

# Tips on choosing the right Web Host and Hosting Plan

by Duty Free Hosting

## Tips for choosing the right web host and hosting plan.

This eBook is designed to help you understand the terminology and choices you may be faced with when searching for web hosting, and to assist you in making a more informed choice.

There are literally thousands of web hosts on the net today competing to host your website[s].

So how do you find the host that's right for you?

There are also many types of hosting plans like Shared Hosting, VPS [Virtual Private Servers], Semi Dedicated and Dedicated servers.

So how do you find the right hosting plan for you?

Considering you may be with your host for many years it is a good idea to spend a little time researching and searching for the one which meets your needs the best.

Above all, we sincerely wish you every success with your web hosting, no matter which you choose.

**DISCLOSURE:** This eBook is composed & sponsored by Duty Free Hosting. However, it contains generic information [relevant to any host](#).

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### Free Web Hosting

We should address this issue first, because many search for free hosting not realising the possible ramifications.

These MAY include:

- Hidden 'Adware' 'Spy' software
- Forced advertising on your pages
- Trojans, viruses and viral marketing
- Unsatisfactory server down times
- Complicated control panels
- Limited, or no support
- Not being able to use your own domain name [URL]
- No full domain server management
- No full email management
- No bonus software
- No free website builder
- No ability to host 'multi' web sites from the one control panel
- No choice of servers
- No free marketing tools
- No free scripts like Wordpress, Joomla, Mambo & more
- No easy '1 click' program installation
- No free text & video tutorials

If reliable paid web hosting was expensive, you could be forgiven for searching out free

hosting options. But these days you can buy incredible web hosting plans for just a few dollars per month that will avoid all the above potential issues.

So we recommend you check out what paid hosting is available at very little cost before you jump into a free option - you will be pleasantly surprised to what is available for very little cost.

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### Windows vs Linux Servers

There are two types of servers available to you – Windows and Non-windows servers like Linux for example, one of the most common non-windows servers.

While some may insist one is better than the other, the bottom line is that both are quite able to host your website[s]. Both can have easy to use control panels and host the same features.

In fact, you may not even notice any difference when managing them.

Generally, Linux servers are more abundant and thus offer cheaper hosting plans. Some even suggest they are more secure.

Because of their lower price and abundance many users buy a shared Linux hosting plan to meet their entire web hosting needs.

Note: Websites that use .asp scripting will require a Windows server to host them as .asp scripting. Non-windows servers perform the same tasks via .php, preferred by many web designers and developers. So you may need to enquire from your web designer what scripting is being used for your website.

Just because you may run a PC with a Windows operating system, you do NOT have to host your web site on a Windows server]

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### Hosting Plans

#### 1/ Shared Hosting

**Note:** *Shared Hosting is normally all that most users require. The choice of plans available offer everything the average user will require and more.*

The alternatives to shared hosting include VPS, Semi Dedicated and Dedicated servers which as the name suggests gives you either less websites hosted with yours or a server completely reserved for your website. This however, this can be very costly and really only needed for specific high-end websites with very high data storage, transfer rates etc.

They will also require various levels of management skills in order to administer these servers. Therefore unless you are technically advanced and have a specific need for special hosting we suggest you skip the following info on VPS, Semi and Dedicated Servers.

#### 2/ VPS [Virtual Private Servers]

Virtual Private Servers have recently been gaining huge popularity among small businesses and web developers who need the flexibility and stability of a dedicated server but are not yet ready to get their own dedicated server. Here are a few reasons why you should take advantage of a Virtual Private Server, if your current shared hosting account does not fit your growing online requirements anymore:

**Complete Isolation from other VPS users**

Although it shares one physical server with other VPS's, each VPS operates exactly like an independent stand-alone server, thus being insulated from the actions and abuses of other users on the same physical server.

**Combines the best characteristics of shared and dedicated hosting**

VPS combine the affordability and simplicity of using a shared account with the reliability and independence offered by a dedicated server. Thus VPS offer a tremendous amount of flexibility at a very reasonable cost.

**Much cheaper than a dedicated hosting solution**

VPS is much cheaper than a dedicated server, but has many of the features typical of a dedicated server such as a dedicated web server and mail server, as well as dedicated storage, memory, CPU and network bandwidth.

**A multi-purpose dedicated solution**

You can use a Virtual Private Server for almost all dedicated server purposes such as off-site data storage, web application hosting, application development, virtual desktops etc. You can also set up a VPS for running your own web hosting and e-mail services.

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**Unique partitioning technology**

The uniqueness of the VPS technology lies in the possibility for a web server to be divided into separate independent mini-servers, where each user will be completely isolated from the other users in terms of software.

**Ability to run your own Operating System**

Each Virtual Private Server can run its own full-fledged operating system, meaning that you can install almost any software that runs on the respective OS and make any configuration change according to your current demands.

**Full Administration Control**

Each Virtual Private Server can be independently rebooted, which means that you will be able to personally restart your VPS as if you were an administrator in the data centre.

**Monitoring Capabilities**

A VPS allows you to monitor resource utilization for CPU, system, disk space and disk inodes. You will be able to view detailed traffic statistics and even format and reload your own VPS if needed.

**You actually get more resources than pay for**

The VPS technology allows only several users to actively use the available resources even when the VPS system capacity is full, which means that each account receives the full server processing power whenever the need arises.

**3/ Semi Dedicated**

A semi-dedicated server is an excellent solution for medium traffic web sites, including forums and Content Management Systems (CMS), which require more server resources such as disk space, server processing power (CPU) and RAM memory for their trouble-free functioning and online growth.

### **Limited number of users per server**

Switching to a semi-dedicated server sets you free from the limitations typical of shared hosting. This may sound like a VPS solution, but actually there is a big difference here, since you share a server with a limited number of users, which suggests more resources per user and the same administrative support that you would get on a dedicated server.

### **Dedicated Resources**

On a semi-dedicated server you share one server with a maximum number of others, meaning that you actually use a big part of the resources. Having a large portion of a dedicated server's capacity at your disposal, you can use much greater amount of CPU, RAM and all other resources crucial to the smooth functioning and growth of your website.

### **Better Performance**

The increased amount of server resources that you receive on a semi-dedicated server have direct impact on the load speed, the database access times, the number of applications you can run and much more.

### **Total Control**

With a semi-dedicated server you can perform all management tasks related to your web sites through a simple and user-friendly interface, thus having total control over your web presence in terms of maintenance and monitoring

### **Guaranteed Security**

With a large portion of the server resources available for you to use, you will not be encountering slow resolution speeds, so you can always feel secure about the smooth operation of your web sites. Furthermore, as a semi-dedicated user you will be protected against any resource abuses, that shared and VPS hosting servers are usually subject to.

## **4/ Dedicated**

Dedicated servers provide you with unrestricted hosting resources for total independence in building and managing your online presence.

You will be a Webmaster of your own server machine offering a robust hardware configuration, powerful server characteristics and stable network parameters.

Any of the server setups comes with it's own Operating System installation of your choice.

Due to the ensured root or administrator access to the server, you will be able to install and configure any software that you need. If you prefer a Control Panel interface for managing your server, this is often provided as an option.

To manage your own dedicated server, you will need to possess advanced administration skills or get assistance from a qualified server administrator.

You could also consider taking advantage of a host's optional backup administration, software installation and troubleshooting services.

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### **Server Location**

You can sign up with a web host anywhere in the world. Quite often your chosen host does not offer you the server location you prefer.

Duty Free Hosting offers you the choice when placing your order to host of any of our server spread across the globe. 4 Data Centres in 3 Continents covering both hemispheres.

You can choose to host your sites on our Australian, European, UK and USA servers.

Although there is often debate on the net as to whether your website should be hosted within the country you are in and therefore the market you are in, there is no firm evidence to suggest where you host your website has any adverse effect on its performance.

The domain name extension probably has more to do with this than where you host your site.

For example, if you are in Australia, a .com.au domain may appear more readily in search engine results than a .com domain simply because people often select the option to search Australia rather than the wider web. So you can take advantage of the best servers and rates you can find no matter where they are in the world, without fear of the location adversely affecting your websites performance.

Often clients will purposely choose a server in an opposite time zone, so when their market is accessing their website, the server itself is running on a local off peak time and therefore using lesser resources, increasing its performance.

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### Disk Space

All hosting plans will quote server disk space. This is the amount of space you can use on the server to host your website.

These days you can buy huge disk storage space on plans in the gigabytes. Much more than the average website requires.

However, in the highly competitive business of web hosting more is considered better.

Hence some hosts promote huge data storage amounts, which they suspect no one will ever use, but it promotes well.

However, problems arise, if clients actually manage to use a large amount of storage [even if they do not exceed their quota] and in doing so drain the shared server resources resulting in the host suspending their account.

How can they do that, I hear you say?

Well in nearly every case hosts cover themselves within their Terms and Conditions with a Fair Use Policy.

Within this Fair Use Policy, they qualify how this storage quota should and should not be used, giving them an opportunity to restrict or suspend your account.

Hosts offering, 'unlimited' disk storage, especially use this type of qualification, because lets face it, in reality nothing is unlimited in web hosting. Simply read through their Terms and Conditions and you will find qualifications that do place limits on disk space.

The bottom line is, unless you intend to use a very large amount of disk space, you should never have a problem.

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## Monthly Traffic

This feature relates to the number of visitors the server receives via your website each month and the amount of information downloaded from your site.

Most hosts offer very generous amounts which again, the average website will never exceed.

This is something the average website owner will not have to worry about unless their host does not allow a reasonable traffic allowance. Traffic allowance should be in Gigabytes per month.

But just like with disk space as explained above, no matter what the amount quoted [especially unlimited], you will nearly always find qualifications within the hosts Terms and Conditions, so please check.

Note: whenever anyone visits your website they are downloading your page, text and images etc which adds to your traffic quota. Sites with hi resolution graphics, music and videos etc will increase traffic more.

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## Domain Names

Domain name – what it is and why you need it?

A domain name is a unique word, or a couple of words, usually associated with an IP address, that represents a special place on the Internet.

You need a domain name because it gives a name of your place in the biggest society in the world - the World Wide Web.

Many hosts also offer domain name registration as an added service. This is a great opportunity to buy and store your domains in the one control panel saving you the hassle of multiple accounts.

While some hosts may not be quite as cheap as a dedicated domain registrar, when you way up the huge advantage of keeping your domains and website together safely within the one control panel, the time saving alone outweighs any small cost variance.

Also make sure your domain registrar allows full management access to your domain in the registration fee.

That is, access to your Name Server, Domain Forwarding, Parking, and Redirection etc.

Some domain registrars advertise very cheap registration fees only to find out later that you have to pay for full management access, which they regard as an extra.

### **Multi-domain Hosting**

Many hosts now offer what is called 'Multi-domain' web hosting where you can host more than one domain/website on the one plan.

You may only intend to host one website at this point, but it can be a great advantage to have the future option should the need arise, to host more, at no extra cost.

It means you can host your business website and still host a family or personal interest website as well.

Again hosts should offer you scalable plans, depending on how many domains you wish to host.

And again some hosts will advertise 'unlimited' domains on their plans, but remember this may be qualified within their Terms and Conditions and is definitely limited by the plans disk storage amount.

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### Control Panels

This is really important and can make or break a website hosting plan.

This is a password protected admin area, which you use to administer your web hosting and domain names. Many cheap hosts offer very confusing control panels that can take you ages to work out how to perform the simplest of web site management tasks.

Just setting up a simple email account can be a nightmare. Pick a web host that offers an easy, user-friendly control panel even if it costs a few dollars more.

Better still go with a host that offers a DEMO control panel. Take the opportunity to test-drive it, before you buy.

Try our DEMO control panel here -

[http://www.dutyfreehosting.com/?lang=en&action=cp\\_demo](http://www.dutyfreehosting.com/?lang=en&action=cp_demo)

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### Databases

Having decided on your web host, make sure the plan you buy offers you access to at least one database.

While you may think you do not need one, chances are you will at some point.

Many web software programs these days offer you the opportunity to create, password protected areas, polls, mailing lists etc, all which use databases.

These days databases are normally included, as standard in most hosting plans, but again small very low cost plans may not have them included as standard and will charge you extra to add them on later.

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### Bonus Software

Many web hosts include a huge selection of bonus software/scripts to enhance your hosting plan. The two many systems offered to deploy these scripts are 'Fantasico' or 'Elephante'.

These two systems will automatically install [with just 1 click] a long list of scripts including, image galleries, CMS, calendars, forums, blogs, ecommerce etc.

Here is a sample of the scripts you could receive all for FREE:

[Ads Management](#)



Openads (aka phpAdsNew & phpPgAds) is an open-source ad server with an integrated banner management interface and tracking system for gathering statistics. With Openads you can easily rotate paid banners and your own in-house advertisements.



**phplist** is an open-source newsletter manager. A feature-rich mailing script, which includes multiple mailing lists and attachments. phplist is free to install and use, and is easy to integrate with any website. phplist is listed in the top open source projects for vitality score.

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## Blogs



**Movable Type** with more than 50 new features, MT4 will enable you to quickly start a blog, easily manage entire blogging websites, and better connect with your audience. Here's some of what's new in MT4: A completely redesigned user interface It's easy to install and easy to get started. Get an at-a-glance summary of your blogging activity from content to contributors on our new dashboard.



**Textpattern** word processors and graphics applications allow anyone to do a pretty good job of managing text and images on a personal computer, but to make these available to the worldwide web a seemingly similar environment of documents and destinations ease of use vanishes behind sudden requirements for multilingual programming skills, proficiency in computer-based graphic design, and, ultimately, the patience of a saint.



**WordPress** is a personal publishing script, which offers a cross-blog tool, password-protected posts, importing, typographical eye candy, Multiple Authors and Bookmarklets.



**b2evolution** is a powerful blog tool you can install on your own website. It includes all the features of traditional blog tools, and extends them with evolved features such as file & photo management, advanced skinning, multiple blogs support as well as detailed user permissions... Not to mention third party plug-ins!

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## Calendars



**Maian Events** is a simple event calendar system. Add/Delete/Edit are the usual events options. Set start and end dates. Include emoticons in events. Nice clean calendar interface.

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## Classified ads



**Classifieds** is a classified ads tool, which offers categories and subcategories of unlimited depth, variable fields per categories, image upload for categories and classifieds, locking categories, classifieds approval, classifieds management by user, auto-generation of thumbnails and customizable e-mail notifications.

## Content management



**Drupal** is an advanced open-source content management tool for creating dynamic websites, which provides a broad range of features and services such as: user administration, publishing workflow, discussion capabilities, news aggregation, metadata functionalities using controlled vocabularies and XML publishing for content sharing purposes.



**Geeklog** is a weblog powered by PHP & MySQL. It allows you within minutes to set up a fully functioning dynamic website, and has many features to get you started. It provides you with user-system, allowing members of the public to register for your site and submit stories. Also it has a comment system, allowing users to comment on posts made to your site.



**Joomla** is one of the most powerful Open Source Content Management Systems on the planet. It is used all over the world for everything from simple websites to complex corporate applications. Joomla! is easy to install, simple to manage, and reliable. Joomla! is used all over the world to power everything from simple, personal homepages to complex corporate web applications.



**Mambo** is a dynamic Web content management tool that is capable of building sites from several pages to several thousand. It is a full-featured content management system that can be used for everything from simple websites to complex corporate applications.



**Moodle** A course management system designed to help educators create quality online courses. Available in 34 languages and features a WYSIWYG HTML editor. The teacher has full control over all settings for a course. There is a flexible array of course activities (Forums, Journals, Quizzes, Resources, Choices, Surveys, Assignments, Chats, Workshops), user logging and tracking, mail integration and much more.



**Nucleus** is a Content Management System (CMS): a powerful set of PHP scripts that allow you to maintain one or more weblogs or online journals. A powerful blog script featuring multiple blogs, multiple authors, drafts and future posts, bookmarklets. Nucleus is far more flexible and powerful than most of the CMS scripts, it expresses flexibility, security, & computational elegance.



**Open Realty** is free web based listing management application for real estate websites for real estate websites. It is intended to be both easy to setup and use. Written in PHP, Open-Realty is designed to be a fast and flexible tool for your website. With a large open-source community working with this application, and solid management from Transparent Technologies open-realty is the top choice for use on your website.



**WebSiteBaker** is a PHP-based Content Management System (CMS) designed with one goal in mind: to enable its users to produce websites with ease. This Website Baker "Start" website is a resource for people wanting to find out more about Website Baker, and get a "start" with the project and our community.



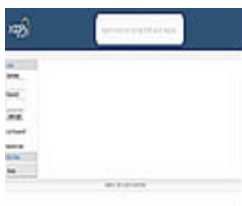
**FuzzyLime** (cms) Get 1-click Installation  
fuzzylime (cms) is the easiest way for you to run your site and keep it up-to-date. Once installed, you can update from any internet-connected PC in the world - you don't even need to know HTML! It has tons of features so whatever you want from your site; chances are this script will be able to do it for you.



**php-fusion** - a lightweight open-source content management system (CMS) written in PHP. It utilises a mySQL database to store your site content and includes a simple, comprehensive administration system. PHP-Fusion includes the most common features you would expect to see in many other CMS packages.



**phpWebSite** provides a complete web site CMS. Web-based administration allows for easy maintenance of interactive, community-driven web sites. Growing number of modules allow for easy site customization without the need for unwanted or unused features. Client output is valid XHTML 1.0 and meets the W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative requirements.



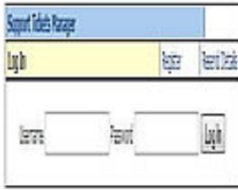
**Xoops** is an extensible, OO (Object Oriented), easy to use dynamic web content management system written in PHP. XOOPS is the ideal tool for developing small to large dynamic community websites, intra company portals, corporate portals, weblogs and much more.

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### Customer support



**Help Centre Live** Very powerful all-in-one help centre including Live Help, Support Tickets and FAQ. Features include unlimited operators/departments, monitor visitors, initiate chat, collect visitor's information, track visitor's footprint, auto save chat transcripts, canned messages, leave a message, auto-assign tickets to operators, unlimited FAQ topics.



**PHPTickets** is a trouble ticket support system written in PHP and utilizes a MySQL database for storage. Tickets can be entered manually or can also be pulled in automatically from any POP account. Each new ticket is assigned a unique number and is tracked and replied to via this tracking number. This makes trouble ticket reporting easier to maintain tickets throughout their life cycle until they are closed.

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### Discussion boards



**phpBB2** Since its inception, phpBB has been among the leading bulletin board solutions and quickly rose to be the world's leading Open Source forum software. phpBB has always comprised of a key feature set, including powerful permission systems, private messaging, search functions, a customisable template and language system, as well as support for multiple databases.



**Simple Machines Forum** SMF in short - is a free, professional grade software package that allows you to set up your own online community within minutes.

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### E-Commerce



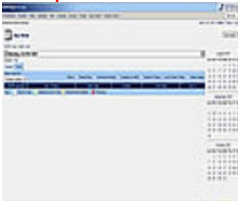
**osCommRes** ranks first among the most powerful open-source booking systems. The commercial solution is based on the secure, scalable and reliable OS CommRes project. The solution includes a full Call Centre module, and key metrics such as inventory management, sales auditing, and bookings analysis.



**osCommerce** is an online shop e-commerce solution that offers a wide range of out-of-the-box features that allows online stores to be setup fairly quickly with ease, and is available for free as an Open Source based solution.

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### Groupware



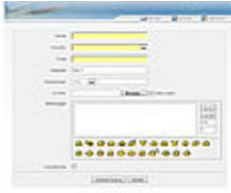
**DOTproject** is a web-based project management application, designed to provide project layout and control functions.



**PHProject** is a modular application for the coordination of group activities and to share information and documents via the web. Components of PHProjekt: Group calendar, project management, time card system, file management, contact manager, mail client and many other modules.

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## Guestbook



**MJguest** is a free professional guestbook, designed as hi-end solution for both personal homepages and corporate websites.

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## Image galleries



**4Images Gallery** is a powerful web-based image gallery management system. Features include comment system, user registration and management, password protected administration area with browser-based upload and HTML templates for page layout and design.



**Coppermine** is an advanced, user-friendly, picture gallery script with built-in support for other multi-media/data files. The gallery can be private, accessible to registered users only, and/or open to all visitors to your site. Users, if permitted, can upload pictures with their web browser (thumbnail and intermediate sized images are created on the fly), rate pictures, add comments and even send e-cards.



**Gallery2** is a web based software product that lets you manage your photos on your own website. You must have your own website with PHP and database support in order to install and use it. With Gallery you can easily create and maintain albums of photos via an intuitive interface. Photo management includes automatic thumbnail creation, image resizing, rotation, ordering, captioning, searching and more.



**plogger** is the next generation in open-source photo gallery systems. A web application not bloated with superfluous features or complicated configuration settings. Plogger is a simple yet powerful tool - everything you need to share your images with the world. Plogger is your photos integrated into your website, a fully featured photo sharing package with an attractive and easy to use administrative interface.

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## Web hosting tools



**phpcoin**: is a comprehensive billing/invoicing application, perfect for web hosting resellers to manage their customer orders, invoices, notes and helpdesk. Different types of businesses can use the tool as well.

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## Wiki



**DokuWiki**: is a standard compliant, simple to use Wiki, mainly aimed at creating documentation of any kind. It is targeted at developer teams, workgroups and small companies. It has a simple but powerful syntax, which makes sure the data files remain readable outside the Wiki and eases the creation of structured texts. All data is stored in plain text files no database is required.

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## Upgrades

### **Flexibility to upgrade plans without penalty**

Firstly, make sure your host offers larger hosting plans should you ever need to upgrade your plan in the future.

You can then save money by starting off with a small inexpensive hosting plan with the peace of mind that you can upgrade if necessary.

But you should also check that you could upgrade without penalty.

Some hosts will upgrade you to a larger plan by charging you the full 12 month cost of the new plan, meaning you lose the remaining time left to run on your existing plan.

Make sure the host provides for pro-rata upgrades where any unused time/money left on your existing plan is credited against your upgrade.

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## Prices

### **Price**

The last but by no means least, is the price.

We always say when dealing with price – *"don't buy cheapest – buy best value"*.

You can get all the benefits listed above in a web hosting plan and more, for just a few dollars per month.

Plus when you consider that these type of low cost plans allow you to host more than the one website as well, its incredible value.

### **One last word of caution:**

-When dealing with price, do not get fooled by the hosts that advertise a very low monthly hosting fee up front, only to find out in the checkout that you have to sign up for up to 2, 3, 5 or even 10 years to receive that price.

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## Support

Without doubt the most important aspect of any hosting plan is support. You want to know that if you have a problem, you can get help fast.

Check that your host offers 24/7 phone/ticket support and in the case of ticket support, that you do not have to wait hours for a response.

Some cheap web hosts can keep you waiting for over 12 hours for an answer.

A good web host should guarantee to respond to your support tickets within a maximum 1 hour 24/7.

They should also provide various forms of support media on their website or within your control panel which you can access 24/7.

These should include;

An extensive Frequently Asked Questions [FAQ] list of links

Written online tutorials

Video tutorials

Help Centre

Again always choose a host with a 30-day MBG so you can test their support for the first month and if you are not happy, you can move on without loss.

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### Summary

We hope this eBook was of some help in choosing the right web host and hosting plan for you.

If you have any further questions we invite you to contact our sales office [sales@dutyfreehosting](mailto:sales@dutyfreehosting) for our free advice.

We would also value your feedback on how you found this eBook.

Was it helpful etc or are there areas it could be improved or expanded?

Of course we do hope after reading our eBook you will consider **Duty Free Hosting** as your preferred web host, however no matter who you choose we sincerely wish you every success with your future web presence.



Regards,  
Sales Team  
[www.dutyfreehosting.com](http://www.dutyfreehosting.com)  
[sales@dutyfreehosting.com](mailto:sales@dutyfreehosting.com)

