**The Essential Step-by-Step Guide to Making Your Own Website**

1. **Get Your Domain Name**

The first thing you need to do before anything else is to get yourself a domain name. This is the name you want to give to your website. For example, the domain name of the website you're reading is "thesitewizard.com". To get a domain name, you have to pay an annual fee to a registrar for the right to use that name. Getting a name does not get you a website or anything like that. It's just a name. It's sort of like registering a business name in the brick-and-mortar world; having that business name does not mean that you also have the shop premises to go with it.

* + Detailed information on getting a good domain name can be found in the article [Tips on Choosing a Good Domain Name](https://www.thesitewizard.com/archive/domainname.shtml).
	+ After you read that, you will need to know the steps to registering a domain name and the things you need to look out for when registering. You can find a detailed guide in the article [How to Register a Domain Name](https://www.thesitewizard.com/archive/registerdomain.shtml).
	+ It may also be wise to take a look at some of the [Important Precautions to Take When Buying a Domain Name](https://www.thesitewizard.com/gettingstarted/precautions-to-take-when-buying-domain-names.shtml), just so that you don't commit the same mistakes that some newcomers make when buying a domain name.
1. **Choose a Web Host and Sign Up for an Account**

A web host is basically a company that has many computers connected to the Internet. When you place your web pages on their computers, everyone in the world will be able to connect to it and view them. You will need to sign up for an account with a web host so that your website has a home. If getting a domain name is analogous to getting a business name in the brick-and-mortar world, getting a web hosting account is comparable to renting office or shop premises for your business.

* + There are many issues involved in finding a good web host. Read up on the various things you need to look for in the article [How to Choose a Web Host](https://www.thesitewizard.com/archive/findhost.shtml).
	+ When you have an idea of what to look for, you can search for one from the [Budget Web Hosting](https://www.thefreecountry.com/webhosting/budget1.shtml) page. You can also find out which web host I'm currently using from the [Which Web Host Do You Recommend?](https://www.thesitewizard.com/archive/webhosting.shtml) page.

After you sign up for a web hosting account, you will need to point your domain to that account on your web host. Information on how to do this can be found in the guide [How to Point a Domain Name to Your Website (Or What to Do After Buying Your Domain Name)](https://www.thesitewizard.com/domain/point-domain-name-website.shtml).

1. **Designing your Web Pages**

Once you have settled your domain name and web host, the next step is to design the web site itself. In this article, I will assume that you will be doing this yourself. If you are hiring a web designer to do it for you, you can probably skip this step, since that person will handle it on your behalf.

* + Although there are many considerations in web design, as a beginner, your first step is to actually get something out onto the web. The fine-tuning can come after you've figured out how to publish a basic web page. One way is to use a WYSIWYG ("What You See Is What You Get") web editor to do it. Such editors allow you to design your site visually, without having to muck around with the technical details. They work just like a normal wordprocessor.

There are a number of free and commercial web editors available. If you use Windows, one of the best around is Microsoft Expression Web. This was a formerly commercial program that Microsoft now distributes for free, presumably because they no longer want to be in the web editor business. It is fully-featured and very polished (as befits software that was once sold in shops) with facilities that both new and experienced webmasters find useful. You can find a guide on how to use this program from my [Expression Web Tutorial](https://www.thesitewizard.com/expression-web/expression-web-4-tutorial-1.shtml). The latter takes you through the process of designing a fully functional multi-page website that is mobile-friendly (that is, your site will work well on both desktop/laptop computers and the smaller screens of mobile devices like smartphones and tablets). Instructions on how to get the editor can also be found in that tutorial.

Other free editors around include BlueGriffon, an open source editor for Windows, Mac OS X and Linux. A guide for how to use it to design a complete website can be found in the[BlueGriffon tutorial](https://www.thesitewizard.com/bluegriffon/bluegriffon-1-tutorial-1.shtml).

For those who prefer to use a commercial program, thesitewizard.com has numerous online tutorials for a web editor called Dreamweaver, a program with features on par with that of Expression Web. The [Dreamweaver Tutorial](https://www.thesitewizard.com/dreamweaver/dreamweaver-cs6-tutorial-1.shtml) takes you through all the steps needed to design a complete website, in addition to providing you with the theoretical and practical foundations that will help you create and maintain that site.

If you prefer not to use any of the above, you can find [tutorials for other WYSIWYG web editors here](https://www.thesitewizard.com/topics/web-editors.shtml), including one for [KompoZer](https://www.thesitewizard.com/gettingstarted/kompozer-tutorial-1.shtml%22%20%5Ct%20%22_top), another free (though somewhat outdated) web editor. And if none of them suits your taste, there are also numerous other programs listed on thefreecountry.com's [Free HTML Editors and WYSIWYG Web Editors](https://www.thefreecountry.com/webmaster/htmleditors.shtml) page.

* + After you have followed my tutorial, and are on the way to designing your website, you might want to read the article [Appearance, Usability and Search Engine Visibility in Web Design](https://www.thesitewizard.com/webdesign/usabilitysearchengine.shtml) as well. It takes a brief look at some of the real world issues that every web designer must deal with.
	+ An integral part of web design is search engine readiness. Search engine promotion does not start after the web site is made. It starts at the web design stage. The article [6 Tips on How to Create a Search Engine Friendly Website](https://www.thesitewizard.com/sitepromotion/search-engine-friendly.shtml) is a must-read. Moreover, [How to Improve Your Search Engine Ranking on Google](https://www.thesitewizard.com/archive/google.shtml) is also important for the simple reason that Google is the most popular search engine around, at least at the time this page was written.
	+ There are many other issues regarding the design of web pages. The above will get you started. However, if you have the time after you get something out onto the web, you may want to read my other articles on [Web Design](https://www.thesitewizard.com/webdesign/index.shtml) and [Website Promotion and Search Engine Ranking](https://www.thesitewizard.com/sitepromotion/index.shtml).
1. **Testing Your Website**

Although I list this step separately, it should be done throughout your web design cycle. I list it here to give it a little more prominence, since too few new webmasters actually perform it adequately.

You will need to test your web pages as you design them in the major browsers: [Chrome](https://www.thesitewizard.com/webdesign/google-chrome.shtml), [Firefox](http://www.mozilla.com/), Internet Explorer 11 and Microsoft Edge. All these browsers can be obtained free of charge, so it should be no hardship to get them. Unfortunately, directly testing your site is the only way you can be really sure that it works the way you want it to on your visitors' machines. In addition, if you have a smartphone, try out your site there too.

For those who don't have Windows 10 but need Microsoft Edge, and those who run a Mac (and thus do not have either Edge or Internet Explorer), all is not lost. You can use a piece of software called a virtual machine, which mimics a completely separate computer running within your real computer. Information about this can be found in the article [How to Check Your Website with Multiple Browsers on a Single Machine (Cross-Browser Compatibility Checking)](https://www.thesitewizard.com/webdesign/multiplebrowsers.shtml).

If you want to improve the chances that your website will work in future versions of all web browsers, consider [validating the code](https://www.thesitewizard.com/webdesign/htmlvalidation.shtml) for your web pages. In layman's language, this means that you should check that the underlying code of your web page, called ["HTML" and "CSS"](https://www.thesitewizard.com/html-tutorial/what-is-html.shtml), has no syntax errors. You don't actually need technical knowledge of HTML and CSS to validate the page, since you can use one of the [numerous free web page validators](https://www.thefreecountry.com/webmaster/htmlvalidators.shtml) around to do the hard work. On the other hand, if the validator tells you that your page has errors, it may sometimes be hard to figure out what's wrong (and whether the error is actually a serious one) if you don't have the requisite knowledge. Having said that, some validators actually give concrete suggestions on how to fix your code, and one of them, called "HTML Tidy", is even supposed to be able to fix errors for you.

1. **Collecting Credit Card Information, Making Money**

If you are selling products or services, you will need some way to collect credit card information. If so, take a look at [How to Accept Credit Cards on Your Website](https://www.thesitewizard.com/archive/creditcards.shtml). I also have a step by step guide on [How to Add an Order Form or a "Buy Now" button using PayPal to a Website](https://www.thesitewizard.com/revenue/add-buy-now-button.shtml) for those using PayPal.

If you need advertisers for your website, you might want to read [How to Make Money From Your Website](https://www.thesitewizard.com/archive/makemoney.shtml) and the follow-up article [How to Increase Your Website Revenue from Affiliate Programs](https://www.thesitewizard.com/archive/moremoney.shtml). A list of advertisers and affiliate programs can be found on [Affiliate Programs: Free Sponsors and Advertisers](https://www.thefreecountry.com/webmaster/affiliate.shtml). Those companies are on the constant lookout for new web publishers to display their advertisements.

1. **Getting Your Site Noticed**

When your site is ready, you can submit it to search engines like Google and Bing. Use the links below to do this.

* + [Google's Link Submission Page](http://www.google.com/addurl/?continue=/addurl)
	+ [Bing's Site Submission Page](http://www.bing.com/toolbox/submit-site-url)

In general, if your site is already linked to by other websites, you may not even need to submit it to these search engines. They will probably find it themselves by following the links on those websites.