

# Internationalized Domain Names (IDN) - What they are, risks, and safe use tips

Gridinsoft Help Center

## What it is

Internationalized Domain Names (IDN) are website addresses that include non-ASCII characters - like accented letters or scripts such as Arabic, Cyrillic, Chinese, or Hindi. They let people use domains in their native languages instead of being limited to A-Z, 0-9, and hyphens.

## Why it matters

IDNs improve accessibility and branding for global users. But they also introduce look-alike risks where different characters appear identical, enabling homograph tricks that mimic trusted domains.

## How it works

- Your typed name is converted to an ASCII form called Punycode (starts with xn--).
- Browsers display the human-friendly script if it meets safety rules.
- Registries set policies to limit mixed scripts and reduce spoofing.

## Red flags

- A familiar site that looks right but shows a strange certificate or region.
- A URL that copies a brand yet contains characters from multiple scripts.
- Copy-paste of the address changes to xn--... Punycode unexpectedly.

## Prevent it

- Bookmark important sites and use those bookmarks.
- Hover to preview links and check the certificate before logging in.
- Turn on browser settings or extensions that always show Punycode.
- Use MFA so a fake login cannot steal access on its own.