

Different Types of Web Hosting (hostingfacts.com)



John Stevens — Jun 14, 2018



Do you need a place to house your website but are confused by the different types of web hosting? Then you have come to the right place.

Finding the right web host for yourself is not easy. There are lots of factors to take into account. Even if you have gone through our list of [best web hosting](#), you might still be stuck with some question marks as to which kind of website is the right one for you.

To help you with that, this post will give you a primer on what is web hosting and what kinds of web hosting are available. After that, we will discuss the different types of web hosting in detail including how they work, pros and cons and who they are best suited for.



Contents

First the Basics – What is Web Hosting Exactly?.....	2
What Different Types of Web Hosting Exist?.....	2
1. Shared Hosting – Best for Beginners	3
Pros	3
Cons	3
Who is It for?	4
2. VPS Hosting – Next-level Shared Hosting.....	4
Pros	4
Cons	5
Who is It for?	5
3. Dedicated Hosting – For the Big Leagues.....	5
Pros	5
Cons	5
Who is It for?	6
4. Cloud Hosting – The Future of Web Hosting.....	6
Pros	6
Cons	7
Who is It for?	7
Which of the Different Types of Web Hosting is for You?.....	7

First the Basics – What is Web Hosting Exactly?

First, let's clear up what web hosting even is.

It's actually quite simple. When you view a website in a browser, you can do so because the browser has downloaded a number of files filled with code and converted the markup into something you can actually see.

Just like on your computer, these files were stored somewhere so you could access them. However, instead of your hard drive, they were on another computer, a so-called server.

Servers are more powerful than your laptop (so they can manage many people accessing the website at the same time), however, it is made up of the same things as a CPU, memory and other components. It even has an operating system, usually Linux based.

The owner of the server rents it out to the person owning the website you are viewing and also provides some other services like server management, support, malware scanning, backups and so on. The process of providing this infrastructure for others is called web hosting. The person who does it is called a hosting provider.

All clear so far? Cool, then let's dive into more details.

What Different Types of Web Hosting Exist?

Web hosting is more than one thing. First of all, most hosts offer multiple service packages which may be wildly different in terms of price and what you get for it.

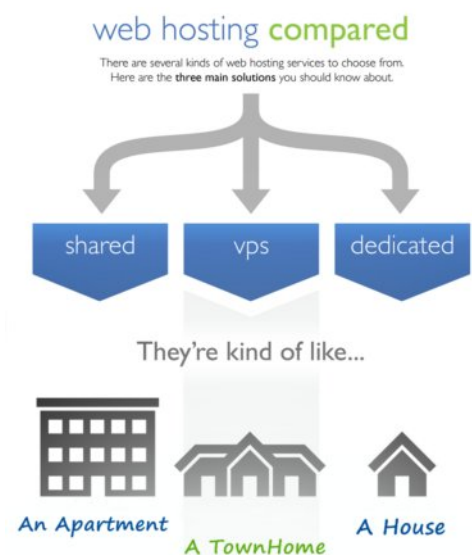
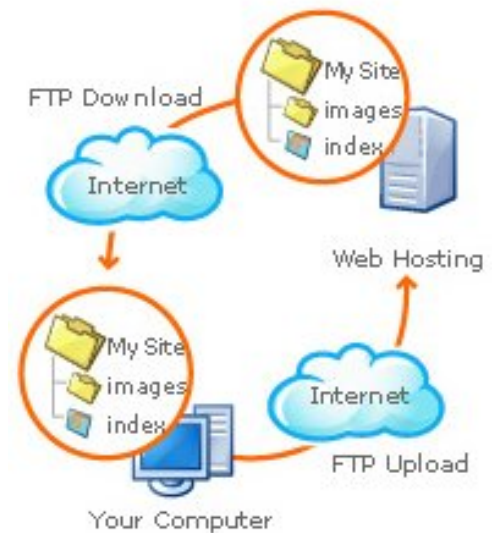
However, one of the first and most basic decisions you have to make is to decide for one the different types of hosting.

While there are different ways to distinguish web hosting offers (features, level of management), the most basic way is to look at the technology used for the server.

This makes sense because, as you will see below, that part also determines a lot of other factors like performance, security, scalability and level of effort on your side.

Because this makes such a difference, instead of looking at companies and prices first, you are better off focusing first on figuring out which of the different types of web hosting is the right kind for you. After that, you can still look at what's available.

In the following we will closely examine four of the most common types of hosting: shared, VPS, dedicated and cloud hosting. So that you know how to make the decision for yourself.



1. Shared Hosting – Best for Beginners

Shared hosting is exactly what it sounds like. With a shared hosting account, your site is located on the same server as a bunch of other websites.

How many are a bunch? That really depends on your setup and hosting provider. However, it's not uncommon for a site to room with hundreds and even thousands of others.

Pros

The biggest advantage of this option is that you also share the cost of server with many people. If the hosting provider can put several hundred or thousand clients all on one sever with many people. If the hosting provider can put several hundred or thousand clients all on one server, it allows them to spread the operating cost among many parties.

That's also why shared hosting is the most affordable. You can have it for [as cheap as \\$2/month](#) with the average cost in the \$5-\$10/month range. Great for people with limited funds and those just starting out.

Aside from that, with a shared hosting account you are usually completely taken care of in terms of setup. There is very little to configure so you can concentrate completely on building your website.

Cons

Sharing the server with many parties, however, is also the biggest downside of this arrangement. As mentioned, a server is a computer with resources like hard drive space, CPU speed and RAM.

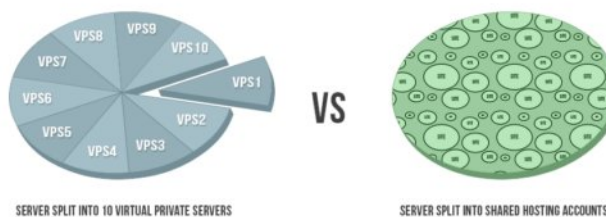
These resources are finite. Just like your laptop slows down when you run too many programs at once, so do these machines when they have too much to do.

Since all websites on a shared host put demand on the server's resources, you can run into problems if one of them is hogging all the processing power through increased traffic or faulty code. This leaves everyone else to compete for the rest, leading to downtime (meaning your website is not reachable) or reduced loading speed.

It's a phenomenon called the "bad neighbor effect" and one of the main reasons shared hosting is the most problematic of the different types of web hosting. While many hosts actively try to avoid this scenario, it's a risk you take with this particular setup. After all, if each client is paying \$5/month, is it really worth spending hours of support on a single customer? Not really.



VPS VS SHARED HOSTING



Who is It for?

So, is shared hosting ever a good idea? Yes! It can be great for housing sites that don't get a lot of traffic (yet), static brochure sites, development and test sites, personal sites or other websites where uptime is not a huge bother.

Shared hosting is also a great option if you are on a very tight budget. It allows businesses to create a web presence even if they are not in the best position to do so. As such shared hosting is an extremely important tool for equality on the web.

Some of the most well-known hosts in this segment are [Bluehost](#), [Siteground](#), and [InMotion Hosting](#).

Recommended further reading: [The 8 Best Cheap Web Hosting Providers](#)

2. VPS Hosting – Next-level Shared Hosting

VPS stands for Virtual Private Server. It is the most well-balanced among the different types of web hosting. A VPS server is still a shared environment, but the way it is set up is very dissimilar.

While all sites on VPS share one physical server, it houses multiple, separate virtual machines. This makes it sort of a middle ground between shared hosting and getting your own dedicated server.



Pros

VPS is a lot more reliable and stable than shared hosting.

First of all is usually limited to 10-20 websites per server. This decreases the demand on the server in itself.

However, the real improvement is that all resources are split evenly, and no website is allowed to exceed its lot. Once you hit the limit of what is assigned to you, your site may go down, but the others will remain stable.

This is achieved via virtual machines that create a separation within the server. This simple addition mitigates most of the bad neighbor effect.

Another big benefit of VPS servers is that they provide more flexibility and allow you to customize your environment. On shared hosts this isn't possible because it would change everyone else's setup as well. Since your account is contained within a virtual machine you can make changes without affecting others.

Lastly, VPS is scalable. Since you are running a virtual machine which takes some percentage of the resources available on the server, increasing what is available to you is no problem at all. This is a great comfort to business owners who expect their sites to grow and flourish.

Cons

There aren't too many downsides for this type of hosting. The biggest thing is, of course, that it costs more than your lower-tier solutions. So, if you are on a tight budget, you need to find a solution that works for you monetarily.

However, while the average VPS costs around \$50/month (and can scale all the way up to \$200) it is possible to get VPS from around \$20/month. Plus, once you hit the higher echelons of this type of web hosting, you are probably making enough money to easily cover the costs.

A second thing about [VPS hosting](#) is that with more configuration power also comes more responsibility. If you don't know what you are doing, it's possible to remove crucial files or software without knowing it. So, to really take advantage of it, you need to get educated.

Who is It for?

If you have the money, I recommend you update to [VPS as soon as possible](#). While it's more expensive, even the lowest tier is usually a lot better than any shared hosting solution.

At the latest when you start getting decent amounts of traffic should you make the move. However, be sure to check the details of what you are getting (setup fees, CPU power, memory, storage space, bandwidth) so you know it's what you need.

Some well-known and respected VPS solutions are offered by [inMotion Hosting](#) and [Dreamhost](#).

3. Dedicated Hosting – For the Big Leagues

As the name already suggests, dedicated hosting simply means that: you have a server all for yourself. This provides a host of benefits but also comes with quite a few downsides.

Pros

First of all one of the main advantages of dedicated hosting is that it negates all bad neighbor issues simply because there are none. No other website can steal your resources, pose a security risk or cause other issues. This distinguishes it from the different types of web hosting we have discussed before. In addition, since you get a computer all on your own, many companies allow you to customize it extensively. You may be able to choose the OS, the amount and type of memory and other hardware elements. This gives you a lot of flexibility.

Cons

Of course, this kind of setup comes with a cost. Renting a dedicated server isn't cheap. Prices start at \$60/month and go all the way up to \$350+/month. However, at the point that your business needs a dedicated server, you should probably be able to shoulder the costs.

In addition to that, you actually need to know quite a bit about computers and server technology. While there are managed dedicated hosting-solutions you'll still need to do a lot on your own.



On the extreme side of things, you could get a completely unmanaged service where you would need to install the OS yourself, let alone all the tools needed to run a web server, provide security scanning, malware removal and so on. Alternatively, you can also hire a server admin. However, that brings additional costs with it.

Also, with a dedicated server you are putting all your eggs in one basket. If its hardware fails, your site is out. In other arrangements, other modules can take over in case of failure or be replaced automatically. [With dedicated servers](#), especially if you are monitoring them yourself, this could take longer.

Who is It for?

Does anyone ever need dedicated hosting? That's debatable. In today's world with cloud VPS catching on, the need for having your own server is declining. Sure, it can take a lot more hits than a traditional VPS, however, in terms of scalability it's nowhere near anything a cloud-based system could provide (more on that below).

Aside from that, a high-end VPS can be a lot cheaper than a low-end dedicated server and also a lot more powerful. Don't be fooled into thinking that dedicated is a more advanced option just because you are the only person on the server. Look at the resources available to you instead, that's what really matters.

So, among the different types of web hosting discussed here, this one is the least likely for you to need. The only two times I would say you definitely should go for a dedicated server is if you have highly specialized needs in terms of hardware or you want a lot more control over your data's privacy than anywhere else.

Some of the best dedicated hosts are: [LiquidWeb](#), [GreenGeeks](#) and [PickaWeb](#).

4. Cloud Hosting – The Future of Web Hosting

Cloud hosting is essentially the same as VPS hosting in that you also have your site on a virtual machine.

However, instead of one physical server, your site is part of a whole network of computers from which it can pull all the power it needs dynamically.

This type of setup is becoming more commonplace. Some companies don't even call their service VPS anymore, they say Cloud or Cloud VPS.

Pros

One of the biggest advantages of cloud hosting is scalability. A traditional VPS can be scaled, but only to a certain point. It's limited by the capacity of the hardware it is on. On a server with 32GB of RAM, your site will never be able to access 64GB if needed.

This is not the case for a cloud-based system. Instead of partitioning one computer into several virtual machines, it combines several computers into a powerful virtual server that can then



provide its resources on a need basis. However much your site requires, that's how much it can get.

In addition to that, you are also only billed for the resources you eventually end up using. This can be a better solution than paying a fixed price for a dedicated server of which you never use the whole capacity.

This type of setup is also good for security reasons, particularly DDoS attacks. In those types of hacks, the server is overwhelmed by a myriad of parallel requests until it crashes. In a cloud network, you can spread those requests among many different computers and mitigate their effect much better than on any single-server system.

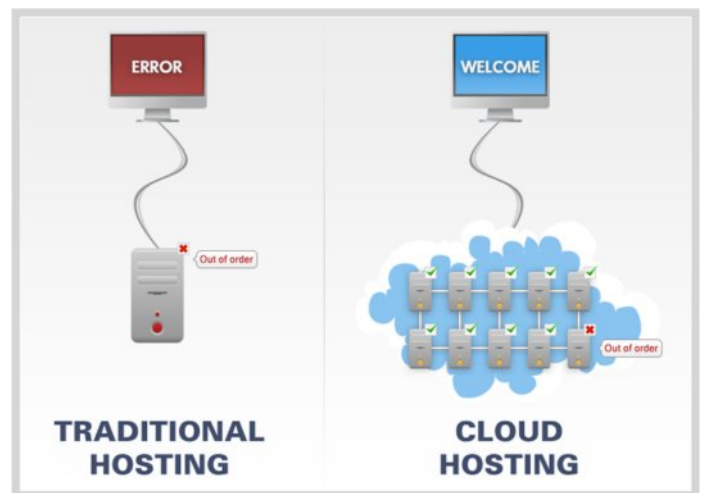
Cons

The main downside of cloud hosting is that costs are not always fully predictable. Many cloud hosting providers work with a mix of fixed pricing and pay-as-you-go fees. In case you experience traffic-spikes this can increase your cost considerably. While that usually also means you are earning better and can therefore take the costs, it is something to keep in mind.

Who is It for?

Cloud systems are great if you want to be able to scale your website a lot further than traditional systems. In the future, it will likely replace shared and dedicated options as technology becomes more advanced.

That said, at this point it doesn't make a huge difference whether you look for VPS or cloud hosting. Many companies are replacing their regular system with cloud-based VPS anyway simply because of the benefits it offers to them as well. So, even if you go for simple VPS, you might be using cloud hosting without knowing.



Some well-known hosts that provide cloud hosting are [Dreamhost](#), [Google Cloud Platform](#), [Amazon Web Services](#) and [Linode](#).

Which of the Different Types of Web Hosting is for You?

Choosing a hosting package can be pretty difficult and takes a lot of consideration. However, the first step is understanding the different types of hosting available to you. Hopefully this article has given you the background to do that.

If you're just starting out (such as when building your first blog/site), it's totally fine to go with shared hosting. It's always possible to transfer to a more powerful setup later. Only if you already know that your site has needs that shared hosting cannot fulfill should you look into other options from the get-go.

Once you have taken a decision, it makes sense to look at a bunch of companies. I recommend checking [our top-rated hosts](#) to find the best ones. Look at what's on offer and compare the RAM, disk space, [CDN](#) usage, bandwidth and other quantifiable resources. Then take a look at any additional features you need.

At the end of the process you should have 2-3 favorites at which point it will boil down to personal preference. Perhaps a short talk with support – to gauge their helpfulness – will go a long way.

Need further reading on web hosting? Read this handy [explanation from WebsiteSetup.org](#). Also, you might want to look into things like [where to register domain name](#) and options for [website builder](#) to create your site.