** [00:00:38] And with that ASMR introduction, I bet you don't know why I have gathered you here today.

[00:00:46] **Martin Splitt:** [00:00:46] No, I never do.

[00:00:47] **Gary Illyes:** [00:00:47] That's true. John?

[00:00:49] **John Mueller:** [00:00:49] Is it cheese?

[00:00:50] **Gary Illyes:** [00:00:50] No, it's not cheese.

[00:00:51] **Martin Splitt:** [00:00:51] Oh, I would love it to be cheese though.

[00:00:53] **Gary Illyes:** [00:00:53] It is.

[00:00:54] **John Mueller:** [00:00:54] Cheese?

[00:00:54] **Gary Illyes:** [00:00:54] Potato peelers.

[00:00:56] **John Mueller:** [00:00:56] Oh!

[00:00:57] **Martin Splitt:** [00:00:57] Not potato peelers again. No!

[00:01:01] **Gary Illyes:** [00:01:01] Okay. How about we help people of the internet? Like all of them? Well, maybe not all of them. Some of them.

[00:01:10] **Martin Splitt:** [00:01:10] Okay.

[00:01:11] **John Mueller:** [00:01:11] Okay.

[00:01:11] **Martin Splitt:** [00:01:11] How?

[00:01:12] **Gary Illyes:** [00:01:12] You know those weird things like gmail.com, and example.com, and google.com and google.ai and... what are these things? What do you call them?

[00:01:26] **Martin Splitt:** [00:01:26] Top level domains?

[00:01:28] **Gary Illyes:** [00:01:28] Yes! [audio ping for correct] Good job, Martin.

[00:01:30] **John Mueller:** [00:01:30] Browsers?

[00:01:31] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:01:31] Oh, god. Not browsers. [audio ping for incorrect]

[00:01:33] **Martin Splitt:** [00:01:33] No, John, get some cheese.

[00:01:35] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:01:35] Oh. So how about we help... well, we try to help people pick a domain name. How about that?

[00:01:43] **John Mueller:** [00:01:43] Okay. [audio ping] Cool.

[00:01:45] **Martin Splitt:** [00:01:45] Sounds good to me. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

[00:01:47] **John Mueller:** [00:01:47] Which one should I pick?

[00:01:48] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:01:48] The left one.

[00:01:49] **Martin Splitt:** [00:01:49] Okay, but does it make a difference if I pick potatopeelers.com, or .ch or .ai or it doesn't really make a difference?

[00:01:59] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:01:59] These are the questions that we want to answer, right?

[00:02:01] **Martin Splitt:** [00:02:01] Oh, how convenient.

[00:02:02] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:02:02] Because technically, it can be helpful if you know whether you should pick .xyz or z for weird people, or .com or .ai or .ch domain name, right?

[00:02:16] **Martin Splitt:** [00:02:16] Okay, yeah.

[00:02:17] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:02:17] So that's something that we should cover, probably.

[00:02:20] **Martin Splitt:** [00:02:20] Okay.

[00:02:21] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:02:21] Maybe we should cover what should be in the second level, so google part of google.com, if you can choose that. In some cases, you cannot, like .co.uk. But then you can choose the third level. Maybe we can cover whether you should use a www or a non-www subdomain, because it is a subdomain.

[00:02:43] **John Mueller:** [00:02:43] Oh, Okay.

[00:02:45] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:02:45] What else? If we are at subdomains, then we could talk about whether you should have an m-dot mobile site.

[00:02:50] **John Mueller:** [00:02:50] No. No, you should not.

[00:02:52] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:02:52] Okay.

[00:02:53] **Martin Splitt:** [00:02:53] Wait, that's just another subdomain. Why would you not?

[00:02:56] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:02:56] Shh, shh. Wait. Okay, okay, okay. And then what else should we cover? John, do you have more ideas?

[00:03:01] **John Mueller:** [00:03:01] Dashes.

[00:03:02] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:03:02] Dashes?

[00:03:03] **Martin Splitt:** [00:03:03] Yes.

[00:03:04] **John Mueller:** [00:03:04] Dashing dashes or no dashes?

[00:03:06] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:03:06] Potato-peelers or potatopeelers?

[00:03:09] **John Mueller:** [00:03:09] Maybe whether you should have keywords that you are targeting in a domain name? We could cover that as well.

[00:03:15] **Martin Splitt:** [00:03:15] Cool.

[00:03:16] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:03:16] Okay. Then let's dive in.

[00:03:18] ♪ [jingle] ♪

[00:03:20] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:03:20] Let's do the first level, like the first level domain. So it's .com, .net, .xyz, so on and so on. Which one should you pick?

[00:03:30] **Martin Splitt:** [00:03:30] Does it make a difference? Besides the price?

[00:03:32] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:03:32] The price is definitely a thing to consider. I just looked up and .ai, for example, it costs me about 54 Swiss francs per year in the first year, and 130 something in the second year and forward.

[00:03:47] **John Mueller:** [00:03:47] Oh, wow!

[00:03:48] **Martin Splitt:** [00:03:48] Yeah, Appenzell Innerrhoden isn't so big, so they don't have as much space for domains. So it's limited, right?

[00:03:54] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:03:54] I don't think it's about Appenzell.

[00:03:56] **Martin Splitt:** [00:03:56] What? Everything is about Appenzell.

[00:03:58] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:03:58] Let's not get into politics.

[00:04:00] **John Mueller:** [00:04:00] Wait, you're saying at Google I/O, Sundar was not talking about Appenzell Innerrhoden?

[00:04:07] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:04:07] Shockingly, no.

[00:04:09] **Martin Splitt:** [00:04:09] Oh!

[00:04:11] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:04:11] I know.

[00:04:11] **Martin Splitt:** [00:04:11] Okay.

[00:04:12] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:04:12] But also, let's not get into politics because reasons.

[00:04:15] **Martin Splitt:** [00:04:15] Right. So should I use ai for my stuff then? Because it's probably super popular.

[00:04:20] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:04:20] It's expensive, right?

[00:04:21] **Martin Splitt:** [00:04:21] Yeah.

[00:04:22] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:04:22] It's kind of expensive, especially if you are considering TLDs, like top-level domain names, like xyz, which you can get for a few bucks.

[00:04:32] **Martin Splitt:** [00:04:32] Hmm.

[00:04:33] **John Mueller:** [00:04:33] Okay.

[00:04:34] **Martin Splitt:** [00:04:34] But is more expensive better?

[00:04:35] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:04:35] Well, I guess it depends what you are going to use it for. Basically, if you are using a .ai, you can already hint that you're building, perhaps, an AI product, like a machine learning-based product, perhaps.

[00:04:49] **John Mueller:** [00:04:49] Okay. But ai top-level domain is for Ascension Islands. Does that matter?

[00:04:54] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:04:54] Kind of. But then how many people are there in Ascension Islands who would have your site boosted in their search results?

[00:05:03] **Martin Splitt:** [00:05:03] Hmm.

[00:05:03] **John Mueller:** [00:05:03] Okay.

[00:05:04] **Martin Splitt:** [00:05:04] So basically, no, I guess?

[00:05:06] **John Mueller:** [00:05:06] So it doesn't matter. Okay, fantastic.

[00:05:08] **Martin Splitt:** [00:05:08] If you are targeting a specific country and you can afford it, then usually it is helpful to pick your country top-level domain name. For example, if you are in Switzerland, then picking the CH, which stands for the Confoederatio Helvetica, which is the Latin name of Switzerland, that can be helpful because maybe, your users will trust that domain name more, perhaps. And then in search, you might also get a tiny boost of people who are searching from Switzerland.

[00:05:42] **John Mueller:** [00:05:42] Okay, like geotargeting.

[00:05:44] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:05:44] Yeah.

[00:05:45] **John Mueller:** [00:05:45] Cool.

[00:05:45] **Martin Splitt:** [00:05:45] Okay, so the top-level domain influences geotargeting.

[00:05:48] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:05:48] The country TLDs, yes. The ccTLDs.

[00:05:52] **Martin Splitt:** [00:05:52] Okay, so not all of them. All right, that makes sense.

[00:05:55] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:05:55] Not all of them. And even there, there are exceptions, because we have .asia, we have .eu. What else do we have?

[00:06:04] **John Mueller:** [00:06:04] But I think technically, those are generic top-level domains.

[00:06:07] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:06:07] And we treat them as generic.

[00:06:09] **Martin Splitt:** [00:06:09] Okay.

[00:06:10] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:06:10] But then you also have, I think, .tv.

[00:06:14] **John Mueller:** [00:06:14] Oh, yeah.

[00:06:14] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:06:14] One of those old ccTLDs. And we also treat that as generic.

[00:06:20] **John Mueller:** [00:06:20] I think we have a list in the Help Center.

[00:06:22] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:06:22] Yes.

[00:06:23] **John Mueller:** [00:06:23] I pointed someone at that recently. Yeah. Okay, and among the generic ones, are any better or worse? You said, xyz is super cheap. I don't know. I haven't even looked recently. Should I use xyz because it's cheap, or should I try to get a .com, or should I get .coffee? What should I get?

[00:06:45] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:06:45] Hmm. I mean, my gut reaction is people should stay away from the cheapest TLDs, especially if they are free.

[00:06:55] **John Mueller:** [00:06:55] Okay.

[00:06:55] **Martin Splitt:** [00:06:55] Why that?

[00:06:56] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:06:56] Because of spammers.

[00:06:58] **John Mueller:** [00:06:58] Oh, basically, if the TLD is filled with spam, then search engines might have trouble finding your content.

[00:07:04] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:07:04] Yeah.

[00:07:04] **Martin Splitt:** [00:07:04] Or thinking that your site might be the exception to the others. Okay.

[00:07:10] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:07:10] I don't actually know if .xyz is overrun with spam. But if we say that .example is overrun by spam, and over 99% of the content there is spam, then we might not want to pick up sitemaps from those domain names because the chances of leading to spam is way too high. But I think this is typically only affecting, or might only affect the free and the really cheap TLDs or ccTLDs exactly because they are cheap and it attracts spammers.

[00:07:52] **John Mueller:** [00:07:52] Okay. Cheap spammers. [scoffs]

[00:07:55] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:07:55] That's how you make big bucks. Come on, I can teach you. I mean I cannot, but...

[00:08:00] **John Mueller:** [00:08:00] [laughs] Okay, Gary, I see you're raring to go. So, one of the things that I know people struggle with is a lot of domain names are taken and they're for sale, but someone else registered them and they want to sell them to you for lots of money.

[00:08:20] If the .com version of my domain name is, I don't know, available for like \$10,000, and the .xyz one is \$5, should I just get the cheap one, or should I try to get the expensive one?

[00:08:34] **Gary Illyes:** [00:08:34] This goes back to the cheapest one, right? If it's the cheapest domain name available, or TLD available, then I would just not go for that. I would find something more expensive that is not basically easily accessible to spammers. But then going back to the \$10,000 or whatever funny money domain name, let's say .com, that should be a business decision. Like, do you need that branding or not for your business? Because if not, then investing \$10,000 funny money in a domain name might actually not make it worth.

[00:09:13] **John Mueller:** [00:09:13] Okay, so it's less like an SEO question and more a branding, marketing type question?

[00:09:19] **Gary Illyes:** [00:09:19] I think so.

[00:09:20] **John Mueller:** [00:09:20] Okay.

[00:09:20] **Gary Illyes:** [00:09:20] if you think about it, all those generic top-level domain names, they are treated equally in search. So for example, if you are based off of Berlin, which .berlin is also a generic domain name, not a ccTLD, not a country TLD, and you want to buy potatopeelers.com, but it's \$10,000, then you might as well just go for potatopeelers.berlin, because why not?

[00:09:47] **Martin Splitt:** [00:09:47] Hmm.

[00:09:48] **John Mueller:** [00:09:48] Okay.

[00:09:49] **Martin Splitt:** [00:09:49] Does it give me any benefit if I own a coffee shop, if I do fantastic.coffee as my domain from an SEO perspective?

[00:09:57] **Gary Illyes:** [00:09:57] I think people would be more likely to link to you.

[00:10:00] **Martin Splitt:** [00:10:00] (surprised) Oh!

[00:10:01] **John Mueller:** [00:10:01] But is there an inherent SEO advantage if you have a TLD that matches your keywords?

[00:10:08] **Gary Illyes:** [00:10:08] No.

[00:10:08] **John Mueller:** [00:10:08] No?

[00:10:09] **Martin Splitt:** [00:10:09] Oh! Damn, I was so smart.

[00:10:13] **John Mueller:** [00:10:13] What about .edu? Surely, if I run a school and I call it coffeepelers.edu...

[00:10:20] **Gary Illyes:** [00:10:20] [laughs]

[00:10:21] **John Mueller:** [00:10:21] ...then it will rank first for coffee peelers, right?

[00:10:25] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:10:25] This is going to be like Steve.

[00:10:28] **Martin Splitt:** [00:10:28] It's going to be like Steve.

[00:10:30] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:10:30] Like a running thing in the podcast.

[00:10:32] **Martin Splitt:** [00:10:32] Mm-Hmm.

[00:10:33] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:10:33] The myth is that a .edu and .gov domain, or getting links from those will give you more juice or whatever.

[00:10:42] **John Mueller:** [00:10:42] More juice!

[00:10:43] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:10:43] I don't even remember what it does. More link juice or something. I don't even remember what was the myth. But then owning those domain names might be actually impossible, right?

[00:10:53] **John Mueller:** [00:10:53] Oh, yeah. I tried to get a .gov domain, but there were people who wanted credentials, which was kind of awkward. I mean, You can buy new top-level domains. You can have your own .gary, for example. That would be fantastic.

[00:11:09] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:11:09] What makes you think I don't already have that? [laughs]

[00:11:12] **John Mueller:** [00:11:12] Okay, let me check. [simulates typing on keyboard]

[00:11:14] **Martin Splitt:** [00:11:14] I think It's really, really expensive and a lot of work.

[00:11:17] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:11:17] [laughs]

[00:11:18] **John Mueller:** [00:11:18] Okay.

[00:11:19] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:11:19] A lot of work and very annoying.

[00:11:21] **Martin Splitt:** [00:11:21] Mm-Hmm.

[00:11:22] **John Mueller:** [00:11:22] Does it make sense for me to get all of the top level domains? Like, I'm starting a new company, and nobody has thought of my brand name, which I will call Potato Peelers Best 2023.

[00:11:34] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:11:34] Oh, my god.

[00:11:35] **John Mueller:** [00:11:35] Should I get all of the top level domains, or does that even matter for Google?

[00:11:40] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:11:40] If you have lots of money, again, I think it's a business decision. It's not a Google decision or search decision. It's a business decision.

[00:11:49] **John Mueller:** [00:11:49] I'm really bad at business. Can you tell? I will just buy them all.

[00:11:53] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:11:53] Hmm. But what happens if you don't buy them all and someone else buys them? Will Google be able to distinguish that it's not me?

[00:12:01] **John Mueller:** [00:12:01] I guess they're just like different websites, right?

[00:12:04] **Martin Splitt:** [00:12:04] But they have the same name.

[00:12:05] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:12:05] But it doesn't really matter, right? We care more about the content than anything else.

[00:12:10] **Martin Splitt:** [00:12:10] Okay.

[00:12:11] **John Mueller:** [00:12:11] Fine. Well, I guess we should build the potato peeler website before we publish this episode, because otherwise, someone will steal all of our potatopeelerbest2023 domain names, and then we'll be stuck.

[00:12:24] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:12:24] Well, I'm happy to inform you that I registered three of them in the meantime, while talking to you.

[00:12:30] **Martin Splitt:** [00:12:30] How dare you?

[00:12:31] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:12:31] [laughs]

[00:12:32] **John Mueller:** [00:12:32] Oh, my gosh. So you're basically saying you're going to sell those potato peeler domain names at a high price to our listeners?

[00:12:40] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:12:40] I'm not sure if it will be high price, but maybe some people want to invest in potato peelers, or they run a potato peeler business, and then they might need it. And then I can somehow twist their arms to give me lots of gold and silver. Alas, it's unlikely.

[00:12:59] **John Mueller:** [00:12:59] [sighs]

[00:13:00] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:13:00] But also the history. You can look it up, who owned a domain name, especially if you are running some, who is scraping service or something like that. Then you could look up that Gary at one point owned the potatopeeler.com domain name, and then you might not want it, right?

[00:13:17] **John Mueller:** [00:13:17] Why would you not want a pre-owned domain name?

[00:13:21] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:13:21] Well, if you don't want to associate yourself with a Gary.

[00:13:25] **John Mueller:** [00:13:25] Okay. So basically, if you look up the history of a domain name and you see it's associated with something that you don't like, you should keep your hands off of it?

[00:13:33] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:13:33] I can certainly imagine ideologies that I don't want to be associated with. Like, for example...

[00:13:43] **John Mueller:** [00:13:43] Cheese.

[00:13:44] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:13:44] No, no, no, worse than that. I don't even know how to come up with examples that wouldn't offend at least one person. But for example, if I know that domain name was previously used for inciting violence against a certain group, for example, then some people might have memory of that domain name doing just that. Basically, they associated that domain name with that particular movement. And then I don't want, basically, to be associated with that movement.

[00:14:17] **John Mueller:** [00:14:17] Okay, so I guess on the internet, that maps to links and content?

[00:14:23] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:14:23] Sure, but also not just because we are humans. Some humans don't forget easily. And then if you see that potatopeeler.com at one point was inciting violence against avocados, then you might not want to remind people with your "new domain name," air quoting here, that that movement ever existed.

[00:14:48] **John Mueller:** [00:14:48] Okay. So how would you check that? Apart from a time machine, which I have, but you probably don't, how would you check what used to be on a website?

[00:14:59] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:14:59] I have a time machine with Martin.

[00:15:01] **Martin Splitt:** [00:15:01] Yeah.

[00:15:01] **John Mueller:** [00:15:01] Okay. For our listeners who don't have a time machine, [laughs] how would you tell them to check it?

[00:15:07] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:15:07] [laughs]

[00:15:08] **Martin Splitt:** [00:15:08] Well, I guess the Wayback Machine in archive.org? No?

[00:15:13] **John Mueller:** [00:15:13] Okay.

[00:15:14] **Martin Splitt:** [00:15:14] Yeah, can we use that?

[00:15:16] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:15:16] Sure. Why not?

[00:15:17] **John Mueller:** [00:15:17] Yeah. I use that from time to time, too. It was just a hypothetical question.

[00:15:23] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:15:23] I actually use it a lot, especially when I'm actually buying domain names and I actually want to use it for something other than annoying people, then I will check the domain history, see what kind of content was there on the pages, just to make sure that I'm not buying something that I actually don't want to be associated with.

[00:15:43] **John Mueller:** [00:15:43] Okay.

[00:15:44] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:15:44] I don't think most of the time, this is about search. It's more about you stumble upon something that you don't want to be associated with. If you ever heard of Rule 34.

[00:15:55] **Martin Splitt:** [00:15:55] Oh, no.

[00:15:56] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:15:56] Well, but that's a good example for it.

[00:15:59] **Martin Splitt:** [00:15:59] Yeah.

[00:16:00] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:16:00] Because... Well, actually, you should just go to xkcd and look up Rule 34, because I don't want to explain it live on podcast. [laughs] But yeah, there definitely can be some sort of content that you don't want to reanimate or whose domain you don't want to reanimate.

[00:16:25] **John Mueller:** [00:16:25] I have a bunch of people on Twitter who've told me that I should pick up expired domain names because it's the best way to get a new site rolling.

[00:16:32] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:16:32] Sure.

[00:16:33] **John Mueller:** [00:16:33] Is that a good idea? You're saying I should check the history, but they're saying I should just buy an old domain that had stuff on it before.

[00:16:41] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:16:41] If you have lots of money, why not?

[00:16:44] **John Mueller:** [00:16:44] But does it help me for SEO?

[00:16:45] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:16:45] The anecdote is that it does. Practically, I doubt it, or at least not the way that people think it does.

[00:16:55] **John Mueller:** [00:16:55] [sighs] Okay.

[00:16:56] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:16:56] The other thing is that when you buy one of these domain names, then you might also end up with a domain name that has manual action. And until you actually bought the domain name, you can't even check it anywhere on the internet. Because to check it, whether it's affected by a Google Manual Action, you would have to register the domain name in Search Console, right?

[00:17:19] **John Mueller:** [00:17:19] Okay.

[00:17:19] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:17:19] I'm asking for validation. I think that's how it works.

[00:17:22] **John Mueller:** [00:17:22] Yes.

[00:17:22] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:17:22] Okay, thank you.

[00:17:23] **John Mueller:** [00:17:23] Yes. [laughs]

[00:17:24] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:17:24] [laughs]

[00:17:26] **John Mueller:** [00:17:26] Okay.

[00:17:26] **Martin Splitt:** [00:17:26] But would it be a problem if it was, and I made sure that it's removed? Is having a history of manual actions a problem?

[00:17:36] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:17:36] Oh, that's a good question.

[00:17:37] **John Mueller:** [00:17:37] I guess it depends on what kind of manual action and what it takes to remove it. If the manual action is based on the content, and you just swap the content out for something that is better, usually, that's easy to get resolved. But if it's based on links on the internet that were collected over the past 57 years, then probably that's a bit harder to clean up and get into a shape where Google will be happy.

[00:18:04] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:18:04] All right. Martin, remember when we were building those links on ARPANET?

[00:18:08] **Martin Splitt:** [00:18:08] Yes, yes.

[00:18:10] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:18:10] Okay, just checking, because we are very old.

[00:18:12] **Martin Splitt:** [00:18:12] It's fantastic times. [laughs]

[00:18:14] **John Mueller:** [00:18:14] Moving on to domain names, should I put keywords in my domain name, or should I pick a brand?

[00:18:19] **Martin Splitt:** [00:18:19] Woo.

[00:18:20] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:18:20] [laughs] It depends. [laughs]

[00:18:22] **John Mueller:** [00:18:22] It depends?

[00:18:23] **Martin Splitt:** [00:18:23] Oh, my god!

[00:18:24] **John Mueller:** [00:18:24] Gary! What is up with you?

[00:18:26] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:18:26] [laughs] This is the flu. I'm coming down with the flu.

[00:18:30] **Martin Splitt:** [00:18:30] I'm going to pull a Barry Schwartz on you and ask, "What does it depend on?"

[00:18:37] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:18:37] Well, as we said before, this is a business decision. I don't think... From Google's perspective or Search perspective... Well, I can't say if it's a Search perspective. But from Google's perspective and Steve's perspective, I don't think it matters.

[00:18:49] **John Mueller:** [00:18:49] Okay.

[00:18:50] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:18:50] I do think that sometimes, it can be helpful. For example, if I want to take a passport photo, then I have the weird sites that will target any kind of photo. And then you have passportphoto.com. And I'm more likely to click on passportphotos.com for some reason as a user.

[00:19:11] **John Mueller:** [00:19:11] You don't have a lot of experience with people building exact match domains, right?

[00:19:15] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:19:15] No, no, I don't.

[00:19:17] **John Mueller:** [00:19:17] [laughs]

[00:19:18] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:19:18] I don't.

[00:19:19] **Martin Splitt:** [00:19:19] But would you rather click on passport-photos.com or passportphotos.com?

[00:19:24] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:19:24] Oh!

[00:19:24] **Martin Splitt:** [00:19:24] Does that make a difference?

[00:19:26] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:19:26] Hmm...

[00:19:26] **Martin Splitt:** [00:19:26] From Steve's or Google's perspective, does it make a difference?

[00:19:30] **Gary Illyes:** [00:19:30] Anything that's in the URL can be technically manipulated by the site owner. So we probably don't want to put that much weight on that kind of input. Which means that in ranking, it might not help as much as people think it does.

[00:19:48] **Martin Splitt:** [00:19:48] Oh, Okay.

[00:19:50] **Gary Illyes:** [00:19:50] So basically, whether you put a dash there or not, from a Google or Steve perspective, not or, and perspective, it shouldn't matter.

[00:20:00] **John Mueller:** [00:20:00] Okay.

[00:20:00] **Martin Splitt:** [00:20:00] Huh.

[00:20:01] **Gary Illyes:** [00:20:01] But then if you go down the UX perspective, then having the domain name with a dash is probably more readable.

[00:20:09] **John Mueller:** [00:20:09] The thing I sometimes tell people is if you're starting off, then it might make more sense to focus on your brand rather than on the keywords, because your website will probably evolve over time. And you could be selling potato peelers now, but maybe you're also selling avocado peelers in a year from now. And if your website is called bestpotatopeeler2023.com, starting to sell avocado peelers would be kind of awkward. So...

[00:20:42] **Gary Illyes:** [00:20:42] Would it be?

[00:20:43] **John Mueller:** [00:20:43] Well, it's like, would you click on a site called bestpotatopeeler2023 if you're looking for an avocado peeler in 2024?

[00:20:53] **Gary Illyes:** [00:20:53] What is an avocado peeler?

[00:20:56] **John Mueller:** [00:20:56] Do you eat avocados with your peel? I guess you could. I won't judge. That's fine.

[00:21:02] **Martin Splitt:** [00:21:02] That's an appealing idea.

[00:21:04] **Gary Illyes:** [00:21:04] [laughs] Martin.

[00:21:06] **Martin Splitt:** [00:21:06] [laughs]

[00:21:08] **John Mueller:** [00:21:08] That's kind of like the thought I usually have. I tell people you should think long term, because changing your domain name is always a hassle. And you kind of want to keep it for a really long time if you can.

[00:21:22] **Martin Splitt:** [00:21:22] Got it. Makes sense. Okay, but then I actually still have questions.

[00:21:28] **John Mueller:** [00:21:28] Okay.

[00:21:29] **Martin Splitt:** [00:21:29] For instance, does it make a huge difference if I do www.something.topleveldomain, or if I just go with like something.topleveldomain?

[00:21:39] **John Mueller:** [00:21:39] No.

[00:21:40] **Gary Illyes:** [00:21:40] What? [sighs]

[00:21:41] **Martin Splitt:** [00:21:41] Gary.

[00:21:42] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:21:42] What?

[00:21:42] **John Mueller:** [00:21:42] It doesn't matter. No.

[00:21:43] **Martin Splitt:** [00:21:43] Does it matter if I have a www subdomain, or if I just go sort of "naked" and just go like something.com, for instance, rather than www.something.com?

[00:21:55] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:21:55] Yes.

[00:21:56] **Martin Splitt:** [00:21:56] Oh, gosh. Oh, my.

[00:21:58] **John Mueller:** [00:21:58] You should just pick one. Pick one and keep it forever.

[00:22:01] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:22:01] No. In all seriousness, it doesn't really matter.

[00:22:04] **Martin Splitt:** [00:22:04] Okay.

[00:22:05] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:22:05] But from a user's perspective, it might be annoying if one of them doesn't work.

[00:22:11] **John Mueller:** [00:22:11] Oh, just make both.

[00:22:12] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:22:12] When I... what? When I was still managing websites or servers or whatever, and I was setting up domains, one of the first things that we did to the DNS records is to CNAME the www version as well, just to make sure that the www will also be accessible, and then set up the HTX's rules to redirect from www to naked domain. But at least it wasn't confusing for users. And this whole idea came from, surprisingly, I didn't read it on Stack Overflow, but I was looking at how my family was using the internet. And for whatever reason, they had this association that internet addresses always start with www.

[00:22:55] **Martin Splitt:** [00:22:55] Hmm.

[00:22:56] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:22:56] And then they started typing www.google.com/index.html or whatever. And if the www didn't work, then basically, they were deadlocked because they didn't realize that the www version, that's just a subdomain that was not registered or not set up for the site. So at that point, we were just setting up the www version as well just to cover our bases that belong to us.

[00:23:27] **John Mueller:** [00:23:27] Okay, and I just want to clarify, when Gary is talking about naked domains, it's not anything bad. It's just the domain plus the top level domain.

[00:23:37] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:23:37] Well... Okay.

[00:23:39] **Martin Splitt:** [00:23:39] Wait, wait, wait. Are you saying a domain without www is a bad thing now? Because you're like, eh...

[00:23:44] **John Mueller:** [00:23:44] No, it's just technically, you call it a naked domain.

[00:23:48] **Martin Splitt:** [00:23:48] Yeah, it's true.

[00:23:48] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:23:48] It's a technical term. It's not related to how well a domain name is dressed or not.

[00:23:56] **John Mueller:** [00:23:56] Yes, exactly. Okay, what about m-dot? Is m-dot the same, whatever you want?

[00:24:03] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:24:03] Oh, I think I'd... Ugh... [laughs]

[00:24:08] **John Mueller:** [00:24:08] Technically, m-dot used to be something where websites that didn't have a proper mobile version, they set up a copy there. And we don't recommend doing that. So don't do that. No m-dots. If I see one more new domain with an m-dot domain, I will... I don't know, buy a potato peeler. [sighs] What about a .blog subdomain? Is that okay? Or should I use a subdirectory?

[00:24:36] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:24:36] Oh, no! We are not going there, subdomain or subdirectory. Come on!

[00:24:40] **John Mueller:** [00:24:40] Okay. Is that like a separate episode?

[00:24:43] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:24:43] Yeah, like the 740th.

[00:24:46] **John Mueller:** [00:24:46] [laughs]

[00:24:47] **Martin Splitt:** [00:24:47] Uh-oh.

[00:24:48] **John Mueller:** [00:24:48] Oh, my god. You really don't like it. Okay, fine. Okay.

[00:24:53] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:24:53] What do you mean, I don't like it? I just want to record it when I'm 87.

[00:24:58] **John Mueller:** [00:24:58] Okay.

[00:24:59] **Martin Splitt:** [00:24:59] Okay, you're very specific with that.

[00:25:01] **John Mueller:** [00:25:01] So I guess to sum up, pick a top level domain, either a country code one or not. Don't get the cheapest one, unless you know it's not full of spam. And...

[00:25:13] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:25:13] And what?

[00:25:13] **John Mueller:** [00:25:13] Do whatever else you want. Oh, look up the history. Yeah, make sure that you're not buying something that used to be terrible junk.

[00:25:21] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:25:21] Unless you want to.

[00:25:22] **Martin Splitt:** [00:25:22] What would you do once you have the domain? Would you just leave it unused until you're ready to put your website online? Or would you have a "Coming Soon" page? Or would you 404 it? Or...

[00:25:35] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:25:35] I wouldn't have a "Coming Soon" page.

[00:25:38] **Martin Splitt:** [00:25:38] Okay. Oh, boy.

[00:25:39] **Gary Ilyes:** [00:25:39] Well, we answered your question.

[00:25:41] **John Mueller:** [00:25:41] [laughs]

[00:25:42] **Martin Splitt:** [00:25:42] You did.

[00:25:43] **John Mueller:** [00:25:43] I think the thing with the "Coming Soon" page is search engines will look at it and be like, "Oh, there's nothing here." We should stop looking at this website.

[00:25:52] **Martin Splitt:** [00:25:52] Oh, my god. That's not great.

[00:25:54] **Gary Illyes:** [00:25:54] Nope.

[00:25:54] **John Mueller:** [00:25:54] And you kind of want them to look at it when it's ready, not before it's ready.

[00:25:58] **Martin Splitt:** [00:25:58] Okay, fine.

[00:25:59] **Gary Illyes:** [00:25:59] Wait, I have to register a new domain name.

[00:26:01] **John Mueller:** [00:26:01] [laughs]

[00:26:02] ♪ [music] ♪

[00:26:06] **Gary Illyes:** [00:26:06] Well, that's it for this episode. And in the next episode, we are going to talk about ranking updates.

[00:26:13] We've been having fun with these podcast episodes. I hope you, the listener, have found them both entertaining and insightful, too. Feel free to drop us a note on Twitter at @googlesearchc or chat with us at one of the next events we go to, if you have any thoughts. And of course, don't forget to like and subscribe. Thank you and goodbye.

[00:26:33] **Martin Splitt:** [00:26:33] Cheers!

[00:26:34] **John Mueller:** [00:26:34] (softly) Goodbye.

[00:26:36] ♪ [music] ♪