**Website Hosting Services**

## Learner Outcomes

At the completion of this exercise, you will:

* Be able to answer the question "How do websites get on the Web?"
* Be able to help a friend, family member, or client shop for a web service provider.

## How Websites get on the Web

Before we answer the question of how websites get on the World Wide Web, let's take a step back and look at how the Web works:

* First, it's important to understand that the Internet is not the Web. Sometimes people use the terms interchangeably, but they're different. The Internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks. A variety of services are provided over the Internet. The Web is one of them, but there are others too, such as email, file sharing, and voice over IP.
* Web resources are stored on, and transmitted by, web servers, computers running software specifically designed for this purpose.
* The address of a resource on a web server is its Uniform Resource Locator (URL) (for example, the URL for the current file is http://www.washington.edu/accessit/webd2/student/unit7/module2/lesson1.html).
* A web client or user agent is the tool an individual uses to access content on the Web. Common examples are web browsers, media players, and web-enabled mobile apps. When a user enters a URL into their browser or other web client, that client looks up the URL, and sends a request to the web server hosting that resource. The web server checks to be sure the resource exists and confirms that the client has permission to access it. If all is well, the server delivers the requested resource to the client, and the client renders the resource for the user.

To get your website on the Web, you need a web server. You could build your own. There are many tutorials online that explain how to do that, and [the world's most popular web server software](http://news.netcraft.com/archives/2012/01/03/january-2012-web-server-survey.html) http://news.netcraft.com/archives/2012/01/03/january-2012-web-server-survey.html is free ([Apache HTTP Server](http://httpd.apache.org/)). <http://httpd.apache.org/>

However, managing a web server is a serious undertaking, requiring technical skills, time, and dedication. For individuals and organizations who don't have adequate technical skills or time to manage their own web server, web hosting services do this for a fee. They typically have various options available, with prices varying depending on the amount of storage space, amount of monthly bandwidth, and other features. Many Internet service providers also provide free web hosting services to their clients.

Another player in the web hosting market is Amazon.com, which launched [Amazon Web Services](http://aws.amazon.com/what-is-aws/) <http://aws.amazon.com/what-is-aws/> in 2006 to allow the general public to store content on its vast global network of data centers, which otherwise were using only about 10% of their capacity at any one time. Cost to the user is very low. In fact many of their services are free for the first 5GB of data storage and 15GB of bandwidth. Costs scale upwards from there based on usage.

## Activities

Imagine you have a small local not-for-profit organization as a client. You're designing and developing their website, and they'd like you to help them find a web service provider. Here are their criteria:

1. **Affordable**. They don't have a large budget to spend on web hosting, but at the same time they're not willing to sacrifice quality.
2. **Reliable** Their clients depend on their site being up and running 24/7. They need a provider with a proven track-record of reliable service with minimal down-time.
3. **Good customer service** They hope they will have minimal need to contact customer service, but when the need arises, they expect to receive a quick, courteous response. They don't understand web jargon, and prefer working with a web service provider who is capable of communicating in an easy-to-understand non-technical manner.
4. **Technical requirements** In addition to website hosting, they will need a database for storing information about their clients, and in the future they might want to stream videos on their site. Therefore they need a web hosting provider who provides these services.

**Assignment**

To find a web service provider for your client, follow these steps:

1. Go to [webhostinggeeks.com](http://webhostinggeeks.com/)

https://webhostinggeeks.com/ and review their list of Top 10 Web Hosting providers. Go to the home pages of each of the top 10 companies to evaluate the services they provide and whether you think they would be a good fit for your client.

1. Back on the Top 10 list, follow the links to read a few of the customer reviews for each provider.
2. Take notes as you explore, using your client's criteria as a rubric.
3. Select three providers that you would recommend to your client, and rank them from 1 to 3. Now select three that you would *not* recommend. Be prepared to defend your choices.
4. Now consider the services offered by [Amazon Web Services](http://aws.amazon.com/) (AWS) <http://aws.amazon.com/what-is-aws/> , and consider whether you would recommend AWS instead of your other top three choices. Whether you like or don't like AWS, be prepared to defend that choice.