

How to Preview a Domain by Modifying your Windows Hosts File

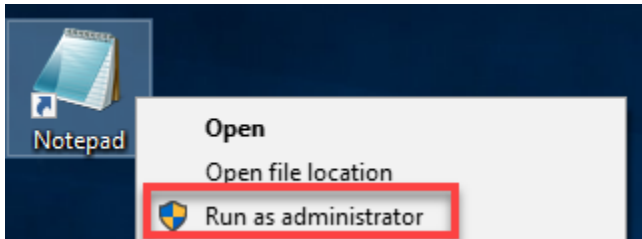
Sometimes you may find you need to access a domain which you have not yet configured public DNS for. Did you know you can use your computer's **Hosts** file to direct it to the correct IP address of the domain you are working on and preview the domain before you update your public DNS? This is a great way to preview a website that's in the process of being built or modified to make sure things work before you update your public DNS.

Modifying Your Hosts File in Windows

The **Hosts** file in Windows is conveniently located in **C:\Windows\System32\drivers\etc\hosts**.

You can open this file in Notepad or a text editor of your choice. You will need to be running Notepad as an Administrator in order to edit the file.

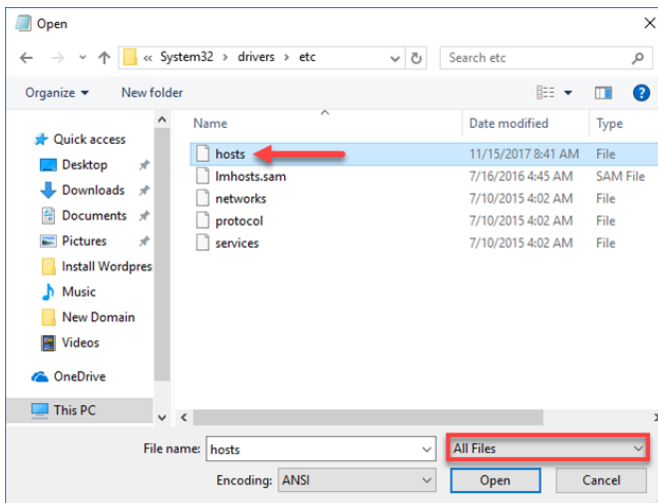
Right Click the **Notepad** icon in your Start Menu or Desktop. Click **Run as administrator**.



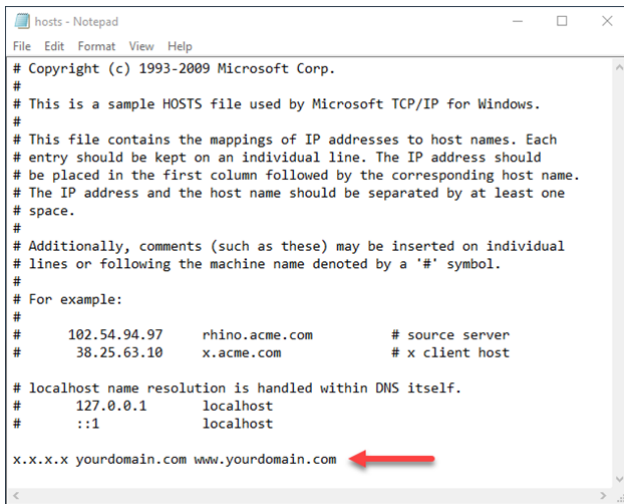
If prompted, click **Yes** to allow the program Administrative access.

Once in Notepad, click **File Open**.

Navigate to **C:\Windows\System32\drivers\etc**. You may need to select **All Files** in the dropdown next to the filename in order for the files to show. Select **hosts** and click **Open**.



You should now see a file that looks like this:



```
# Copyright (c) 1993-2009 Microsoft Corp.
#
# This is a sample HOSTS file used by Microsoft TCP/IP for Windows.
#
# This file contains the mappings of IP addresses to host names. Each
# entry should be kept on an individual line. The IP address should
# be placed in the first column followed by the corresponding host name.
# The IP address and the host name should be separated by at least one
# space.
#
# Additionally, comments (such as these) may be inserted on individual
# lines or following the machine name denoted by a '#' symbol.
#
# For example:
#
#       102.54.94.97       rhino.acme.com          # source server
#       38.25.63.10       x.acme.com             # x client host
#
# localhost name resolution is handled within DNS itself.
#
#       127.0.0.1         localhost
#       ::1               localhost
#
x.x.x.x yourdomain.com www.yourdomain.com
```

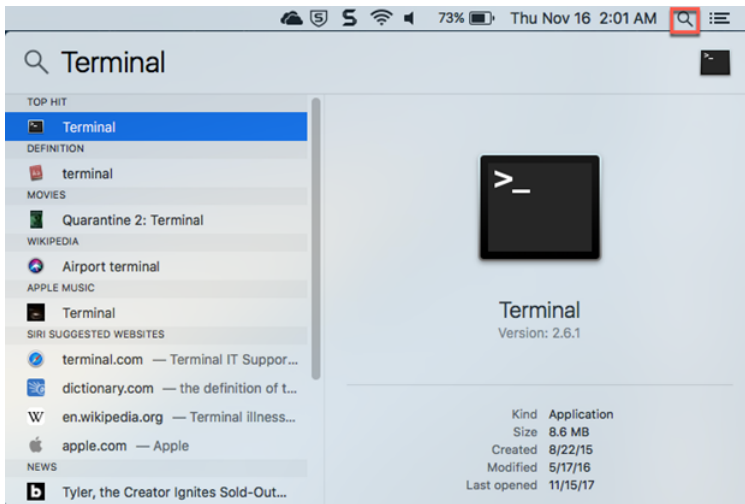
Add in the IP address of your server and the domain you would like to access. Add both the www and non-www versions for greater flexibility.

Click **File Save** to save your changes. You should now be able to access your domain at the IP address you assigned.

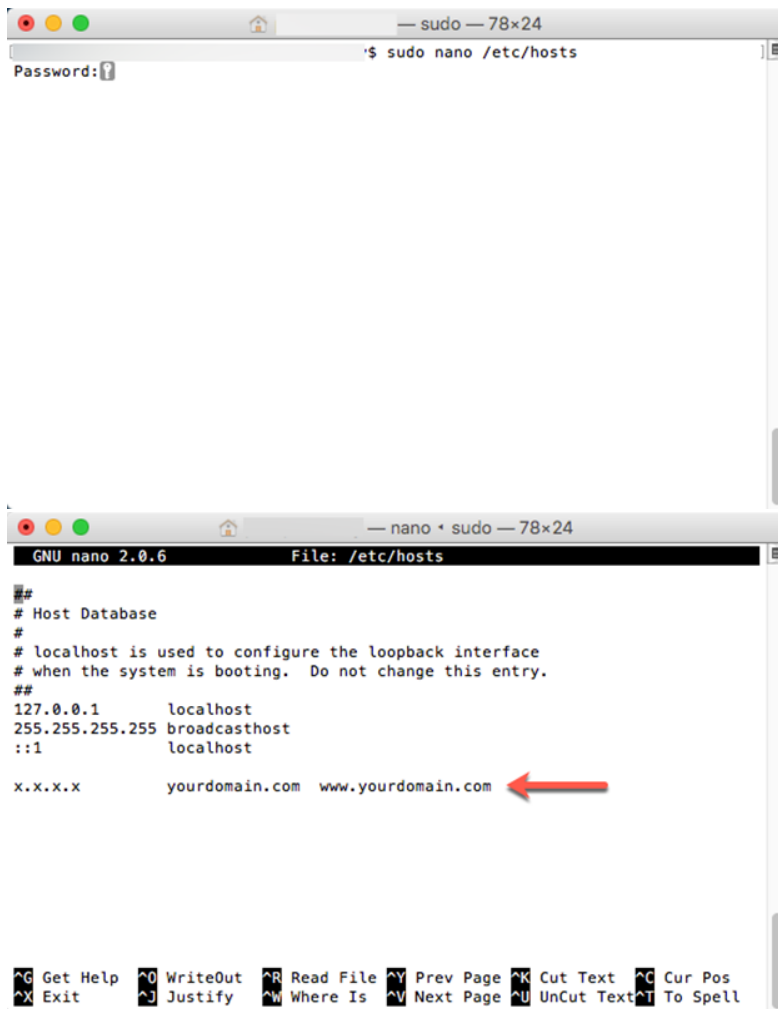
Modifying Your Hosts File in MacOS / Linux

Both Linux and MacOS locate the hosts file in **/etc/hosts**. MacOS in particular keeps this location hidden in the graphical interface, so you will need to edit the file from a command line. Assuming Linux users know how to access their terminal, this tutorial will be written with the MacOS interface in mind.

Click the spyglass icon in the upper right corner to open **Finder**. Type **Terminal** in the search box and press **Return** to open it.



Once open you will see a command line. Type **sudo nano /etc/hosts** and enter your administrative password if prompted to open the file.



The image shows two screenshots of a terminal window. The top screenshot shows a terminal window with the title bar "— sudo — 78x24". The prompt is "\$ sudo nano /etc/hosts" and the user has entered their password. The bottom screenshot shows the nano editor interface. The title bar is "— nano + sudo — 78x24" and the status bar at the bottom shows "GNU nano 2.0.6 File: /etc/hosts". The content of the file is as follows:

```
##
# Host Database
#
# localhost is used to configure the loopback interface
# when the system is booting. Do not change this entry.
##
127.0.0.1    localhost
255.255.255.255 broadcasthost
::1         localhost
x.x.x.x     yourdomain.com www.yourdomain.com
```

A red arrow points to the line "x.x.x.x yourdomain.com www.yourdomain.com". The status bar at the bottom of the nano editor shows the following shortcuts: ^G Get Help, ^O WriteOut, ^R Read File, ^Y Prev Page, ^K Cut Text, ^C Cur Pos, ^X Exit, ^J Justify, ^W Where Is, ^V Next Page, ^U UnCut Text, ^T To Spell.

Use the arrow keys to navigate and insert text. The “^” in the commands at the bottom corresponds to the **Ctrl** key on the keyboard. Add in the IP address of your server and the domain you would like to access. Add both the www and non-www versions for greater flexibility. Press **Ctrl+O** to write the file. Press **Ctrl+X** to exit.

You should now be able to access your domain at the IP address you assigned.

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