

Getting Started

If you are new to web hosting, you will likely be a little confused by the terminology and the many different pieces that make website hosting work. If this sounds like your situation, then this document is for you.

My first introduction to web hosting was years ago. But, like many, I did not understand how all the pieces fit together. I just assumed that a web hosting account would take care of everything. After many hours of counsel from patient friends, I finally had a better understanding of how things work. So it is with this background and empathy for those first starting out, that I write this introduction to web hosting.

A very important concept to understand is that there are three (3) basic pieces to making a website visible on the Internet.

1. Domain Name Registrar
2. Website Hosting
 - a. Services / Utilities
 - b. 3rd Party Website Applications
3. Website Development

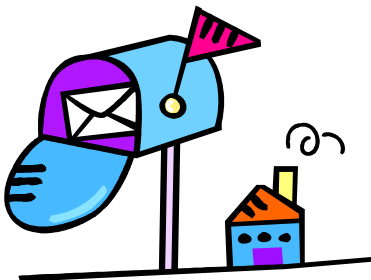
Website Hosting is like renting a plot of land in a neighborhood – no buildings, just the land.

The primary job of the web hosting company is to provide this land and the roads that allow Internet traffic. But just because you have a plot of land, it doesn't mean that others on The Internet will know where or who you are. In other words, the plot of land doesn't have an address – it is just land. You can park and RV, or build a storage shed to store electronic files, but no one else will know that you exist. For this you will need an "Internet Address".



Your Address

An Internet address is your domain name. Although hosting companies do offer Domain Name Services, they are not the ones who control domain names. That is the job of a Domain Registrar.



plot of land is (where you live).

A Domain Registrar is like a Post Office. The Post Office knows who you are and where you live. In the same way, a Domain Registrar is where you apply for your domain name (who you are) and the neighborhood where your

Now, there are three important concepts to understand about Domain Registrars. **First**, many website hosting companies provide domain registrar services. This is like having a local Post Office at the web hosting company. But just because the web hosting company has a field office doesn't mean they 'control' your domain. The Domain Registrar Companies do, and there are only a handful in the world. Website hosting companies (like Truepath) may help manage your domain on your behalf and often have convenient forms integrated into their hosting control panel. However, web hosting companies don't 'control' your domain. Here is the point. It is possible to use any Domain Registrar service (ex. a field office at someone else's hosting company, Truepath's or another domain registrar) and still tell them where you live (the neighborhood where your plot of land is). A Domain Registrar is a completely separate and distinct service that requires its own set of fees. These fees are often paid by the web hosting company on behalf of its customers.

Here is the **second** concept: you rent a domain name. You don't own it. As a renter, you do have certain usage rights. But be careful: not all Registrars are created equal. Some play games and don't pass on all the usage rights. Others send out emails and snail mail notices saying that your domain is about to expire. This practice often tricks many into sending them money. These notices often appear to be legitimate, but they are really registrar hijackers trying to get you to switch to their registrar service (e.g. Domain Registry of America). Please note: **Truepath will never send you notices in the mail – we always use email.** Your domain name registration is ultimately a subscription with an expiration date. If you don't renew your domain name, you can lose the rights to use it and someone else can 'buy' the rights. If this happens, you will have to negotiate with the new 'owner' (renter) to 'buy' it back. And that price can be very high. Therefore, don't let your domain name expire if you intend to keep it.

The **third** concept has to do with your web address. To make website hosting work, you need to tell the Domain Registrar the neighborhood where your plot of land is. Truepath is a neighborhood. Truepath contains many websites, each with their own individual plot of land. If you don't use Truepath's Registrar services (our Post Office), then you must tell your Domain Registrar that your website is located in the Truepath neighborhood. The technical term is Primary and Secondary DNS (Domain Name System). For Truepath hosting customers, the values are:

DNS Record	Values for Truepath Hosting
Primary:	ns1.truepath.com
Secondary:	ns2.truepath.com

If you are using Truepath's Domain Registrar services, we will handle this for you.

Web Hosting Fundamentals (continued)

When the Primary and Secondary DNS values are entered, The Internet will know the neighborhood where your plot of land is located. In addition, Truepath Internet servers will know your 'lot number'. Together, your Domain Registrar DNS values and Truepath servers allow Internet users to find your website space (plot of land) by your domain name.

Other Services

Most website hosting companies offer more than just a plot of land. They include other Service Utilities like:

- Email (SMTP, POP3, IMAP)
- Control Panel Interface
- SQL databases (MYSQL)
- Log files
- File Management Utilities
- Website Page Creator Utility

These are analogous to home utilities like gas, electric, sewerage, water, telephone, etc. These kinds of Service Utilities are provided by the hosting company and used by its customers.

Many website hosting companies like Truepath offer 3rd party Website Applications like:

- Content
- Photo
- e-Commerce
- Blogs / Wikis / Forums
- Calendars
- Customer Support Systems

These are analogous to home services like landscaping, newspaper delivery, carpet cleaning, bottled water delivery, etc. They are made freely available but are **NOT** managed or controlled by the hosting company.

Users are responsible for their implementation and maintenance.

Webmaster Role

So now, your Domain Registrar and Truepath hosting servers are working. What do visitors see? They see an empty lot – no house, no landscaping, nothing. There is nothing to see until you put something on your lot. That is the role of a Webmaster.

A Webmaster is like a house architect and general contractor rolled into one. The architect plans the building and the general contractor builds it. But just like a real construction project, there are website construction and usage restrictions.

These restrictions are based on the kind of hosting package you sign up for and the hosting platform. Truepath uses Linux based servers, which are considered to be the most reliable type. Some other web hosting companies use Microsoft servers. Simple websites can work on either hosting platform, but more complex websites are designed to take advantage of either Linux or Windows server functions. In the latter case, websites may not be cross platform compatible.

So you want a website. What do you do? You could hire a Webmaster to design and build one. You could hire Truepath to build one, or you could build your own. If you are the do-it-yourself type of person, and this is your first website, you should spend a little time reading about the fundamentals of website design. Although this subject is beyond the scope of this article, there is a lot of relevant material on the Internet. You can start by conducting a Google search for a phrase such as "website design fundamentals". Webmonkey.com is a good place to start.

Truepath offers a basic Service Utility called Site Studio (<http://sitestudio.psoft.net>). This utility makes it easy to create simple website pages.

If you would like additional flexibility, try Microsoft Word. YES - Microsoft Word. You can save a Word document as HTML. This means you can create your own website using Word. It may not be pretty, but it works. For a little more control, try other HTML editors. These editors will make creating and formatting HTML pages easier so they can be uploaded to your web space (your plot of land). Consider these good products:

1. KompoZer: \$Free (<http://kompozer.sourceforge.net/>)
2. Web Page Maker: \$49 (<http://www.webpage-maker.com/>)
3. Webdwarf: \$Free (available from various sources – use search engine to find download sites)
4. CoffeeCup HTML Editor: \$49.00 (<http://www.coffeecup.com>)
5. Expressions Web2 by Microsoft: \$299 (<http://www.microsoft.com/expression/>)
6. Adobe Dreamweaver: \$399.00 (<http://www.adobe.com/products/dreamweaver>)

Front Page

One final note about HTML editors: "Front Page" by Microsoft used to be a popular HTML editor. Microsoft is no longer supporting the product, which means that they are no longer releasing security updates. Therefore, web hosting companies are at risk if they continue to offer website services specific to Front Page. This doesn't mean you cannot use Front Page to create a Truepath website. However, it does mean that some of the special extensions, unique to Front Page, will not work properly. Further Front Page has a unique method of publishing websites that can cause other problems. Because of these issues, Truepath recommends using an alternative HTML editor.

