

Seven Free Tools to Create your Web Site

By Dianne Reuby

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Free Site Builder <http://www.freesitebuilder.co.uk>

Coding your HTML by hand gives much better results than using a WYSIWYG program. You can get the layout that you want, and make small adjustments easily.

NotePad comes free with Windows - but a much better text editor is NoteTab Light. This has a sidebar with HTML tags - double-click to enter the tag you want, with a dialog box for those that have options or preferences, such as size, colour, placement, etc. Download it from <http://www.notetab.com/> . There is also a NoteTab mailing list, where you can ask questions, and exchange tips and tricks - subscribe to the basic list by sending a blank e-mail to <mailto:NoteTab-Subscribe@eGroups.com>

When you're used to coding, an award-winning program is First Page from <http://www.evrsoft.com/> . It runs in easy, normal, expert and hardcore modes - so you can learn to use it and continue to keep up with your web page output. Version 3 is due out any day. A built-in browser lets you view your pages as you create them, there are buttons or menus for tag creation, JavaScript wizards, HTML reference guides, template facility, and much more. Don't buy an HTML editor until you've tried this freeware!

You'll need to check your pages for errors. I use CSE Validator Lite from <http://www.htmlvalidator.com/> You can also buy a PRO version, but I've found the free version enough for my needs. You can correct errors directly in the main window, and each error is explained as you highlight it.

Graphics often need a bit of a tweak before you add them to your pages. Cropping, making the background transparent, resizing, or just finding that picture that you ****know**** you've got somewhere on your hard drive! Irfan View can carry out all these tasks, and includes a great browser

which loads at the click of a key, and displays thumbnails for you to choose from. Available from many freeware sites (see below), you can also download from <http://softwarecenter.net/irfanview/>

Uploading to your server (the computer where your web site is stored and accessed from) is done using File Transfer Protocol, or FTP for short. Two good freeware programs are FTP Explorer from <http://www.ftpx.com/> and WS_FTP, available from many freeware sources (see below). Both have graphical interfaces, very similar to using Windows Explorer. You can download a free WS_FTP tutorial in PDF (Adobe Acrobat) format by Steve MacLellen from my e-book library at <http://www.freesitebuilder.co.uk/library/library.html> If you haven't got Adobe Acrobat reader, use the link on my library page to download a free copy.

Another essential check - dead links. The web is a very fluid medium - sites arrive, move, and disappear regularly, and if your site has a link to one that has vanished or moved, your visitors get a "404 page not found" error message. Your reputation and business can suffer, not to mention your rankings with directories and search engines. I use Xenu's Link Sleuth, from <http://completelyfreesoftware.com/> - the reports are easy to understand, and can be saved to read off-line.

Finally, a task that is all too often forgotten, but which is absolutely essential, - backing up! If the worst happens, you need to be able to create all or part of your web site quickly - and the only way is to run regular backups. You can use the Backup program that comes with Windows, but I find the Swedish program MyOwnBackup much easier to use, and more flexible. Create different sets to back up your web site(s), important data, e-mail, or whatever you want to keep secure. You can create new archives or add new or changed files to a current archive, restore complete sets or individual files, zip archives, and span diskettes. The help includes *9 Steps to a Complete Backup* to guide beginners. Download from the main site <http://home4.swipnet.se/~w-42000/MOB/> (Sweden) or the mirror site <http://www.nt-eng.com/mob/> (USA).

Some of my favourite freeware sites:

<http://www.completelyfreesoftware.com/>
<http://www.webattack.com/>
<http://www.jumbo.com/>
<http://www.moochers.com/>

Dianne Reuby is co-author of the e-book "First Website Builder", <http://newbieclub.com/builder/?pramclub>
Dianne created and runs the Free Site Builder web site and

ezine, dedicated to helping newbies create web sites with free tools, services and resources.

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