



CHOOSING A HOST

Summary

In order for the web-browsing public to be able to view your web site, you will need to host it on a computer that is online and available to all Internet users worldwide, 24 hours a day. These computers are usually owned, maintained and serviced by a specialist company, known as a web host.

A good web host will be able to make sure your site is live, 24 hours a day, and be able to offer technical support should any problems arise.

Business Web Hosting

Many Internet Service Providers (eg: AOL) offer some free web space, which is intended for personal use, rather than for hosting a business web site. For any business web site you should look for a professional service from a reliable hosting company.

Examples of Web Hosts

There are many companies providing this service. Several companies offer a combination of services – Internet Access, Email, Hosting and Domain Names. Examples of the larger established companies offering hosting include:

www.oneandone.co.uk

www.simply.com

www.fasthosts.co.uk

www.easily.co.uk

Costs

Prices of hosting vary, depending on the company and the level of service. As a very general guideline using the companies above, a good hosting deal for an average business web site is available from £50 per year.

Check list of things to consider:

Amount of Web Space

It is important that you have enough web space to host your site, and for your site to grow. The space is usually measured in Mega Bytes (Mb) or even Giga Bytes (Gb). A basic 8 page business web site with few images may be as little as 10 Mb.

Support

Ideally the hosting company should offer help by telephone as well as email. Also, you should check the costs of the telephone calls.

Data Transfer Limits

Put very simply, data transfer is how much activity (amount of traffic) there is on your web site. Some hosting deals put a limit on the amount data transfer allowed. If you have a busy web site, this may mean you have to pay more to upgrade.

Reliability

A good hosting company should be able to offer secure and stable hosting for your site, often in the form of an “**Uptime Guarantee**”. For example a **99.6% Uptime Guarantee**.

Web Site Statistics

It's very important to be able to measure how well your site is doing. This can be done through Web Site Statistics. Check that your hosting company can offer this service.

Domain Names

Most hosting companies will be able to provide you with a domain name (eg: www.yourbusiness.co.uk) often as part of the deal. It is easier to set up your web site if you buy the domain name and hosting from the same company.

FTP Access

This will allow you to upload and maintain your site remotely using FTP software, or the FTP tools in Dreamweaver, MS Expression, or FrontPage.

Secure Website Hosting (SSL)

This allows the customer to host a secure and encrypted website for safer credit card transactions etc. This is not always required, even by web sites selling online, if the credit card transaction is to be done by your Payment Processor, such as Pay Pal or HSBC.

Shared hosting or dedicated hosting

This simply means that your web site will either be on a computer with several others (shared) or on a computer of its own (dedicated). Most small sites use shared hosting as it is cheaper.

Windows or LINUX

Hosting companies usually offer a choice of 2 platforms or operating systems used in their web hosting. Choosing between the two is more important for e-commerce or data base sites, but not necessarily for a basic web site. If you are not sure, it is always best to check with the hosting company.

Email

When you buy a domain name, it's possible to set up email addresses for that domain name, for example, if the domain name is www.yourbusiness.co.uk, you could set up an email address such as info@ yourbusiness.co.uk

Many hosting companies also offer email accounts, where you can access email sent to your business email address, often by using MS Outlook (or similar) or via the hosting company's web site (often called Web Mail).