

Web Hosting School

www.webhostingschool.com

Web Hosting eBook

Where & How to Host your Website



Version 1.0

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Everyone needs a website

If you are reading this, you probably already know that you need a website. This eBook focuses on telling you how to get started with it.

What kind of website do you want?

The easiest way to get started with your online presence is probably to create a page on twitter.com or facebook.com . In fact, if you haven't done any of that, you should probably start with that right now...

However, you may quickly find it that you are limited by the design, content type and content layout you will have with these sites.

At some point, if you want complete control over the look and feel of your web site, you'll need to roll out your own site. We'll show you how to do that in just a second.

Having your own website also means you can have your own [domain name](#) like www.yourname.com instead of a less desirable web address such as www.facebook.com/something ...

The absolute basics you need to know

You are browsing the internet with an internet browser such as Microsoft Internet Explorer on your PC computer or maybe Safari if you have a Mac.

Whenever you go to a web address like www.somesite.com , your computer actually makes a [DNS](#) lookup to find the internet address (IP address ¹) for “somesite.com”. This IP address is an address on the internet where another computer is waiting to serve your request. That other computer is called a **web server**.

Your computer then contacts that web server and requests the homepage for the site www.somesite.com . The webserver sends that page to your computer over the internet, and your web browser will display it to you.

When you click on a link, the same process repeats and you receive a new web page for your browser to display.

¹ This IP address might look something like 142.136.54.201 but you don't really need to worry about those IP address numbers for now...

What do I need?

Now, if you want other people to visit your web site with their own web browsers, you will need the following:

- A **registered domain name** like yourname.com
- A **web server** to serve requests for www.yourname.com
- An **actual web site**, that is: web content or web pages if you will, that the web server can send back to the requesting browser.

How do I get a domain name like yourname.com ?

You need to make sure your chosen domain name is still available and you need to register it.

A well know place for registering domain names is godaddy.com but don't register your domain there just yet. As you will find out, there are ways to get your domain as a free bonus at other places, i-e when signing up for web hosting.

How do I get a web server ?

Unfortunately, you cannot use your own computer as a web server. That is because your own computer will not be online all the time. And when you're not online, people would not be able to visit your website.

Beyond that, even if your computer were to be online all the time, your [ISP](#) (Internet Service Provider) would actually prevent you from using it as a web server through several different technical measures that are beyond the scope of this e-book ².

So, the better option will be to rent a little space on a web server that is professionally hosted by a web hosting company. We'll give you more details on this later.

The hosting company can also register your domain name for you and take care of mapping it to the IP address of their web servers. That makes it very easy for you to get started.

² For example, they would change your IP address all the time, so it would be very difficult to map your domain name to a specific IP address that actually works.

How do I build my web site / web pages / web content?

Back in the early days of the web, you would have used a piece of software called an [HTML](#) editor to hand craft your website. Popular software options were Microsoft FrontPage, Macromedia DreamWeaver, Adobe GoLive, etc...

You may also have used image editors like Adobe Photoshop or Macromedia Fireworks to prepare graphics for your website.

Professional web designers still use these tools today. The most popular are [Photoshop](#) and [Dreamweaver](#) (which has been acquired by Adobe).

However, if you are not a web designer yourself, you don't need to worry about this kind of software. You have three easier and faster options to go with...

3 easy options to start with

You could do either one of these:

Option 1: Hire a web designer

If you are building a professional web site and have a budget, hiring a professional designer is probably the best option to go with, as long as you choose your web designer carefully ³.

Option 2: Use a free online website building tool

Most web hosting companies will provide you with a free online tool to design & build your first website just by selecting a template, selecting colors, selecting graphics and entering some text.

They make the process very easy for you and you can literally get your first website out in a matter of minutes.

You can then gradually refine it and add pages over time.

Option 3: Use a Content Management System

A Content Management System - also known as CMS - is a system that runs on your web server, not on your computer.

³ Check webhostingschool.com for more info about hiring a web designer.

Your web hosting company will provide you with easy installation of the CMS of your choice so you don't really have to worry about it. Getting started with a CMS will be almost as easy as using an online site building tool.

A CMS will power your site with more than just information pages. A CMS can typically add interactive features such as:

- A **blog** with the ability for visitors to comment
- A **forum** with the ability for users to register and start conversations
- A **photo album** with the ability for you to easily add photos at any time

The CMS will also provide you with statistics on your visits and other additional features you may like.

For example, for blogs, popular CMS choices include [WordPress](#) and [b2evolution](#). Again, your web host will provide easy installation for you.

How do I choose a web hosting company?

This is your most important choice at this point: choosing the right hosting company!

And that can get quite overwhelming quite fast... search for hosting in your favorite search engine and you will see what we mean!

So what do you look for?

Many web hosting companies will advertise hosting plans that include more or less hard drive space to store your web pages and more or less bandwidth to transfer your web pages to your visitors.

But, if you are just starting out, you don't really need to worry about these! Any web hosting plan from any reputable web hosting company will fit your needs.

If your site gets widely popular in the future and you get tens of thousands of visits every day, you may need to upgrade to a bigger hosting plan in the future but that shouldn't be much of a concern for now.

Actually, the most important difference you will find from one company to another is the quality of their tech support. Some companies will be easy to contact, some won't. Some will be helpful, some won't. Some will be friendly, some won't.

The quality of tech support is pretty hard to grasp from a company's website. And if you actually try to contact them, you will be put in touch with the sales department, not the tech support department.

This is why you'll need to rely on third parties who have had previous experience with the company of your choice to tell you about their experience...

For that matter, you can search for reviews on each hosting company on Google.

You can also check out specialized web sites that are reviewing all major hosting companies, evaluating them and ranking them against each other.

One good such hosting provider list can be found at <http://b2evolution.net/web-hosting/> .

What about price?

You will notice that the aforementioned site also has a list of [cheap web hosting](#) companies.

Be aware of two caveats though:

First, getting cheaper prices often requires you to commit to a certain length of time: one year, two years, three years... some web hosting companies even offer their best price only if you sign up for four (4!) years and pay in advance!

We typically recommend you sign up for two years maximum in advance. That will get you good prices without having to put out too much cash upfront.

The other caveat is that very cheap hosting typically comes with pretty cheap support! If you go for cheap, make sure you select your host carefully after checking hosting review sites.

Note: do not fall into the “free hosting” caveat. They will add their own ads all over your site and sometimes you won’t even see those ads yourself. (They will hide them from you using cookies⁴.)

For more information about selecting your web hosting provider, please check out www.webhostingschool.com .

Also, please come back to www.webhostingschool.com/ebook and let us know what you think about this ebook. Your feedback is very valuable for us to improve while preparing the next edition of this ebook.

⁴ Cookies are a system designed to recognize a specific user when he comes back to a site. For example, when you come back to your own site, they could hide the ads but still show them to everyone else.