

Free Web Hosting: How much will it Cost You?

Anyone with an idea for a website will probably find themselves considering a free web hosting service. Maybe you're launching your own online business, or perhaps you just want to get your personal blog up and running. Either way, you've got a vision, you've got your content ready, and now you just need a web hosting company to bring it all to fruition.

These days, you'll probably be hard-pressed to find a web host who actually charges an up-front fee. More likely, you'll find dozens of them advertising free web hosting—no strings attached. But can it really be that easy? Unfortunately, not always. While the actual setup of the account may not cost you a dime, there are often underlying costs that come into play later in the process.

To get your web site live without breaking the bank, we recommend that you review any hosting service with a fine-tooth comb before signing up. Below, we list some factors to consider before making any commitments:

Can they Promise 24/7 Reliability?

No matter how compelling your website content may be, it's useless if you don't have a web hosting service you can count on. Above all, you need an agency that will be available all day, every day to ensure uninterrupted performance. When evaluating a free web hosting service, be sure to determine their preferred contact method for customer service needs. Also, ask about their procedure for scheduled maintenance and whether you'll be able to customize the message that web site visitors will see in the event of an outage.

How Fast Will Your Pages Load?

To an Internet user, there's nothing more frustrating—or more likely to send them clicking somewhere else—than a website that's slow to load. The most surefire way to prevent this? Plenty of reliable bandwidth. A common money-saving strategy of free web hosting providers is to offer limited bandwidth. This can cause a noticeable sluggishness in the rendering of your text and graphics, drastically impacting the impression you worked so hard to make on visitors to your site. When evaluating a free web hosting service, compare their bandwidth package to other service providers and make sure it doesn't miss industry standards—so you don't miss any sales.

Will Visitors be Plagued with Pop-ups?

One way that free web hosting services recover some of their costs is to sneak in banner ads and pop-ups on their clients' web sites. Not only might this cause your customers to lose credibility in your content, they can quickly become irritated and abandon your site for someone else's. Confirm that your

prospective provider will not be clogging your web pages with unwanted advertisements.

Will Your Assets be Limited?

If you're looking for unlimited creative license in designing your web site, a free web hosting service may not be for you. When a web host shoulders all of the cost, they often place constraints on the number of web pages, images, or text that can be added to their clients' sites. Make sure the service you are evaluating supports the type of site you are building—without a bunch of hidden costs.