

Verisign's 3 Tips for Building a Free Website

According to Verisign's 2013 small business survey, 71 percent of small businesses agree having a website has made it easier for customers to find their business¹. More and more business owners are turning to free website builders as an easy and economical way to bring their business online. Created for the non-technical user, these tools provide easy-to-use templates that let you point and click your way to a new website. Building a successful site using these tools is easier by following these three guidelines before you start:

- 1. Identify your website needs:** Websites can be as simple as a one-page flyer for your business, or as sophisticated as a multi-media marketing and sales hub. Determine your requirements before you begin building. Most free website builders are great options if you want to start simple with just a few pages, and offer varying levels of upgrade packages as you scale your website. Generally what is included in a free package versus a premium package will vary from provider to provider so knowing what you require now – and what you might need later – will help narrow down the list of potential website builders. Here's a list of basic features to consider, and which are generally included in a free package versus an upgraded package which has an associated cost.

Website Features	Typical Free Website Builder Package	Typical Upgraded Website Builder Package
# of pages in website	Usually 1 – 5 pages	More pages
Website storage (for storing web images)	Enough for a simple site	More storage
Templates & design	Yes	More templates & customization
Hosting	No	Yes
Tools such as online forms, blogs, slideshows	Sometimes	Yes
Links to your social media pages	Yes	Yes
Video and audio players	No	Yes
Website reporting	No	Yes
eCommerce/Shopping cart	No	Yes
Customer support	No	Yes
Search engine submission	No	Yes
Mobile device optimization	No	Yes

2. Pick a domain name: Your domain name will be your virtual address, and your online identity, on the web. Some website builders suggest skipping this step, offering to host your site on their domain. We recommend putting your website on your *own* domain name for the following reasons:

- Brands your business
- Gives you a consistent address on the web for customers to find you should you switch website providers
- Provides an easily remembered address to use for marketing
- Enables you to have a company-branded email through the domain name

Try to come up with a domain name that represents your business name and choose a domain extension that is highly recognized and credible. We recommend using a .com or .net since they are the standards for doing business online and have more than 15 years of operating with 100 percent uninterrupted availability. The key is to keep your domain name simple so it can be easily found on popular search engines like Google or Bing. If you need inspiration, many companies that sell domain names have [tools that suggest available names](#) based on a series of keywords. Don't overlook brainstorming names with family and friends; this method has helped many small business owners find their ideal domain name.

3. Select the right website builder: Research, research, research. We recommend taking time to compare two to three different website builders. This will allow you to choose a tool that meets your requirements from Step One while increasing the likelihood you end up with additional free website features. It's also helpful to understand what the premium packages are in case you scale your website with them in the future.

Remember not all tools are created equal, and selecting the right builder for your needs will save you time and frustration down the line. Many of the companies that sell domain names offer free website builders, or you can simply do an Internet search for 'free site builders' to find the top tools available now.

ABOUT VERISIGN

As the global leader in domain names, Verisign powers the invisible navigation that takes people to where they want to go on the Internet. For more than 15 years, Verisign has operated the infrastructure for a portfolio of top-level domains that today includes .com, .net, .tv, .cc, .name, .jobs, .edu and .gov, as well as two of the world's 13 Internet root servers. Verisign's product suite also includes Managed DNS Services, Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) Protection Services and iDefense Security Intelligence Services. To learn more about what it means to be Powered by Verisign, please visit VerisignInc.com.