

## What Is Web Hosting & Why Do I Need It?

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### What is a Web Host?

A web host is a company that has computers which are called servers that are connected the internet 24/7. Servers are powerful computers that have very large hard drives, or many hard drives. Every server is assigned an IP (internet protocol) number so they can be found by other computers connected to the internet.

The hard drive space is then rented to people who want a "website presence" on the internet. Think of a server as being like an apartment building with a unique address. Each apartment unit in the building is like the space which is rented out for one website. And like real apartment buildings, each apartment unit within the building, also has an address based on the building it is located in.

Renting space on a web host server for your website is like setting up house on the internet. You can be reached by a unique address (your website address or IP address), which is based on the server's address.

Once you have purchased web hosting you can then upload your website files to the server, where they are stored as HTML, CSS, Javascript, graphics files etc. It is from there that your webpage is then served out to your internet visitors.

When someone types your web address into the address bar of their browser, the browser sends out a request to 'get' the web page. The request travels across the internet to the appropriate web server (your web hosting provider) and attempts to locate the web page on that server. If the request is successful, (the web page exists) the web page will download to their browser, so they can view it.



Web hosting servers that store and serve up web pages to the internet cost money to setup configure and maintain. Web hosting companies will typically charge a monthly or yearly fee to:

- Allow you to save your web files to their web server (called *uploading*)
- Serve your web files up to the internet (make available for *downloading*)

These days web hosting is a very competitive business and there are many hosting companies to sign up with. Web hosting companies now offer all different kinds of deals on their *Web Hosting Packages* with all the 'bells and whistles' to entice customers to use their service over others.

## **How Much Will It Cost?**

There are free web hosting options available, however these may not be very reliable. So you will want to host your website properly the first time around and use a professional web hosting company. [HostGator.com](http://HostGator.com) is an excellent choice when it comes to web site hosting and their prices are very affordable, starting from just \$4.95 per month for unlimited disk space.

## **Why can't I host my website off my own computer?**

Technically you can. However, you would need a high powered computer connected 24/7 to a fast and reliable internet connection (cable and DSL is not enough). You'd also need technical knowledge of running web servers, mail servers, database servers, etc. All this would take a lot of time to learn and cost a lot of money to setup. Going through a professional web hosting provider is less hassle and a much more reliable solution. They can provide you with all the functionality you need at a much cheaper price.