

How To Create A Web Site for Free

The web is a gigantic library of stored information in your website becomes your catalog, media kit, and information about you and the business you represent.

As of September 2014, there were over 1 billion websites which tells us that everybody who's anybody has a website and if you don't have one, you are now in the minority.

Websites used to be complicated and expensive but now, after 20+ years, the industry has finally firmed up to the point where you can create a website easily and inexpensively without being a programmer or understanding anything about the technology involved.

The system that we recommend will allow you to create a website for free in just about an hour or so. Once you had the opportunity to see how easy and effective it is, you can convert this free website to a paid website that will give you even more power and versatility.

Incidentally, the free website is a real website, not a trial, and it will last forever. It has some limitations like a weird domain name and the inability to add certain key features which are a part of the paid version, but as a place to try before you buy; it's the best idea going.

Although there have been ways to create a free web site since the web began, few of the methods were really free, easy, or comprehensive enough to do most people any good.

Remember that when someone says "it's free", there's some kind of a catch because somebody has to pay for it.

Fortunately with some of the newer renditions of free web site systems, the "free" is simply being bombarded with a bunch of advertising for paid programs when you're downloading the application, advertising banners on the site, or the absence of more desirable features like audio, video, and embedded files that are only available as a premium upgrade.

That being said, there is still enough power and functionality in many of the free systems to make them well worth considering.

Website builders can offer you an easy way to build, design and organize your website without having to use complicated computer code. Many hosting providers include free website builders in their hosting plan but some builders

are very limited and you can be very frustrated trying to build your site using one of them.

What are web hosting companies free website builders?

Website builders are extremely useful for people who want to build a site yet have little or no knowledge of code (ie, XHTML and PHP).

These days most web hosting companies will include free website builders in your web hosting package.

This is highly advantageous as site builders will provide you with the tools to assist you with the design and construction of your page and encourage you to build your own site without confusing you with complicated code.

What should you look for when considering site builder tools?

Consider what types of URLs the site builder creates, the number of pages you are allowed to make, the amount of versions of the site builder that you are entitled to in the package and the number and type of templates that are included with the site builder. It is also useful to check how much disk space and bandwidth you are allowed for building the website, especially if the site builder is part of a web hosting package.

Also check the special features that come with the site builder, such as galleries, PayPal facilities, password protected areas and RSS capability.

What do you really need?

I learned very early on that most people, like speakers, trainers, and authors, and many small organizations and businesses do not need a super exotic site that costs a lot of money to create and maintain.

Neither should it be beyond the capabilities of the individual to at least maintain the site with updates, calendar changes, newsletters, and the like without resorting to outside help.

From a practical standpoint, a web site has to be capable of supplying you with the ability to create a custom look, and allow you to put in enough text, graphics, and linking to make it worthwhile.

What's more, it shouldn't be so complicated that you have to take a course in HTML programming in order to use it which, incidentally, is what many of the "free" offers require.

After listening to a lot of feedback from our seminar attendees and reading a lot

of reviews about how expensive and complex it was to create a simple web site, we started doing research on what was going on and found that there are several places to create free web sites that are not a scam in terms of their functionality as well as their ease of usage.

Of course, if the web site doesn't do what you need it to do; it's not worth anything either so we set out with the following basic criteria understanding that the more exotic features could be added for a price:

No Hosting fees

- No software fees
- Instruction manuals and video demos for all functions
- Unique domain
- Templates for basic site design
- Ability to customize template design
- Linked table of contents
- Ability to create text and graphics pages
- Ability to add a shopping cart like PayPal
- Ability to link to other sites and pages
- Ability to add custom HTML if desired

Since nothing is really free on the web, that looked like a pretty tall order but we started looking and actually found place that will allow you to create your web site with enough content to do you some good, for free.

In the process of our research, we found this YouTube™ video that reviews the top three sites. It's worth the five minute investment to see what's really going on in the world off free web sites. www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLWzbrnSOIY

Let's start with the web design software itself and review what look for.

Feature Set

A successful website utilizes the best of web 3.0 along with proven design elements. Good web design software will include utilities for inserting links, images, tags and keywords.

It should also have multimedia support, e-Commerce capabilities, and advanced features such as an HTML editor. Good web design

applications should also provide security measures such as site backup so it is possible to pull up previous versions of site in the case of a crash.

Templates

Good web design software provides website templates that serve as a starting point for users. The templates should be professional, polished and easy to customize with your own content. Ideally, the software should offer you the ability to create your own design or to use additional templates that can be downloaded online.

Text

Since there is a lot of text involved in a web site, it's imperative that the software contain a robust text editing system that allows you to import text, generate text, and format the text. A desirable feature is the ability to pre-format text using your own word processor and imports it, as is, directly to the web software.

Graphic Imaging Tools

Web design software should allow you to customize and enhance images for your site. You should be able to crop and resize and compress images directly in the software plus it should allow you to upload and use your own library of graphics, clip art and photographs.

Ease of Use

As a consumer or small business owners, you probably don't have, nor are interested in, taking extensive training in web design or scripting languages.

Therefore, to be effective, the web design software should be easy to use, even for beginners. The ideal software is intuitive and provides the designer with a "what you see is what you get" (WYSIWG) working environment.

Help & Support

Given its technical and utilitarian function, web design software should be supplemented with ample help and support options.

Most importantly, there should be a built-in help section that can be accessed directly (and printed out) in the software. Finally, a variety of online resources should also be offered including user forums, FAQs and how-to guides.

Whether developing a website for business, pleasure or both, be sure to read our in-depth reviews of the best web design software on the market.

Wikipedia created an ongoing report that has resulted in a compressive report of the top ten free web site systems and can be viewed from the Wikipedia site at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_free_web_hosting_services

You can look up each of these sites referenced using Google® and judge for yourself what makes the most sense for both your needs and your technical capabilities.

Our recommendations

After we tested over a dozen of the packages, we decided that www.weebly.com had the best overall program. In fact, we actually created several free and fee sites for our own use as well as our clients. (For example, check out www.Clutterology.com – it's really COOLJ)

Weebly's well-organized interface makes it easy to see at a glance what it has to offer. Like all of the new school of web site software, it has a series of menus across the top for easy access to its key features. A simple drag and drop is all it takes to add text, images or forms to your Weebly website as you can see in the video:

Weebly's pricing

The website doesn't reveal too much about pricing. So here's the deal: *the basic package is free, but will include a small Weebly ad in your website's footer.*

The Pro plan will cost you a very reasonable USD \$5.99 per month if you sign up for a whole year (\$4.99 if you sign up for two years).

You get to the price list only after signing up for the free version, but an email address is all it takes to register.

Note that you will have to pay extra for your own domain name, however. A .com domain will be USD \$39.95 per year (with discounts for longer terms).

Here's what we found:

- **Ease of use** - This is exactly how a website builder should be. There's no learning curve with Weebly, so you'll have your website up and running in no time..
- **Template choice and flexibility** - Range of attractive designs with access to the source code for customization. Also possible to use a template you've coded from scratch. A Smartphone-friendly website will even be generated automatically.
- **Advertisement-free** - Yes, but in the Pro version only. The free version has a small advertising link in the footer.
- **Languages** - Currently available in English, French, Spanish, German, Italian and Chinese. Support available in English only. No special feature to create multilingual sites.
- **Features** - Top-level domain (e.g. .com or .net) Yes You can buy a domain from Weebly, but it works out to be pretty expensive and they only offer .com, .net or .org domains. You can re-direct a domain you've bought elsewhere though.
- **Depth of navigation – Unlimited.** A drop-down menu is added to your navigation bar automatically.
- **Widgets (small tools to add extra functionality)** - Photo galleries, video and music players and more. We very much like the Button-Widget that lets you create call-to-action buttons easily.
- **Monetization – Yes** - Using Google Ad Sense or other banner ads.
- **e-Commerce** - Simple store in their basic and pro configurations but offers a really robust e-commerce version as well. It's \$25 per month but includes everything you'll need for a full on-line store. Works with multiple payment systems like PayPal or Google plus it works with pay per download sites like E-Junkie.com.
- **Search-engine optimization (SEO)** -Title, meta and description tags are all customizable at page level, as are your images' ALT text. URL text is always created from the respective menu item.
- **Blog** – Has all the standard features, e.g. comment moderation and trackbacks. Thanks to the iPhone app you can even blog on the go.
- **Visitor statistics** - Weebly has its own tracking tool, or you can use Google Analytics.
- **Contact form Yes** - Use drag and drop to create detailed contact forms or surveys.
- **Add HTML code Yes** - Allows you to add external widgets and other tools.

- Storage space Unlimited - Individually, your files cannot exceed 5 MB each on the free plan, or 100 MB each on the Pro plan. But other than that, the sky's the limit!
- **No limits on bandwidth either.** And you can even download your Weebly website and host it on your own web space.
- **Forums Yes** - Direct integration with Talki, which makes adding forums quick and easy.
- **Support** - Email and Tech support responded competently and quickly to our questions.
- **Fun factor** - Weebly's editor is one of the fastest out there, and it's very easy to use. Simply put, Weebly is a pleasure!
- **Overall rating** - One of the best website builders on the market. There's room for improvement in its store, but other than that, Weebly hits the spot.

Conclusion:

At first glance, the Weebly website seems nothing special. But take a closer look and you'll discover an outstanding tool. It's simple, uncluttered and easy to use, and that's exactly what people with limited technical skills need it comes to creating your own internet presence.

Added to this, Weebly's price/performance ratio is one of the best on the market: you can build up to 10 completely separate websites on the Pro plan.