Tools for Creating Your Website

Introduction

Creating a website for your business can seem daunting, especially if you don't have much technical experience. However, there are tools today that make the process easier, more accessible and more efficient. This guide will walk you through the essential tools you'll need to get your website online.

Domain names vs. web hosting: what's the difference?

Before diving into tools, it's important to understand two key concepts:

- **Domain name:** This is your website's address on the internet (it's like your street name and house number). For example, www.yourbusiness.com
- **Web hosting**: This is where your website lives (like the actual house itself). Hosting services store your website's files and make them accessible to visitors online.

Some platforms offer both domain registration and web hosting in one package, making setup easier to manage.

Domain name registrars

Your domain name is a unique and memorable domain name is vital for branding and making your business easy to find. The below services are examples which let you search for, register and manage your domain:

- **GoDaddy**: A popular choice with affordable rates, also offering hosting and website building tools.
- **Namecheap:** Known for budget-friendly registration and excellent customer support.
- **Google Domains:** Reliable, competitively price and integrates smoothly with Google tools.

Web hosting providers

If you're not using an all-in-one website builder, you'll need a separate hosting provider to store your website's files.

Sample web hosting providers:

- **Bluehost:** Recommended for WordPress sites, includes one-click installs and a free domain for the first year.
- **SiteGround:** Great for growing businesses with excellent support and fast load times.
- **HostGator**: Affordable, with easy-to-use website-building tools and scalable plans.
- **DreamHost:** Offers a variety of hosting types, including WordPress and VPS hosting.

Many hosting sites offer combined domain and website hosting, which makes it easier to manage.

Website builders vs. Content Management Systems (CMS)

When creating your website, you can choose between a Website Builder (easier, all-in-one) or a CMS (more flexible, but technical). Here's how they compare:

Sample website builders (for non-technical users):

- **Wix:** Beginner-friendly drag-and-drop interface with e-commerce and blogging features.
- **Squarespace:** Known for stylish templates, ideal for visually-driven businesses.
- **Weebly:** Simple to use, with free and paid plans and built-in e-commerce.
- **WordPress.com:** Great for simple blogs and websites; easy to set up but less flexible than self-hosted version of WordPress.

Sample Content Management Systems (for more control):

- **WordPress.org:** The self-hosted version, highly flexible with thousands of themes and plugins.
- **Joomla:** More advanced, suitable for complex websites.
- **Drupal:** Highly customisable, ideal for businesses needing advanced features.

Design tools

Creating eye-catching visuals is crucial. These tools help even non-designers produce professional-looking graphics:

- **Canva:** Drag-and-drop tool for logos, social media posts, banners and more.
- **Figma:** Advanced collaborative design tool for web and app interfaces.
- **Adobe Spark:** Simplified Adobe tool for creating graphics, videos and web pages.
- **Unsplash:** Free high-quality photographs, available for use with proper credit to the photographers.

E-commerce tools

If you're selling products or services, these platforms can help you set up an online store:

- **Shopify:** User-friendly e-commerce platform with inventory and payment processing.
- **WooCommerce:** A WordPress plugin that turns your site into a full online store.
- **BigCommerce:** Scalable platform with built-in inventory and sales tools.

SEO tools

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) helps potential customers find your website. These tools can improve your search rankings:

- **Yoast SEO:** A WordPress plugin for keyword optimisation and site structure.
- **SEMrush:** Comprehensive SEO tool for tracking rankings and competitor analysis.
- **Google Search Console:** Free Google tool to monitor and optimise site performance.

Analytics tools

Tracking how visitors interact with your site is key for growth. Use these tools to make data-driven decisions:

- **Google Analytics:** Free tool for tracking website traffic and user behaviour.
- **Hotjar:** Provides heatmaps and session recordings to improve user experience.

- **Matomo:** Privacy-focused alternative for in-depth performance data.

Security tools

Protecting your website and your customers is essential; these tools enhance site security:

- **SSL Certificates:** Encrypt data for secure connections; often included with hosting plans.
- **Sucuri:** Comprehensive platform for malware removal, firewall protection and monitoring.
- **Wordfence:** Popular WordPress plugin for firewall and malware scanning.

Email marketing tools

Building an email list is one of the most effective ways to engage your audience. A mailing list is also essential to have direct contact with your customers and potential customers, rather than relying on another platform, which you don't have control over (such as a social media platform).
These tools manage mailing lists and campaigns:

- **MailerLite**: Simple platform with automation, templates and analytics.
- **EcoSend**: Affordable and environmentally-conscious platform with automation, templates and analytics.
- **Brevo:** Simple platform with automation, templates and analytics.
- **Constant Contact:** Robust features with strong customer support.
- **ConvertKit:** Simple, automation-focused tool for creators and entrepreneurs.

For more guidance on email marketing, see our resource in our E-library here.

Final thoughts

Setting up a website might seem overwhelming, but breaking it down into manageable steps and using the right tools make the process much easier. Start with securing your domain name, choose a reliable hosting provider, and then decide between a website builder or CMS depending on your needs. From there, design your site, optimise it for SEO, set up e-commerce if needed and track your performance with analytics tools.

Your website is a reflection of your business—make it shine!