

## **You Need Internet Access**

Sign up with an online service. Earthlink, MSN, and AOL are among other national commercial services, or check out local ISPs (Internet Service Provider) in your area.

Besides connecting you with the Internet, most ISPs allot space on their servers to post users' web pages. There are also companies on the Web that offer you free space for your web pages. One of the best known places is GeoCities at [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com). Online web hosts, may also offer special programs to design your pages online.

## **Do you need a Domain Name?**

You can publish web pages without having your own domain name. In this case, you will use your ISP's space or a free web host. But, the web address will be longer and less intuitive than a domain name. The company owning the server will be listed, then a slash and the name or identification of the individual's site is listed. For instance: [www.geocities.com/geodanny/](http://www.geocities.com/geodanny/).

If you want a domain name, you can register it through several services, including Network Solutions [www.networksolutions.com](http://www.networksolutions.com) among other companies. Fees will vary depending on who registers the name. You can expect the top-end price to be \$70 for two years.

Your domain name can be as long as 63 characters, but it is best to keep your domain name short and simple so people can remember it easily. And, keep in mind that people often type in their best guess of a website name when they are looking for something.

For example, what if you are looking for xerox's site? It's simple to type in [www.xerox.com](http://www.xerox.com) as a guess. And, you'd be guessing correctly, and would go directly to the company's site without having to search for it or look it up.

When you have a domain name, plan to rent server space to "park" your web pages. Web space for rent is provided by "web hosts." Web hosting may be found for around \$10 a month after a setup fee.

## **Have a Plan Before You Begin**

Will your web page be a personal one, or will it be designed for your organization or business. What's the purpose of your web site? What software (if any) will you use to design it? What do you want to include on the pages? Who will your audience be?

Take a look around the Web for pages you like and ask yourself what you like and how you could use something similar. Study the page layout and design. Check out pages that are in the same category as the one you want to design. What do they have? What don't they have? How can you make your page better and different?

## **Get a Web Design Program**

Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) is the language used to design web pages. Browsers read the code contained in a web page and display it graphically in the browser window. Some people write HTML code directly in Notepad and save their file with an .htm or .html extension. This file can be opened and viewed in any browser.

But, many programs allow you to design pages without having a working knowledge of HTML. Plus, you may even have a web design program installed and not realize it. Later versions of Word and WordPerfect will convert your word processing document to a web page, or let you create a web page from scratch. They also provide templates that make designing text, color, and layout very easy.

More often, in order to create sophisticated web pages and use complex coding, designers use programs such as Dreamweaver, Front Page, and others.

## **Resources for Web Design**

You can find "how to" books for web design at book stores, or do a search in [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Often, books will contain a CD with templates, tips, design ideas, and other useful things.

Use a search engine to find helpful information on the web. Many of them give step-by-step web page design instructions. You can print these and refer to them as you work.

Some sites give you tips by showing you bad web design, such as [www.webpagesthatsuck.com](http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com).

Other support materials, such as clip art, sound files, and even software, may be found on the web. Lots of software is free, but shareware must be purchased for a nominal sum. You can find cool things offered by your ISP, in search engines, or at online sites such as [shareware.cnet.com/](http://shareware.cnet.com/).

## **Make Your Page Search Engine Ready**

As you design your page, make sure you have used:

- Descriptive titles for each of your pages.
- Alt tags behind all the images on your pages.
- Meta tags for Keywords and Description.

*(Warning: Don't overuse or duplicate keywords, or your site may be banished from a search engine. Misuse of keywords is called "spamming" and search engines frown on the practice.)* A wonderful tutorial on meta tags is at: [jimworld.com/metatag.html](http://jimworld.com/metatag.html).

Use words throughout your page that are consistent with keywords that you want search engines to notice and index. In addition, the larger a word's size and the higher it appears on the page, affects its importance to a search engine. Each search engine is programmed to look for various things. Often, it's best to go to a search engine's page and find out what its specifications are. Or, go to [www.geocities.com/ffa24\\_7/promote.htm](http://www.geocities.com/ffa24_7/promote.htm) or [www.searchenginewatch.com](http://www.searchenginewatch.com) to learn specifics about search engines and searches. There is a tutorial on designing pages with search engines in mind at [www.northernwebs.com/set/index.html](http://www.northernwebs.com/set/index.html).

## **Test Your Page**

When your page has been created, make sure you test it in several browsers and on other computers. It will look differently depending on screen resolution, browser make and version, and whether it is on a PC or a Mac. You can also run your pages through testing services on the Web that give you feedback on speed of download, links, Meta tags, popularity, etc. A free service that tests main pages only is [www.websitegarage.com](http://www.websitegarage.com). There is a subscription fee for testing entire web sites.

## **Register Your Site With Search Engines**

You should register your Web page with a dozen of the top search engines. There are thousands of search engines, but most people only use a few. The ones that are used the most get hundreds of thousands of hits a week, so concentrate on submitting your site to them.

To see if your site is ready to be submitted to search engines, go to: [www.sitescreamer.com/screamer3.html](http://www.sitescreamer.com/screamer3.html). You can also go to [www.tiac.net/users/seeker/searchenginesub.html](http://www.tiac.net/users/seeker/searchenginesub.html) where there are links to a number of top search engines all in one place. Click on a link and follow the instructions to submit your site's link.

Or, if you prefer to go to the main page of a search engine, look for their link that says “Add a URL,” “Submit a Site,” or something similar.

Sometimes there may be a delay in listing your page with an engine. Yahoo!, for instance, lists a site after a live staff member checks it for content and usability. This can take about three weeks. To see if your page is listed in a search engine, type in keywords you have on the page or the title of the page.

Submit your page to the search engines regularly. You can do it every month, in fact. Change your pages frequently, too, even if it is just the revision date at the bottom. Some search engines will drop pages that look abandoned, not to mention that searchers won’t click a search results link to an outdated page.

There are directories such as [www.bigbook.com](http://www.bigbook.com) and [theultimates.com](http://theultimates.com) where you can also register your site. These are not search engines, but are more like Yellow Pages where people might check a listing for something they want.

You can also submit your page to automatic submission services. Some of them offer free submissions, and many will submit your site for a fee. To see more about these sites, go to [www.ineedhits.com/add-it/free/](http://www.ineedhits.com/add-it/free/) and [www.submitit.com](http://www.submitit.com).

Finally, there is software that you can use to submit your site, and a number of programs are listed at [www.netsupport-online.net/market/marketingsubmitters.html](http://www.netsupport-online.net/market/marketingsubmitters.html).