Website Hosts I Do Not Recommend

First, My History with Website Hosts…

I've been on the Internet since before there was the web. I remember using Gopher in college to browse around the world. There wasn't too much to see back then, but it was cool. My first website in 1994 was called The Background Deli where I collected and made cool backgrounds to use on websites. That was on AOL (America On Line) and I used their tools. Later I used a tool called AOLPress/NaviPress to write HTML and design websites.

At my first job after college, I promoted myself to manage the company's website part time, then got it full time – along with hiring other people to help. That was about 1997. I learned Server Side JavaScript (SSJS), Perl, and Linux. Modem speeds were doubling every 4-6 months. HTML kept changing versions, too. The same with web browsers. I did really like Netscape and still use Firefox primarily now.

My website company started in 2001. We were using AOL Instant Messenger to do IM (Instant Messaging). We coded each page of websites manually to start.

So, you could say I've been at this a while. I've worked with lots of different hosting companies – both for myself and with clients over the years. I'm no spring chicken. I've worked with hosts and we are even a website host for our clients at Webstix. We've had both good and bad providers. I remember one weekend when our server got hacked and I missed a family event because I was rebuilding the server. That was with ServerBeach. Since then, we've only gone with managed hosting, and that's the way to go. And we even had one of the first servers with SSD (solid state drives) as one host. We requested that and they had to figure it out because they've never done that before. Now, that's all there is.

Here are a few website hosting companies I've had experience with. They're the ones I can remember right now. I don't want to go too far back because a bad host years ago could be just fine now. I don't know. Take this for what it's worth.

Here's my honest take based on years of hands-on experience — the good, the bad, and everything in between.

Hosts Not Recommended:

GoDaddy

No. Their admin panels are confusing, keep changing, you don't know when you're actually logged in, and support takes a long time to get on the phone.

We just had a client's website go down. It was tracked to DNS being changed and the domain was parked – for no reason. The domain wasn't expired.

My company is even a reseller for GoDaddy and I'm saying this.

Bottom line: Great for domains, but I wouldn't host websites there.

Network Solutions

We've had many troubles with clients' DNS over the years. It goes down. If the DNS goes down, you site will go down, even if you're on a good host.

Bottom line: Unreliable DNS can ruin even the best hosting setup.

Bluehost

We've had trouble with them. The admin panel is confusing. When someone who has been in the industry since 1994 says it's confusing, it definitely is.

Bottom line: I would avoid them, but any host deserves a chance and they may have gotten better.

SiteGround

From what I recall there were big problems with them. I think it was DNS going down or some major outage. I remember thinking any client using SiteGround will, for sure, need more time, so we need to charge more in our estimates.

Edit: They just automatically upgraded one of our client's sites. They changed the PHP version, and the site broke. This client had to come to us to fix it. SiteGround does not seem to have people checking the work that's automatically done. That's a bit scary.

Bottom line: Avoid this host.

HostGator

We used to use them, and I have been an affiliate. I don't know how they are now, but their systems we just too old for a while. Service was good, not great. Again, I haven't worked with them for a while.

Bottom line: They might be alright, but in my experience, they were more concerned about volume, which is not a model that services customers.

Rackspace

They've been great for so long, but their support has gone way downhill. The servers are reliable and the DNS has never gone down (very awesome). We needed to renew and get a new server and I even had trouble getting them to sell me something, which makes you wonder. They have different people pick up tickets, which is both good and bad. Bad because each person then needs to take time to review it. It's good because some of the support there is so poor that hopefully the next person is smarter (unfortunately).

Bottom line: The service is reliable, but be ready to troubleshoot more on your own or know that getting the final answer might put you through a few ticket responses with different people.

Website Hosts I Do Recommend

A2Hosting (Hosting.com

I've had hosting with them a long time. Their prices are fair, and service is good. Support isn't immediate, but good enough.

Bottom line: Go sign up with them now.

Cloudways

We've had a good experience with them. Good support. Uptime is good. They're more of a cloud host and app host.
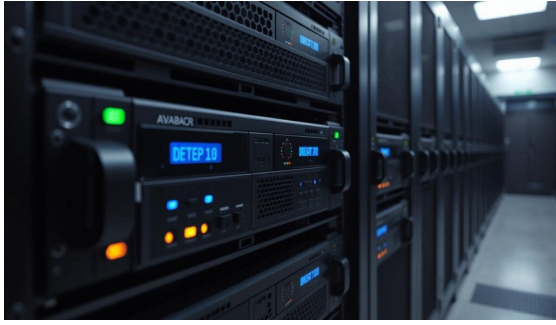
Bottom line: If you need cloud hosting, they have a great interface to cloud hosting, which is basically what they are/do. Support is good.

BionicWP

These guys have good, fast hosting and they take care of website maintenance (a light version, I'd say).

Bottom line: A great host for WordPress websites if you want your site to load quickly.

What Does "Uptime" Actually Mean?

When you're looking at website hosting, you'll see a lot of companies brag about "99.9% uptime." But what does that actually mean?

Uptime refers to how often your website is available and running without any interruptions. If a host claims 99.9% uptime, that sounds great — but it still technically allows for about 8 hours and 45 minutes of downtime per year.

I first really understood this when a company here in Madison called **FiveNines** explained it to me. "Five nines" — or 99.999% uptime — would mean only about 5 minutes of downtime per year. That's a huge difference if you're running an online business where every minute matters.

- **99% uptime:** About 3.65 days of downtime per year
- **99.9% uptime:** About 8 hours and 45 minutes of downtime per year
- **99.95% uptime:** About 4 hours and 23 minutes of downtime per year
- **99.99% uptime:** About 52 minutes of downtime per year
- **99.999% uptime (Five Nines):** About 5 minutes of downtime per year

Most good hosting companies aim for at least 99.9% uptime, but if you see guarantees higher than that (and real proof to back it up), it's a sign they take reliability seriously.

Bottom line: Uptime isn't just a marketing number — it directly affects your customers' ability to reach you, your SEO rankings, and ultimately your reputation.

Quick Website Host Checklist

If you're shopping for a new website host, here are a few key things to look for:

- **Uptime Guarantee:** Look for 99.9% uptime or better — and make sure they stick to it.
- **Fast Server Speed:** Slow hosting = lost visitors and lower rankings.
- **Good Support:** 24/7 support by real humans who know what they're doing is critical.
- **Easy-to-Use Control Panel:** cPanel is common — or make sure they have something intuitive.
- **Daily or Weekly Backups:** Automatic backups included (without charging extra) is a huge plus.
- **Scalability:** Can you upgrade easily as your site grows?
- **Security Features:** SSL included, firewall protection, malware scans — basic stuff that shouldn't cost extra.
- **Clear Pricing:** Watch out for tricky renewal rates that skyrocket after the first year.
- **Real Reviews:** Check reviews from real customers — not just the ones on their own website.

Choosing the right host isn't just about the cheapest plan — it's about setting your site up for long-term success.

Conclusion: You Get What You Pay For… Sometimes/Usually

When it comes to website hosting, you usually get what you pay for — but not always. Some budget hosts really do cut corners, and some expensive hosts aren't worth the premium. The key is finding a provider that delivers solid uptime, good support, and reliable performance without making you jump through hoops.

After working in this industry for years, I've learned that a little extra research (and sometimes paying a little more) can save you a lot of headaches down the road. Hosting isn't just where your website "lives" — it's the foundation everything else sits on. Pick a good one, and your site will have a much better chance of growing and succeeding.

Hopefully my experiences help you find the right fit. If you ever need a second opinion, feel free to reach out — I'm happy to point you in the right direction. And, if you've noticed, there are no affiliate links to hosting in this article. It's my straight, honest truth.

P.S. No matter who you choose, always have backups. Trust me.

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