

What do I need to make a website?

Lack of answers to one simple question — *What do I need to make a website?* — prevents many people from bringing their businesses to the Web, or even assessing what it will take to do so or if it is worth it to a company.

In this overview, we'll take a brief look.

What do you need to make a website?

(For information about building websites, our step-by-step [web design tutorials](#) cover various aspects of building websites.)

Essentially, what's needed to make a simple website is:

1. A computer
2. An Internet connection
3. The website itself (plus programs for making images and text)
4. Browsers (e.g., Internet Explorer and Netscape)
5. Web hosting space
6. Domain name (e.g., yourwebsite.com — optional)
7. Uploading software

A Computer

Although it may be obvious that you'll need a computer to create a website, we thought we'd mention it.

An Internet Connection

You'll need an account with an Internet Service Provider (such as Earthlink) so that you can log on to the Web, upload your website, receive email, etc.

The Website

Pages & Programs. Simple websites generally are made up of two main elements: pages and images. The pages themselves are all text (really!), such as the text you see on this page, interspersed with web page coding that causes browsers to display them as, well, a web page.

You don't even need expensive programs to write it — any old text editor, like NotePad, can suffice. But, of course, you must know HTML to do this. You basically have two options:

1. Get a graphically-oriented program which writes the HTML for you. These will generally work well for you at the beginning, but later on you will probably find that you need to learn HTML.
2. Use a simple text editor such as NotePad, which comes standard with the Windows operating system, and [learn HTML](#). While this sounds a bit more difficult, you can spend the time you'd take learning how to use your graphically-oriented program actually learning HTML — and it's not that hard to learn! This will save you a lot of confusion.

Images & Image Programs. Few websites can go without images. At the very least, you'll need a decent logo, and perhaps some pictures to enhance your presentation. Images can really make a website.

You will likely find that you need to enhance the images or, at the very least, prepare them for use on the Web. There are a number of image editing programs running from Adobe Photoshop (the expensive industry standard) and Macromedia Fireworks to Adobe's Photoshop Elements, which will allow you add various "effects" (such as shadows) to your images as you prepare them for display on the Web.

Browsers

As you create your website, you'll need to test it in different browsers to see how it will look on the Web and to spot any errors. At a minimum, I recommend testing in later versions of Internet Explorer, Netscape and Opera. We also test in Netscape version 4 browsers for backward compatibility. See our earlier issue entitled [Web Designer Tools](#).

Tip: in my opinion, it's a mistake to code websites for only one browser, such as Internet Explorer. Your best potential customers may be using another browser.

Web Hosting

Once your website is complete, you'll need somewhere to put it so that people can view it on the Web — that is, you'll need a **web hosting** account.

If you're making a personal website, you can probably use the web hosting space your Internet Service Provider (e.g., Earthlink) may have included with your Internet connection account. However, for anything more — and certainly if we're talking about your company website — you'll need professional web hosting.

Free Web Hosting. Free web hosting exists; however, it is normally slow, lacks effective or fast customer support, and probably won't give the impression you wish to give to clients and potential customers. Same with cheap web hosting.

Web hosts usually have online instructions for uploading websites and setting up email; the better ones offer support by email; the best ones also have phone support. Truthfully, one probably never calls a web host unless something is drastically wrong — which is not the time to be waiting for emails or waiting until the 9-5:00 shift arrives for the day!

If you can afford it, I'd suggest going with one of the better web hosts. It will save you time and aggravation, and make you look good (and allow you to sleep at night!).

Professional web hosting usually costs around \$20-\$35 a month; well worth it in terms of making you look professional, wouldn't you say?

Domain Name

A "domain name" is actually a website address, such as yourwebsite.com.

Normally, the web hosting space provided with an Internet Service Provider account does not allow for domain names. Instead, you get an address much like this:

<http://members.yourserviceprovider.com/~yourcompany>

While this may suffice for a personal website, it is a ridiculous address for a company. It's too long to fit on a business card, too hard to remember, looks unprofessional — and don't forget that you'd be clarifying it with clients and potential clients more often than you'd wish. Worse, if you ever change Service Providers, you'll no longer have this address, making you effectively "disappear" from the Web, and the time and effort you've put into getting listed in search engines will now be wasted.

That is, you'd have to start over. Getting a website is only the first step; there's the matter of promoting it on the Web.

This goes for email addresses, too: mycompany@someprovider.com makes a company look small, unprofessional and unsavvy, whereas you@yourcompany.com does the opposite — and advertises your website at the same time. If you move or change ISPs — or even web hosts — neither your email address nor your domain name change.

Domain names are registered, not bought; they normally cost from \$10-35 a year.

Uploading Program

Last but not least, once your website is completed, you'll need to put it (the pages and images) on your web hosting space. This is called uploading. There are quite a few programs available for doing this. One of our favorites is [Ipswitch WS_FTP Pro](#). And then — always, always, always test it in your browser(s). Always.

Well, that's it, the bare bones of what it takes to make a website. I hope this has been of help!

Please visit us on the Web for more free articles — and our [web design tutorials](#).



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