

Do you know what your hosting SLA is?

By Lars Jensen

Do you know what your hosting SLA is?

Lars Jensen
emu10k1@mail.tele.dk

HostingAndDesigns.com <http://articles.hostinganddesigns.com/seek.html>

Also known as "Terms and Acceptable Usage Policy" your Service Level Agreement, SLA is probably the most important piece of text you will need to read. And read you will have to; the entire text. Once you have familiarized yourself with this SLA you can start to skim read and look out for the most important details you feel are most important to you as you search for other hosting companies.

An SLA basically tells you what services you will be paying for and what rights you do not have and what rights you do have. You are agreeing to pay for your web hosting and for what is in the SLA and nothing else. In this document or text, the web host provider is letting you know in print, what you will have to agree to if you wish their services. But remember, that it also tells you, what rights you have. If the web host provider does not live up to the SLA, you now have a right to use this agreement to your advantage.

Web sites and web pages are very powerful marketing tools to appeal and encourage the client to act or buy the service that company is offering. Web pages can contain images, Flash, colors and even sounds and music. A web page can even be interpreted as one big advertisement to the buyer. This is why the SLA of a company, or in this case, a web host provider is so important. It is straight to the point and to quite a number of people, simply boring. Many times the SLA is written in small text, is very long and to some people confusing or complicated. You may notice some SLA's are almost hidden or at the bottom of a page in small text or only available on the order form.

Is there a reason why this is so? To have your SLA on the first page would look very odd and highly unusual. There are many reasons why some companies choose to have their SLA located where they are, written the way they are. Some are simply so they do not confuse the buyer. Some are so they do not scare the buyer so he or she thinks that what they are "getting into", is way out of their league. Unfortunately, some companies "hide" these service agreements because it reveals too much about the company and what you are really purchasing. Remember the colorful and bedazzling web pages? Well these SLA's are just the opposite. They get straight to the point. It's like opening the hood of a car and looking at the engine to see exactly how it works.

If you do not find an SLA anywhere on the website and have looked on just about all the web pages, then simply move on to another provider. This must be present on all web host providers selling services, even if they are free. You can always ask for their SLA, but this is not advisable if it comes in the form of an email as there is no way for both parties to revert to a static SLA.

This is also another important matter. The web host provider can always change their SLA if need

be, but find out if you are told so and how much time you have to adapt to these changes. It is not good agreeing to their terms and then having them change it later on to something you did not agree to. You may wish to make a copy of their SLA page and save it on to your computer's hard disk. You may also find it much easier to read their SLA by copying and pasting the text into Notepad and reading it from there. There is actually no need to read the small print on the web page itself, just copy and paste.

Another "tactic" for some web host providers is to provide their SLA on the order form. This is where you are just about to enter your credit card details and pay for your web hosting that they inform you of their SLA. A check mark is needed beside the agreement which usually has a link to the small text. 9 times out of 10, buyers can't be bothered to read this long complicated text and just get on with getting their web hosting. A mistake done all too often. Roughly 70% of all customers read their SLA after they have purchased a web hosting account.

Let's discuss what the SLA can contain. You can always "verify" if what the web pages say are true, as well as get the finer details in the SLA. For a while, a few years back, the most heated discussions involved unlimited bandwidth and web space. To cut a long story short, unlimited bandwidth or web space is simply and always will be an outright lie. There is no such thing; again, read the SLA.

30 day money back guarantee.

The phrase sounds simple enough but there are still just a few things to think about. Can you receive a refund on the 30th day? Or do you need to give them 7 days warning that you wish for a refund. Is it truly a "30 day guarantee"? Does it regard all types of payments, check, money order credit card etc. Is it mentioned in the SLA? Remember, you are basically buying the services within the SLA.

Uptime guarantee.

Another very important feature to look closer at. Again, web pages can look wonderful, but the business takes place within the text of the SLA. You may even want to compare how these uptime guarantees are calculated by other web host providers. Do you need proof in order to tell the web host provider that your site was down more than x many hours a month so the web host provider can give you a refund? Or is it more complicated, where your site needs to be down for x many hours in a row? In other words, down 2 hours on Monday, 3 on Tuesday, and 1 hour on Sunday but not 6 hours in a row, therefore not receiving a refund? Or if their uptime guarantee does not involve third party software crashes, server maintenance, internet congestion etc. What does the uptime guarantee cover? Not, what does the uptime guarantee not cover. It is extremely unlikely for any web host provider to offer a 100% uptime guarantee, without some exceptions.

What files are permitted?

There are more than just .html, .gif and .jpg files on the Internet. Apart from those files, what other files are you allowed to upload? Do they include any multimedia files; mp3 or movie files? Are you allowed to upload software files? and etc.

How is the bandwidth and disk space quota handled?

If you go over your quota, how is it handled. Are you automatically charged the extra fee? And if so, how much? Or, is your account suspended until you pay the extra charges or pay for the next hosting account? Or, are you notified about the "problem" and asked to pay the extra charges or upgrade to the next hosting plan within a certain number of days?

Domain names.

If you have registered a domain name with a registrar you should not encounter any problems. If you are registering a domain name through your web host provider, make sure you retain all rights to the domain name. This is especially true if you are given a free or a very inexpensive domain name with your account. Some web host providers will register the domain name for you, but in their name, which means you do not own it. In some cases, if you wish to move to another web host provider you will have to purchase the domain from them at a much higher cost.

Miscellaneous categories.

A few other categories to study are server resources, background running programs, mass mailing and other technical areas like Cron Jobs, telnet or SSH etc. Some of these topics mentioned in the SLA may sound rather strict or stringent but it is actually very common to read these same restrictions on almost all web host providers. This is, as mentioned earlier, to inform you of your rights and most importantly in this case, to protect the customer from harming or congesting the server for the company's other clients. You do not want someone slowing down the server which you are using so your web pages load slowly or not at all. So you can actually be more reassured that if this happens, action will be taken, thus an advantage to you and not necessarily a hindrance. (This mainly refers to all virtual hosting accounts.)

If you are uncertain about a certain part of an SLA, you should always ask the web host provider. Never assume something is adequate unless you are sure and have checked. Always think ahead. Will I need this or that in the future? What happens if my website grows much bigger? What if I need to upload x type of files from now on? What if the third party company or software I work with needs this or that enabled? Should I have read the whole SLA? Never assume your web host provider will have or offer what you wish. Find out, and if you are not sure, ask!

Plausibility is a term that is most often overlooked in regards to web hosting. Our goal is to educate the reader and at the same time, improve our hosting services. For more information and articles or to comment, please visit <http://www.HostingAndDesigns.com> .

[Get-Articles.com](http://www.Get-Articles.com) : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)