

Best of the Web Hosting Show Guides

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Notes from the Hosting Media Rock Star:

I hope you all enjoy this collection of guides I have put together from past specials we have done in the past with the Web Hosting Show podcast. Working on this podcast week after week has turned from an interesting idea I wanted to try to a real passion that I absolutely enjoy. Feel free to share this guide with friends, family and if your a web host - share it with your clients too.

For more information about what the Web Hosting Show is all about be sure to check out:

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Moving from Web Host to Web Host

When moving from house to house, you have to pack up all of your belongings in the old house before you can move, right? The same could be said when you are moving from web host to web host. The first and most important thing you can do is backup your web site and get it ready for the move. Remember to grab all of your static files. This would be all of your non-dynamic pages, images, templates and more. The exact files that you do backup might change depending on how your site is setup.

Backing up Isn't Fun To Do

If your using a content management system, then you might search the official site for that CMS to find the best way to backup the information it stores. Often you can also backup you databases (MySQL, MSSQL, ect). Control panels can really come in handy when it comes to backing up too. All of the major control panels that your hosting account could come with should have a backup function built in.

You should also always keep a backup of your web site in my opinion (make one at least one a month) no matter if your moving or not. That makes this job easier to manage and getting everything moved from the Web to your computer shouldn't be such a big job.

Put Your Moving Pants On...

Next step you are going to want to take is to take all of those files, folders, databases and more from your computer to the new web host. Before transferring the information over, check with your new web host to see if you will be able to view your web site as it should be seen with the temporary URL they give you. Often if they give you a URL like this:

`http://www.dummyurl.com/~yourname`

You will not be able to execute JSP, PHP and other advanced code types. If that is the case, see if they can set you up with a temporary real domain or sub domain. Most web hosts will be happy to do so - but it will be a service you need to ask for. Then you will know your web site will be able to be viewed by your domain name (*with the old web host*) or your temporary domain name (*with the new web host*).

They give you a domain such as *testsite.testermctesttest.com*. Now that you have a temporary domain that works with your new hosting plan you are ready to transfer over (via FTP) all of your static web site files.

Syncing Content, Keep it Static

Once the files are uploaded with your new web host - go back to your older web host and disable your databases and put up a nice message saying, "Web site going through move, will be back soon." or something to that effect. You need to turn off any dynamic content generation (*like with forums or blogs/comments*) so that your information moving from the old host to the new host will not be out of sync when your done.

Now let us go back to your new web hosting account and upload your scripts, services and databases that need to be restored. Each script will have it's own way of doing this so best to check with the

script provider to see what the best method might be.

Take a break. At this point you should have two working versions of your web site. They are: the web site with your domain name at the old web host and the web site with the temporary domain with the new web host. Both should be static, so that no content can be added or removed from them at this point in the move.

If all systems are go, then you are ready to move to the next step in the process.

Domain Names and Nameservers

Now you need to get your domain name to point to your web site with your new web host. To do this, login to the place where your domain name is registered and update your nameservers. These should be supplied to you by your new web hosting company and are what tells the domain name to point to the new hosting account and away from the old one.

Note: If you talked your new web host into giving you a temporary domain, now you will probably need to tell them you want to go back to using your actual domain name.

Now this nameserver update will take some time to complete. I would say give it 24 to 48 hours. After that time has gone by your domain name should be pointing at your new hosting account. While the change over is taking place, people will be taken (*most often*) to your web site with your old web host or your web site with the new web host.

Once your domain starts pointing at your new web hosting plan, you are almost all done. Turn back on your dynamic content, forums, blogs, comments, and more. Break open some of the good bubbly stuff too because you just completed something that most people dread. I would put moving a web site from web host to web host right up there with doing your taxes. It is no fun at all. I would give it a week or two there before you cancel your old hosting account so that if you forgot to backup something you still have time to grab it before your old web host deletes it for good.

Web Hosting Guide to Ecommerce

You know Joe right? Joe lives down the street from you and runs a little comic book store downtown. Joe doesn't know much about the Internet but he does know that he would like to expand his business.

What should Joe do? Joe should look into getting into ecommerce.

Now first things first, what is ecommerce? Ecommerce is the conducting of commerce with goods and services over the Internet. It includes: consumers using the Internet to purchase goods and services online; as well as businesses selling and communicating with other businesses through the Internet.

There are a lot of "Mom and Pop" stores all over the world that want to get their goods and services Online. How do they do it? Well there are a few things that Joe is going to need.

1. Joe Needs a Domain Name

The first thing Joe should be looking for is a good domain name. It should be something that is short, yet gets the job done when it comes to telling people what they are coming to see or buy. Take my domain name for example. When you type in WebHostingShow.com you automatically know you are getting a show about Web hosting. Now do you have to be that direct? No - but it doesn't hurt any.

2. Joe Needs an "Ecommerce Friendly" Web Hosting Company

The second thing that Joe needs is a Web hosting company. Now there are millions out there to choose from, so finding one should not be that big of an issue. Find the best hosting deal for your budget and go with it. Now will just any Web host do? No. You want to look for the one that offers the other things on the list as well. That is where the term "Ecommerce Friendly" comes into play.

The Web hosting account that Joe chooses should have:

- A Dedicated IP Address
- Shopping Cart Software
- Shared SSL Certificate
- Dedicated SSL Certificate

Now the dedicated IP address and the SSL certificates kind of go together in the same group. I will explain more about them later. The shopping cart software will be where the fun begins.

3. Joe Needs His Online Store Setup

Now when it comes to setting up the basic building blocks of an Online store you will need a script or service to run the interface. Now like you might use WordPress or MovableType for blogs and driving content - you will need to find another Online script to run your virtual store front. Here are some of your options:

- [osCommerce Shopping Cart](#)
- [Cube Cart Shopping Cart](#)
- [Zen Cart Shopping Cart](#)

Now some if not all of these will come pre-installed with your Web hosting account. That is one of the devilish details you will need to look into when you go shopping yourself for a Web host.

4. Does Joe Need a Dedicated IP Address?

Answering support questions, every so often I get the guy who tells me he doesn't know what a dedicated IP address is but he wants one! Now where a dedicated IP address plays a part in the Web hosting world is when you need it for setting up your own dedicated SSL Certification.

Now I could get into all the details about how it works and why you need it, but both of use would probably just end up being more confused than when we started. The thing to remember is - is that if you want your own dedicated SSL certificate, you need a dedicated IP address. If you want to use the shared SSL (if it is provided by the Web host) then you usually don't have to have the dedicated IP address.

5. Joe Wants to Know the Differences Between Dedicated and Shared SSL Certificates

Now we get into that gray area that seems to confused a lot of people. Before I tell you the differences between shared and dedicated SSL certificates - let me share with you what exactly a SSL certificate is.

SSL certificates give a Web site the ability to communicate securely with its Web customers. Without a certificate, any information sent to a Web site can be intercepted and viewed by anyone. You know that little padlock you see in your address bar when you have a secure connection to your E-mail, banking or credit card company's Web site? That is created by the SSL certificate. Think of it as the security checker on the server. It's job is to encrypt any information sent from yourself to the server so no bad guys can steal your information.

Shared SSL Certificates

Now a shared SSL certificate is usually one provided by your Web hosting company. It is the one that everybody and anybody on the server you are on can use.

The advantage of using this is you don't have to pay for a dedicated SSL certificate of your own. The disadvantage is that when people go snooping around to see your verification it is going to show your Web host's information and not your own.

Dedicated SSL Certificates

For those that want the more professional touch, you should go with a dedicated SSL certificate of your own. Now at this point, I am not sure which way Joe might go - but there is nothing wrong with paying a little extra to get your own SSL certificate.

The advantage is that it gives your company and Web site a more professional look. Dedicated SSL also shows that the SSL certificate is in your company name and dedicated to your Web site. The disadvantage is that it usually costs some of the green stuff, and you have to pay your dues on a subscription type basis.

6. Joe Needs a Credit Card Processor

Now that Joe has a domain, hosting account, shopping cart software, and an SSL certificate - what comes next? Well a lot of folks do not think of the credit card processing that an Online store must do to turn those products into dollars. This is the one area you might have to shop around to get a good deal on. Most Web hosts do not do credit card processing because it would be another headache that they don't want to deal with.

So with that said, what should you be looking for? Well after you type “credit card processors” into Google you should look for a company that will:

- Work Well With Your Shopping Cart Software
- Doesn't Take Too Much Off the Top of Your Sales
- Has Low or No Annual Fees

If you want to go down the easy road when you start out, you might look at [PayPal](#) or [Google Checkout](#) as a payment processor.

7. Does Joe Want to Shop Around?

Now that all the basic have been covered and Joe has everything he needs to know, should he shop around for all these various things or get them all in one spot? I would say Joe should get as many of them as he can at one spot. This makes managing things a lot easier.

Your Web hosting company maybe able to point you in the right direction and get a lot of these services for you cheaper than it would be to go out and do all the shopping on your own.

Now you know Joe, the guy that lives down the street? He has turned his little local store into a world wide market leader by placing himself on the Internet. Where people in his local area used to be the only ones that could get his goods - now everybody can. This is as good as opening a store in every city across the world. You don't have to be a Walmart to become a success. All you need is a good idea and the tools of the trade I have provided you here.

Web Hosting Job Hunting Guide

So you want to become one of the few, the proud - the average web hosting worker. Now I can tell you from first and experience, it isn't all fame and glory.

It is a job for people who like to help other people. If you don't have the patience for people with stupid questions, or if you're not that interested about how the Web works this job might not be for you. If you like tinkering with things and you find yourself being very customer service friendly, then stay tuned because this might be the right job for you.

In this Web Hosting Show guide I want to cover some of the basic questions and ideas that anybody looking to work in the web hosting business will need to consider at least once before jumping in with both feet.

Am I an Employee or a Contracted Worker?

First thing that is hard for some people to wrap their heads around is the idea that you are not working as an employee of the company. You are instead working as a "contracted worker" for the company.

This is how many freelance jobs work. If you are working a remote position with the web host in question, you are actually classified as a small business in many situations. Now I won't pretend to know all the legal loopholes that are related to that - so we'll just leave that topic there for now.

Now if there is a web host or data center in your area that you work for - that all changes. You will be an employee and it will be "legally" much like all the other jobs you've probably had in the past. Nothing new there.

Experience Workers Make the Best Workers

When looking for a web hosting job, you might make a list of things that you are experienced in so that when they ask (and you know they will) you'll be ready to answer. If you've owned and operated your own server then you should be a shoe in.

There are always jobs for experienced server administrators out there. Take in consideration some of your other web projects. How would you answer these questions?

- Have you installed many content management systems or other scripts?
- Do you know the basics of HTML and CSS as it related to web site design?
- Have you ever messed around with PHP, SSI or other server technologies?

If you answered yes to most if not all of them - those would also be good things to include in your resume.

Show Me Some of That Web Hosting Money!

One of the most important questions is how much will you be making? Are you going to be able to do this full time - or will it need to be a part time investment of your time? You should be looking for at least minimum wage when it comes to how much you get paid.

You might actually ask for more - because you will not have taxes taken out of your paycheck in many situations. So you have to consider that a certain portion of your paycheck will be going to

Uncle Sam at the end of the year.

What Type of Web Hosting Jobs Are There?

Now for the most part I would say you could divide the world of a web hosting worker into two parts. You have the customer service end and you have the technical grunt end. The customer service end is the side that answers the questions, smiles and has the patience of a Tibetan monk. If this was a war, the customer service representatives would be the first line of defense.

Now on the other side you have the technical grunts. These workers know their way around a server and can get things on that end of the web hosting job fixed and done quickly. They might not talk with the public much - but they can do grunt work like nobody's business.

Now occasionally you might find people that fit a little 'bit into both camps. That is fine too - there is room for all types at most web hosts around the Web. The important thing to note is that working for a web host doesn't mean you will be babysitting a server all day long. There are a lot of different jobs you could end up doing.

Where Can I Find Available Hosting Jobs?

Your average remote web hosting job is not going to be listed in your local paper. You might need to know where to look before you make that leap. One great resource that is getting more and more jobs listed on it every day is HostCareers.com. That gives you everything in one spot.

You might also try looking around on some of the popular web hosting forums out there like WebHostingTalk.com. Many of them have a "jobs" section where web hosts can post the kind of folks that are looking for and people looking for work can post their applications.

Another route you could go down is to go talk with the web hosts directly. Some places like Lunarpages.com have a [jobs section](#) of their web site for open positions within the company. I am a big believer of "it never hurts to ask" so just dropping them an e-mail or a phone call might give you a lot of information on if they are hiring or not too.

Other Things to Consider Before Switching Jobs

Before you give up your nine to five job, there might be a few more things you need to keep in mind.

- Most remote or contracted positions do not offer vacation time. If you need to take some time off, most web hosts will allow it but you had better check on the policy before signing up.
- Make sure you read the contract the hiring web host gives you from top to bottom. Your going to be legally bound to this - so better know what you are getting yourself into.
- Get ready to find somebody who knows what they are doing when it comes tax time. The big branch tax offices should do well, but that old lady down the street might not know exactly how to classify your new job.
- Don't get suckered into a job with no set hours. It might sound nice, but this just means that you'll probably be tricked into working 24/7.
- Remember that the customer needs to be happy - no matter how much of a jerk he or she is. Just think of it as a challenge, smile and ask "what can I do for you?"

Is a Web Hosting Job for You?

Well that just about wraps up this guide on getting yourself a job inside of the hosting industry. So now that you have heard it from all angles, has it changed your mind or are you now interested more than ever? If you have any feedback, questions or remarks be sure to send them my way or leave a comment.

Setting up a Blog on Your Hosting Account

Blog hosting is a big part of what made the Web hosting industry grow by leaps and bounds in the past ten years or so. Everybody and their grandmother wanted a place to tell their stories, post their options and share their thoughts. Now just about everybody has one.

The only problem is that some of the best tools out there are intimidating. I'm here to hopefully take some of the intimidation away and get you started with your own blog about whatever your passion is.

Finding the Right Web Host

When it comes to picking a good Web host for setting up a blog, there are a few things you must keep in mind.

You want to first make sure that they are going to deliver you enough disk space and bandwidth to keep your head above water for a while. If you expect to write five or more posts a day - you could fill up that space pretty quick. Also make sure that you have an upgrade you can make when you need it.

It might be to the next largest plan - or it might be to a VPS or dedicated account. If you are a nobody just starting your first blog, you could probably just go with the least expensive plan and move on from there. Find some of blogs out there and see who they use for hosting.

Uptime is always important too - because you never want your readers to be left looking at a "this site is not available right now" message too long.

Even though we haven't picked our blogging engine yet - you must keep in mind you need a Web host that will support the features you need. So you might pick a few good candidates first, and then go on to finding the content management system you need.

Picking the Right Publishing Engine

Now this is where the real fun starts to happen. There are a million and one different content management systems or CMS scripts you can pick from. If you need a good resource on where to find the one that will work best for you I would highly suggest checking out OpenSourceCMS.com.

Here are some other good content management system resources to check out:

- [The CMS Matrix](#)
- [CMS Web Links](#)
- [CMS Watch](#)

Now for the sake of keeping things simple - for today's show we are going to go with my favorite WordPress. Now should you download WordPress from its Web site and install or install via your control panel's easy "one-click" install? I would say do it the hard way. Navigate your favorite browser towards WordPress.org, hit the download link and pick up the .zip download file.

Here are a few other suggestions for blogging scripts you could use:

- [Drupal](#)
- [Joomla](#)
- [Mambo](#)

You want a blogging script that will be easy enough for you to manage and that has plenty of other users. The reason you want to use one of the more popular choices out there is because when you run into trouble, figuring out a problem is often easier to do in a group. There are a lot of WordPress resources out there so that would be why it would be my suggestion for the best script you could use.

How to Install WordPress

How do you install WordPress? We are getting to the meat and potatoes of all of this. Now that you have WordPress downloaded to your desktop and a Web host ready to host it on we can start worrying about how we are going to get it installed on to the server. Before we get started make sure you can or have these ready:

- You Have Access to MySQL via Your Control Panel
- You Have a FTP Client Handy for the Uploading and Downloading
- You Have a Paper and Pen Ready to Write Down Your MySQL Database and User Information (and password!)

Thankfully for 95 percent of the population the easy “five minute installation” of WordPress should do the trick. I have edited this down a little ‘bit so if you want to check out the original please visit WordPress.org.

1. Download and unzip the WordPress package, if you haven’t already.
2. Create a database for WordPress on your web server, as well as a MySQL user who has all privileges for accessing and modifying it.
3. Rename the wp-config-sample.php file to wp-config.php.
4. Open wp-config.php in your favorite text editor and fill in your database details.
5. Place the WordPress files in the desired location on your web server. If you want it to show up under your main domain name, drop all the content inside of the wordpress folder into your public_html folder.
6. Run the WordPress installation script by accessing (your domain)wp-admin/install.php in your favorite web browser. If you installed WordPress in the root directory, you should visit: <http://example.com/wp-admin/install.php>

There you have it, now WordPress should be installed correctly. If you run into any problems, the first place to check for errors is in your wp-config.php file. Make sure you got the database name and the user name in the right spot. I often get these confused.

Also you might need to also put a prefix before the name - such as “username_databasename” in the file as well. When you setup the MySQL database it should tell you the exact names. Just copy them from there as they are shown to your WordPress install and you should be alright.

Get WordPress Configured to Your Liking

Alright we got WordPress up and running but you are not ready to blog just yet. I have a few tips and tricks to hope you get the most out of your WordPress experience. Here are some of the first things that I do after installing WordPress for the very first time.

Edit the Default User - Login to WordPress and then click on the “User” Tab. After that you should be brought to a page that has the default “Admin” user. You need to go into here and customize it for you. Set your own password, your name, your link, your nickname and more. This way when you post something it won’t show up as “admin” it will show up with your own name.

Make SEO Friendly URLs - From inside of WordPress click on “Options” and then “Permalinks”. By default WordPress has a pretty crappy way of setting up your links. You want to use something that is a little more search engine friendly. Click on the radio box for “Date and name based” and then hit the “Update Permalink Structure” button. You might have to set your .htaccess inside of your WordPress install. You must chmod the .htaccess file to 666 to allow WordPress to write its rules to it automatically. If not, then you can download or create the .htaccess file by hand and do it yourself.

Check the Other Options - After getting into the “Options” tab inside of WordPress you might check each tab under that section to make sure things are configured the way you want them to be. You might have to use WordPress for a while before you start noticing little things you’d like to change here or there. Click each sub-tab under your options to get familiar with where to find what also. This way you won’t be left hunting for a half hour to figure out how to change one little configuration.

WordPress Themes and Plugin Help

Now that we have gotten WordPress ready to go, you can now start working about plugins you need and themes you can use. One really nice resource for WordPress themes can be found at themes.wordpress.net. There are dozen there to choose from.

Just make sure if you do decide to use one of those, you pay attention to the author’s notes. Some require that you keep certain links on your Web page back to them - and others have “sponsor links”. I would suggest to stay away from the “sponsor links” ones because that is just a little slimy in my opinion.

For plugins I would suggest that you check out the plugin directory at WordPress.org.

<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/>

There are a slew of ways there to extend your WordPress install to do a number of things.

Now for most themes and plugins getting them installed it a pretty easy process. You will need to startup your FTP client and get yourself into the “wp-content” folder. From there you will see a folder for themes and a folder for plugins.

The rest of this pretty much explains itself.

Put themes in the themes folder and plugins in the plugins folder.

Plugins are often just one .php file so getting them in there should not be a problem. When uploading a theme, make sure you grab the entire folder for the theme and upload it. Themes have multiple files inside them so if you don’t grab them all - often they won’t work. Each theme and plugin should have a “Read Me” file with it to give you more specific instructions if needed.

Handy Guide to Domain Names

Need help picking the best domain name? Do you want some assistance finding the domain name register that is right for you? Have you considered the privacy concerns you might be giving up by getting that .com of your very own?

I want to tackle domain names from head to toe to give people a guide to the confusing world of domain name registrations. There is no doubt that domain names are one of the most important parts of the web hosting game so they do deserve a little special attention.

Picking a Domain Name

The hardest thing about getting a new web site going is deciding what the domain name is going to be. I remember when I started this podcast, I wanted webhostingradio.com. Sadly enough though, it was already taken. WebHostingShow.com was my second choice though and I was able to pick it up with no problems at all. Of course when picking a domain name it has to be related to your web site or product in one way, shape or form.

Which domain name extension do you want to go with? There are plenty out there, but my usual rule of thumb is to go with a .com if at all possible. Why? This is the one that people know, are familiar with and is pretty much in the general public's mind when it comes to associating businesses with the Web. If I told you my company's name was the Web Hosting Show, you would type webhostingshow.com first to try to find me. Your first thought is not to go type in webhostingshow.co.uk or webhostingshow.biz.

Now where the rule might be broken is if you can get a better second choice than a first choice. For example, you want to go register greenlatern.com but it is taken. You do a little more research and find though that greenlantern.net is available. Then it would be ok to go with the .net. Also you can do lots of creative things with the domain extensions too. An easy example of that idea would be del.icio.us.

When it comes to hyphenated domain names a lot of people out there will tell you they are good. They will then start going on and on about the search engines and good keywords. I think that is all a bunch of bologna. While search engines are important you need to keep in mind you are making a web site for people to read first, not search engine robots.

Check out these domain name search engines that will give you a little more help when it comes to finding out if a domain name is available or not.

What domain name extensions are available out there? Wikipedia has a good list of country code top-level domain name extensions.

Shopping for a Domain Name

Now we have your domain name you want picked out, where do we go to purchase it?

There are a number of domain name registers out there today. One of the most popular is GoDaddy.com. You have probably seen them at least on the Super Bowl, right? Usually when people reach this fork in the road that can go one of two ways.

Register the domain name with a third party or register the domain name with their web hosting company (if the web host provides that service). I like keeping all my eggs in different baskets - so I would stick with keeping your domain name registration and web hosting separate.

Go from domain name register to domain name register and try to find the best deal with the most respectable name. Somebody like GoDaddy.com for example. You might also want to check the ICANN list of accredited registers. That would be the best place to find out if the domain name register you find is a fly by night setup or a real online business.

Now this brings up a new idea that you must keep in mind when shopping for a domain. Make sure that when you register it, the registration is done under your name and not the name of the company setting it up for you. You want to make sure that you will own the domain name and the rights to that domain name. If you can't find it in their small print when signing up you might drop them an e-mail to make sure.

WHOIS and Anonymous Domain Registration

What is the whois database? The whois database is the big dump where everybody's domain name registration information gets tossed into a big search-able pile. This way anybody can find out the name, home address, phone number and more of the person who has registered any domain name.

It started as almost like a phone book for system administrators to find out who owned that next server over. The whois system though hasn't matured any at all over the years though. It might have been ok when there were 25 people out there with domain names and servers but with millions? That is a little scary. Well I would say for businesses, having this information to turn to could be very handy but for Joe Newbie who is registering his first web site it is a big security concern.

Now I could go on and on about how the whois system is broken and we need a replacement, but that is for another podcast. They did kind of fix the problem, the only issue here is you have to throw more money at it. Money fixes everything right? Due to the problems with the whois database a new business has come up for domain name registers and the like. It is often called anonymous domain registration or privatizing your domain name. Many domain name registers and web hosts offer it as a secondary service and the price usually isn't that bad. For \$5 or more a year they will replace all of your information in the whois database with their own.

Now some people would suggest that you could just put in fake information when signing up and you would be in the clear right? The problem with that, and I speak from the domain name register and web hosts' side on this one, is it makes it very hard to verify your identity when you say you are Huckleberry Hound from Nowheresville, Texas. Now if you had a PO BOX available to you that might be one work around - since it is a real address but not your home address. Another fix would be to use your work address when signing up for new domain registrations (just make sure you clear it with your boss first).

Watch Out for Domain Slammers

So what have I left out of the domain name discussion? I would advise you to keep up to date when your domain name registrations are due. The reason is that there are places out there that will try to steal your registration away from the place you have it now and move it over to them. This is called domain slamming. An example of a company that does this shady practice is Domain Registry of America. They have been known in the past to send you a letter via snail mail (another good reason there to privatize your domain registration) to your house, to your front door and tell you..

"Oh no, your domain name registration is running out. Fill out this form and we will register it for you for another year. You only have to pay us \$49.95 and you will never

get another letter like this."

Then at the bottom or back of the letter in really tiny print it will tell you, "This is not really a bill, it is an advertisement by a butt monkey trying to steal your domain name registration." Ok, maybe the "butt monkey" part really isn't in there but you get the main point behind the idea. If there is any question at all about your domain name registration, go to the web site of your domain name register and check there first.