

Your First Website



A definitive jargon-free guide to setting up your own website.

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What you need

Website

Firstly, what is a website? A website is a collection of web pages that relate to each other in some way, that's it.

You might want a website to advertise products, services or an event. Some people create websites just to provide information about their business or organisation. Whatever your reason for obtaining a website, which I am sure you have already decided, all websites have a global reach and can boost the success of any campaign.

To create a web page you can start by learning HTML, which is a language that tells your computer how to display a web page. This may sound scary and for some people it is scary – so this is where web designers like me come in to answer all of your questions and create a website for you.

The first thing you should do to obtain a website is to find a website designer. All good web designers will guide you through the process of design, development, maintenance and marketing. To find a web designer right for you, it is a good idea, as with any service on the World Wide Web, to shop around. Any web designer will give you a free 'no-purchase necessary' quote, if give them an idea of what you are looking for.

Tip: Avoid web designers that charge by the hour to create a website. You do not know how long it will take them to finish and your initial quote could be grossly underestimated.

Tip: Do not pay everything up front in case the web designer does not fulfil their end of the bargain to create your website in the way that you want.

I give my clients a fixed quote for an estimated amount of web pages and work. At all stages of the design process, my clients can login to see how work is progressing and give feedback.

Website Address

A website address, or domain name as it is technically known, is what people type in to access your website. You do not buy website addresses but you lease them for a period usually lasting one or two years. Website addresses are surprisingly cheap – you can get a .com website address for under £10 a year and a .co.uk for under £2 a year.

A TLD or Top Level Domain forms the last part of the website address. Here are some examples of TLD's:

.com
.co.uk
.net
.info
.biz

There are many more available such as .ltd.uk and .plc.uk, which are reserved for limited or public licensed companies.

The first part of the website address (i.e. the www.) can be changed to anything you like. This is known as the sub-domain. If you want some more information on this part of website address, you can contact me through my website and I will provide more information. However, it goes slightly beyond the scope of this article.

Tip: Buy your hosting (web space) with your website address to save money and hassle.

Tip: Choose your website address carefully as it can assist your ranking (popularity) on search engines like Google.

If you are having trouble finding a website address that is not already taken (a common problem) please contact me and I will give you some tips or recommend a couple.

Hosting

Hosting or web space is where your website will reside 24 hours a day, 7 days a year. There are many things to consider when choosing a web host or web space provider.

The most important things are what your website needs and what you can afford. It is likely that your web space will need to support certain technologies that enable it to function correctly. If you are unsure what these are, it is best ask your website designer. High quality web space can be costly for individuals at around £100 per year but there are cheaper alternatives, which I can recommend. You may be thinking why is it so expensive? Well the truth is that you are actually paying for many things including:

- The maintenance of the computer where your website is stored upgrading hardware and software.
- Security of the computer where your website is stored – and I mean CCTV, security guards, finger

print scanners etc.

- Fire prevention – sprinkler systems.
- A high speed connection to the Internet – to handle thousands of visitors per hour.
- Virus / Hacker protection.

Cheaper alternatives may not include the above but you should ask yourself, how much is piece of mind?

Marketing

Marketing is an important part of creating a website. After all, what is the point in having a website if the only person that looks at it is you?

Your web designer may or may not include this service with your initial quote so make sure to ask if they do not mention it. One of the key factors in marketing your website address is SEO, which stands for Search Engine Optimisation. There are many other techniques to get your website address listed at the top of lists when a user performs a search but SEO is essential.

You can get a high ranking in Google by having what is known as good link popularity. This basically means that the more websites that have link to your website, the better your website is.

For a more detailed explanation of factors in website address marketing, please see the e–marketing article.

Maintenance

When you start out with your website designer it is important to ask them: how will I maintain my website once it has been created?

It is not unusual for web designers to charge by the hour for updating a website, especially as you often do not know how much you are going to need to update and when. Your web designer might be able to provide a tool called a Content Management System, which will allow you to update the website yourself without any technical expertise. The latter option is always the preferred.

Tip: Regular maintenance increases your chances of maintaining a high search engine ranking.