

REALTOR® Trademark Use on the Internet

When surfing the Web for real estate homepages, it's quite common to come across sites belonging to REALTORS®. If you are looking to add your own electronic presence on the Internet, it is easy to get caught up in designing your own web page and choosing a domain name which will capture the attention of surfers and make you easily identifiable. REALTORS® often want to use the REALTOR® marks as part of their domain name or address to distinguish themselves, but they must keep in mind that there are rules governing proper use of the REALTOR® marks that must be adhered to at all times regardless of the media used. These rules are found in the National Association's Membership Marks Manual, a reference manual explaining proper use of the REALTOR® marks including examples of correct and incorrect uses. Here is a brief list of the principle rules affecting use of the REALTOR® marks in domain names:

1. The term REALTOR®, whether used as part of a domain name or in some other fashion must refer to a member or a member's firm.
2. The term REALTOR® may not be used with descriptive words or phrases. For example, Number1realtor.com, numberone-realtor.com, chicagorealtors.org or realtorproperties.com are all incorrect.
3. For use as a domain name or e-mail address on the Internet the term REALTOR® does not need to be separated from the member's name or firm name with punctuation. For example, both johndoe-realtor.com and johndoerealtor.com would be correct uses of the term as a part of domain names and jdoe*realtors@webnetservices.com and jdoerealtors@webnetservices.com are both correct uses of the term as part of an e-mail address.
4. The REALTOR® block R logo should not be used as hypertext links at a web site as such uses can suggest an endorsement or recommendation of the linked site by your Association. The only exception would be to establish a link to the National Association's web site, Realtor.com.

The public has adopted the use of all lower case letters when writing domain names, even those containing trademarks. Therefore, for purposes of domain names and internet addresses only, there is an exception to the rule on capitalization of the term REALTOR® and it may appear in lower case letters.

Whether you use traditional print media or the Internet, it is essential to use the REALTOR® marks in accordance with the rules and guidelines of the National Association. The REALTOR® marks should only be used to denote membership in the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®.