



Guide to Creating Your Own Website

Creating your own website may seem like a daunting task for someone with no prior experience. In reality, a bit of research and following these basic instructions make it possible for anyone to get their website operational in under a day. Yes, even if you only ever use the Internet to check email, play games and chat with friends, you can fairly easily create your own website.

Register Your Website Domain Name

Your website's domain name is the address where it is located on the Internet. In order to own the domain name, you must register it and that carries an annual cost typically varying between \$10 and \$30 per year.

The domain name should be the same as or similar to the name you plan to give your website. For example, if you plan to sell homemade soap, and the domain HomemadeSoap.com is available, that is the domain name you buy and register, as well as the name you give your website. In a perfect world, it would always work that way. In the real world, it rarely does.

People have been registering domain names and building websites for over 20 years now. In 2014, the number of websites hit [1 BILLION](#), and that number just keeps climbing. In other words, you may need to be flexible when choosing your name.

Let's look at your company selling homemade soap. That domain name is, of course, already taken. However, you can expand the name by adding your own, such as Homemade Soap by Charlotte. You need more variations, so think of a couple more options, maybe adding the name of your town or street name: Homemade Soap on Main.

Why do you want so many options before you begin looking? To protect yourself against unscrupulous tactics. Tech-savvy types scan searches for domain names, and then buy the name before the person searching has the chance to register it. The intention is to then sell it to you for a lot more money than you'd pay simply buying the domain name (third-party sellers typically charge hundreds, if not thousands, more).

Avoid this by creating your list of names, in order of preference. As soon as you find one that's available, [register it at the same company where you plan to build your website to avoid extra technical steps.](#)

Sign Up with a Web Host

Registering a domain name does not give you a website. You still need to find a home for your website, and that means signing up with a web hosting company.

The web host is like the landlord for your website, the place where you open up your virtual shop (even if you aren't selling anything). It is the web host that makes your site visible to everyone else on the Internet. There is a myriad of web hosting companies, but some of the more well-known companies include [GoDaddy](#) and [Bluehost](#). Take the time to research what each company offers, and to compare pricing, support, and features.

Newly launched websites are not going to attract a lot of traffic until marketing efforts are made through search engine optimization or advertisements. As such, a lower-cost web hosting package will suffice to get a website off the ground. The web hosting package can be upgraded in the future at any time through the web hosting company's customer portal or by contacting customer service.

Some [criteria](#) to consider when selecting a web hosting company are as follows:

1. Is the host server fast and reliable? Does it guarantee an uptime percentage of 99.5 or higher (the percentage of time your site is up without any glitches causing it to be down temporarily)?
2. What is the data transfer limit? Unless you post a lot of video or audio content, you likely don't need more than 3 GB.
3. Does the host let you set up a secure server, also known as an SSL certificate? If you plan to collect payments or other secure data, you need a secure server (this is the difference between sites that begin <http://www> and sites that begin <https://www>).
4. Can you set up email for your site without additional costs? You want to be able to register an email address with your domain name on it, such as Charlotte@homemadesoapbycharlotte.com.
5. Does the host offer technical support 24 hours per day, seven days a week? To be sure, send an email late at night, on a weekend or holiday.
6. What do customers say? You can't trust all reviews, but if you find a wealth of negative reviews, consider that a red flag.

You will be asked during the process of purchasing website hosting whether you already have a domain name or not. If you do, please enter it where prompted so the hosting company can connect the domain name to your website, or give you directions to do if you purchased the domain name from a different company.

Design Your Website

This step assumes you choose to do the design yourself. If, instead, you hire a person or company to perform your web design, you will need to work closely with them to assure the website look and content is how you desire.

Most web hosting companies offer one-click installation for the most popular website content management systems (CMS) available for free, such as Wordpress. The CMS is a software that allows you to install the theme i.e. what the website will look like, as well as create the page and posts for the website. You will use the CMS every time you want to change something on your website.

Every CMS has an area to choose a theme for your website. The theme is what the website looks like. It is a customizable template that will either be free or cost money, usually in the \$10 to \$50 range.

For example, you can perform a Google search for “best Wordpress themes” to get an idea of what’s available. Once you find a theme you like, you can search for it within the CMS and complete the purchase (if necessary) and installation by following the on-screen prompts.

Some web hosting companies offer a variety of their own tools for designing your website's pages within their own themes, from fonts and color choices to stock images and style templates. For instance, on GoDaddy, there are themes designed for specific businesses, such as restaurants or car repair. It also allows you to leave the theme blank so you can design it yourself from scratch.

Other popular hosts have similar capabilities, and it's one of the reasons they became so popular. Offering customers these frameworks is part of what made designing your own website possible for anyone. If you prefer, you can design your site yourself using a program like [Dreamweaver](#), which is a paid program from Adobe.

The reason for your site determines the number and types of pages you need. Visit the sites with a similar mission to yours to get some ideas of how to set up your site and the type of information to include. Typically, you include a Home page, which includes content introducing your site and its purpose. An About page tells about you, and anyone else associated with your brand. You probably want a Contact page, which offers users the opportunity to send you a message and provides your contact information, such as phone number, email address, and mailing address. You will need a mailing address to register your site with Google Business and Maps if your website supports a business. If you prefer not to list your personal address, say because your site is for a service offered, not as a marketing tool for a brick and mortar establishment, buying a P.O. box is a viable solution.

Once you've installed and customized the theme to get your website looking the way you want, the final step is to add content. Most CMS's have a sample page already built so you will know where to add new content. When writing the content for your site, take special care with grammar, spelling, and punctuation. These types of mistakes instantly create distrust of your site and therefore your brand. With your content in place, be sure to check the general options in your CMS to ensure search engine crawling is not disabled. Once you verify it is not disabled, you can begin marketing your website and continue to add new content.

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