

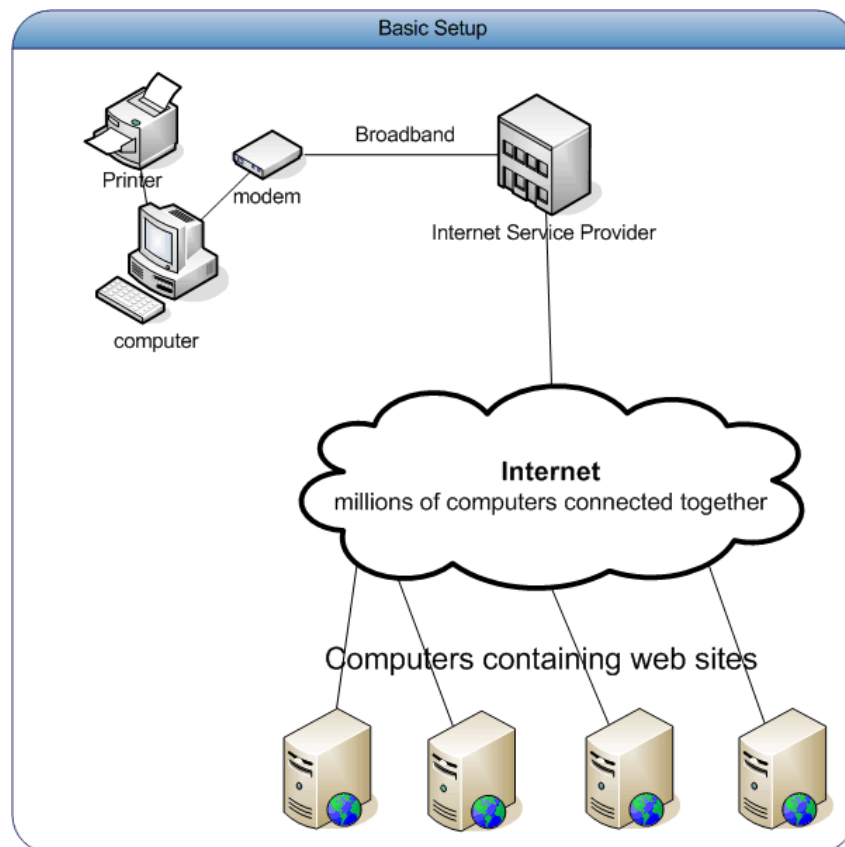
# Web Sites and the Internet for Small Businesses

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## HOW DO WEB SITES WORK?

The diagram below shows the typical basic setup. The computer is connected to a modem which connects via a broadband (e.g. ADSL) connection to your internet service provider (ISP e.g. Pipex). The ISP acts as an access point to connect to the internet. When you connect to the internet you are one of millions of computers that become networked together. You are not just simply connecting to the internet you are part of the Internet along with all the millions of other computers connected at the same time (which is why security is so important).

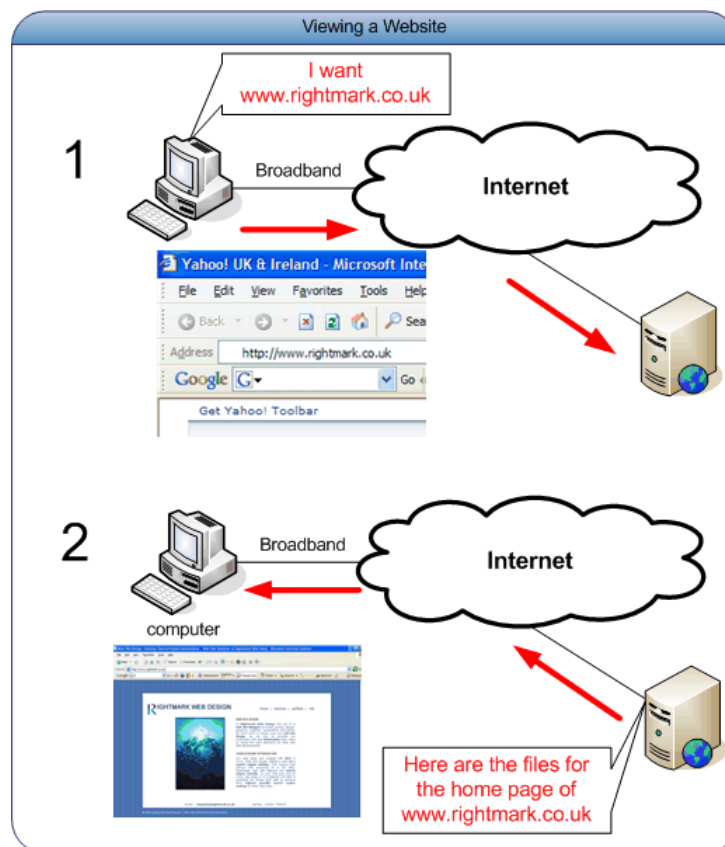


Certain computers that are connected to the Internet have special functions. One important type of computer is called a Web Server. These are heavy duty computers that store the files for a website. These computers need to run 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with a very good Internet connection to provide continuous fast access to the website they hold. No point in having a website if no one sees it!!

The following diagram illustrates what happens when you ask to see a website.

Step 1. After typing the domain name (e.g. [www.rightmark.co.uk](http://www.rightmark.co.uk)) in the browser, a message is sent to the internet asking to view the website requested. The Internet directs the request to the correct web server.

Step 2. The web server checks its hard disk and then sends back a copy of the files for the pages of the web site requested.



After the computer receives the files, these are passed onto the browser (e.g. Internet Explorer). Most people forget that a browser is actually a program that translates the code in web files so they can be viewed on your screen.

Each and every time you ask to see a new page on a website this two-step process occurs. A request is made to the web server and then the files are downloaded to your computer. Most computers keep these files for a little time in a special folder before automatically deleting them.

This is why it is important that the files on a web site are small, large web site files take longer to transfer making the website slower to appear. The fastest sites are mainly text because pictures are much bigger to transfer than text. However, a site containing just text can be very boring and are not very appealing; so a compromise is made to ensure that the pictures used in the design of the site are as small as possible and the site is downloaded in as small a time as possible.

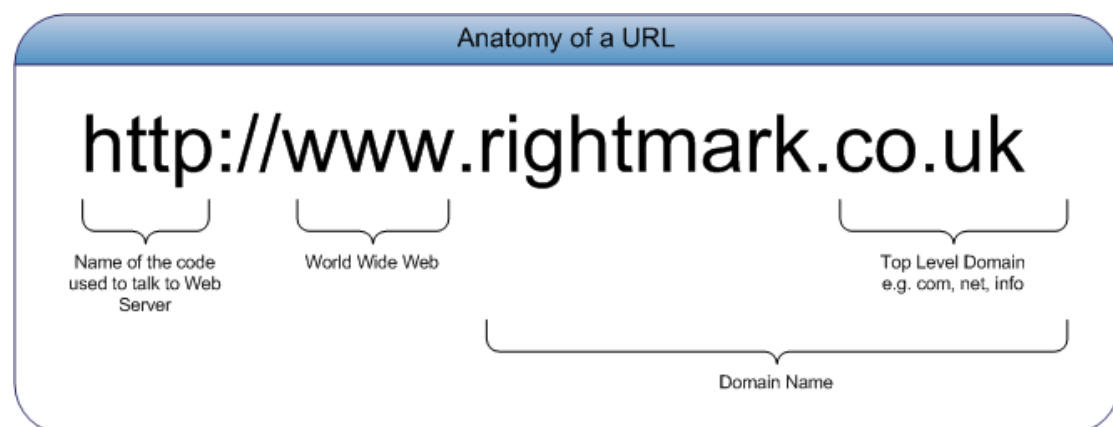
## WHAT DO YOU NEED TO HAVE A WEB SITE?

For those completely new to owning a web site it can be rather daunting, particularly with all the jargon that is used. But, there are three basic things that you need to have a website:

1. A domain name
2. A website
3. A hosting account

### Domain Name

The domain name is the name that is typed in the browser to get your site e.g. [www.yourcompany.co.uk](http://www.yourcompany.co.uk). In reality, the 'www' bit refers to the fact that your website is on the World Wide Web and the domain name is the 'yourcompany.co.uk' bit. The domain name is often called by other names such as the URL, the web address, web site name.



Anyone can 'lease' a domain name; you don't have to have a website or anything else. Why do I say lease? Well, when you buy a domain name you only 'buy' it for a minimum period normally 2 years or 5 years.

You can use different top level domains such as '.co.uk' or '.com' or '.info' or '.tv', there are many more but the most common and the most familiar to most people are the .co.uk and the .com variants for businesses. You can use just about any domain name you wish, providing someone else does not own it. A .co.uk domain name will cost in the region of about £10 whereas a .com domain name will cost about £30.



Rightmark Web Design recommends 123-reg to register your domain name, a link can be found at [www.rightmark.co.uk/links.htm](http://www.rightmark.co.uk/links.htm) or we can do it for you. We register the domain name in your name and provide access to its control panel so that you are in complete control of it and not tied in. **Your Domain Name is your most important Internet Asset**, you can always make another website, and you can always host with another supplier but if you lose your Domain Name then you have lost your company website. A common problem is other people registering your domain name for you in their name, such as ex-employees, friends, business partners and even, less than professional, web designers.

## **A Website**

Perhaps this is the most daunting part. The website contains all the coded pages that form the complete website. Your website provides potential clients a first impression of your company; it should be an integral part of your marketing and sales. Consider how much you might spend on a weekly advert in the local paper or a listing in Yellow Pages. For a similar price you can get a professionally designed website that advertises and validates your company 24 hours a day seven days a week 365 days a year. Website costs vary greatly depending on the requirements of the company and will range from a few hundred pounds to thousands.

You are the best person to determine what you want from your website; the web designer provides the technical expertise to enable you to have the site you want within your budget. They can also advise you on other aspects such as Search Engine Optimisation, accessibility, and help you avoid many of the pit falls of bad sites.

## **Hosting Account**

Once you have a website it needs to live somewhere so that potential clients are able to access it. In fact, it needs to live on a web server. This is an ongoing monthly expense, like the service charge on your phone line. Once you have both a website and a domain name and these have been linked to your hosting account, anyone typing in your domain name will see your site.

At Rightmark Web Design we spent many months investigating/interrogating top level providers to ensure we could offer to our clients an excellent hosting account. We offer a very competitive price of £5.49 per month for a basic business hosting account which includes SMTP email (you can send and receive email using [name@yourcompany.co.uk](mailto:name@yourcompany.co.uk)), web statistics (see how clients use you site) as well as many more technical services and an uptime of greater than 99%, see [www.rightmark.net](http://www.rightmark.net). Rightmark Web Design hosts its own site in the same place as our clients, so you can be reassured that if there are any problems (none as yet) we will know about it straight away and will be sorting it out.

## FAQ

### *Can I host on my own computer?*

The answer is yes but it is not economical. You will need an experienced IT engineer to configure it, pay for a permanent fast internet connection with a static IP address, as well as pay for the web server and all the software you will need. The cost would be crippling for most small businesses.

### *Why not use a free hosting account?*

Again the answer is yes you can. But there is a reason they are free, they are usually deficit in some way for real business use. Each one will vary - from poor uptime (your site will not be available), lack of email functions, low bandwidth (your site will be locked out if you have too many customers), inability to use your domain name properly, lack of features making some sites break. Free hosting is offered to entice people to sign up with their paid services, **NEVER** register your domain name with one of these sites.

### *How do I get my email to be the same as my company name?*

Once you own your domain name you can then configure this with your hosting account (providing it allows this feature) to enable you to send and receive email using that domain name e.g. joe@blogg.co.uk

### *Why can't I just use FrontPage or Word to create my own website?*

The answer is yes you can if you don't care about your website. These programs are OK to start learning about web design and are really for people's personal sites. They produce sites that are bloated with useless code making and their pages are larger than they need to be. Many sites will fail in different browsers and they produce unpredictable results in the display of a website. Professional designers will hand code using Dreamweaver or the equivalent.

### *Can I use my company font on the website?*

This is common question; many companies have a preferred font that they use for all their marketing material. Unfortunately, websites are not the same as a printed book. The website code is interpreted by the browser on the local computer of the user. This means that only those fonts that are on the local computer will be able to be used. So if you have chosen one of those then your website will be displayed as expected, but if you have chosen an unusual font, then it is likely that that person's computer will not have that font and it will substitute its default font...which could be anything. This can result in your website looking a real mess. There are some 'tips' and 'tricks' that can be used, to some extent, so have a chat with your designer if this is an issue.



*Someone else has bought the domain name I want.*

Unfortunately, that is tough luck, it is a common problem. Can you use a different name (Blogs-Trading.co.uk instead of Bloggstrading.co.uk) or top level domain (e.g. .com instead of .co.uk), alternatives include using your products as a description such as cameras-and-lens.co.uk. Otherwise you may need to wait a long time hoping that they don't renew the name. So people buy domain names purely to sell them to someone that wants it and that can be thousands of pounds.

*A friend registered my domain for me, is this a problem?*

Yes, if the domain name is registered to them. This means that they are the legal owner of that name. They could charge you to use that name, charge you to buy it from them or withdraw its use. **Always make sure your Domain Name is registered in your name.**

*What is Search Engine Optimisation?*

This is often abbreviated to SEO. It is the skill of making your website as appealing as possible to search engines, such as Google. This will help to ensure that when someone does a search for information about your product, then your website will appear in the top ranking positions on the results page. This is called an **organic listing**. The other type of listing is called a sponsored or **paid listing**, where a company will pay money to have their website appear on the same search page. At Rightmark Web Design we make our sites search engine friendly.

*Should I have Linux or Windows Hosting account?*

These are the two most common types of web server. Most web servers are Linux. Both are able to host basic websites. Linux is open source and therefore does not charge a license fee unlike Windows. This means that Linux Hosting is normally cheaper than Windows hosting. Also certain technologies such as PHP and ASP are native to one or the other type of server. Have a chat with your designer before moving hosting or during the planning stages of your site to determine which type of account you will need.

*What is HTML, JavaScript, PHP, ASP?*

HTML is the basic code used to create web pages; it is common to nearly all websites.

In addition to using HTML, you can add extra code, called JavaScript, in the page to make the site more interactive i.e. checking a contact form has been filled out properly.

Another type of code is PHP and ASP these are both written so that the web server will act on the instructions and these are used in a dynamic site. PHP is native to Linux web servers and ASP is native to Windows web servers.



### *What is Flash?*

Flash is a technology that is like a small movie and allows animation and movement on a web page. In fact the whole site could be built in Flash, though impressive, it is expensive and it has some major drawbacks.

### *What is the difference between a dynamic site and a static site?*

Most small companies will start with a small site that tells customers about the company and what it sells. Often termed a brochure site and these are normally static sites where the client goes from one page to the next and nothing changes.

A dynamic site is one where the information on the site can be held in a database and the web pages uses that information to be displayed. This is common for sites that need regular updates and display rapidly changing information or for the site to be tailored to each customer for example [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk).