



## 7 Keys to Identifying the Right Web Host for You

One of the most critical internet strategy decisions you will have to make is where you want to host your internet site.

A web host is the computer where all the files that make up your web site are located so they are visible on the internet. If your host is not reliable, that can put you out of business, particularly if their servers are down frequently or security measures are lacking.

Web hosting has changed a lot in the last few years. Cost has gone down and simplicity has gone up. You should be able to find a good host for under \$150 a year. Here are the 7 keys to finding the right web hosting company for you:

**1. 100% Reliability.** Your web host should be able to guarantee at least 99.999% uptime. You must have confidence that when your customer is looking for you, they will be able to pull up your web page, and you should be able to access your web files and email whenever you want. Also, check how long the company has been in business so that you can see their track record over time.

**2. Backup Process.** For a host to provide 100% reliability, they need to make provision for backing up files. This should be part of their routine security, and be included in the price. They should be very specific about what they are backing up, such as files and databases.

**3. Customer Support.** A good web host should provide good documentation at their site that will answer many of your questions. However, they should also have email and telephone support, and at least one method of support available 24 hours a day, every day.

**4. A cPanel interface.** This is a dashboard control panel now offered by most, but not all web hosts. The cPanel allows you to manage your domain through a web interface. It makes it relatively simple to do things such as set up email, manage your files and folders, and upload files to your web site.

**5. Storage space and Bandwidth.** Plan for your site to grow which means you want a web host that won't penalize you when you grow in size or traffic. 25MB is the minimum you need. You should be able to upgrade your space without having to change hosts.

**6. Number of POP3 email accounts.** You want a host that will provide at least 99 email accounts and preferably unlimited email accounts. This lets you add different email addresses for different functions on your website. For example, you may want technical issues to go to [webmaster@yourdomain.com](mailto:webmaster@yourdomain.com) and customer service questions to go to [service@yourdomain.com](mailto:service@yourdomain.com).

**7. Access to server logs.** These logs contain the information you need to evaluate how your site is performing. Access to free software that allows analysis of web logs is a big plus.

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A number of the better web hosting companies offer free domain names when you agree to buy hosting services. Be careful of companies offering free web hosting, however. The \$150 a year is worth it for the reliability and dependability of something as important as your web site.

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