Web Hosting Buyers Guide

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Welcome to the Web Hosting Buyers Guide!

Finding the right web host for your website can be a daunting task, especially when you consider there are thousands of service providers all competing for the honor of hosting your website. Even the most experienced webmasters struggle to choose from the multitude of features and plans available.

The good news however, is that costs have dropped significantly in recent times as the competition among web hosting companies has increased. For example it's now possible to select reliable service providers who will host one or more websites on shared server plan for less than $10 per month.

The Web Hosting Buyers Guide has been produced to help you find a web host suitable for your own particular needs. Whether you are hosting your very first website, or looking to change your hosting provider this free report can help you:

- Avoid common pitfalls and avoid undesirable web hosts

- Describe useful account features you should look out for

- Gain an understanding of the different types of hosting products and services available to you. We'll look at Shared hosting, Reseller hosting, VPS hosting and Dedicated servers.

- Discuss the various prices you should expect to pay

- Suggest a few hosting providers who offer good value and service

Let's get started

Before we discuss what to look for, let's take look at some things to <u>avoid</u> when when choosing a hosting provider for the first time:

- Avoid choosing a web host based only on pricing alone. There are many cheap hosting providers out there and often you'll get exactly what you pay for. Very little. So be wary of the $2 or $3 per month plans if you want consistent uptime, regular data backups (important) and reliable customer support.

- Don't pay a high set up fee. With the exception of some dedicated server accounts, we think they are quite unnecessary.

- Don't buy web hosting from an auction site! Your website could vanish next week along with the hosting provider.

- ==Don't buy a domain name from a web host, and don't buy hosting from a domain name provider.== Yes, even though many very good hosting companies offer a free domain name you should always keep your most important domains registered separately so **YOU** maintain ownership and control over the domain instead of the web host. This is a common mistake many people make and it's only realized once they try to leave their web host for some reason and discover they often can't easily take their domain with them. So before you order web hosting remember to register your most important domain names separately at a domain name provider such as Godaddy, Register.com or Namecheap.

What to look for in a web host

The hosting provider you choose should satisfy the following criteria:

- They're established. At least a few years old, and preferably with a few thousand clients. Don't be afraid to ask them about their history.

- Provide 24/7 quality support. It's usually a good idea to ask a simple question in order to test out their support times and helpfulness.

- Provide a money back guarantee. This removes any risk for you and give you a chance to test drive them for a period of time.

- Offer accounts that let you host multiple websites without paying more. Sometimes you will want to set up a second or third website.

- Provide multiple databases in case you want to install more than one database driven script on your account.

- Provide regular backups of your site so you don't lose any important files.

What type of hosting do you need?

There are many different types of hosting to choose from depending on your site's structure and popularity, but probably the first choice you will make is between Linux based hosting and Windows based hosting. The most popular of the two is Linux hosting and you should probably choose this option unless you know that you specifically require Windows hosting...

Linux hosting accounts will allow you to set up a simple site quickly and also allow you to use popular .php scripts like shopping carts, forums and blogs to build almost any type of site you like. Usually included is an account control panel called 'cPanel' which enables you to easily manage your site, and also look out for 'Fantastico' which provides dozens of scripts for free with one-click installation.

Windows web hosting should be used if you require special server side scripting support for your .ASP, .NET, MS SQL or MS Access web based applications.

Shared Hosting

For most people starting out online 'standard' or 'basic' hosting provides all the space and bandwidth needed for around $10 per month and will allow you to host a few sites on the one account by using add-on domains within your control panel. Shared servers are managed by the host so technical knowledge is rarely required of the customer.

Shared hosting accounts share a server's resources with dozens, maybe even a hundred or more other customer accounts which makes it very affordable. Choosing to pay annual fees can reduce your costs even more. Here are a couple of suggested hosting providers who don't charge a setup fee. At the time of writing the following special offers are available (Click on the logos and links to visit the websites):

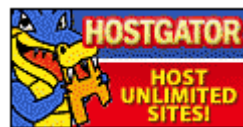Hostgator are a very popular choice. You can save $9.94 off your first payment when you sign using the coupon code: **wordpress**

Globat offer a **free year of hosting** when you sign up at this page and check out the Hostican website regularly for their special offers.

Reseller Hosting

After running a website or two for a period of time many webmasters decide to start a larger network of sites. This is the time to consider upgrading your account from shared hosting to 'reseller' hosting.

Reseller hosting was originally intended for web designers who wished to offer hosting for their customer's sites, making a some extra money along the way. Reseller hosting allows you to have multiple sites each with their own hosting account and control panel within one master reseller account. These reseller accounts, when provided on a Linux platform usually include the WHM (Web Host Manager) software. WHM makes managing a large number of websites easy.

You can expect to pay from $20-$30 per month up to hundreds per month depending on the number of hosting accounts you wish to set up. You have full control over each site's space and bandwidth limits and yes you can even sell accounts if you wish!

Excellent value reseller hosting can be found at Micfo hosting and Hostgator.

VPS Hosting

If you've grown and promoted your websites to a point where they attract thousands of visitors per day, or if you are using demanding scripts and databases, you will need to think about more powerful hosting options than shared or reseller hosting. If you cannot afford a dedicated server at this point but require the same performance and stability, then VPS (virtual private server) hosting may be the best solution for you.

VPS hosting consists of a server divided into multiple isolated accounts, and each VPS account has its own independent operating system with it's own web server and mail server resources – no sharing here. Just like a dedicated server, you can have full 'root' access to all configuration files in your account which means a greater ability for you to install and run custom software should you choose to.

In addition to providing more control over your hosting environment, VPS accounts are more secure than shared hosting accounts. If a hacker were to find access to a shared server he could damage any or all of the websites on that server at once. But because a VPS server is divided into isolated accounts, even if a hacker were to gain entry through one account there is no way to access the others.

More experienced webmasters may wish to manage the technical aspects of their VPS accounts, but this can be a time-consuming and complicated task. It's little wonder many people prefer to have their VPS hosting accounts ==fully managed by the hosting provider==. Usually you'll pay a few dollars per month extra for this, but this can free up your valuable time and energy to concentrate on content and website promotion.

You can expect to pay $40-$70 per month for an entry-level, fully managed VPS hosting account and this will allow you to run multiple sites from one account just like a reseller account. You'll be provided with an operating system, control panel, your own allocation of RAM memory, plus large space and bandwidth resources. A minimum of 256MB guaranteed ram is suggested in order to run your control panels and database driven sites smoothly. For higher traffic sites consider 384MB or 512MB of guaranteed ram or more.

Micfo Hosting, ModVPS and Hostican provide excellent value, fully managed VPS hosting.

Dedicated Servers

If you are ready for the ultimate in power and control then it's time to consider leasing your own dedicated server. Dedicated hosting gives you the <mark>freedom to use the entire resources of the server</mark> as you wish. As with VPS hosting, choosing a fully managed plan can relieve you of many technical tasks, allowing you the time to concentrate on managing your website content.

Dedicated server hosting is noticeably more expensive than shared or VPS hosting because the cost of operating the server is not divided between a number of users. You can expect to pay upwards of $150 per month for a basic managed server, and pricing will depend largely on the physical setup of the server computer.

Server hardware becomes an important thing to consider when choosing a dedicated server. You'll want to choose a provider offering adequate processors along with quality hard drives and memory. These days Pentium 4 processors are common and perform much better than older Celerons because they have a larger cache, allowing you to run more demanding web applications. New Xeon processors provide even more performance and now Dual Xeon processors are also widely available.

Dedicated servers have become extremely popular with e-commerce businesses. Your host can set up and customize the security, operating systems and control panels so your server will run just the way you want it to, and as business grows over time you can have new software programs added or upgraded anytime you wish.

Hostgator , Hostican and Micfo provide a wide selection of managed Dedicated Servers at some of the best prices available (Click on the logos or links to view current prices).

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