

Disadvantages of Free Web Hosting

If you get what you pay for, anything free must not be worth much. This is as true for free Web hosting services as any other commodity. A free Web host may or may not provide the required level of reliability. Therefore extreme caution must be taken when choosing a free Web host.

There are several restrictions likely to appear. These include:

1. Advertisements, potentially those of competing Web sites, may be placed upon any site they host. This is a common source of revenue for a free host. These advertisements prove to be an irritant for many customers who may not like their browsing experience to be affected by these ads.
2. There may be little to no support with a free hosting plan. Sometimes only a FAQ page is offered as support. There may be no chance for change or correction of problems even when a complaint is filed.
3. The host may suffer frequent server breakdowns. There may be insufficient bandwidth to support the Web site's needs. There may be no scalability. There may be thousands of other Web sites competing for the same server resources. This "death of a thousand paper cuts" result in hosts that look good at first glance, but fail miserably in practice.
4. Few free Web hosts offer significant storage space or even restrict the type of files allowed for use. For example, files typically that use a lot of bandwidth (like MP3 files) may not be allowed. This can cripple the utility of many Web sites.
5. Free Web hosts may also require the use of a sub-domain, which makes the ID much longer than it would have been if the Web site used its own domain name. The vast increase in URL length for the site can result in many potential customers forgetting, misspelling, or otherwise failing to reach the site quickly and efficiently.

These are not insignificant disadvantages. The Internet is a very competitive and unforgiving environment. Visitors can be very fickle and are unlikely to return to a Web site that suffers from frequent technical problems, is cluttered with obtrusive banner advertisements, or which otherwise encumbers their navigation. Because the Internet makes most tasks very easy, this ease of use is expected. Complications are typically greeted with simple avoidance, as there is almost certainly an easier way to accomplish any given task.

Generally speaking, a free host should be avoided if the desire is to set up a business Web site. The resultant loss in terms of customers lost can be much higher than the actual gain to be had through Web presence. A sub-standard site is often the sign of a sub-standard business.

Free Web hosts are, however, a safe choice if the Web site is an information Web site or a personal Web site. Even then the goal should be for this to be a limited period. For a Web site to grow, money will have to be invested eventually.