

# How to Choose a Hosting Company

By Herman Drost

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Ok, you have your web site built and are now confused as to all the choices you have in order to find a home for your site. It is good to make a right choice the first time, because if you have to move to another hosting service, it will cost you time and you will lose some of your valued customers due to the downtime setting up with another host. You will also have to pay set up and hosting fees for a new account.

Here are some basic things to consider when choosing a Web Hosting

Service:

1. Speed and reliability of the servers and hardware

- Make sure they have a high-speed connection (preferably T3 or higher) to the Internet.

- Effective Bandwidth Management - opt for unlimited bandwidth

for your site.

- Backup Systems - good hosts will have back up systems in

place to guard against power failures, which will cause you to lose

data and customers.

2. Features

Compatibility with existing Software and Skills - Is your host's

server, software and support services compatible with the skills and

software you are using? For example if you are using FrontPage to create your site, make sure they have FrontPage extensions installed on their server. Some of the basic features of a hosting service should include:

- Domain name registration
- At least 20MB of allocated space
- Unmetered bandwidth
- Free Technical Support
- POP3 E-Mail Accounts
- Email Forwarding
- Email Auto-responders
- Email Aliases
- FTP Access
- FrontPage Support
- Own CGI-Bin Access
- Free Perl, CGI
- Server Side Includes (SSI)
- Password Protection
- Reseller/referral program
- 30 day money back guarantee

Flexibility and room for growth - Keep in mind the future needs of your web site. If the traffic to your site explodes, or in the future you may need a database solution then your host must be able to accommodate the changes.

Quality of their support services

- Quality of existing customers - ask for any BIG current

customers that are hosting with that service.

- Opinions of existing customers - ask for any testimonies of

existing customers to get feedback from them concerning reliability and support.

- Stability - you do not want your hosting service to go out of

business (like what happened to many of the free hosts) and leave you

stranded. Check how many years they have been in business.

- Support and Responsiveness - Make sure you can contact them

24/7 by phone or email. Test the quality and efficiency of response

by sending them an email pertaining to some question you may have

before you sign up.

### 3. Types of Hosting Services

- Free Hosting: Free sites are for people whose sites are small and do not expect much traffic.

#### Pros

It's Free

For small non business sites

#### Cons

No usage of domain names

Limited technical support

Unreliability of servers, software

Limited web space, technical support

Host may shut down due without notice

- Virtual Hosting: (also known as domain or shared hosting).

This is the most popular and cost effective form of hosting.

#### Pros

Low cost

Great for the average business sites

Good technical support

#### Cons

Multiple sites on server

Sometimes slow updates

Limited security and control due to the large number of sites on 1

server

Use your own domain name (www.yoursite.com)

What can you expect to pay?

- Expect to pay \$5 - \$50/month for a small web hosting package

of 20-50MB of allocated space for your site. This will be enough for

up to 20 pages with a few graphics on each page.

- When you sign up for a monthly service, there is usually no

fixed length contract, so you can terminate your contract at any

time. Your commitment is month to month although you often will get a

discount if you sign up for 1-2 years.

If you follow these basic guidelines, you will have a reliable,

efficient and satisfying hosting service that will contribute to the

success of your business for many years to come.

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