

# Some things to think about when picking a web host and a domain name

## What's a Web Host?

A web host provider is a company who rents out web space and bandwidth to those who wish to publish a web site. The web host gives its customer an account, which can be used to upload everything you need for a website

## Types of hosting

### Basic Shared Hosting - Free

For those who are new to web design it makes little sense to pay a monthly fee for a hosting service when you barely know how to create a web site. Choosing a free host is a logical solution for someone who would like to experiment with web design, or maybe host a low-traffic personal site. Free hosting often includes a small amount of storage and bandwidth. Features also tend to be limited, often with no support for PHP, MySQL, multiple email addresses, and poor web statistics.

Bottom line: Free hosting is great to practice your web design, or even host a web site for family and friends. However, free hosting is not a plausible solution for the serious web master or business.

### Shared Hosting

Shared hosting is the most popular type of web host on the market. Nearly all small businesses, intermediate to large web sites, and professional web sites require only a fraction of the resources of a complete web server. It would be expensive for these sites to all reside on their own server, which makes shared hosting the perfect choice.

## Choosing a Domain

The domain name (the bit you type into the address bar in the browser) for a web site should be permanent and easy to remember. If a web site was changing its domain name every year, how would its visitors find it when it moved? Also, it is not easy for a visitor to remember a domain name that is not easily spoken out loud, such as [www.saf4azk.com](http://www.saf4azk.com). There are a few important items to consider when choosing a domain name:

*Use existing words - If possible use a combination of english words for your domain name, like [squirrels-are-great.com](http://squirrels-are-great.com), but try to keep the total domain from becoming too long.*

*Make up a unique name - If you create a unique name like Lycos or Tizag, you will have a greater chance of getting a shorter domain name.*

*Domain Extensions or Types - There are many domain suffixes to choose from for a given name, i.e. .com, .net, .org, .nu, .us, etc. We will talk more about the domain endings later.*

## Domain Types

After you have chosen a name, there are many different types of extensions to choose from. Say you chose "mysite" as your name, you then have the option of registering [mysite.com](http://mysite.com), [mysite.net](http://mysite.net), [mysite.org](http://mysite.org), [mysite.us](http://mysite.us), [mysite.biz](http://mysite.biz), [mysite.cc](http://mysite.cc), and many more lesser known extensions. Below is a reference of the

correct usage of certain extensions, however people tend to follow these guidelines less and less with each passing year.

*.com* - Stands for company/commercial, but it can pretty much be used for any web site.

*.net* - Stands for network and is usually used for a network of sites.

*.org* - Stands for organization and is supposed to be for non-profit entities.

*.us*, *.nu*, *.co.uk*, - Are country specific domain extensions that may require the register to be a citizen of the given country.

*.biz*, *.info* - These and other like them are domain types that have been added because there are barely any short and intelligible domain addresses left to register.

If you are trying to decide the right type for you, just follow this rule of thumb: In the United States try to get a *.com* or *.net*. In other countries, if you cannot get the *.com*, then using your country's domain extension is a viable solution.

## Web Host – Features

When searching for the right web host you will be assaulted with huge lists of features that the host provides. Many of these items are not important and should be included by default in even the most basic of hosting plans. However, there are a few features that you should pay close attention to.

### Domains

Most web hosts will give the option to either register a domain name at the time of signup or let you bring your own domain name. Additionally, check to see how many domain names are supported for an account. If you later choose to own another domain name, it would be nice to be able to add it to an existing plan without having to pay an additional charge.

### Sub Domains

A sub domain is what appears between the "http://www" and the domain name. For example say *orangepolecats.com* has a sub domain "furry" then the address would be "http://www.furry.orangepolecats.com". lots of free hosting packages will have free sub domains or only let you use sub domains

### Databases

Forums, calendars, customer orders, and many other items use databases to function. If you plan on having multiple of these items on a server be sure that the plan you sign up for provides a sufficient number of databases.

The most common database for a web server is MySQL, which is a free open-source database system. MSSQL, PostgreSQL and GNU SQL are also popular SQL servers.

### FTP Access

FTP is the common for webmasters (the person who "owns" the site) to utilize for managing their web files. Though some web hosts may provide a web interface to upload files without having to use an FTP program, not having direct FTP access to your site is a pain to say the least.

### Web Host - Bandwidth

For a webmaster, bandwidth is the measurement of data that is sent from your web host's server down to the visitors computer. If you have a lot of visitors and they all download large files from you, then you will need a great amount of bandwidth. Many webmasters do not plan for the future and inadvertently have their web sites shut down in the middle of the month because their web site was much more popular than they ever expected. To prevent this from happening to you, carefully measure your bandwidth usage and plan ahead!

## Web Host - Control Panels

A control panel is an interface to allow quick and easy access to a wide variety of features your host supports. Many control panels are now a GUI (graphical user interface) that grants access to email management, web site statistics, database administration, server load viewing, and more. There are a variety of control panels, but we will focus on the big three: CPanel, Ensim, and Plesk. Nearly all shared hosting services will come with one of these control panels installed.

### CPanel

CPanel is the most popular control panel solution on the market. Nearly all web hosts are currently using this control panel, except for those hosts that do not want to pay the expensive price tag. CPanel allows the web host to easily customize the features/programs that appear. Additionally, CPanel has a skinning feature, that many hosts prefer, to customize the look of the panel.

If you are looking for a user-friendly control panel, look no further then CPanel. However, if you do not have much money to spend, chances are you can find a better deal on web hosting if you choose a host that has one of the cheaper control panels, like Ensim and Plesk. It should also be noted that with the extra features included in CPanel, there tends to a few more bugs than with the other two control panels.

### Ensim

Ensim is geared towards those webmasters on a tighter budget. If you do get a host that uses Ensim control panel, be sure to check that the cost is less than a comparable host with CPanel. Ensim also has a history of containing less bugs than Cpanel, however the interface is not as user-friendly as CPanel's.

### Plesk

Plesk is another budget solution for webmasters to try out. Plesk has a history of being very stable. This is good if you have important information that requires above standard stability. However, the downside to the Plesk control panel is that it has a severe lack in features compared to the other control panels. If you are thinking of selecting a host that uses either Ensim or Plesk, be sure you do your homework and check up on the company's track record.

## Web Host - Uptime

Uptime refers to how often a site is available or responsive to web requests. The internet never sleeps, which means your web site needs to be up every second of every hour of every... you get the idea. A visitor could be arriving at your site's home page at any time of the day, so a web host with a high uptime percentage is critical.

**[Advertise on Tizag.com](#)**

### Advertised Uptime

Nearly all web hosts will advertise and guarantee a "99.9%" or higher uptime percentage. However, these guarantees are about as trustworthy as a used car salesman, not very! If a host has a history of a great uptime performance they will post a history of their uptime performance, monitored by a 3rd party, such as [Alertra](#) or [InternetSeer](#).

## Web Host - Backup

Your server's hard drive crashed. A hacker compromised your account and deleted all your files. Your web host disappeared with your money and your data.

These catastrophic events happen without warning, and without discretion. If you are not prepared for the worst, your hard work might be lost forever. That is why it is of the utmost importance that you keep regular backups of your data. Do not worry, there are a variety of backup options to pick and choose from.

## Web Host - Ecommerce

If you are thinking of starting an ecommerce web site, stepping through this Web Host Guide is critical. If you have read through this guide, start to finish, and follow the advice we have offered, you will be well on your way to choosing a quality host. Ecommerce is a much different business than the world has ever known. It is fast paced and those who cannot keep up are left behind. There are many reasons ecommerce sites fail, but hopefully the information here will help you avoid those issues that are under your control.

## Free Hosting? Never!

If you are running a web site on a free host you had better rethink your business plan. If you do not have the 10 or so pounds a month to pay for a reliable web host, then it would be much better to wait and save up the money. Launching your business on such an unreliable service as "free hosting" would discredit your business and irritate your visitors. Some pitfalls of freehosting:

**Pop ups** - Many "free" hosts will contain pop up advertisements for their own site every time someone visits your site. Instead of people focusing on your product, they are immediately distracted by this ad!

**Unreliable** - Free hosting subscribers are at the bottom of the pecking order when it comes to customer support, bandwidth, and server resources.

**Cancelled** - You may discover one morning that your web site is not loading, only to find out later that your hosting service has been discontinued. Free hosts reserve the right to remove you at any time.

**No Domain** - Many free hosting services do not give you a unique domain. Visitors will have no domain name to associate with your site and will instead have to remember an unreasonably long url, such as: <http://www.example.com/freeService/YourSite/index.html>, which is simply horrendous.

## Shopping Carts

Shopping carts, as seen on Amazon.com and numerous other ecommerce web sites, are the key way to allow visitors to purchase items. Usually these programs are written in PHP, ASP, or CGI, which are all server side scripting languages. Installing these programs onto your web space is often as simple as a couple of clicks. Many hosts offer pre-configured shopping carts that can be installed through the control panel.