# How to Create a Web Site in 5 Days

## 2004 Edition

**by Bina of VirtualBina.com**

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# Please Read This First.

## Disclaimer

# Instructions

This e-book is like any other PDF e-book. I am assuming here that you have. If you read a PDF e-book before, don't worry. You read it just the way you would read any other document on the computer; just read and scroll down 🙂. When you come to an underlined word or phrase like this, click it and it will take you to somewhere else in the e-book or somewhere else on the web.

## *Navigation*

Adobe Acrobat Reader has several features that let you quickly get to key sections of the -book. In the "Bookmark" tab on the left, you can go to a particular chapter just by clicking on the link to that chapter.

## *The Movie Tutorials*

This e-book contains **embedded movie tutorials**. The movies are in Flash format and you need a Flash player to watch it. You will also need the Adobe Acrobat Reader version 6.0 or above. You can get both these softwares free.

**WebSite Workshop**

**How to Create a Web Site in 5 Days**

**Click here to Play the Movie Tutorial**

If you don't have the Flash player installed on your computer, you can download it for free at the Macromedia web site.

If you need to get or upgrade your Acrobat Reader, just click here.

When you come to a movie tutorial, you'll find this screen. Just click where it tells you to click and the movie will begin.

You can control the movie tutorial by using the playback control at the bottom of each movie.

## *Printing*

Reading from the computer screen can cause eye strain so you may want to print this e-book. To print the book, just click on the print icon at the top or go to the File menu and select Print.

You are permitted to print one copy for each copy the book that you paid for.

You will, however, need to come back to the computer to watch the movie tutorials.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# Introduction

Before we dive into the technical part of getting your web site up and running, there's a couple of things I need to be sure that you understand..

I know you want to get this done in 5 days, so I'll make this as short and sweet as possible. 😊

## #1 Web Design Rule

Designing a web site can be a bit of a headache sometimes, especially if you're thinking of creating a web site with more than just a few simple web pages.

There is, however, one rule that you should stick to because it will make your web building venture a lot easier.

<div style="border:1px solid">

## #1 Rule: Keep It Simple

</div>

Your aim is to create a professional looking, fast loading web site in as little time as possible.

### *What's a fast loading web site?*

A fast loading web site is one that will **load fully** into your visitor's web browser **before** they have a chance to click away.

Keep your design simple and you'll create your web site **faster** and without any **unnecessary** technical glitches. You can devote the time you save to more important things, like building traffic to your web site.

In these tutorials, you will learn how to build a web site using a common, simple web design layout. This layout has been proven to be one of the easiest and safest layout on the net today.

You will find many variation of this layout all over the Net with enough variations to make each web site unique.

Although the proposed design is very basic, it still gives that professional look and is used by many successful online entrepreneurs around the world.

Most important of all, it's fast loading.

You don't have to stick to this design layout if you don't want to.

If you decide to venture away, there are some things you need to be aware of:

## Web Design Problems

To be able to create good designs for the web, it is helpful to learn about the problems associated with it. There are quite a number of problems and you should, at least, have a basic understanding of the following:

### *Browser Problems*

Believe it or not, our browsers have a mind of their own -.oOr rather, the mind of their owner or creator.

Though most **HTML tags** (short pieces of code used to organize things on a web page) can be understood by most browsers, **some** tags that are understood differently by different browsers.

There are even tags that can be understood by only **one** type of browser.

This difference is not just between each **type** of browser (e.g. Explorer vs Navigator) but also between different **versions** of each browser (e.g. Explorer 3.0 vs Explorer 5.0) **AND** also between different **platforms** (e.g. Windows vs MacOS).

Since there is absolutely **no way** that **all** your web site visitors will be using the same version of the same type of browser on the same **platform** (computer type and operating system), you have to be careful when designing your web site.

Here are some steps you can take to make your web site easy to read for as many people as possible:

√   Design your web site using HTML tags that are **common** among all browsers.

√   Design for the **lowest** browser version that is currently popular - later browsers are able to read earlier versions of HTML code.

> This does not, however, mean that you have to design a web page for the very first internet browser ever. This will limit your design capabilities.

At the time of writing this, the most common choice of lowest version browser is version 3.0 (you can check out more up to date browser statistics at TheCounter).

## *Display Problems*

The browser is not the only problem you have to consider. There is also the display problem. More specifically, the resolution and color capabilities of your audience's computer monitor.

**Monitor Resolution**

The more common monitor resolutions for a PC are 640x480, 800x600, 1024x870, 1280x1024 and 1600x1200.

For a Macintosh, they are 512x384, 640x480, 800x600, 832x624, 1024x768, 1152x870, 1280x960, 1280x1024 and 1600x1200.

That's quite a lot of numbers. Your visitor can be on any one of these resolutions.

One way around this problem is to design for the **most common** monitor resolution. However, at the time of writing, the most common resolution is currently tied between 640x480 and 800x600. Between the two, 640x480 is a 'safer' choice because it can be viewed by computers of both resolutions without requiring your visitor to scroll to the right to see the rest of your page.

**Color Capabilities**

Display problems also include color problems. The more common number of colors displayed by a computer monitor are 17 million colors, 65 000 colors or 256 colors.

Colors differ a bit when seen on a Macintosh compared to how they display on a PC.

A solution to this is to design using the **Web Palette** (standard set of colors regarded as "safe" to use for viewing by all systems). The Web Palette contains 216 colors that are made up from the cross-section of the Mac and Windows system color palettes. As people upgrade their computers, however, this becomes less and less of a problem.

There are many more problems you'll find when designing for the web but knowing about these is a good start for now.

Once again, you can check out the latest resolution and color capabilies statistics at [TheCounter](#).

# Conclusion ?

What does all this technical mumbo-jumbo mean?

Well, put simply, your web site could look **terrific** on one computer and at the same time look **terrible** on another.

Because there is just no way to guarantee that your design will look **perfect** on **ALL** computers, don't spend too much time tweaking your design to make it perfect. Remember, you aim is to create a professional looking, fast loading web site in **as little time as possible**.

The bad news is <u>there isn't really a way where you can make your web site look the same on</u> **<u>everyone</u>**<u>'s computer</u>.

Well, there could be but you would have to study for years and get a degree in web development to find out how. Even then, there'd be no guarantee with your Certificate!

The good news is that you can create an **almost perfect** web site for <span style="color:red">**MOST**</span> computers if you stick to certain rules.

If you follow the step-by-step tutorials in this course, you will breeze through!

Try not to venture too far away from the suggested designs unless you know what the consequences of your actions will be.

# Before You Start

## Tools of the Trade

There are tools with every trade.

To help speed up your web site building process, you should think about getting a set of tools. In this course, you will be introduced to several free software programs and services you can use but, if you're serious about designing and maintaining your own web site, you should at least consider investing in good web design and **web graphics** (web pictures – drawn and photographs) software programs.

## *Web Graphics Software*

You should consider getting a software program to create and edit web graphics, even if you're not going to create your own. It comes in handy when you need to create a quick graphic or do minor graphic tweaks such as cropping, optimizing, reducing or increasing size etc.

I, myself, use [Macromedia Fireworks](#). I chose this software because it works seamlessly with my web design software, [Macromedia Dreamweaver](#). There are many other graphics software programs out there. Most will have a fully functional trial version for you to experiment with. Choose one that suits you.

In this course, we will not use web graphics software,. because I searched the Net and couldn't find one with reasonable features, a simple interface and, at the same time, free. So, we'll use several free online services instead.

You will quickly learn that it **is** possible to make **professional** web sites using these services but this is **not** meant to be a long term solution.

It's more like a budget-friendly jumpstart solution.

## *Web Design Software*

A web design software program is essential unless, of course, you're thinking of **hand coding** (writing yur web pages and all the necessary instructions for lay-out, links etc as text) your whole web site. In that case, all you need is a text editor.

A lot of professional designers hand code their designs. Hand coding, however, is beyond the scope of this course.

In this course, we'll use **Netscape Composer** to create a web site because it's simple and (you guessed it) it's **free**. You can download it for free at the Netscape web site.

In the previous edition of this e-book, we used a program called CoolPage. CoolPage is much more intuitive to use if you're a beginner, but you do have to pay for it.

A similar program that you may want to check out is VisualSite Designer by CoffeeCup. VisualSite Designer has the added feature of in-built graphics software.

Composer needs a bit of "practice" before you get the hang of it. But, once you're familiar with how it works, it is more than capable of making a simple multi-page web site.

If, however, you're thinking of creating a more dynamic web site, you're better off with a program like Macromedia Dreamweaver.

## *FTP Software*

**FTP** (File Transfer Protocol – you do NOT need to remember this) is just a method of sending and retrieving your files to and from your server. You don't really need to know **how** it works. You **do** need to know that, when you find a web host, make sure that you have unlimited FTP access.

In this course, we'll use CoffeeCup FreeFTP as your FTP software. It is not the best there is out there but it is free, and more than capable of handling what we do.

You can download this software for free at Tucows.com.

# DAY 1: Getting Started

## Register Your Domain Name

The first step you need to do, to establish your online presence, is to register a domain name.

What's a domain name? The **www.website-workshop.com** that you see in your browser's address box when you visit my WebSite Workshop web site is my domain name.

A **domain name** is pretty much like a business name in the traditional business world.

These days, you can get a domain name for as little as $USD8.95 a year. Getting your own domain name is one of the most important investments that you'll ever make for your online business. Let's just put it this way. If you're not thinking of getting one, you shouldn't be thinking about starting an online business.

You can purchase your domain from any registrar on the Net. If you're not familiar with any, check out: WebSite WebHost.

If you already have a name in mind, great! You must check to see if it's still available. Just do a search at the WebSite WebHost homepage. If you don't have a name in mind, brainstorming at NameBoy may light up some ideas.

## Find a Web Host

Now that you have a domain name, you need to find a **web host**. What's a web host? A web host is a company that gives you space on the Internet to put your web site in. This space is similar to a physical business venue that you associate your business name (domain name) to and where you set up your store (web site).

**Here are just some things to consider when looking for a web host:**

√ First class support system.

> I must emphasize this is very important. You need a web host that offers support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When you're doing business online, you don't really take days off. You need to know that help is just a phone call away should anything happen to your site. Call them or e-mail them and see how fast they reply. If they're hopeless **before** you sign up with them, they'll be a nightmare after you sign up.

√ Fast connection speed.

> You don't want your site to take forever to download. Test web sites that are already using that particular web host.

√ Storage space.

> Make sure that the web host account you choose has enough space allocated to it to store your whole web site. Choose an account that offers more space than you actually need at the moment.

√ Data transfer limit.

> Every time someone visits your site, data is being transferred. When someone downloads your digital products, data is being transferred. Make sure you do your calculations before choosing your web host.

√ E-mail.

> It would be ideal to have a catch-all e-mail address. This means that you can have an unlimited number of e-mail addresses at your domain. Eg.: tech@you.com, support@you.com, subscribe@you.com, anything@you.com.

√   FTP access.

> You should have unlimited FTP access so that you can make any changes you want to your site via FTP at any time that suits you.

√   CGI and PHP support.

> If you plan to use scripts, make sure your host supports CGI and PHP and that you can access the CGI bin. You also should find out if you can use custom CGI scripts or only the ones that are supplied by your web host. Most web accounts now come pre-installed with scripts. You may want to check out the list of scripts they have.

If you're in a hurry, you can get a hosting account for as little as $3.95 a month at WebSite WebHost.

## Link Your Domain Name to Your Web Host

The next thing that you have to do is to point your domain name to your web host's server. You do this by changing your domain's DNS (domain name server) settings.

When you register your domain name (Step 1), you should receive instructions on how to access your account area.

Log in to this area and look around. There should be a form or other way for you to set or change your DNS settings. Change your DNS to that of your web host's - you should receive the DNS settings that you have to type in when you signed up for your web hosting account (Step 2). The DNS will look something like this: NS3.MEWEBDNS.COM

After you've made the change(s), it normally takes between 24-72 hours before the change come to effect. While you're waiting, let's start building your web site. By the time that you are ready to publish your web site, your domain name should be pointing to your web host.

# Existing Material

Before you start planning your web site, make a list of what you already have that you could use for your web site

If you already have most of your material, you can save a lot of time.

Using existing material can also increase your business' brand awareness. Your off-line customers will adapt to your web site more quickly. It is important that you keep the look and feel of your business consistent, not just throughout your web site but also between your off-line and on-line presence.

**Your existing material could be any of the following:**

- your business logo.

- a color scheme.

- web images.

- images of your products.

- text from brochures.

  … or anything at all.


# Organize Your Folder

The purpose of doing this is to … well ... get organized.

The last thing you need right now is to have to search every other folder in your computer just to look for one tiny image file that you need for your site. It is true that you can dump everything

for a small web site in to one folder, you will find a much faster working environment when you do a bit of organizing at the start.

## *Organizing your web site folder on your computer*

The **first step** to getting yourself organized is to create a new folder on your Desktop or somewhere else that's **easily accessible**.

Dedicate this folder to your web site. You can always move this folder elsewhere later on but you will save a lot of time if your web site folder is <u>just one click away</u> while you're working on your web site.

The **second step** is to create additional folders **within** your 'Site' folder. In our case, we'll create a folder named **images**. This is where you'll keep all your images.

## *Organizing your web site folder on your server*

When you've organized your web folder on your computer, it's time to organize your web folder on your server.

Note that most web hosts require that you to save all of your web files in a specific folder on the server, e.g., the **public_html** folder. If this is the case with your web host, you'll have to create your **images** folder in the **public_html** folder.

Make sure that you find out which folder you need to upload your web pages to or your web site will not be 'visible' on the web.

**There are several ways that you can work with the files and folders on your server:**

- via your web host's control panel

   Most web host gives you access to an online control panel. You can upload files and create new folders on your server from this panel.

▪ via an FTP software

If your web host does not offer you an online control panel, that's okay. You can use FTP software to upload files and create new folders on your server.

▪ via your web design software

Most web design software programs have an in-built FTP function which lets you upload files and create folders from within the web design software itself. This is, by far, the easiest way to manipulate your files.

In this tutorial, you will learn how to do this with CoffeeCup FreeFTP. If you have not downloaded this software yet, you can download it before you do the following tutorial.

First thing's first. Let's learn to connect to your server. Just click below to watch the movie.

**Movie Tutorial: Connect to Your Server via FTP**

Okay, now it's time to organize your folder. Remember to organize the **Site** folder on your computer first. Just create a **Site** folder in an easily accessible place on your computer and then create an **images** folder within that folder. When you're done, it's time to create an **images** folder on your server.

**Movie Tutorial: Organize Folder on Your Server**

# Day 2: Planning

Now that you've

- ✓ registered your domain name,

- ✓ signed up for a web hosting account,

- ✓ downloaded your tools and

- ✓ organized your folder

. . . . . let's get started.

You're probably in a great hurry to launch that software and start designing but, after having to redesign my first web site over and over again, I'm going to stop you right here and request kindly that you . . . . .

## <u>PLAN YOUR SITE BEFORE YOU START!</u>

Don't take this personally. It's just that I feel **VERY** strongly about this.

You don't have to have a complex plan,. just a simple one with enough detail to keep you on the right track. If you've been on the Net as long as I have, you'll know how hard it is to stay on track.

**Just have a basic idea of the following:**

- ? What's Your Objective?

- ? Who's Your Target Audience?

- ? What's Your Competition Doing?

? Creating a Site Map

? Choosing a Color Scheme

? Listing Material You Already Have

? Web Design Layout

## What's Your Objective

The first step in your basic plan is to set your objective.

What's the **purpose** of your web site? What are you trying to achieve? It may seem quite straightforward but, depending on what you want to achieve, your design can differ quite a bit.

Are you trying to get your customers to order? Then, you might want to concentrate your effort on creating a blood-pumping sales letter that gives your visitors a compelling reason to buy your product now.

Or perhaps you want them to sign up for your online newsletter? Then, you'll want to have samples of past newsletters on your site so that your visitors can get a clear idea of what your newsletter is all about.

To increase the likelihood of them signing up, you should consider adding a subscription form on every page of your web site.

Or maybe you want to impress them with your expertise. Depending on what your expertise is, you might want to include testimonials, samples of your work, MP3 audio files of interviews, online video of you at work etc.

Or maybe you just want to create a web site for your family members to visit. Then, you could probably get away with breaking some web design rules because your family's going to visit your web site anyway, even if it takes forever to load.

This doesn't mean they'll come back for a second visit though.

Nothing complex. Knowing what you're trying to achieve will help keep your web site design effort more focused.

# Who's Your Target Audience

When you're doing business online, the magic word is **FOCUS**. It's amazing how much faster you'll progress when you use this magic word in all aspects of your business.

- ✓ When you're checking out your competition ……. focus.

- ✓ When you're designing your site …… focus.

- ✓ When you're marketing your product …… focus.

It's easier to market your products when you focus on a specific target market - the more focused the better. It's easier to create a presence when you know who your target audience is.

With respect to your web design, knowing your target market makes it easier to choose the appropriate images, color, bait and more importantly …… words.

If you're trying to sell children's products to parents, for example, you **DO NOT** want to

- ✗ use a black background for your web site, or

- ✗ use an image of a hunting gun as your logo, or

x   start of your sales letter with 'Dear Friend'.

Your web site will do a lot better if you use pastel colors with an image of a teddy bear and a sales letter that starts off with 'Dear Loving Parents'.

Catch my drift?

You should also do a bit of research on what technology your audience use.

?   Are they just the normal everyday people surfing the net on a 28.8k dial up connection with no more than just the normal computer? Or

?   Are they the computer freaks with high speed broadband connection and state of the art computers with multimedia capabilities?

If you're only just beginning and you're not sure, it's better to assume that your audience is 'normal'. You can always upgrade your site later when you get to know your audience a bit better.

## What's Your Competition Doing?

Competition? *Brrrrr*..... The idea of competing with others who are more experienced than yourself can sometimes hold you back.

But, let me tell you a secret. Your competitors are there to <u>help</u> you. Yup! They will tell you exactly what to include in your web site ..... kind of.

I, for one, would never refuse a helping hand.

So, go ahead. Visit your competitors' web sites. See what they have on their web sites. Ideas are bound to pop up in your head. Whatever you do though, do not copy anything straight off other people's web sites. Stay clear of copyright infringement. Make a note of their overall web site design.

Take notice of their ideas and adapt it to your own.

## Creating a Site Map

If you are planning to create a two-page website to sell your digital info product, your map will probably be a very simple one. You could probably even get away without a site map.

But, it would be handy to know what sort of information you're planning to include.

Will they be on separate web pages?

If so;

- ? how many web pages and

- ? what are these pages and

- ? how do they link to each other?

A site map is a visual representation of your web site. When you have your web pages in the form of a map, it becomes easier to see the 'whole' picture. Having a picture of your whole web site will also make it easier to create a navigation system that is useful to your visitors.

Depending on your product, you may have different web pages for your site. Here are the more common pages:

- About Us

- Features

- Benefits

- Testimonials

- Products and services

- Order

- Ezine

- Affiliates

- Links

- FAQ

- Contact Us

You don't have to include all of these pages. Just pick those that suit you most.


## Choosing a Color Scheme

Although colors are fun, **don't get carried away** with them when designing your web site. You don't want your visitors to think that you're a circus and fond of fooling around unless, of course, you **are** running a circus.

Stick to a color scheme comprising three colors at most; one main color that will cover most of the colored areas of your web site and just hints of another color, or two, to give your web site that extra oomph.

Choose your colors carefully. Color can affect your audience's subconscious. Depending on your objectives, you can choose different colors to achieve different results.

**AMAZING**, isn't it?

Well, I thought so when I first discovered the power of colors.

Below is a table of colors that I created from the results of an experiment with colors & emotions that was reported in an article called, **"HYPNOTIZE\* Your Potential Customers"** by Kacper Postawski.

(Kacper Postawski founder of The eBiz PowerPlant™ (www.etherntech.com), an "extremist" in internet marketing and the editor of the ePerformance Marketing eZine - subscribe free at http://www.etherntech.com/ezine)

| | |
|---|---|
| RED | I feel intense, vital or animated.<br>I desire something.<br>I feel transformed.<br>I feel sexy or have strong sexual urges. |
| ORANGE | I want to expand my field of activity or develop new fields.<br>I feel influenced.<br>I want to contact others.<br>I feel driven by desire. |
| YELLOW | I am seeking a solution.<br>I am hopeful.<br>I need relief.<br>I need a change. |
| GREEN | I need to establish myself.<br>I want recognition.<br>My opinion must prevail.<br>Things must not change. |
| BLUE | I feel tranquil, peaceful and quietly content.<br>I feel a sense of harmony with things.<br>I feel a sense of belonging.<br>I feel TRUST. |
| VIOLET | I feel a "mystic" union.<br>I sense an intuitive understanding.<br>There is a feeling of intimacy. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | I need intimacy. |
| BROWN | I seek a secure state where I can be physically comfortable and relax or recover. |
| | I desire physical comfort. |
| | I want to satisfy the physical senses (food, luxury, sex). |
| | I have a physical problem. |
| GRAY | I feel emotionally distant. |
| | I want to remain uncommitted, noninvolved, shielded or separated from the situation. |
| | I do not want to make a decision that will require my emotional involvement. |
| | I wish to avoid any further emotional stimulation. |
| BLACK | Unlike the other colors, black is different. People responded to this color in very mysterious ways. It is the complete opposite of TRUST and creates a boundary between you and your visitors. ( The unknown, space, evil, etc.) |
| WHITE | This is a new experience. |
| | I'm becoming aware of new feelings. |
| | I'm experiencing a new beginning, a reawakening. |
| | I have a new outlook, a new awareness. |

If you already have a current logo, your color scheme should be determined by the colors that are **already** in your logo. Some knowledge of color theory would be useful in choosing a color scheme.

If you want to learn more about color theory, the WebDesignClinic has a good article you can read.

If you don't have the time to get acquainted with the color theory and you've got absolutely no color sense, we've got an online color schemer at the WebSite Workshop to help you get started.

## Choosing a Layout for Your Web Site Design

There are many different web site layouts used in the web design world, but I will only introduce you to two of the more common layouts for a small business web site.

But, there's something you should know before that.

As a general rule, users **do not** like to be surprised. The more **familiar** the layout of your web site, the **better**. Your visitors will quickly learn to navigate around your site. If you're selling something, then your ultimate goal is to allow your visitors to find your products in **as few clicks** as possible.

**Here are the <u>most common features of a web site</u> to consider when designing:**

- A top or left navigation system.

- Additional text navigation at the bottom.

- White background.

- Black body text.

- Logo in the upper left corner.

- Blue underlined hyperlinks.

The most important feature of web site layouts is the positioning of its navigational elements. The two most common layouts are:

1.    *Top Margin* – Navigation is in the top margin and content fills the remainder of the web page.

2.    *Left Margin* – Navigation is in the left margin and the content fills the remaining width of the page.

Surprised? Yup! I'm afraid that's it. It's that simple.

But don't underestimate these two layouts. Check out examples of them in the real world. Whichever layout you choose, the most important thing to keep in mind is to remain consistent throughout your site.

# Draw a Sketch

Now that you have a rough idea of where you're headed, it is time to sketch out your desired web site design.  Remember to incorporate some of your existing material into your sketch.

Here's what we'll be creating:

# Day 3: A Bit About Web Graphics

I'm sure you've heard the saying, "**content is king"**. Ultimately, the content of your web site is what turns your visitors into customers.

Nevertheless, the **appearance** of your web site (which consists mainly of your color scheme and web graphics) is also an important part of your web site. When a person surfs the net, it is the appearance of your web site that creates the **first impression** of your business, not the content.

Check out the following example. See how much difference colors and graphics can make to a web page.



## When to Use Web Graphics

As important as graphics are, your web graphics should not be the main object of your web site. Instead, they should **complement your content**.

Graphics are very bulky when it comes to **file** size, so try to use as few as possible. If an image does not add meaning to your web site, don't use it.

**Before adding a graphic to your web site, ask yourself three questions:**

? Is the graphic relevant? Does it fit into the theme and content of your web site?

? Is the graphic useful?

? Is the graphic's file size reasonable?

**The most useful ways to use graphics on a web page are:**

✓ to help visitors **navigate** around your web site.

✓ to give a consistent **look and feel** that assures your visitors hey are **still** on your site.

✓ to create **brand awareness**, emphasizing your unique identity. Your logo on every page of your web site, for example, makes it easier for your visitors to remember you.

✓ to **grab attention** and provide some sort of **organizational** feature.

# Where to Get Web Graphics

**There are basically 3 ways to get web graphics for your web site:**

1.      Create them yourself.

2.      Buy them from image 'galleries'

3.      Hire a professional to create them for you.

## *Hire professionals*

Ultimately, you should **hire a professional** to create your graphics - at least for the more important graphics such as your logo. But, creating your own graphics is probably the best way to go when you're just starting out.

Creating web graphics **does** require a level of creativity which I, obviously, cannot teach you. You either have it or you don't.

I advise you to find a graphics designer to create a header image for your web site.

A relatively cheap way to find a designer is to go to a web site like Scriptlance.com and post a project with a description of what you'd like created. Designers will then bid on your project. If you're lucky, you might even get your images designed for free.

## *Image Galleries*

Image galleries are great places to get professional images that you can use for your web site. They're also reasonably priced. Just remember that you only need a few images to spice up your web site. Check out the following web sites to purchase ready-made images:

- ✓ ClipArt.com

- ✓ Hemera Image Express

- ✓ PhotoSpin.com

## *Create Your Own*

Although it's better to get a graphics designer to create your graphics, I will show you, in one of the video tutorials, how you can create your images on your own by using free services on the net.

Nothing fancy though.

# Different Web Graphics Formats

Before you start collecting images for your web site, you should be aware of the image file formats that are used. Graphics on the web come in several formats.

I won't go into great detail. Instead, here is my list that gives you a basic idea of what the formats are, their properties and when to use them.

## *GIF*

GIF was the first image format ever created for use on the web. This means that all browsers of all versions can read images in the GIF format.

GIF files are limited to a color-depth of 256 colors.

GIF can include transparency.

GIF compresses an image using LZW compression (lossless: no data is lost during compression).

GIF files can be displayed as animations by using special software to combine several GIFs into one animated GIF.

GIF is best used when there is a large area of flat color in the image.

## *JPEG*

JPEG uses a lossy compression scheme (some data is lost during compression).

JPEG files support up to 16.7 million colors.

JPEG is best used for photographic images and other images which have subtle gradients.

Browsers take a longer time to display JPEGs.

JPEG's degree of compression can be controlled. The higher the compression rate, the lower the size of the image and the lower the quality.

## *PNG*

PNG is the latest web graphic file format at the time of writing.

PNG was developed with the needs of designers and the drawbacks of GIF and JPEG in mind.

PNG graphics are lossless.

PNG graphics can be transparent.

PNG graphics can be highly compressed.

PNG graphics can have great color depth.

Unfortunately, PNG graphics, at this point, are not supported consistently by all recent versions of all browsers currently in use.

## Background Images

A good place to start is with a background image. A background image can make a **huge impact** on the look and feel of your web site and, at the same time, remain **subtle**. They are **simple** to use, small in file size and a great way to affect your visitors' subconscious minds without seeming to do so .

So, really, you have absolutely no excuse not to use it.

## *How do they work?*

When you use a background graphic, the browser repeats that graphic over and over until it covers the whole background area of your web page. You're probably aware of the term '**tiling**'.

This is what a browser does with background images. It tiles it across the web page, both horizontally and vertically, until it covers the whole screen.

### *Making the most of them*

There are several things you need to keep in mind before you start going on a background shopping spree:

- *Watch your graphic size*

  Having a large background graphic increases your web page's loading time. One of the most annoying thing on the Net is waiting for a page to load. On the other hand, very small graphics are not much better either - it makes your web site look too 'busy'. It also takes more computer processing power and time to tile a very small graphic across the browser. So, try to stay in the mid-range.

- *And watch your graphic file size*.

  The dimensions of your graphic are not the only thing you should look at. More importantly, you should also keep an eye on your graphic's **file** size. Usually, the bigger the graphic - the bigger the file size but this doesn't mean that a smaller graphic has a smaller file size. It also depends on how many colors the graphic uses. As a rule of thumb, try and keep your background image below 10K. The background graphic used in the tutorial, for example, is only 4K.

- *Don't use it behind any text*.

  Try not to use a background image behind any text. This gives your web site visitors a major headache and they won't come back when that happens. In fact, don't even use another color. It is best to stick to the norm i.e. black text and white background.

- *Use a darker color*.

Your background graphic should usually be a darker color than the rest of your web page. Its purpose is, after all, to affect your visitors without attracting too much attention. The darker color will help your visitors stay focused on the white area and reduce the 'glare effect' of too much white space at the same time.

### *Where to get them*

There are many places on the Net where you can get free background graphics. For starters, check out MediaBuilder and Absolute Background Textures Archive.

When you've found an image that will go with your overall design, save it to your **images** folder on your computer.

## Creating Your Own Logo

Now that you have a background image, you'll need a logo. If you already have a logo ….. use it!

If you don't, you'll have to create one. Nothing major, just a simple logo to start off with. To create your simple logo, we'll be using the free online logo creator tool at Flamingtext.com.

**Movie Tutorial:  How to Create Your Own Logo**



Alternatively...   If you have a good graphics design software, you may want to consider purchasing logo templates from TemplateMonster.com. The templates are very professional and very affordable.

With TemplateMonster.com, you don't have to worry about millions of people having similar logos. You'll actually get information on how many times the logo has been purchased. The logo will be deleted from their database once it's reached a certain number of purchases.

## Uploading Your Images to the Server

Once you've created and saved your logo on to your computer, it's time to upload it to your server. Uploading your logo is important for the next step.

You don't have to upload your background image at this time.

**Movie Tutorial:  How to Upload Images to Your Server**

## Creating Your Header Image

Once you've uploaded your logo to your server, you can use the [Crecon Online Banner Creator](#) to create a header image.

We'll actually use a different header image for the web design tutorial, but this tutorial shows you how you can get your own header image without hir ing a professional to create one for you.

**Movie Tutorial:  How to Create Your Own Header Image**

## Optimizing Web Graphics

One of your aim is to create fast loading pages. To do this, your images must be as small in file size as possible. You can reduce the file size of your images using an online service offered by NetMechanics.com called GifBot.

The trick here is to choose an optimized image that is both small in file size and still good-looking enough. Using GifBot is quite straightforward, but just in case you have trouble, check out the following tutorial.

**Movie Tutorial: How to Optimize Images with GifBot**

## Get a Web Graphics Software

After going through all that, you've probably realized that it would be much easier if you had web graphics software, not just any web graphics software. **A good one**.  A good web graphics program could create a logo **and** a header image **as well as** optimize it, all in the **one** package.

You can get a graphic software, such as [PaintShopPro](#), for only $84 as a download. But even this is a bit expensive for some of us. Thus, the tutorials above.

# Day 4: Creating Your Web Pages

Finally, it's time to put all the pieces that you've gathered, into one single web page design. We'll use **Netscape Composer** to accomplish this mission.

So, if you have not downloaded a copy of it, <u>do so now</u>.

## Netscape Composer - Interface Overview

If you've never used Netscape Composer before, you should go through this tutorial. The tutorial guides you through the basic features of Composer. You will quickly see it is easy to use Composer. If you've ever used a word processor, you will find that many of the features are familiar.

**Movie Tutorial:  Netscape Composer – An Overview**

## Preparing Your Template

Let's start with a template web page. Your template is important because every other web page you create will be based on it.

**Movie Tutorial: Preparing Your Template**



There is just one other property that you have to include in each of your web pages. Unfortunately, Composer does not have a point and click feature for this. We will, therefore, need to modify the source code **by hand**.

Nothing major.

What property are we adding? Your web page's **keywords**.

Before you do the next tutorial, you need to prepare your keywords. When you're ready, copy the following codes into your text editor.

<META Name="Keywords" Content="make your own web site, web design">

You must replace the red bits with **your own** keywords. When you're ready, view the tutorial.

**Movie Tutorial: Adding Your Keywords**

## Inserting your header image

A header image is probably the easiest way to add some spice to your web pages without adding clutter. It is also one of the easiest ways to brand your web site. A professionally designed header image can instantly increase the appeal of your web site, giving it that professional look. The following tutorial teaches you how to add a header image to your template.

In this movie, you'll learn how to add an **ALT tag** to your header image. An ALT tag is simply the text that will appear in place of your image, while waiting for your image to download or if your image fails to load. This is a great way to give your visitors an idea of what is downloading. This is especially useful when used with images that are used as navigation. You should make a habit of adding ALT tags to all your images.

**Movie Tutorial:  Inserting Your Header Image**

## Using tables as a layout tool

Web pages are very **flexible**. They're pretty much like your Word processor document. When you decrease the size of your window, the text in your word processor automatically re-flows so that you can still see all the text. Though convenient for a word processor, this flexibility can **destroy** your web page layout.

Without any form of **control**, your text and images can **reposition** themselves as your visitors change the size of their browser window. Your carefully laid out design could easily be distorted.

Lucky for us, there is a tool that we can use to make our web page more predictable. You can design your web page and be pretty sure that it would look the same, no matter the size of your visitor's screen.

**Introducing ... Tables**!

Sorry, nothing fancy. Tables will not just help you control the flow of your text; they will also allow you to do so much more. You will quickly realize the design power of tables when you've finished this course.

**Movie Tutorial:  Setting up your tables**

## Creating a navigation bar

In the next tutorial, you learn how to use tables to create attractive text-based navigation, for your web site, using tables.

**Movie Tutorial:  Creating Navigation**

# Creating links

A link is a unique feature of a web page. Without them, your web page would be just like any other static printed page.  Links make the Internet come alive.

There are basically two types of links: 1) a text link and 2) an image link.

A **text link** (which looks like this) is a word or phrase that, when clicked upon, will take you to another web page or to a completely new web site.

An **image link** is similar but instead of using text, it uses an image. Your navigation bar, for example, is a group of image links.

The one rule to stick to when creating links is to **make your destination clear**.

The safest route is to **keep** to the **industry norm**. **Home**, for example, would lead back to the homepage. Don't give your links weird names. If your visitor clicks on the link and ends up somewhere he had not intended to go, you're going to have one unhappy visitor.

So make your link destination clear.


## *Link Destination*

There are three types of link destination:

**1]    Somewhere else within your web site**

I call this type of link a **safe** link. It's safe in the sense that it keeps your visitors at **your** web site. Getting them **to** your site is hard enough to begin with. So the last thing you want them to do is to go to a different site from one of your links.

When you're linking to somewhere else in your web site, it is best to use **relative** links. I usually use links that are relative to the root directory (folder).

Relative linking makes your web site more **portable**. Say, you decide on a new domain name. Your web site will still be workable without having to change any of your safe links. If you used an **absolute** link, you will have to change the **domain name** in each safe link you have on your web site.

---

**Example:** When I publish my files to my server, for example, the root directory is called **public_html**. Although this is the root directory, it will not appear in your URL. So the URL to your homepage will be *http://you.virtualave.net/index.html* and **not** *http://you.virtualave.net/**public_html**/index.html*.

To link relative to a root directory, type a **/** and then the path to the file. So, to link to the **about us** page (aboutus.html), you would link to: **/aboutus.html**

Your server would then look for the file name **aboutus.html** starting from the **public_html** directory.

To link to your logo image (logo.gif) in the images folder, you would link to: **/images/logo.gif**

Your server would then start from the **public_html** folder down to the **images** folder and look for a file name **logo.gif**.

---

**2}     Somewhere outside your web site**

These are **dangerous** links because they take your visitors **away** from your web site. You should try to minimize this as much as possible. Try not to have any dangerous links unless it is absolutely necessary.

Sometimes it does become necessary. You may want to link to an affiliate program you're involved in, for example. In this case, make that web site appear in a **new** window. You'll learn how to do this in the links Tutorial.

When your visitor is done with the other web site and closes the window, your site will still be waiting in its own window. And you wouldn't have lost the visitor.

When you're linking to a dangerous link, it's best to use an **absolute** link which looks like this: **http://www.you.com/linkpage.html**

It is simply the whole web site address.

## 3]      Mailto: link

The **mailto:** link is special because instead of going to a web page, it allows the 'clicker' to send an **e-mail** message to the e-mail address specified. To send an e-mail to me, for example, I would use this link, **mailto:bina@virtualbina.com** .

There are, however, certain problems with using this link.

There lives on the net a certain electronic being whose job is to run around the net harvesting e-mail addresses to be used by a spammer. They do this by recognizing the mailto: tag. If you're unlucky, you might find yourself being bombarded by spam.

When you click on a mailto: link, is that your default e-mail software will launch itself and open a blank e-mail with the intended recipient's e-mail address in the To: section. This may sound harmless but can be annoying for some.

One way around these problems is to use an online contact form, where your visitors can just fill in their details and message and hit the send button. Their details and message will then automatically be sent to your e-mail address. Without the need of an e-mail client.

**Movie Tutorial: Creating Links**

## Preparing your homepage (or additional web pages)

After you've finished your template, creating your web pages is just a matter of adding content.

Let's create your very first web page with it - and what better page to start with than your homepage - the page that your visitors will be sent to when they type in your web address.

Most web hosts need you to name your homepage **index.html** so that itis recognized as your homepage. Check with your web host to see if they require a different name for your homepage.

**Movie Tutorial:  Preparing your web page**

## Inserting and formatting text

Now, all you have to do is add some content. Check out the tutorial below to learn how you can easily add text and format it.

But before that, just a bit about fonts.

### *A bit about Fonts*

Your computer probably has hundreds of different fonts installed on it. When you add text to your web page, Composer will let you have access to all those hundreds of fonts. Though it may sound like a lot of fun, try to refrain from using your more unique fonts. If the font is not installed on your visitors' computers, they will not be able to 'see' it. The font would instead, default to a more common font that's readily available on all computers, such as Arial, Verdana and Helvetica.

**Movie Tutorial:  Inserting and Formatting Text**

## Creating image link

An image link is another type of link. Earlier, you learned how to turn text into links. In this tutorial, you will learn how to turn an image into a link.

An image link can be a more attractive way to add links to your web page. You can use an order button image, for example. Or you may decide to use button images for your navigation bar instead of using plain text. There are many uses of an image link. The best way to get ideas is to surf the net and see how the billions of web pages out there uses image links.

**Movie Tutorial:  Creating Image Links**

# Creating additional web pages

To create additional web pages, just follow sections 6.7 through to 6.10. That's it!

# Day 5: Publishing Your Web Site

Now that your web site is ready, it's time to make it available to the world. Netscape Composer makes it easy for you to publish your web page to the Internet. You need to find out a few things when you publish your first web pages.

**You need to know:**

? Publishing address: **ftp.yourdomain.com** (eg. ftp.website-workshop.com)

? Your user name and password.

? Subdirectory to publish your site to: e.g. **public_html**

? The URL of your homepage: (eg. http://www.website-workshop.com)

**Movie Tutorial:  Publishing Your WebPages**

# Check Links and Load Time

When you've published all the web pages on your web site, check that all your links are working. The last thing you need is for someone to click on your **ORDER** link and get a missing page.

You can use a service offered by Net Mechanic to do this - HTML Toolbox. You can try this service for free.

**Here are some things that HTML Toolbox will report on:**

- Load Time

  The load time will tell you how fast it takes for your webpage to load. Obviously, the faster the better. This is useful to help you fine tune your webpages to increase load time. Try and keep it between 15-20 seconds.

- HTML Check & Repair

  Don't worry too much about this bit. You will most probably come up with some errors. As I said before, nothing beats handcoding.

- Browser Compatibility

  The problems reported here should be minor.

- Spell Check

  This report could also be misleading. I had 11 errors on my page. My first name, my last name, my address ..... You get what I mean. Nevertheless, check and see which words are being reported as an error, just in case you did make a spelling mistake.

All you have to do is go to the Net Mechanic - HTML Toolbox web site.

# A Job Well Done

**Congratulations !**

You made it. I'm so proud of you. You should be proud of you too.

You have single handedly created your very own web site without burning a hole in your wallet.

Isn't it the greatest feeling?

**Let's recap what we just did:**

√ Day 1: Registered your domain name and signed up for a web hosting account

√ Day 2: Planned your web site

√ Day 3: Gathered some web graphics and optimized them

√ Day 4: Created your web pages

√ Day 5: Published your web site and checked for missing links

Whew! You deserve a good break. Take two or three days off. I bet it's been 5 days since you admired the clear blue skies. When you've regained your energy, switch on the computer and show the World Wide Web what you're made of.

Good Luck in Your Online Venture!

Warm regards,

*Bina*

Your Guide to DIY Website Solutions - [VirtualBina.com](VirtualBina.com)

PS:  Thirsty for more action?  Why don't you drop by the **WebSite Workshop** and learn how to create forms, use scripts, create and upload e-books, create a membership web site  .....

Oh, and don't forget to subscribe to my free ezine **WebBriefcase!** for exciting tips and updates on DIY web master resources and tools.

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