Website Language –
Your Reference Guide

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Webbiedooo.com

What's a domain?

A domain is the name of your website. It's the URL, or the web address. This website is built on the domain webbiedooo.com.

I use a company called [Namecheap](#) to register my domains.

Once you've registered your domain you need to 'point the DNS' which means telling your domain registrar (such as Namecheap) where your website is hosted.

What's hosting?

Hosting is where your website is stored. You can think about it in terms of books. The domain is like the name of your book, the website is the book itself, and the hosting is the bookshelf where it sits.

It's just a computer actually, at the end of the day. Your website is stored on someone else's computer.

There are soooo many different hosting companies and each one offers a number of plans. It's one of the biggest questions in the industry – "which hosting plan should I use?" and I actually have a project going where I'm testing 11 hosting plans against each other. The thing is, hosting companies are NOT all created equal – you can put the exact same website onto two different hosting plans and one will load much faster than another. Speed is really important. So I can't just say, "Oh, use such and such a host." It depends on things like where you are, how much you can afford, how many websites you want to build and how many visitors you're likely to receive. You can check out that project at [The Hosting Experiment](#).

Managed hosting is where the hosting company takes care of some things for you. They're all different, but things that are included might be updates, backups, security checks, malware scans and things like that.

Self-hosted is a term used to distinguish from situations where the hosting is included as part of the website itself. When you're self-hosted it means your website is on a hosting plan of your choice and you (or your tech person) can log in and manage it yourself.

What's WordPress?

WordPress is the program we use to build your website, in the same way that you might use Word to write a letter or Excel to work with numbers.

WordPress is the most popular website management system in the world.

It's often called a CMS, which means content management system.

What's a theme?

A theme is a bit like a set of building plans. It's a starting point for your website, so you can choose a theme that already includes a lot of the things you need rather than starting completely from scratch. I had a LOT of trouble choosing themes when I first started building websites. I discovered that some of them are coded really badly which makes it impossible to build a good website.

Then I found the [Divi](#) theme, which is now the most popular theme in the world and for good reason. It's a drag and drop builder that's versatile and intuitive. I use it in all my workshops and it's included in the starter site that my students receive.

What's a plugin?

A plugin is like an extra feature you can use in your website. Not everybody needs the same things, just like in real life one family has a rice cooker while another has a massage chair. It can be tempting to use hundreds of plugins, but remember that every plugin will slow your site down a little, so you really should only use what you absolutely need.

What's SEO?

SEO stands for search engine optimisation. It's the art of making sure your website is found by Google so it's really important and there's a lot to it. One of the instructors in our upcoming course is an SEO specialist and I find it really interesting hearing her talking about keywords cannibalising each other.

What's a cpanel?

A cpanel is the control panel for your hosting account. It's one of those things that can seem a bit scary but once you log in it can be quite interesting to look around. I spend a lot of time in cpanels. It's the website equivalent of opening the hood of your car. Sometimes hosting companies don't offer cpanel and that can be really frustrating because you have to figure out their special way of doing whatever it is you're trying to do.

One of the really handy things about cpanel is the File Manager, which looks a lot like the Windows Explorer on your computer. That can be quite a handy alternative to FTP.

What's FTP?

FTP stands for File Transfer Protocol. It's a good way of moving things from your computer to your website or vice versa but sometimes it can be tricky to connect and that causes frustration and lost time. I can't remember the last time I used FTP – I achieve everything I need to do using the File Manager in cpanel.

What's CSS and HTML?

CSS means cascading style sheet and is used to change how a website looks and behaves. It's a whole language that you can learn if you want to but none of my workshop students have ever needed to do that. If you want something specific to happen on your website that's not available as a standard option you're better off to ask someone else to write the css for you.

Otherwise it would be like learning Russian because you had a Russian architect and you wanted to ask him (in Russian) to change the shape of your kitchen benches a little. Everything else about his design is perfect. Why would you learn an entire language when you could just use the translator sitting in your front room?

HTML means hypertext markup language and is actually the thing that controls your whole website. But that's about as much as you need to know about it. It's a bit like how you know your car has doors and windows. It is what it is.

Do I have to worry about being hacked?

Ooh yeah. You're best off to assume that at some point you will be hacked, and be prepared for that rather than adopting a 'head in the sand' approach.

Make sure you have offsite backups and that your hosting and domain are kept separate. If your host goes down you need to be able to quickly point your DNS somewhere else and get your website up on new hosting.

There are lots of things you can do to help though. Make sure your password is ridiculously strong. That's the most important tactic yet heaps of people don't do it.

Do I have to backup my website?

Yes – see above.

There are various plugins available for backing up and there are some good tutorials on YouTube showing you how to backup and restore your website. The most important step is to take the backup and download it to your computer. Then if you ever need to restore it you can call on help – and you'll be one of a very small minority who ever bothered to take this step.

If you don't have a backup and your website goes down, there's nothing you can do about it.

It's not just hacking you need to worry about either. This year one of our hosts suffered two power surges, which fried databases and deleted websites. You can't foresee that kind of thing.

Be ready for it.