

## How To Find The Perfect (or at least good enough) Web Host

Finding the perfect web hosting company is sort of like finding the perfect mate. We're all out there looking for something that our hearts tell us is there but our heads say doesn't exist.

If you've spent much time looking you've probably heard numerous times that there is no such thing as a "perfect" web host. They are, after all, just a combination of people and machines; both inherently fallible and both subject to the whims of fate and likely to fail us at a critical moment. But, if we accept the fact that web hosts are fallible just as people are, then I think many of the same criteria we use for finding the "perfect mate" can be used in our search of the "perfect web host".

So, where to start? Start with yourself and your needs; self evaluation is critical before starting any long-term relationship. What needs are you trying to fill? Do you want to start a personal blog? An e-commerce web site? A family web site? A forum to discuss urban landscaping?

The kind of site you have in mind may help to point you in the direction of a particular kind of host. Will your site require interactive page generation, will there be lots of traffic, or heavy database activity? You may need the extra power of dedicated servers. Are you creating a site to show off pictures of your quilting accomplishments? You will probably be happy with a shared server.

Is this your first time? Look for a host that gets good reviews for customer service. Don't be fooled by friendly and eager responses during those heady days leading up to a commitment. Be sure to test their support after you sign up but before you put a whole lot of effort into building your site. Pick various times of day and use all of their available forms of contact and make sure you get helpful answers in a reasonable amount of time. If you don't get support from them now when it's easy, you're not going to get it later when it's hard, either.

Try to have some idea what software you will need before you start searching for a host. Many hosts provide free and easy to use software packages for things like blogging and forums. If you are planning something more involved, make sure the host can support it. If you're a PHP type and your host is strictly ASP, you will never be compatible.

If this isn't your first time around the block, review your past relationships with web hosts. What did you like about them and what didn't you like? Were there features they offered you feel you can't do without? Or, areas they were lacking in that you would like to find elsewhere?

Make sure you understand your needs and your weaknesses before you start approaching web hosting providers. Look for one that is a close match to your situation. Take the time to do your research carefully before committing yourself and be prepared to walk away if things don't work out.

In the end, though it may be true that there is no such thing as a perfect web host, with careful planning and lots of research you can find one that meets your needs and makes for a happy long-term relationship.

### About the Author

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