

Getting Started with Your Web Site

Perhaps you know you want a web site but have no idea what the first step is. Or maybe you've worked up a detailed plan about how you want your web site design to look. Whichever point you're at, I'm happy to discuss your ideas with you.

To assist you in getting the process going, here is a brief, very generalized outline of the process of getting your web site online, as well as some of the things you should think about in advance. You can also [click here](#) (opens a second window) for a printer-friendly version.

Things to think about in advance

There are many variables to take into account when planning your website design. By spending a few moments thinking about some of the basics, we can get a better idea of what you're after. Please don't feel obligated to come up with absolute answers; this is simply intended to give us a starting point in our discussions. I recommend you print this page out so you can study it at your leisure.

- **Who is your target audience?** What are your expectations for having a web site? Are you aiming your site to the general public? Professionals? The elderly? Artists?
- **How do you envision the organization of information;** How many pages? Even the smallest web sites usually require a few pages...a Home page, About Us page and Contact us page. Perhaps your web site needs a few pages to display your products, or a Frequently Asked Questions page.
- **Text/Content:** This one is very important. Do you have text written for your web site, or at least a basic idea of what you will say on the various pages? Quite often, this is a stumbling block for small businesses, since many people are not comfortable with their writing skills. In some cases, it may be wise to hire someone with expertise in writing web site content. [Click here](#) for information on proper techniques for writing web site content that can help get traffic to your site.
- **Visual Design:** Most web sites require at least some graphic elements. Is there a specific color scheme you would need to use, or a particular logo? Do you want complex graphics or would you prefer a simple, sparse look for your site? What kind of "feel" do you want your web site designer to create for your site?
- **Are there other web sites that you like?** It's perfectly acceptable to use other web sites as inspiration for your own. Obviously, we can't just use someone else's design, but using another design to stimulate ideas is fine. Keep a list of websites that you like and try to

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note what it is that you like about them. Is it the color? The way the information is organized? The simplicity of the graphics? The flashy, high-tech look?

- **Photos:** Do you need photographs of your products, personnel, facility, etc.? Are these photos already created, or will you need photographic work done also?
- **Forms:** Do you need any pages on your web site that collect information from your visitors and then automatically forward the information to you in email?
- **"Shopping cart":** Do you want to sell products online via an automated "shopping cart"? Or will a simple "fill in the blanks" form work just as well?
- **Number of products:** About how many individual products do you want to sell on your website? Take into account different styles, colors, sizes of a particular item.