Web Hosting: An Introduction

We touch on the basic components of web hosting, to help you make an informed decision when looking for your host.

What is a web host?

A web host is a service provider that stores your website on a server, and allows your website to be seen by anyone in the world who has an internet connection and a browser.

What are the differences between web hosts?

There are many differences between web hosts. Some offer free web hosting in return for advertisements on your website, or they may provide a shared domain name, that you cannot change. Different web hosts offer support for different website coding languages and functionality, such as **mailing list** [1] software, **databases** [2] etc. They will also provide a different amount of space for your website (web space) and the amount of **bandwidth** [3] (how much information that can be downloaded from your website). Nowadays most web hosts offer so much space and bandwidth, that the numbers are often just marketing gimmicks. Very important is the support offered by your website, and this varies greatly. Some web hosts advertise incredible guaranteed response times, but then force their customers to use automated response systems that make getting hold of a real person next to impossible. There is nothing more frustrating than receiving an unintelligent canned response from a computer, when you need to speak to a human!

What is the difference between shared server, virtual private server (VPS) and dedicated server web hosts?

Shared hosting involves many clients using one shared server, and is suitable for small to medium-traffic websites. Virtual private server hosting involves partitioning a server into several virtual servers, to provide the capabilities and greater capacity of a dedicated server, allowing for greater traffic handling. Dedicated hosting is a set-up consisting of one server per website, and is recommended for websites that receive very high traffic loads. Search over Google that offers shared hosting, which is the most economical type of hosting and is suitable for the vast majority of websites: remember to look at how much traffic you are expecting compared to what bandwidth is offered.

Is the physical location of a web host important?

It can make a difference depending on where your expected users are located. Most simply, the closer the server is to the end users, the better, as there will be a minimal latency or delay. Some web hosts, offer a choice of server locations to suit your market.

So how do I choose a web host?

Firstly, you have to know what your basic requirements are in terms of web space, bandwidth, code-support and functionality. For most websites the maximum web space offered is more than enough. However, if you plan to have a website with a very large library of pictures, or videos, you may need a larger web space. If you are not sure about how much bandwidth you need, most web hosts will allow you to upgrade accounts if your bandwidth grows. You will need to check with your web designers to see what code and functionality your website needs, and whether a web host offers it.

Once you know your basic requirements, you should try and find out what people are saying about a particular web host. Read testimonials, and visit websites hosted by that web host to ensure they are responsive and not suffering down time. Does the web host offer a money-back guarantee? They should do! This allows you to try it out, and cancel, without risking a thing!

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Is it easy to change web host?

Yes, it is. Most of the web hosts will help you in every step of the way. In summary though, you should first upload your website to your new webhost, and then get your domain name provider to switch or repoint your domain name to the new location.

You can also check the reference **here** [4].

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Links
[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mailing_list
[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Database
[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bandwidth
[4] http://www.realfreewebsites.com/articles/an-introduction-to-web-hosting/

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