

Best practices in the NJIT.edu namespace for public-facing services
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Office of Strategic Communications

The njit.edu namespace is the property of NJIT. NJIT authorizes several offices to coordinate and oversee this activity, including StratComm, Telecom, and others in IST.

Collectively we have an imperative to provide a high level of customer service in our public-facing services. Good customer service should be reflected in our naming conventions and practices.

There may be cases where (for reasons of security, usability, technical limitations, or business circumstances) a principle should not or cannot be followed. Further, some of these principles overlap each other or offer a different shading of the same issue.

Thus, this should be viewed as a “living document” of guiding principles for us all to aim for rather than a hard-and-fast policy statement.

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Principle 1: Websites and pages should only show to the public under one address

- A site should not show up to the public as both *vm1host.njit.edu/sitename* and its mask at *sitename.njit.edu*.
- A site should not show up to the public as both *www.njit.edu/centerforbuildingknowledge* and *www.njit.edu/cbk*.
- A page should not show up to the public as both *www.njit.edu/administration.php* and *njit.edu/administration.php*.

Principle 2: A limited number of redirects are permissible, but they should (consistent with Principle 1) only ultimately land on a single address

- This may be done for legacy reasons.
- This may be done for usability, advertising, ad campaign tracking, or “catch all” reasons.
- We discourage the practice of establishing “just in case” redirects to catch variant names. For example, *finaid.njit.edu*, *financialaid.njit.edu*, *aid.njit.edu*, and *www.njit.edu/finaid* as four redirects pointing to the single and definitive *www.njit.edu/financialaid* is overkill, encourages bad habits, and expends real NJIT resources to establish and maintain.
- Redirects are typically not maintained forever, but have a sunset date appropriate to the situation.

Principle 3: Follow a “Rule of Three” for hostnames

- *hostname.njit.edu* is acceptable; it has three name elements. However, neither *www.hostname.njit.edu* nor *server.name.njit.edu* are acceptable; they have four name elements.
- Note that *hostname.njit.edu/subdirectory/filename.php* still follows acceptably the Rule of Three because we are only counting the hostname and not subsequent folder and files.
- Note that *njit.edu* does not follow the Rule of Three. Nor does *njit.edu/subdirectory/filename.php*

- In some circumstances we “catch” URL’s like *www.hostname.njit.edu* and seamlessly redirect users to *hostname.njit.edu* and catch URL’s like *njit.edu/sitename* and seamlessly redirect users to *www.njit.edu/sitename* so as to conform to Principles 1 and 2. We cannot guarantee this will work in all circumstances and over the long haul.
- URL’s not adhering to the Rule of Three never be promoted or shared.

Principle 4: Server and service names should make sense to their audiences

- NJIT uses hostnames to present a more user-friendly face to the name services we provide, which can be separated from the underlying structure that provides access to them.
- We do not want to advertise URL’s like *phpserverhost1.njit.edu/housingapp* to the world. The preferred method is to apply a hostname like *housingapp.njit.edu* to that service running on the *phpserverhost1* server.
- This also allows the underlying service and coding to be moved as coding changes without the need to generate a new (permanent) hostname.
- This also means that server names only viewable to IT staff should be named in self-evident ways. *Roxy.njit.edu*, *cedric.njit.edu*, and *billyiscool.njit.edu* denote nothing to IT staff. *Backupcluster01.njit.edu*, *mysql13.njit.edu*, and *eprints-repository.njit.edu* mean something to IT staff.

Principle 5: Use meaningful, memorable, user-friendly, and search engine-friendly hostnames and URL’s

- Try to avoid special characters (including dashes, numbers, and symbols) in hostnames and sitenames. *njitday.njit.edu* is good; *njit-day.njit.edu* is bad.
- All URL’s should be in lowercase characters only. Do not use mixed case (or “upstyle”) in URL’s.
- Do not use space characters or %20 characters in URL’s.
- Do not use underline_characters. Use-a-dash-if-necessary. However, do not use a dash in a hostname or sitename.
- Do not use periods in filenames. Periods are reserved for file extensions. Thus, *web.njit.edu/info/password.expiration.notification.php* is discouraged. Use dashes instead.
- Use at least 3 and no more than 20 characters for sitenames. Thus, *m.njit.edu* and *www.njit.edu/os* are discouraged.
- Do not use grammar articles like “the” or “an” in hostnames, sitenames, foldernames, and filenames.
- Do not use the redundant “NJIT” in hostnames, sitenames, foldernames, and filenames. *www.njit.edu/njitforum* or *njitsenate.njit.edu* would be discouraged. Note: a known and allowed exception is *njitday.njit.edu*.
- This principle extends to uploaded objects (like PDF documents) that will ultimately be a part of a URL. Thus, *www.njit.edu/admissions/ug-app.pdf* is good; *www.njit.edu/admissions/Under_Grad_App.pdf* is bad.

Principle 6: NJIT services are provided within the NJIT.edu namespace

- We generally do not allow services to appear at .com or .org sites. For example, *njit-physics.com* and *njit-students.com* are not allowed.

- There are some exceptions for student club accounts (e.g., *njitvector.com* and *njit.acm.org*).
- There are some exceptions for affiliated NJIT organizations that service the community, are jointly run with other universities or organizations, or are 5013C-type organizations (e.g., *njit-edc.org* or *www.polymers-ppi.com*).
- If NJIT contracts with an outside vendor to provide service, NJIT (if appropriate) can extend a domain to that vendor subject to approval by Strategic Communications and Telecom. For example, if Vendor XYZ is contracted by Residential Life to provide a Pick-Your-Roommate app, we can apply *pickyourroommate.njit.edu* to the Vendor XYZ servers.

Principle 7: Academic college and department typically get assigned a canonical hostname

- For example, *physics.njit.edu*, *math.njit.edu* or *som.njit.edu*.
- We are not, at this time, assigning programs (e.g., MS in Applied Physics or BFA) their own websites and hostnames (although there are a few legacy instances such as *msptc.njit.edu*).

Principle 8: Administrative offices and units typically get assigned a “root down” hostname

- For example, *www.njit.edu/cds*, *www.njit.edu/admissions* and *www.njit.edu/registrar*.
- There are, of course, some legacy exceptions to this (such as *womenscenter.njit.edu* and *campuscenter.njit.edu*).

Principle 9: Some categories of sites will be assigned hostnames under one of our “umbrella sites”

- Sanctioned student clubs and organizations will typically be assigned something like *clubs.njt.edu/clubname*.
- Sanctioned fraternities and sororities will typically be assigned something like *greeks.njit.edu/fratname*.
- Sanctioned research centers and labs will typically be assigned something like *centers.njit.edu/centername*.
- Of course, we have nearly 20 years of legacy sites out there that will (for a time) still be using an old name.
- Some of these umbrella sites will host and/or serve up individual club, frat, or center websites from within that namespace.
- Some of these umbrella sites will simply provide a “vanity” URL that directs to a legacy site elsewhere.

Principle 10: Limit logons outside Pipeline

- To reduced customer confusion and the likelihood of credential phishing incidents, there should be a trend towards enabling UCID-based logons only from within Pipeline.
- Of course, some exceptions already exist (which should be retired over time).
- Of course, there may be compelling case where exceptions should still exist.