

# Transitioning to a New Web Host

Moving your website from one host to another can be as smooth as a well-made caramel frappuccino\*, or it can be as disastrous for your business as a volcanic explosion, causing your website to be down or unreachable for days or even your data completely lost. But keep breathing -- YOU can make the difference in how it goes.

- 1 ) Start by finding out what type of server you are currently hosted on, either Unix or Windows. This is very important. You most likely need to stay with the same type of server. This will help you select a new host that your website will work on.
- 2 ) Check your current space and bandwidth. Find out what you're actually using, not just what your package limits are. You can generally find this information in your control panel or email your current host to find out.
- 3 ) Make a list of any other features you specifically need such as Frontpage support or FTP access for Dreamweaver. Include all the scripts you're currently running (guestbooks, shopping carts, contact forms, etc) so you can be sure your new server supports them.
- 4 ) Do your research using the chart included in this PDF file. Often the best place to begin is personal recommendations. It's better to know a real customer's experience with a host than to depend on a slick, shiny website created to "sell" you on a company. You may want to contact the support departments for any hosts you're considering and ask if they will help you transfer your files. Some will transfer them free, some will for a fee, and some won't help you at all. You'll also be able to see the speed of their response.
- 5 ) Next, with everything in mind that you've listed as needs, choose your new host.
- 6 ) Wait for your welcome email to arrive from the new hosting company. Now begin the process of transferring your files. If your new host will take care of this for you, just send the mail the details they need, and sit back and relax. Otherwise, get started copying all your files, databases, email addresses, etc. Be sure that if you are running a shopping cart or forum you change your configuration file if needed so it can access your database at the new server.
- 7 ) The next step is to be sure that all the email addresses and autoresponders you currently use are setup on your new server. This is the most overlooked step in my experience, and it's one of the most important because if you forget this step your email will stop working when you transfer.
- 8 ) Now you want to verify that everything is setup and working properly. If your site is a simple HTML website, you should be able to do this with a preview URL your new host provides. It'd be something like <http://www.yourhost.com/~yourusername> If you have a website running php scripts you'll need to preview by modifying your hosts file. Ask your new website host for directions on how to do this so you can check to be sure everything's working.
- 9 ) Go back to your old host and login to your control panel and make a final complete backup.
- 10 ) Edit your domain name's DNS to point to your new host. You'll need to login at the website where you registered your domain name to do this. Once you've requested this change it can take anywhere from a few hours up to 48 hours for the changes to propagate through the internet. All you can do during this time is be patient.
- 11 ) Check to see if the new nameservers are in effect. You can do this at [www.whois.sc](http://www.whois.sc) Just type in your domain name to lookup then in your domain record verify that your new nameservers are listed.
- 12 ) Verify that everything is properly working on the site at the new host. Now, and only at this point, you may cancel your old account safely.

*\* The author is slightly addicted to blended coffees. She recommends you purchase them from independently owned shops, and keep your eyes open for the shops that offer fair trade coffee. Even the little things we do can make a difference!*

## *Web Host Comparison Sheet*

|                             | Current Host | Host 1 | Host 2 | Host 3 |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Company Information</b>  |              |        |        |        |
| * Website                   |              |        |        |        |
|                             |              |        |        |        |
| <b>Technical Support</b>    |              |        |        |        |
| * Help Guides               |              |        |        |        |
| * Knowledgebase             |              |        |        |        |
| * Forum                     |              |        |        |        |
| * Support Ticket System     |              |        |        |        |
| * Emergency Contact         |              |        |        |        |
|                             |              |        |        |        |
| <b>Accounts Basics</b>      |              |        |        |        |
| * Type of Server            |              |        |        |        |
| * Space                     |              |        |        |        |
| * Bandwidth                 |              |        |        |        |
|                             |              |        |        |        |
| <b>Features and Scripts</b> |              |        |        |        |
| * Databases                 |              |        |        |        |
| * Email Addresses           |              |        |        |        |
| * Autoresponders            |              |        |        |        |
| * Mailing Lists             |              |        |        |        |
| * Shopping Cart             |              |        |        |        |
| * Any Other Scripts?        |              |        |        |        |
|                             |              |        |        |        |
| <b>Other Information</b>    |              |        |        |        |
| Notes                       |              |        |        |        |
|                             |              |        |        |        |
| Referred By                 |              |        |        |        |