



.com vs .io vs .ai: which extension for a startup? (2026)

.com is the extension users type and remember; .ai is the convention for AI startups; .io is fully operational despite the Chagos headlines. What each one signals, what they cost, and how to choose.

- **What each one signals.** .com reads as trust and recall, .ai as an AI-first product, .io as a developer or infrastructure tool. All three are usable; the signal differs.
- **The .io question, answered.** The Chagos Islands transfer does not delete .io. The extension remains operational, so there is no reason to panic-migrate off it.
- **SEO truth.** The extension does not directly change Google rankings. A .com's real edge is user behaviour and recall, not an algorithm boost.
- **What it costs.** .com is the cheapest and most stable; .ai carries a clear premium; .io sits in between. Price the renewal, not just year one.
- **When your .com is taken.** A different name whose .com is free usually beats the same name on a compromised extension. Own the .com you can actually get.

Find a name whose .com is actually free.

Read the full guide, then generate brandable names with an available .com, checked live against the registry.

startupnamegenerator.com/com-vs-io-vs-ai-startup-domain