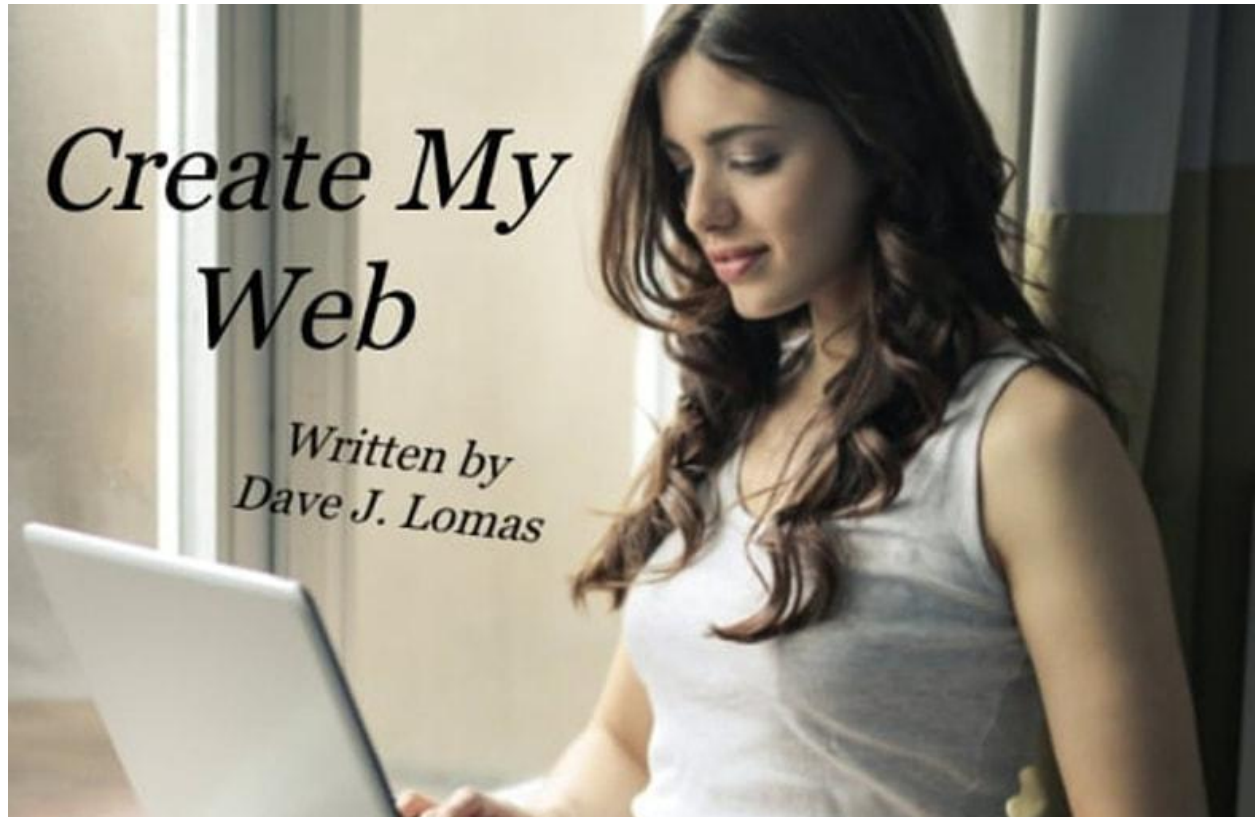


Create My Web

(Special Project Article)



First published in July 2015 the Create My Web special feature project is aimed at new beginners, or those thinking about creating a website of their very own, for the very first time. Not aimed at the design aspect of creating a website but more aimed at how best to add content and the general layout of the web pages. Plus a few tips and tricks to make it all look that extra bit special.

Making Your Own Website

Many people will tell you, or at the very least believe, that 2004 was in many ways the turning point when it came to the internet becoming a part of mainstream technology in people's homes, and in the workplace, and at that point in time all sorts of web and blog sites came along that further covered all sorts of information, online services and internet related products in a more user friendly way.

Forum based websites such as Facebook, for example, came along at that point in time which of course made it possible for people from all over the world to talk to each other at the click of a button.

Since 2004 the ability to set up your very own website could not be more easy, compared to all that technical stuff that you needed to learn back in those early days, thanks to online hosting services that takes all that complicated hard work out of setting up your very own website for you, and often these days, totally for free.

It still takes a fair degree of skill and an eye for detail to set up your own website when it comes to the general look and design of your web pages and how best to add written and photo content to highlight and promote what you wish to share with others but with a combination of a lot of practice and putting in some thought as to what you create online over a period of time, and maybe taking some advice along the way, you will soon have a web or blog site that looks highly professional and eye catching.

Do I Need A Website?

Where to start is of course the big question when it comes to setting up a website of your own but even before you think about that part of it the real important question is do I need one?

A website is an ideal way of advertising a product or service, in addition to providing information on all sorts of things that need not be business based, so if you run your own service or wish to promote something then having your own website to highlight such things, and to give out further more in depth information in addition, and also people being able to contact you via your website, by phone or email, then having your own website is a very viable option.

These days many people, both high profile businessmen and those seeking work, will have what is now called an E-profile website that acts as a CV and portfolio of what they have done in the past and what skills and experience they can bring to the table in the workplace for the benefit of a future employer for example, ('E' stands for electronic by the way), but such personal profile sites however need not be just limited to work related items but also about other things such as hobbies and interests that can be shared online with others who follow the same type of activities.

The amount of things a website can be used for, at any level, from business to hobbies to advertising products and services to personal profile information is a great asset in many ways and in addition it can also be used to keep in touch via the internet with family and friends all over the world by not only sharing messages and photos on your site but also via direct email, if you add an email address link to your site, for sending more private messages.

The one other advantage of sharing or promoting various things on a website is that it is there to be seen 24 hours a day, every day, throughout the year.

Web Or Blog Site?

There are two main types of websites available on the internet. A standard website is the more traditional form of site that can have custom designed pages that vary from each other to highlight the individual contents of each page or a preset blog site that is more aimed at adding regular written work that acts like a publishing site or an online diary.

In the case of a traditional website such individual website pages could be designed to highlight such things as videos on one page, therefore a film or television type background theme, to maybe a page that is more focused on published written work for example.

A traditional website is more suitable for content that is aimed at being a set publication of information that does not need to be updated often, or at all, and can be easily found at any time from the site's main menu.

A perfect example of a set published website page would be a 'contact' page. Such a page would contain some basic contact information, an email link and maybe a contact form.

Such a page, in most cases, would never require being updated, amended or additional information added so it would be a set information page that can be left on display for a long time.

Although nothing is written in stone and both web and blog sites can be used in the same way, regardless of content or how it is being used, added to or amended on a regular basis the standard website tends to be more suitable for set inserted information pages with individual theme backgrounds for each page, if required, and very ideal if only a few web pages are needed for the site.

A blog site is very much the same as a website but it will have set features, to handle regular published work, added automatically when pages are published and it will be more aimed at people who wish to add updated information and articles often.

A blog site is also ideal if publishing hundreds of pages over a period of time as blog sites, and blog pages, have an automatic indexing system unlike a traditional website page.

A blog site is like an online daily diary, some would say, when it comes to adding content on a regular ongoing basis and therefore the nature of a blog site, regarding how it handles new information being added to it, is more suitable for those who wish to publish content often.

These days web and blog sites are often merged on one site together so that you can have standard web pages and also a blog page setup all under one site address. That being the case when the option is given, by a host provider, to select a web or a blog site it is best to select a standard website when first getting started, as you may not need a site with blog features, but the option to add a blog page could come in very handy in the future if more and more content is being added.

A blog page, it should be noted at this point, is also a space saver to a degree. Due to how a blog page works, unlike a standard page, a blog page can display different subjects, separate from each other, with their own individual titles, all on one scrolling page. Such a feature therefore removes the need to publish pages for various subjects on an individual basis.

Starting up your very own website for the first time can be a problem when it comes to which type of website or blog site to have but selecting which host provider is also a big problem when it comes to all those various services out there.

With all those various website host providers out there promoting themselves, and all their service options on offer, you can and often will be misled or overwhelmed by it all if you are not careful and fail to take the time to study what exactly is available.

Some for example will offer a free of charge site but will charge a fee after a trial period while others will offer a free site but will charge for various add-ons and services that you may not have been aware of at the time until it is too late and you are now facing costs and charges that you did not plan for. So when looking for a host provider it is very wise to look through their site and study what they are offering and check out all the details in full.

Taking the time to study various host providers will save a lot of time and effort in the end as some offer services that you may not need while others will lack what you will require to make your site a viable and worthwhile option. In addition to all of these things you also need to think about how much you are willing to spend as paying for some services and site features may not be required for what you have in mind.

Often a free of charge site will cover what you require in just the same way as a costly website so take some time on what you wish to spend and compare it to what website services and features you need or don't need as the case may be.

When it comes to selecting a website host provider your options are often limited when it comes to having a free of charge site but there are plenty of host providers out there who do many sites with all the functions that you may need and all for free.

Another thing to take into account is that although many website host builders claim to have easy to construct sites, some are not that easy to do in the end. Therefore when first starting on a new site with a host provider make a point of finding the link on their site that gives you the option to close your account with them before you waste too much time trying to build your site and also avoid paying any money out until you are very sure you have the right site provider for you. In other words - shop around and see what is on offer.

The other main thing to consider when setting up a website for the first time is how big do you think it will need to be in the end? A standard website is suitable for just a few web pages while a blog site is ideal for hundreds of published pages. In the event that you are not sure how many pages you may need to publish in time then find a host provider that offers sites that are a combination of both with regard to blog pages in addition to standard web pages.

Many host providers these days have sites that are a combination of both interchangeable web and blog site set ups so make a point of looking for that feature when selecting a host provider.

How Much Does It All Cost?

Creating a website via a host provider often costs very little, or nothing at all, depending of course on what the host provider is offering at the time. With many website providers all trying to gain customers and competing with each other on the internet to attract customers via a number of methods the costs involved can vary to a great degree depending on which package deal they have on offer and which one of them you choose to select.

Often domain/site service providers will offer a basic starter deal that is free of charge or a range of more advanced services, for a fee, that can vary from business to executive level with regard to extra added features.

A top of the range website with all the features you could ever hope for would of course cost a lot of money, often payable on a monthly basis, while a basic site would cost less than the price of a cup of tea, but for the new beginner who would only need a site for personal or general use then selecting the free of charge site package is often the best way forward.

While some services will only offer a free hosting deal for a limited period of time before asking the customer to upgrade to a fee paying option or only offer a few limited features and website pages for free unless you upgrade to a better deal there are those who will provide a free website hosting service for a lifetime and with no content restrictions with regard to the size of the website.

In many cases these free website services will insert advertisements on their customers' sites, added by the host provider automatically, to help them get income from such free websites that they provide in return, but at least, no costs or service fees have been wasted if in time you no longer want your site for whatever reason.

In the end it all comes down to three things, when first starting up a website of your own, - costs, features and the level of need.

Looking at these three things in true order of priority the subject of need comes first.

In the case of needing, or desiring, a site, simply think about what you want it for and how much money are you prepared to spend on it? When it comes to all singing, all dancing features such as photo slideshow, buying and selling features and many, many more services of that nature then again think about what is the desired result you are looking for and is it worth the price involved?

Let's Do A Checklist!

A quick checklist of things to do when setting up a website of your very own!

OK - let's get started!

1 - Have a think about what type of web or blog site you are after and what kind of content you will be adding to it. 2 - Search for various website host providers on the internet and see what they have to offer. 3 - Open an account with your chosen host provider and give your new site a name and a website address.

4 - Start work on the 'home page' and think about how you would like it to look. 5 - Sort out any written text for the site and any photos you are thinking of adding. 6 - Take a look at the site settings and change them to suit you.

Here are some more general tips to help you get started and how best to construct your brand new website. Note that some tips are for commercial purposes so not everything is relevant to you in the event it is of a home use nature.

Is the purpose and scope of the site immediately clear from the homepage? Is the information contained on the site credible and reliable? - Is it useful and relevant? Is it up-to-date? Does the homepage allow users to start key tasks immediately? Are there always clear headings and subheadings to help users scan/read more easily? Is the content correct, clear and written in the user's language and not full of needless jargon?

Does the website have a comments section for user feedback in order to constantly improve its content? Does the navigation of the site convey to users upfront what is available in it? Does it help/guide users to go to the parts they want quickly? Does it make it easy for users to request additional information? Does it make clear to users their current location on the site? Page name or index name for example.

Is it clear to the user that the site is an authoritative source? Is there a clear indication to users on data protection, copyright policy and other legal issues? Is there a 'Contact' and a 'About' page?

Don't worry about all of these things at first, just simply focus on getting it all up and running and come back to these things at a later date.

The one item that many people tend to overlook when starting up their very first website is the subject of copyright laws. This is nothing to be concerned about but if using written work or using photos that others have done in the past then it is often wise to check that you have not violated any copyright laws.

This subject does tend to be somewhat complex in nature at times so therefore if you are not sure then seek legal advice or ask others who know more about this subject first.

Host Providers

When it comes to creating your own website you will need a hosting service to get you 'up and running' as they say. Commonly called a 'Host Provider' their job is to provide you with everything that you will need to get your site up and working including not only all the site building tools that you will need but also a website address so that people can find you.

When it comes to all host providers however there will be times when, due to a technical fault, or maybe when upgrading their services they may have to 'go down' for such maintenance and their customer support for a short time will not be available.

It is at those times that you will be unable to update your site, and in some cases, your site will be taken down and completely off line for a short time which will mean that it will be unavailable to everyone online for a period of time.

This situation is often unavoidable, and in most cases completely out of your control, so all you can do is to try visiting or updating your site again, every few hours or so, and hope it is all working again without any undue further delay.

Often when this situation comes around, from time to time, the problem is only for a short period of time happily so having a bit of patience is the key thing and the best way forward in situations of this nature.

If the problem tends to be more of a long term problem however, or a regular thing then reporting the problem should be considered, and can be very easily done, by visiting the host provider's own service website and leaving a message or visit their Facebook page, or one of the other social networking sites that they run.

Often when visiting one of their social networking site pages or on their own service site you may find that they have already given out a message themselves giving details of the situation. So when things go wrong simply report the problem or visit their own sites for repair updates and go back to your site later in the day to see if it is all working again.

It is very rare that your content, or recently added content, is lost when such things happen but just to be on the safe side always keep copies of your work on file, on your computer, as a backup.

Site Email

Having an Email address is not something you will need when it comes to surfing the web, as they term it, when it comes to just looking at websites on the internet or for simply looking at things that you need information wise, or simply doing so for general interest reasons, but without one you will be very limited as to what services you wish to apply for. That being the case, applying for an email address to send and receive private or general email messages or applying for services is vital in the end.

Most, if not all, websites will have a variety of contact methods that are based on three methods in the main, the first being a direct contact email link address that you can click on to or in standard print form, that you can type into your email 'box', or a contact form that you simply enter your details into and send at the click of a button.

Both of these methods however cannot be used if you do not have an email account of your own. The third method is of course by phone if they provide one on their website.

When having a website of your own you will find having an email address for people to contact you a vital thing when it comes to taking enquiries or for just simply exchanging messages in various ways. That being the case if you create a website of your own, an email address is something of a vital feature.

Many hosting services will provide you with an email address for your website as standard but may charge for this service as part of a package deal but you can also insert your own email address, that you may already have, without having to pay for one from a website host provider. Simply giving out your own email address on your website or using it for your online contact form works fine without the need to apply for one specifically through your website host provider.

Website Templates

These days all of those technical skills a person had to have to create their own websites is long gone, unless you like creating your own website totally from scratch of course, as website hosting services these days will have a large range of ready made 'template' websites available for customers to choose from and build upon, and customise, to their own liking with the various tools and features available, which often includes drag and drop content creation features, that makes creating your own very first website reasonably easy to do.

Although there are no true technical skills involved in creating a website these days as the host provider will have template websites for customers to work from the new beginner to website publishing will still need to put some practice in at making the most of the website they are working on and how to make it all look eye-catching and professional. Getting to know, and how to use, various features and site functions through a bit of practice is often the best way forward before getting down to creating a website.

A lot of people tend to be idle minded when it comes to the layout and general design of their website pages but as the old saying goes – ‘If a job is worth doing then do it right’ is a very valid thing to say if you want it all to look and read just right.

That Vital Home Page

So there you are sitting in front of your PC, or laptop, all ready to start working on your very first website. Brilliant, at last, you say to yourself. You have done your homework and found a site host provider, you have sorted out what costs are involved and you have even selected the type of site and theme that you think will be best suited for the content you plan on adding.

A website name and site address is all sorted out and you have even got most of the written content ready to add to it. You even have videos and photos on the side also ready to insert onto your website pages. So with all that now completed, and all the content ready in hand, you are now ready to get started - but what is the first step at building a site? Now that is something you need to ask yourself, and think about, in a big way.

The 'home' page is the first step, and a very important step, when it comes to building a website in a nice and productive way. Getting the home page sorted out and perfected is needed for two reasons in the main - not least of which is that vital first positive impression that is required when site visitors see your work for the first time.

Strange but true - the home page can, and often does, make a lot of difference when it comes to visitors wanting to see more and thinking that it is a professional site, based completely on that very first impression of the home page image and content. The second and equally important thing about the home page is that most of the layout and the general image of the website is based on what you do with that page.

The reason why the layout of the home page is of great importance is that when extra site pages are added, most people will add a copy of the home page rather than add a blank page and then change the page content accordingly but leave the design and general layout alone to give all the site pages a set standard throughout.

Therefore perfecting the home page to your liking before adding more pages is a wise thing to do and very much time well spent.

Experience and a lot of time honoured practice is often the best way forward when it comes to creating a website of note as anyone who has learned to build their own websites in a self-taught way over a period of time will tell you.

It is also wise to look at how others have done their websites and to ask advice from seasoned website builders now and again if you truly want to make it all look good and fine.

There is always something new to learn when it comes to building a website and promoting the site's contents in a practical and effective way so sharing ideas and learning a few tips and tricks from others is for sure a worthwhile thing to do at times.

Website Address

Having your own website would be pointless if no one could find it, so that being the case, having a site address is the first thing to think about when starting up your brand new website.

A host provider will of course do that for you with regard to setting it all up but it will be down to you to select not only the site name, that should highlight what the site is all about, but also a site address that tends to match the site name. For example 'John Smith Dog Show' should have a website address that is similar in name.

For example: johnsmithshow-com would be ideal but, take note, the shorter the site address name and the more memorable it is the better. Jsdogshow-com is another example regarding an even shorter website address.

Note: The example site addresses shown are in lowercase only because all site addresses are done that way - but a site name is done in the normal way just like a book title.

A site address by the way is just like a home address with regard to being a location finder. Without a site address no one will be able to find you. The entire internet, known as the World Wide Web - hence WWW at the start of website addresses, is totally made up of peoples websites - millions of them in fact - so just like a crowded city you will need a site address so that people will know how and where to find you.

The one drawback, it should be noted at this point in time, is that having a free of charge website will automatically include the host provider's own website address as part of your site address if you select one of their free package deals. The reason for that of course is so their website/services are automatically promoted on your free site.

As a further example, jobblog-com, a paid for site address would become, 'jobblog.hosting-com' if it is a free of charge site. So that being the case do have a bit of a think about that situation when selecting a free or paid for site.

Networking

There are many other ways of sharing things, or services that you may wish to promote, on the internet such as social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn for example. But having your own website means you are not sharing your hobbies, interests or services with thousands upon thousands of other people who are also doing the same thing on those sites all at the same time.

Having your own web or blog site means that the entire content of your site is yours and yours alone, of course, throughout each and every website page published, however social networking sites do have great value when it comes to sharing your work with millions of others if you provide a link back to your site so that people can find you, and hopefully they will take the time to search through your site throughout to see what you do.

Therefore having a link to such social networking sites on your own website that takes them to a page of your own, if of course you have one set up and published on Facebook for example, is an ideal way to get what you do and what you have published on your site noticed far more than random visitors to your site who were maybe only surfing the internet without any particular reason and landed on your site by chance.

In addition to social networking sites there are also online publishing sites that will offer you the chance to have your written work seen on their website or maybe have it published in print form for a fee.

However these online services are more aimed at writers so for general written work, and having more in depth information and illustrations, having your own site is the best way forward.

You may also come across one page services. These are nothing more than a one page profile type of site that you can add details about yourself to but nothing more. Ideal for someone who only wishes to publish the basics about themselves but no good if you have much to share. Although having said that a one page website of your own, and not part of a one page service, can be very effective at times depending of course on what you wish to add to it.

Saving Content

In the main all you will need to make a website of your very own is some good and accurate content and an eye for layout. If you can write content that is easy to read, and is reasonably accurate, then you are halfway there already.

You may also need some photos, illustrations and maybe some video content in addition, to make it all look nice and highlight your written work, but as a whole that is all you will need to get things started.

To add or edit written and picture content onto your own PC or Laptop's hard drive at home before transferring the final version to your website can be done very simply by using your word processing and picture editor software programmes on your computer but if trying to do this on a computer that is not your own, within an I.T. class or at a library that has computer access for example, then that will mean you will need to use such software that is on their computers that you are using of course. In that situation you will need to save your work to a memory stick, (Flash Drive), or a memory card as a result.

Creating content before transferring it to your website on someone else's computer instead of your own computer's hard drive will mean of course that you will not be able to keep or access your saved work in the same way that you can on your own computer when using someone's else's personal computer, (PC) so saving work on a memory stick is ideal.

It is also never wise to save unpublished work on someone else's computer, for various reasons anyway, so therefore saving your work on a portable memory data storage device makes for good practice.

There are only two other things that you will need when it comes to creating a website of your own and that is your time and patience until the job is done. Rome wasn't built in a day, as the old saying goes, and creating a website is just the same thing. The bigger the website and the more content you need to add to it as you continue working on it will take time so avoid rushing the job and have patience, moreso, when things go wrong at times.

Line Spacing

When it comes to adding written content on a website most people will naturally think about the font style, colour and size but there is also one other aspect to adding written content that can make all the difference when it comes to it all looking nice and neat and easy to read and that is the subject of letter and line spacing.

Most, if not all, website template set ups offers the option of altering the spaces between each letter within a word and also the spacing between each line of text that can be adjusted automatically from the site builder menu options, if required, and is something worth taking a look at when first starting to add written content to your website.

Taking the time to adjust the spacing of written text can make a great deal of difference when it comes to not only making it all look nice but also when it comes to making everything easy to read, therefore taking the time to experiment with different formats is a very worthwhile thing to do before moving on to the job of adding a lot of written content to your website.

Nothing is worse than having all the letters of each word, and also the lines of writing, all bunched together so sorting out the spacing is a very worthwhile thing to do.

Forums

Forums are a mixture of many things, and topics, that anyone can take part in subject to registering to go on a forum site first, (although having said that many forums can be accessed without doing so), but if you do need to register first on a forum site or forum page then you can often do so via some accounts that you may have already such as a Facebook account etc..

Such social forums are a place where everyone is on an equal level with each other, more or less, and are free to comment on a thread, (A thread is a list of comments from other people), or even for that matter starting a topic thread themselves in some cases.

These popular ‘communication tools’ allows anyone and everyone to comment on a thread, or they can also be used to ask a question without the need to contact someone by direct email for example, and offers people the chance to talk to many other people all at the same time.

A normal website page can of course include such a forum feature but a blog site will often, if not always, have such a feature located below any published work on a page automatically that is aimed in the main at inviting the reader to make comments or some other form of feedback on what the visitor to the page has read.

This is an ideal feature when having your own website as that not only gives site visitors the chance to make comments but also a direct way of leaving a message rather than sending an email.

Adding Content

Adding content to a website is something that needs to be thought through and planned in advance before publishing such updated or new information even if you think it is ready to be published there and then on the spot.

Many people will often cut corners, in an effort to save time and energy, when it comes to adding written content on their sites by just simply writing about what they want to say and then pressing the 'publish site' button but doing it that way will often result in what they have written being inaccurate, not readable in a logical and smooth way or at the very least containing spelling mistakes, which of course, is never a good idea if you want your site to read and look professional.

The best course of action when adding written content to your website is to first write it all down and then spell check it and proofread it many times until you are very happy with it. When you are sure that it all reads well, after checking it a fair few times over a period of a couple of days, then copy the final version to your site.

It is not just checking your written work that needs some thought and planning before publishing new or updated stuff but also when it comes to adding visual media, such as photos, videos and illustrations.

The size and location of photos on a web page is often just as important as the printed text when it comes to people reading through a web page and not being distracted by such visual content while trying to read the page. Or to put it in more simple terms, - text and photos on a page should be a coordinated balance of both that compliments each other just like the pages of an illustrated book.

When adding written and visual content to your web page also have a think about the size of the printed text. Very small print on a computer screen may look very neat and tidy and professional but can people read it easily when it is that size? Remember not everyone can be bothered, or know how, to magnify the screen 'visual' size on their computer to read small print.

By the same token having the print size the size of a house may make it easy for people to read but if it is too large then that may make it look silly - would it not?

On a final note when it comes to selecting a site theme also remember that the nature of the background web page, or pages, should reflect the nature of the content.

When it comes to adding content to a website you can do all sorts of things to the web page itself, unlike a normal white sheet of paper, from making it a black background to an all singing all dancing bright yellow page with a video showing a fireworks display going off in the background. Such a display may be ideal for a childrens based site but for a formal site with formal or serious written work being the main focus then such a background theme would not be a wise thing to select of course.

There are no true rules written in stone when it comes to all of these things but as a general rule a white background is often ideal for formal or informative written work while a flashy colourful background is more suitable for fun based things.

The one item that many people fail to realise however when it comes to the colour of printed text and the colour of the web pages is that some colours definitely do not mix and some text/background colours are a true nightmare for those who are colour blind.

Even a part only colour blind person will face problems trying to see or read text when it comes to some colours merging into each other. So when it comes to the subject of colour, get people to read your pages and ask them if it was easy on the eye when reading or was it a bit of a problem due to the colours used for the text or on the site pages themselves?

Computer Screens

Sadly not all computers are the same, or I should say not all computer screens are the same, when it comes to how a website looks when displayed on various computer screen formats. Creating a website is often best done on a large computer screen, with direct regard to designing website page layouts, or a laptop screen, when it comes to making your site pages look nice and good to the eye but even if you do take the time and trouble to make it look good, and having a focused good eye for detail when doing so, it can still often look very silly, or at the very least, a bit jumbled up in parts when viewed on a computer screen that is different in size or shape to the computer you have been working on while constructing your site.

Wide and square screen formats are a perfect example regarding this subject. Sadly however there is very little you can do to overcome this problem at times so therefore it is wise to resist the temptation to keep adjusting things when looking at your website on another computer.

Often such irritating layout problems are nothing more than a section of writing not looking correct in a small way or that written content continues down the page further than you thought when viewed on another screen but this is not down to you but how various computer screen sizes alters how it all looks.

A Laptop screen, for example, or a square sized computer screen will not display the same as some other computer display screens but again this is not down to you when designing your page layouts but how things are these days.

As for mobile phones, internet display screens are also totally different when looking at a website. Hence the reason for mobile formats that are also part of many host providers package deals these days - and often a free standard service.

Advertising

The time may come one day when you will start thinking about having advertisements on your website as an easy way of getting income but there are a couple of things to make a note of when doing this. The first thing to be aware of is that if you charge someone a fee for letting them have an advert on your site then make sure as to the terms and conditions that it all comes under with them.

Would you, for example, be charging them a monthly fee or maybe a one off fee that lasts for a year or longer? In any event if you fail to complete your part of the arrangement, for whatever reason, then you could be in the situation of facing legal action or maybe simply forced to refund the fees paid to you in part or in full.

You would also have to cover yourself with regard to not being held responsible for what advertisers do when it comes to any legal actions against them if they mislead or fail to provide the product or service that their adverts promise to do. In other words you would need to state a disclaimer with regards to services advertised on your website. In any event it would be wise to seek legal advice just in case.

You would also need to look into what taxes are involved when it comes to the income you are getting from advertisers.

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