

Chapter 1: Domain Registration and Hosting

In This Chapter

- ✓ Selecting a domain name for your site
- ✓ Getting help from domain name generators
- ✓ Registering a domain name
- ✓ Researching the best hosting plan
- ✓ Designing and uploading a placeholder page for the new domain

This chapter focuses on what you need to do to prepare your site for publishing on a host server. You find out about domain name selection, name generators, domain verification, and domain registration. You also discover how to find a good hosting plan, including what to look for in a plan, where to find a host, and general pricing structures. The last part of this chapter shows you how to create a customized placeholder page, which is a single, simple web page with company branding, an e-mail link, and a smattering of other contact information that can hold the place on a new domain until the new website is fully built and ready to publish.

Understanding How to Get Your Site Online

Before you can make a new website available on the Internet, it must first be assigned its own special web address, which is commonly referred to as the *domain name*. The process of acquiring a domain name can be a fun adventure and only requires a little bit of work. To start with, someone needs to think of a good name for the site and then check to see whether that name is available for use or has already been taken. If the desired name is available, the name needs to be registered, and that can be done either through a domain registrar or a host provider.





After the domain name is registered, the site needs a hosting plan so that it can reside on a server and thus become available to the public. All of this needs to be done before you can publish the site. Most people like to register the domain and get a hosting plan at the start of any new web project to ensure that the domain name is secure during the site-building process. And, because building a site takes a good bit of time, most folks also like to have a customized placeholder page designed and uploaded to the domain until the new website is ready for publishing.

If you are working as a freelance web designer, some of your clients will have already registered a domain and possibly even secured a hosting plan before contacting you about your design services. Other new clients, however, will not have done any of these things and will need a fair amount of hand-holding from you as you take them through each of the steps. Being able to provide information about these topics to your clients can both enrich your skills as a web professional and enhance their experience with you as a designer. This fact alone can be very good for business because happy clients are more likely to return to you for website maintenance services after their site gets published, as well as refer other friends and business acquaintances to you if they feel confident in all your web-related skills.

If this is your first time dealing with domain names and hosting plans, you may want to try setting up a domain name and hosting plan for your own website before handling these tasks for any clients.

Selecting a Domain Name

Choosing a domain name for a website is something that you, in your role as a designer, may or may not be involved in when working with clients, depending on their individual needs and how web-savvy they are. Some clients will have already selected a domain, registered it, and secured hosting, whereas others will say they don't really understand anything about all that stuff and are relying on your experience to help them figure it all out, or in some cases do it all for them because they don't care to know. Some clients, of course, will fall somewhere in between these extremes, needing a little help with some but not all of these domain-related responsibilities.

In the following sections, you find out more about domain names, how to help select a domain name for your client, and then how to check to make sure the name is available.

Understanding what a domain name is

Simply put, a *domain name* is a name that is used to identify an address on the Internet for a particular website and any e-mail addresses configured for that site. For instance, if your company is called Clean For Dreams, your

domain name might be `http://www.cleanfordreams.com`, and your e-mail address could be `info@cleanfordreams.com`. The web address itself is composed of four distinct parts, as diagrammed in Figure 1-1:

- ✓ **Protocol:** The first part of a web address, `http://`, is the HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP), which identifies the protocol that allows a computer to browse the web by getting information from a remote server. Secure access to the Internet (that is, anytime a domain has an SSL [Secure Sockets Layer] certificate installed on the host server for encrypting private data) requires the use of the `https://` (note the `s` for secure) protocol.
- ✓ **www:** The second part refers to the World Wide Web and identifies the type of page that will be delivered in a browser window. Another type of web address includes domains where the `www.` is omitted, such as in `http://maps.google.com`. This type of address refers to a *subsite* or *subdomain* that resides on the main domain's servers but is separate from it.
- ✓ **Domain name:** The third part identifies the unique name of the website as registered by the owner of the site. Domain names may contain any combination of uppercase and lowercase letters and numbers. In addition, though less often used, domain names may also include hyphens but no other special characters, as in `www.jet-streamshowerhead.net`.
- ✓ **Extension:** The fourth part identifies the type of site visitors should expect to see at the address, such as `.com` for commercial business sites, `.org` for nonprofit organizations, and `.edu` for educational sites.

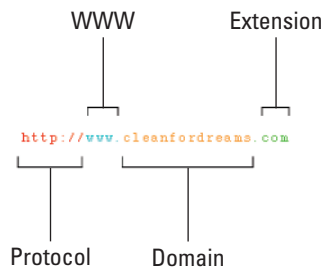


Figure 1-1: The four distinct elements in a web address.

Although several unrestricted top level domain (TDL) extensions are in use by all kinds of businesses around the world, the most familiar extensions should really be used as they were intended. For example, the `.org` extension should be used for nonprofit organizations, and the `.gov` extension should be used exclusively for government agencies. Table 1-1 lists the more common extensions from around the world.

Table 1-1 Common Web Domain Extensions

<i>Extension</i>	<i>Usage</i>
.com	Commercial, but is commonly used for just about any kind of business
.net	Internet administrative site, but is also commonly used for other types of sites
.org	Organization, most often used by nonprofit groups and trade associations
.info	Information, the fourth most popular extension
.biz	Business
.us	United States
.name	Personal websites
.at	Austria
.be	Belgium
.bz	Belize
.cc	Cocos (Keeling) Islands
.cn	China
.de	Germany
.eu	European Union
.gs	South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands
.ms	Montserrat
.mx	Mexico
.nz	New Zealand
.tc	Turks and Caicos Islands
.tv	Tuvalu, but often used for television
.tw	Taiwan
.uk	United Kingdom
.vg	British Virgin Islands
.ws	Western Samoa, but is often used for websites



For a complete listing and description of all the domain name extensions available to you and your clients, visit the following website:

www.networksolutions.com/domain-name-registration/popup-extensions.jsp

In addition, ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers at www.icann.org) is currently developing several new extensions slated for public use sometime in 2013. Many of the new extensions are industry related as well as geo/cultural, such as `.law`, `.futbol`, and `.solar`. You can view a complete listing at:

www.newgtldsite.com/new-gtld-list/

Finding a domain name for your client

The first thing to do when researching a domain name for a business is to see whether the name of the business is available. For example, if your client's company is Station Organization, the most fitting domain name for the company would be `www.stationorganization.com`. With an unusual or unique business name, selecting domains can be fairly quick and easy. When a client has a common business name, which is likely to have been already taken by someone else, things can become tricky.

If the desired domain name is already taken, you or your client needs to come up with a new name, and tinkering with the desired name is a good place to start. Easy solutions work best, such as adding a city name or state reference, inserting a hyphen between certain letters, or using common abbreviations within the name. For example, if the company name is Rochester Apartments and it's located in New York, the client could consider using `rochesterapartmentsny.com`, `rochester-apartments-ny.com`, `rochesteraptsny.com`, or `rochester-aps-ny.com`. Conversely, the client might also consider using a different domain extension, either with or without the other name adjustments, such as `rochesterapartments.net` or `rochester-apartments.info`. If your client gets really stumped trying to find the perfect domain name, you can help him find the right one using a domain name generator, as described in the next section.



Part of your job in helping a client choose a domain name also includes helping to select an appropriate domain extension. In some cases, the domain names with the chosen extension will already be taken by another company with the same name. In those instances, the client needs to use a different extension with the desired domain name, alter the spelling of the desired domain name, or come up with a similar but different domain name with the desired extension.

Using domain name generators

To get help finding a suitable domain name, whether the one you want is already taken or you're just interested in seeing what kinds of domains are available based on a few keywords, turn to one of the popular online domain name generators. In addition to helping you come up with new and unusual name ideas, these services can also suggest suitable alternatives based on real-time domain name availability. Most generators take whatever word or

words you'd like to include in the domain name and then shake them out in a variety of combinations either with or without other words, and present a resulting list of potential names for you to choose from.

The most popular and useful domain name generators can be found at Network Solutions (www.networksolutions.com), DomainsBot (www.domainsbot.com), NameTumbler.com (www.nametumbler.com), Impossibility! (www.impossibility.org), Blungr (<http://blungr.com>), and Nameboy (www.nameboy.com). At Nameboy, shown in Figure 1-2, you can enter a primary and optional secondary word to begin the search and choose whether returned results include hyphens between characters and rhyming, which can sometimes make the domain name easier to remember. It also allows you to verify domains you're interested in with its handy WHOIS search form. You can even search for and register domains that have expired or are about to expire.

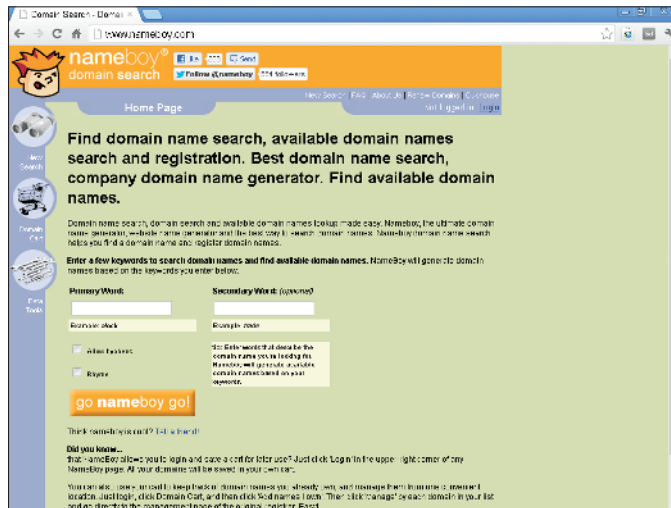


Figure 1-2: A domain name generator can help you find suitable alternatives for your ideal domain name.

No matter which service you use, be sure that you verify the domain name availability (as described in the next section) before plunking down any money to register the domain. You may also want to find out about registration services and hosting plans before you ultimately commit.

Checking domain name availability

Even if you don't require the services of an online domain name generator, you still need to verify that the domain name you have chosen for your website is truly available for registration. This means ensuring that no one else is

currently using the domain you want or has already registered it but hasn't begun using it yet.

Thankfully, verification is free and quick to do on a number of websites, including many of the domain registrar and domain name generator sites. For example, Network Solutions (www.networksolutions.com) provides fast results along with providing automatic alternative name suggestions if the name you enter is already taken. With a good verification tool, finding the right name for your site should be only a matter of a having a bit of patience and open-mindedness while you perform the search and verification process.

To show how easy it is to use these domain name verification services, follow these steps to check for the same name on both Network Solutions and DomainsBot:

1. Go to www.networksolutions.com, as shown in Figure 1-3.
2. In the Search for a Domain text box on the left side of the page, type the domain name you want to register (leaving the .com and .net options selected) and click the Search button.

For example, type **rochesterapartments**.

In the search results that appear, you see that this domain is already taken for the .com, .net, .org, and .info extensions. Other extensions that are available include .co, .biz, .us, .us.com, .mobi, and .tv.

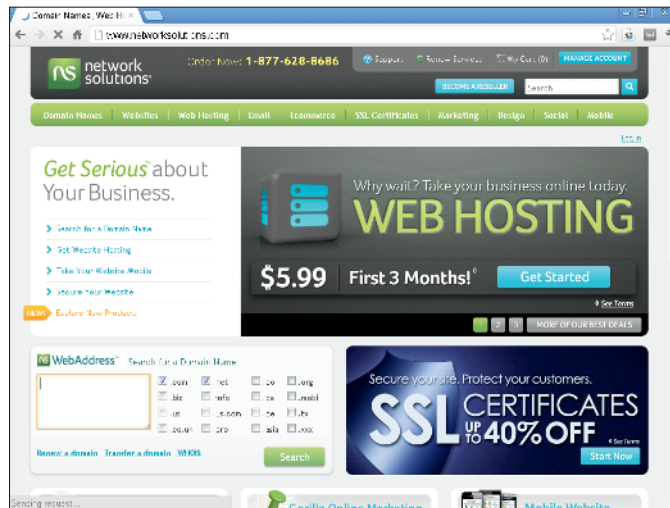


Figure 1-3: Network Solutions is a reputable place to register your domain name.

3. Do another search. This time, enter a variation of the desired domain name in the Search for a Domain text box and click the Search button.

For example, type **rochester-aps**.

Aha! This domain name is available with both the .com and .net extensions and could be registered today if you wanted it (presuming that no one has registered this domain since the time of this writing).

4. Go to www.domainsbot.com and type the words your first choice of domain name into the search field.

For example, enter **rochester apartments**.

Before you even click the Search button, notice how the page reconfigures itself, like the example in Figure 1-4, to reveal the availability of any domains that use the two words in the search field. The **rochester apartments.com** domain name is included in this list and is noted as Not Available.

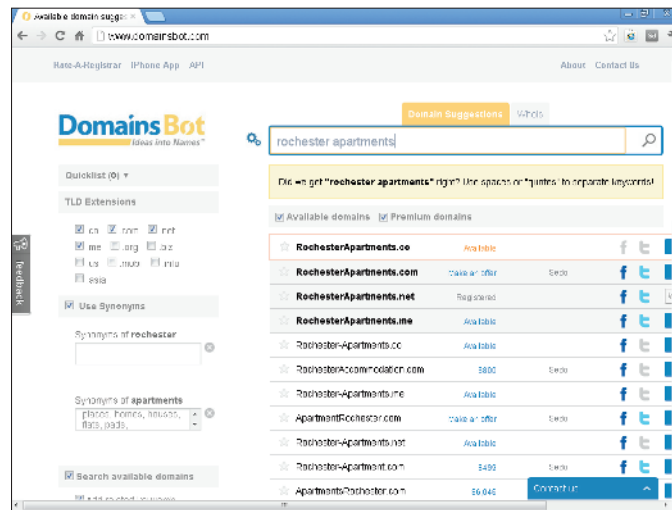


Figure 1-4: DomainsBot can help you find suitable alternatives for domain names that are already taken.

As you can see, these search results are more detailed than those from Network Solutions. In addition, the page includes extra tools to help you refine the search based on selected criteria.

5. To modify the domain search results, adjust the settings in the various search fields located on the left side of the page.

For example, adjust the following settings:

- Under TDL extensions, deselect all the extensions except `.com`.
- Under Synonyms of Apartments, delete all the keywords listed except *lofts* and *suites* and select the check box to save these edits.
- Deselect the Search Premium Domains option.
- Under General, select Exclude Offensive Keywords and Exclude Dash.

The list of domain options automatically updates the list of available domains as you make changes to the search criteria.

If the apartments are located in downtown Rochester and have an open floor plan, for example, `RochesterLoftsDowntown.com` and `RochesterCityLofts.com` might be good choices, for example. However, if the domain name really needs to exactly match the company name, the client may be out of luck and will need to come up with some other ideas to find a suitable domain name to register.



If you can't find exactly what you're looking for the first few times, be open to new ideas and try searching on other domain name generator websites. The more you search, the more likely you are to come upon a domain name that really works.

Registering a Domain Name

When you find the right domain name for your website, get it registered as quickly as you can. Think of registering a domain name like reserving a rental car: To reserve the car, you must provide the car agency with your name and contact info, credit card, car preference, and rental dates. To actually use the car, you must go to the rental car agency, sign a contract to rent the car for a predetermined period of time, and provide payment information before the agency gives you the car keys. Likewise, registering the domain is a means of paying for and placing the name on reserve for later use with a hosting plan for a specified period of time.

To register your domain name, you can go about it in one of two ways: Register your site with a domain registrar or sign up for a hosting plan and have the host provider register the domain for you as part of your hosting package. Both options have unique benefits and drawbacks.

Using a domain registrar

When registering a domain name through a domain registration service, you get the benefit of quick and affordable registration without having to worry about hosting until you're ready to publish your site. In most cases, you should be able to choose a time frame for the rights to use your chosen domain name. Typical terms for domain registration are for one, two, three,

five, and ten years. Rates for the registration range from as low as \$0.99 to over \$35 per year. Many registrars include e-mail accounts and other services for this fee; however, some do not, so be careful to understand exactly what you're paying for. Most domain registration rates fall somewhere in the \$10–20 per year range, and the rate often drops significantly when you increase the term of the registration to two years or more. The .com domains are usually the most sought-after domains and tend to cost more, whereas the less trendy .info and .mobi extension domain names can now be grabbed up for as little as \$0.99 per year.

Choosing the right domain registrar — if you want to use one instead of registering your domain through your host provider — depends on your time frame, budget, and needs. The most popular domain registrars tend to be the ones that charge the least amount of money. Keep in mind, though, that while more affordable, the less expensive services may not necessarily provide the best customer care, which, depending on your level of knowledge, might be an important factor to you and your client. Therefore, shop wisely and do your research before you procure a domain for yourself or a client. Alternatively, you could pass on this part of the process and recommend that your client registers the domain on his own through a particular registrar or host provider.

In addition to domain registration, most registrars these days provide additional web-related services, including domain verification, domain name generators, domain transfers, hosting, and Internet access.

If you just need to register the domain name for a time before the site is ready to publish, but aren't interested in e-mail or hosting until right before the site gets launched, it would probably be fine for you to use one of the cheaper domain registrar services. However, if you know you need other services such as web hosting and e-mail, obtain an SSL certificate, and set up an e-commerce shopping cart, go with one of the companies that also provides those services, such as Network Solutions (www.networksolutions.com), eNom (www.enom.com), Tucows (www.tucows.com), HostGator.com (www.hostgator.com), Lunarpages (www.lpwebhosting.com), directNIC (www.directnic.com), GoDaddy.com (www.godaddy.com), and Register.com (www.register.com), or any of the myriad hosting services that might have been personally recommended to you by friends and business associates.

Before you do that, however, consider your long-term needs:

- ✓ **Your site is ready, you want to post a placeholder page while you're building your site, or will have a short turnaround time (say, 30 days or less):** You may want to speed the domain registration process by registering the domain through the host provider that will be hosting the site.

- ✓ **Your site will not be ready for publishing for quite some time:** You can save some money by registering the domain and not worrying about hosting until you're ready to publish the site. If this is the route you decide to take, just make sure that you understand that if you register the domain with one company and use another company for hosting, you need to do a DNS transfer when the hosting plan has been secured. To avoid having to do a DNS transfer, simply register the domain name while you sign up for a hosting plan with your preferred host provider.

Using a host provider

When registering a domain name through a host provider, all you need to do is tell the provider your chosen URL when you sign up for your hosting account. The host then registers the domain for you as part of the hosting plan, often without any additional fees. To find out more about hosting, see the later section, "Finding the Best Hosting Plan."

Activating your domain

To use the registered domain name and allow visitors to access an actual website through that name, you must secure a hosting plan and activate the registered domain name. When you register a domain with one company and host with another (which a lot of people do to try to save a few bucks), the site can be activated for hosting only through a *DNS transfer*. By contrast, when you register your domain and host with the same company, the site becomes active almost immediately after payment.



The DNS (Domain Name Server or Domain Name System) helps create a permanent address for every domain name. Every computer and server that connects to the Internet has its own IP (Internet Protocol) address, typically written in four sets of numbers separated by dots, as in 123.45.67.890. By parking a domain name on a server and creating an alias for the IP to match the domain name, you let visitors begin to use the domain name to find a site.



To get the IP address of your computer, go to <http://whatismyipaddress.com>.

A DNS transfer, therefore, means that the host provider's servers are pointing to the domain name as an alias for the server's IP address. For the host provider to create that alias, the domain must be transferred from the registrar to the host provider. This ensures that the domain name points to the server that hosts the site so that the site can be properly accessed by everyone on the web.

Finding the Best Hosting Plan

A hosting plan is like a parking space for a website that you rent out by the year on a host provider's server. While parked there, and as long as the domain name is pointing to the host's servers, the site is accessible to anyone surfing the Internet with knowledge of the web address or who happens to find the site listed in search engine results.

In the following sections, you find out how to find the right host provider and evaluate hosting plans.

Researching host providers

Like domain registrars, host providers are everywhere online, which means that finding the right one for your needs may require a little research. You could consult one of the hosting plan review sites, such as Hosting-Review.com (www.hosting-review.com), Top 10 Web Hosting (www.top10webhosting.com), or TheHostingChart.com (www-thehostingchart.com), to find the names of the most popular host providers. However, bear in mind that the host providers on those kinds of lists might be rated more for their pricing than for quality hosting and customer service.

Ideally, you'll want certain things from your host provider: a reasonable rate, great technical support and customer service, and enough web space on the server to host all your files. In addition, you should get the right number of e-mail accounts for your needs, have access to some good site-reporting tools, and be eligible for any special services and discounts that the host provider may have to offer, such as 1-click WordPress installation.

On a personal note, having worked with many different host providers over the years, and having experienced firsthand the difference between good and bad customer support, I can highly recommend Lunarpages (www.lpwebhosting.com) for both domain registration and hosting plans.

Lunarpages, shown in Figure 1-5, is a full-service web development and hosting company that offers competitively priced domain registration and hosting plans with top-rated 24-hour telephone and e-mail technical support. Lunarpages is offering two special discounts to readers of this book who sign up for new 12/24-month hosting plans.

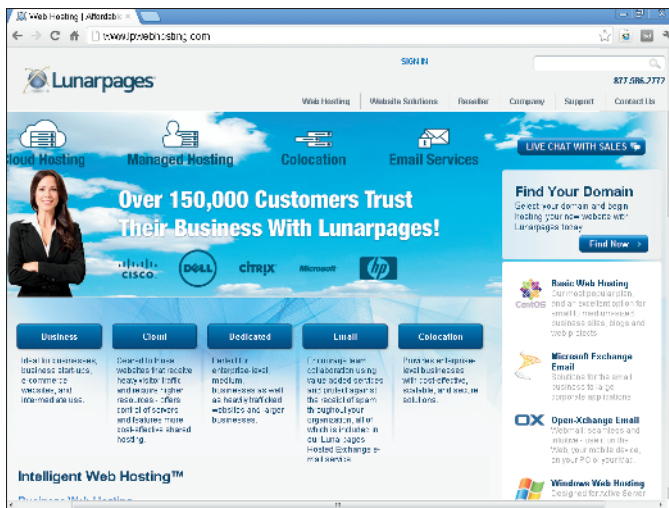


Figure 1-5: Lunarpages has fantastic customer support and offers both domain registration and hosting services.



Both discounts include unlimited storage, unlimited data transfer, and \$700 worth of free bonus programs included with your hosting account:

- ✔ **Save \$10:** Enter coupon code **WebDesign10** and save \$10 when signing up for any 12- or 24-month Basic Hosting Plan.
- ✔ **Save \$30:** Enter coupon code **WebDesign30** and save \$30 when signing up for any 12- or 24-month Business, Windows, or LPQuicksite Plan, or any 3-, 6-, 12-, or 24-month VPS or Dedicated Account.



To find the right host provider for your (or your client's) project, keep the following tips in mind:

- ✔ **Referrals:** A friendly recommendation can often be the best method for finding a reputable hosting plan. Most people either love or hate their host providers. If you keep hearing praise for the same host provider from different people, that can be a good sign.
- ✔ **Customer service:** The most important feature of any hosting plan is customer service. Having 24-hour telephone and e-mail support is absolutely essential, so make sure that the host provider you are interested in offers this. If it doesn't, keep looking. Customer service is so

important because you will, at some point, need help and shouldn't have to wait a long time to get it. Ideally, someone should be there 24/7 to help answer your technical questions and resolve any server-related issues. Furthermore, if you keep irregular work hours, or if your host is on one coast and you're on another, it would be nice to be able to have your questions answered anytime, day or night.

Make a list of all the host providers you're interested in and then call them to ask questions about their hosting plans. You can get a good sense about a company's customer service by talking to one of its customer service representatives about hosting plans and customer support.

- ✓ **FTP and control panel:** Be sure to inquire about ways that each hosting plan allows site access. At a minimum, you should be able to upload files using FTP (File Transfer Protocol). Some host providers offer only a custom-built site console or control panel with limited capabilities for uploading files, while others allow you to use any standalone FTP program to access the host server. With FTP access, you have better control over uploading files when it's time to publish the site.
- ✓ **Cancellation policy:** Be sure to also ask each company about its cancellation policy and whether that includes a refund. If for any reason you decide you want to switch plans to another host provider sometime in the future, it would be nice if you could get a refund for the unused balance of the plan. The host providers that do offer prorated or partial refunds are often the ones with the best customer service and hosting plans.

Evaluating hosting plan packages

While you're researching the different hosting plans from the various hosting companies, make sure to look for the type of hosting package that's appropriate to your needs. Shared hosting plans tend to come in four distinct flavors: the bare-bones starter plan, the small-business plan, the big-business or cloud hosting plan, and the e-commerce plan. Most plans have certain features in common, with tiered levels of benefits, as outlined in Table 1-2.

Table 1-2 Typical Web Hosting Plan Features

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Starter</i>	<i>Small Biz</i>	<i>Big Biz</i>	<i>e-Commerce</i>
Monthly fee	\$3.95–9.95	\$19.95	\$19.95–59.95+	\$44.95+
Technical features	5GB hard drive storage space, 50GB data transfer, 20 million page views, dedicated IP address, 3 user accounts	400GB to unlimited hard storage drive space, 400GB to unlimited data transfer, 40 million page views, dedicated IP address, 6 user accounts	1000GB hard drive storage space, 400GB to unlimited data transfer, 60 million page views, dedicated IP address, 12 user accounts	1000GB hard drive storage space, 1000GB to unlimited data transfer, 100 million page views, dedicated IP address, 24 user accounts
E-mail	5 accounts and 1 GB hard drive space, spam guard, virus protection, online e-mail access, autoresponders, forwarders, and so on	500+ accounts and 1.5 GB hard drive space, spam guard, virus protection, online e-mail access, autoresponders, forwarders, and so on	750+ accounts and 2GB hard drive space, spam guard, virus protection, online e-mail access, autoresponders, forwarders, and so on	1,000+ accounts and 3GB hard drive space, spam guard, virus protection, online e-mail access, autoresponders, forwarders, and so on
Database and indexing services	mySQL max, 25MB hard drive space	+ mySQL server, 2 ODBC data source names, Microsoft Access, unlimited hard drive space	+ mySQL server, 4 ODBC data source names, Microsoft Access, unlimited hard drive space	+ mySQL server, 6 ODBC data source names, Microsoft Access, unlimited hard drive space

In addition to the services listed in Table 1-1, most plans also provide or support the following:

- ✓ **Account:** 24-hour uptime, customer service, and technical support
- ✓ **Scripting:** MySQL, CGI-BIN, Perl, PHP, Ruby on Rails, Python, SSI support, and so on
- ✓ **Domains:** Dedicated domain name, domain transfers, registration of new domains, domain pointers, and so on
- ✓ **Site management:** Online control panel, website builder, FrontPage extensions (scripts that provide dynamic functions on sites built with Microsoft FrontPage or ExpressionWeb), 24-hour FTP access, free web-based statistics, access to raw log files, and so on
- ✓ **E-commerce services:** SSL secure servers, shared SSL certificates, merchant tools with and without credit card processing, Google Checkout, and so on
- ✓ **Data center:** Firewall and antivirus protection, daily backups, redundant servers with UPS features power backups, and so on

Although monthly rates can run as low as \$1.50 and as high as \$99, most plans range from about \$4.95 to \$39.95 per month and differ by the terms of service they provide:

- ✓ **Uptime:** The total time within any 24-hour period where the site is accessible to visitors on the Internet. Anytime a host provider's server goes down, for whatever reason, domains on that server go offline, which is commonly referred to as *downtime*. An uptime of 100 percent is the ultimate goal of all host providers, but most will only guarantee a 99 percent uptime rate.
- ✓ **Hard drive space:** This is the total number of megabytes (MB) or gigabytes (GB) of space allotted for the domain on the host provider's server. To determine your website's hard drive space needs, multiply the number of pages by 30K and then factor in enough space to account for all the additional files required for the site, including all the graphics, CSS, JavaScript, jQuery, PDFs, and multimedia files. You may also be able to estimate the total number of megabytes for your site through your HTML code editor. For example, in Dreamweaver, you can select all the files through the expanded Files panel and read the total byte count in the status bar. Typical small sites can make do with as little as 500MB–1GB of space, whereas e-commerce sites can require upward of 30GB, depending on the number of products being sold on the site.
- ✓ **User account:** Depending on the website's needs, the hosting plan can accommodate from one to several user accounts. Each account provides password-protected host server access to site management tools such as passwords, e-mail setup functionality, and billing information.

- ✓ **Data transfer and page views:** The data transfer and page view figures refer to the maximum allowable number of times that visitors can access the pages (that is, the text, graphics, and other content) on the hosted site within a given time frame, such as a 30-day period. If the site is very popular, there could easily be anywhere from several hundred to over 50,000 page views in a month!
- ✓ **Web-based statistics:** Web-based stats can help site owners track the number of visitors to their site, including such details as the entry and exit URLs, the number of hits and page views, keyword analysis, and the number of returning versus new visitors.
- ✓ **Dedicated IP address:** Domains with a dedicated IP address are hosted on their own servers as opposed to sharing a server with other domains. Dedicated IP plans are more expensive than websites that use a shared IP address, but they are also ultimately more reliable because a dedicated server can more accurately monitor its own web traffic and provide faster server response times. A dedicated IP address can also sometimes be a requirement if your site needs an SSL certificate, depending on the host provider's setup, so be sure to ask about this if you intend to get an SSL certificate.
- ✓ **Domain pointer:** This feature, which may cost a few extra bucks per month, allows one domain to automatically reroute visitors to another domain. Domain pointers can often be useful when a business wants to provide for misspellings of a domain name so that anytime visitors try to view the misspelled domain, they're automatically directed to the correctly named site, such as `www.yahooo.com` pointing to `www.yahoo.com`.

Shop around, do your research, speak to friends and business associates, and make your decision. After you choose a host provider, just sign up for the desired hosting plan. If you're also registering a domain for the first time when signing up for the plan, the site should be ready for use right away. If the domain was registered elsewhere, you can do the DNS transfer from the registrar to the host's servers as soon as you're ready to publish the site or a placeholder page. You (or your client) can also set up e-mail accounts and adjust them at any time after the plan is paid for. Later, if you (or your client) are not happy with a particular host provider, you can always switch to another provider.

Creating a Custom Placeholder Page

A *placeholder page* is exactly what it sounds like: It's the default home page that visitors see at a particular web address — your domain name — when you (or your client) have both registered the domain and set up a hosting plan, but have not yet published the new website or any of your own pages there.

The default placeholder page provided by the host provider can vary. Sometimes that page may identify the domain name and IP address of the domain, and sometimes it doesn't. More often than not, what you see are some instructions to the site owner on how to access the host's servers to manage the new hosting account. The rest of the page is usually filled with information and links to the services of the domain registrar or hosting company where the site is parked, as in the example from Lunarpages shown in Figure 1-6.



Figure 1-6: A host provider placeholder page often provides site setup tips to the site owner but no information to potential visitors about products or services.

Fortunately, the domain registrar or host provider placeholder page only stays online until it is removed or overwritten by either you or the site owner (or the webmaster or whomever else the client might hire to manage the site after you design it). The smartest thing to do, then, is to take advantage of this paid-for open advertising space and design a customized placeholder page for the domain that can sit there until the new site is ready to publish.

The best custom placeholders are simple HTML web pages that identify the site (logo, company/owner name, tag line, and other branding) and offer a means of contacting the site owner by both snail mail and e-mail. Anything else on the page, like a blurb about the company or some recent news items, is gravy. Figure 1-7 shows an example of a typical placeholder page that includes company name, an encrypted contact e-mail address, and general information.

In the following sections, you find out how to design your own placeholder and then publish it.

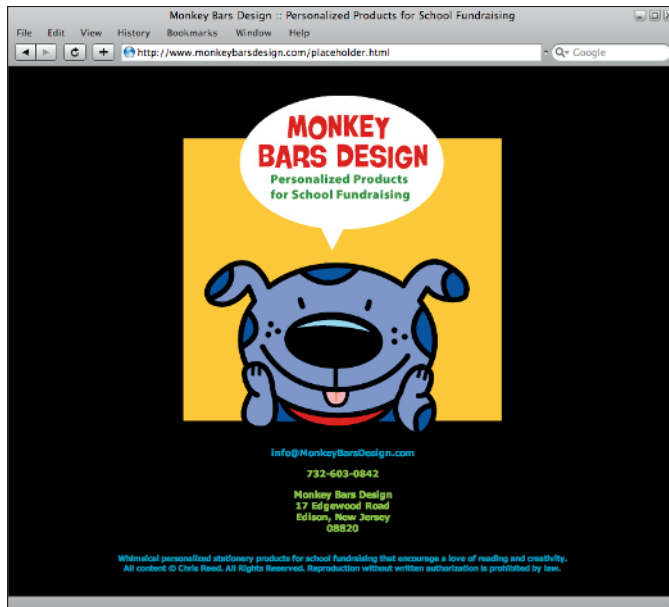


Figure 1-7: A customized placeholder page can include the company logo, an (encrypted) e-mail address, and a statement about the company’s services.

Designing a placeholder page

To create your own custom placeholder page, you need access to the following things:

- ✓ A text, HTML, or WYSIWYG code editor to build the placeholder page such as Dreamweaver, CoffeeCup, Amaya, Kompozer, TextWrangler, or even TextEdit or Notepad
- ✓ The site owner’s company name/logo in GIF, PNG, or JPG format
- ✓ The descriptive statement about the site that will be included on the placeholder page
- ✓ The site owner’s e-mail address, which should use the new domain name such as `info@mysite.com` rather than a personal e-mail address from AOL, Gmail, AT&T, or Yahoo!

The following two sections show you how to create a simple customized placeholder page styled with internal CSS. By leaving the CSS inside the page, you only have to upload a single file rather than the HTML and the CSS.

Creating the page

Follow these steps to create the placeholder page:

- 1. Create a new folder on your computer desktop called Placeholder, and inside that folder, create another folder called images.**

The placeholder page and image you're about to create will be saved to this folder structure.

- 2. Save the company logo with the .jpg, .gif, or .png file extension and place it into your new images folder inside the Placeholder folder on your desktop.**

If you want to follow along with the example, download a copy of the logo graphic named Luau-a-go-go (`luauagogo.gif`) from this book's website.

To save a copy of the graphic, as shown in Figure 1-8, right-click (Windows) or Control+click (Mac) the image and choose Save (This) Image As. Choose the images folder inside the Placeholder folder on your desktop as the save-to location.

- 3. Using your preferred code editor, or your computer's text editing program, open a new blank document.**

To use your computer's default text editing program, choose Start⇨All Programs⇨Accessories⇨Notepad if you're using a PC, or on a Mac, launch your Applications folder and double-click the TextEdit icon.



Figure 1-8: Use this logo to create a sample placeholder page.

A new untitled document should open automatically. If that doesn't happen, choose File⇨New to open a new file.

- 4. If you're using a text editor, type the following basic HTML5 page structure, including the HTML5 DTD and charset meta tag:**

```
<!doctype html>
<html>
  <head>
    <meta charset="utf-8">
    <title></title>
  </head>
  <body>
  </body>
</html>
```

Otherwise, if you're using an HTML code editor, which automatically drops in the structural code for you, skip ahead to Step 5.

5. Between the opening and closing <title> tags, type a title for the page (for example, Luau-a-go-go).

Your code should now look like this:

```
<!doctype html><html>
<head>
<meta charset="utf-8">
<title>Luau-a-go-go</title>
</head>
<body>
</body>
</html>
```

This code sets the title for the page, which appears in the browser's title bar.

6. Between the opening and closing <body> tags, type the company name, a descriptive statement or tag line, and an e-mail address (which you convert into an encrypted e-mail address in Step 10).

For example, type the following bold text, making sure to add the paragraph <p> and break
 tags where indicated:

```
<!doctype html><html>
<head>
<meta charset="utf-8">
<title>Luau-a-go-go</title>
</head>
<body>
<p>Luau-a-go-go</p>
<br>
<h1>Hawaiian Themed Catering</h1><br>
<p>Luauus * Special Events * Birthdays * Anniversaries * Celebrations<br>
Santa Monica, CA<br>
For further information contact<br> info@luauagogo.com</p>
</body>
</html>
```

The <body> tags hold the text and other content that appear in the browser window.

7. Choose File → Save to open the Save As dialog box.

You need to save the document to your new Placeholder folder.

8. In the File Name field, type index.html; in the Save In field, select the Placeholder folder; and in the Save as Type field, select the All Files option. Then click the Save button.

This document does not include any logo graphic yet, so you'll need to modify the code.

If you're using TextEdit, choose the Make Plain Text option from the Format menu. You also want to make sure that you include the .html file extension before saving so your document doesn't accidentally save as an .rtf or .txt file.

9. Delete the line of code that says `<p>Luau-a-go-go</p>` and replace it with the following line of code, which inserts the logo graphic onto the page:

```

```

Replace the text in italics if you're using your client's logo.

10. Convert the e-mail address into a working hyperlink using an e-mail encryption service (instead of the regular `mailto:` e-mail link, which is vulnerable to spambots), like the one found at www.dynamicdrive.com/emailriddler.

Your page code should now look something like this:

```
<!doctype html><html>
<head>
<meta charset="utf-8">
<title>Luau-a-go-go</title>
</head>
<body>

<br>
<h1>Hawaiian Themed Catering</h1><br>
<p>Luauus * Special Events * Birthdays * Anniversaries *Celebrations<br>
Santa Monica, CA<br>
For further information contact<br>
<script type="text/javascript">
/**/
/*****
* Encrypt Email script- Please keep notice intact
* Tool URL: http://www.dynamicdrive.com/emailriddler/
* *****/
&lt;!-- Encrypted version of: info [at] *****.* ** //--&gt;
var emailriddlerarray=[105,110,102,111,64,108,117,97,117,97,
103,111,103,111,46,99,111,109]
var encryptedemail_id62='' //variable to contain encrypted email
for (var i=0; i&lt;emailriddlerarray.length; i++)
encryptedemail_id62+=String.fromCharCode(emailriddlerarray[i])
document.write('&lt;a href="mailto: '+encryptedemail_id62+'"'
+encryptedemail_id62+'&lt;/a&gt;')
/]]&gt;*/
&lt;/script&gt;&lt;/p&gt;
&lt;/body&gt;
&lt;/html&gt;</pre>
</div>
<div data-bbox="143 732 229 804" data-label="Image">
<img alt="REMEMBER icon: a yellow circle with a black hand pointing up, with the word 'REMEMBER' written in a curve above it."/>
</div>
<div data-bbox="281 755 856 788" data-label="Text">
<p>For more on e-mail encryption, see the sidebar about protecting your e-mail addresses from spam in Book III, Chapter 1.</p>
</div>
<div data-bbox="250 796 883 813" data-label="List-Group">
<p>11. Save the changes to your file and preview the page in a browser window.</p>
</div>
<div data-bbox="281 820 871 872" data-label="Text">
<p>To preview the page in a browser, drag and drop the icon of your new <code>index.html</code> page into any open browser window. No Internet connection is required to preview the page locally.</p>
</div>
<div data-bbox="281 879 868 913" data-label="Text">
<p>The page looks okay, like the one shown in Figure 1-9, but it could definitely benefit from a little styling, as described in the next section.</p>
</div>
```

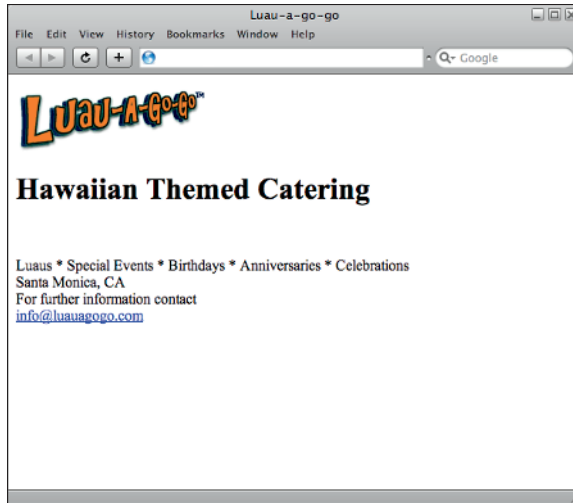


Figure 1-9: Before you add CSS styling, a placeholder page can often look bland with just graphics and text.

Styling the page

Follow these steps to add CSS styling to the placeholder page:

- 1. Above the closing `</head>` tag in your code, type the internal CSS markup you want to use on your page.**

See Book III, Chapter 3 for more on CSS.

If you're following along with the example, type the following markup:

```
<style type="text/css">
<!--
#luauagogo {
  height: 250px;
  width: 500px;
  margin-right: auto;
  margin-left: auto;
  margin-top: 15%;
  margin-bottom: auto;
  text-align: center;
  font-family: Georgia, "Times New Roman", Times, serif;
  font-size: 12px;
  color: #F60;
  padding-top: 20px;
  padding-right: 0px;
  padding-bottom: 0px;
  padding-left: 0px;
  background-color: #FFF;
  border: 1px dashed #0CC;
}
a:link {
  color: #0CC;
}
-->
</style>
```

This CSS markup contains instructions that tell the browser how to style the content. These styles center the content in the browser window, style the text in the Georgia font in 12px and an orange color with the hexadecimal color of #ff6600 to match the logo, add a blue dashed border around everything, and use blue as the link color to match the border.

Before this CSS markup can work, however, you must apply this ID style to the page's content.

- 2. Wrap a pair of DIV tags around the page content. Put the opening <div> tag directly after the opening <body> tag and the closing </div> tag directly above the closing </body> tag.**

DIV tags are container tags for layers that can be styled and positioned with CSS when you include the `id` or `class` attribute in the opening tag that matches the name of the style in the CSS markup.

- 3. Add the attribute `id= "uniqueid "` (for example, `id= "luauagogo"`) to the opening <div> tag.**

Replace `uniqueid` with the ID of your choice.

The body part of your code should now look like this:

```
<body>
<div id="luauagogo">
  
  <br>
  <h1>Hawaiian Themed Catering</h1><br>
  <p>Luauus * Special Events * Birthdays * Anniversaries *
    Celebrations<br>
    Santa Monica, CA<br>
    For further information contact<br>
    <!-- encrypted email address code here --></p>
</div>
</body>
```

- 4. Save the file again to save the changes you just made and preview the page in a browser window.**

Figure 1-10 shows what the page example should look like after applying the CSS ID style.



When creating your own placeholder page, feel free to generate as many graphics and other CSS styles as needed to make the page look exactly as you'd like it to. If you've already created a mock-up for the website, you may even want to use some of the same design features within the placeholder page. When the page is finished, you need to upload the page and any graphics or other supporting files to the host server so that the placeholder page can brand and identify the domain until the new site is ready to publish.

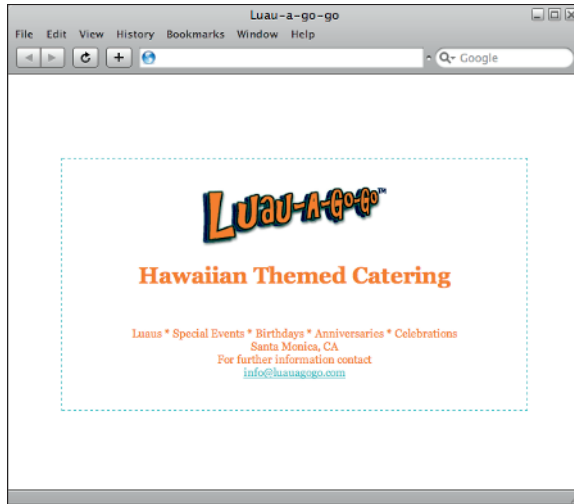


Figure 1-10: Use CSS to give your placeholder page more style and personality.

Uploading a placeholder page

When a custom placeholder page is created for a client, be sure you get your client's approval on the page before publishing it. This gives the client the opportunity to review your work and suggest any changes that may need to be made. After all, this page represents the client's company, and she will want to put her best face forward. If the client does recommend some changes, make any adjustments to the code as needed and then resubmit the page for approval. When the client grants approval, you can then upload the placeholder HTML file, the images folder that contains any graphics, and any other files needed to support the page to the host server.

To transfer the placeholder page and supporting files to the host server, you can use the host provider's control panel, a standalone File Transfer Protocol (FTP) program, an FTP program that is built into an HTML editor (Dreamweaver has one), or a browser that supports FTP. You discover more about FTP in Book V, Chapter 2, so for now, I discuss how to upload your files through a browser.

Before you begin, download and install the free cross-platform Firefox FireFTP add-on from <http://fireftp.mozdev.org>. If after clicking the Download button you see an alert that says "Firefox prevented the site from asking you to install the software on your computer," click the Allow button

and follow the onscreen prompts to install the add-on. When finished, restart Firefox. (If you have any difficulty using FireFTP, view the Help files at <http://fireftp.mozdev.org/help.html> or contact the host provider for further assistance.)

Follow these steps to transfer your local placeholder files to the remote host server using Firefox:

1. Get the FTP address, username, and password for the domain from the host provider or from your client.

This information is typically sent by e-mail to the person who signed up for the hosting account. The FTP address should be something like `ftp.domainname.com`.

2. With a live Internet connection, open Firefox and choose Tools → Web Developer → FireFTP to launch FireFTP.

The FireFTP tool opens in a separate browser tab. Notice that the screen is split into two sides. Your local files are listed on the left and the remote files from the server will be listed on the right after a connection to the server is established.

3. From the account menu at the top of the window, choose Create an Account to launch the Account Manager dialog box, shown in Figure 1-11.

This is where you enter the FTP access information to connect with the remote host server.

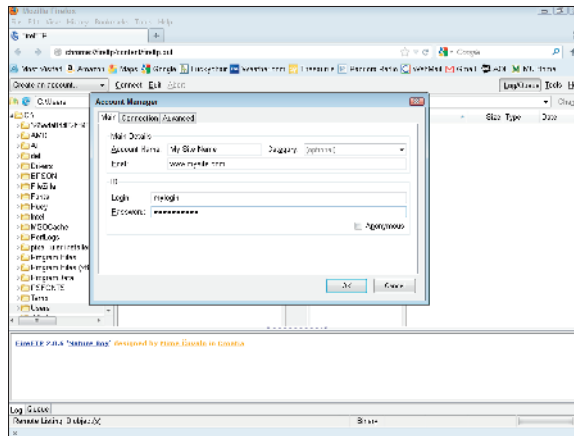


Figure 1-11: Enter the FTP username and password in the FireFTP Account Manager dialog box.

4. **In the Account Name and Host fields, enter a name for your site and the URL of the domain you want to access.**

The name is for your eyes only so it can be anything you like. The URL should be the exact domain name as in `www.domainname.com`.

5. **Enter the FTP Login (username) and Password provided by your host provider.**
6. **Click OK to close the dialog box and click the Connect button at the top of the window to connect to your site.**

After a connection is established, the browser window automatically refreshes and displays all the files on the host server for the domain. Those files will probably include a default placeholder home page named `index.html`, a CGI-BIN folder for processing scripts, and possibly a few other preinstalled files and folders that the host server requires to make the site accessible to visitors.



Some host providers place your site's files inside of a folder named `publichtml` or `www`. If you see one of those folders, double-click to open it. You should then see your host provider's default `index.html` file. If, for some reason, you'd like to save this file for archival purposes, select the file, right-click to open the context menu, and choose `Rename file`. You can rename it anything you like such as `_hostindex.html` or `zhostindex.html` so it will fall alphabetically at the top or bottom of the list of files.

7. **Drag and drop a copy of your Placeholder folder's `index.html` file along with a copy of the images folder from the Local files on the left of the screen into the Remote files listed on the right.**

Your browser begins copying the files to the remote host.

8. **If prompted to overwrite the `index.html` page, click the Yes button so that your new custom placeholder page will appear as the new default home page.**

When the files have fully been copied to the server, you are finished *ftp-ing* and can disconnect by clicking the `Disconnect` button.

9. **To test the success of the file transfer, type the URL of the domain into the browser's address bar, such as `http://www.mydomainname.com`.**

Your new placeholder page should appear. If you don't see it, try refreshing the browser window (usually by pressing F5) and/or clearing your browser's cache.



For simple directions on how to clear your browser's cache, visit www.bnl.gov/itd/webapps/browsercache.asp. If you still don't see your placeholder page, your server might use the `default.html` homepage naming convention. To test that theory, rename `index.html` to `default.html` and upload the file to the server. The new placeholder page should appear if your theory is correct.