

## Choosing a Web hosting company

A *Web hosting company* provides everything you need to put up a Web site, including the computer space and all the Web site software. You just create the files for your Web pages and move them to a location specified by the Web hosting company.

About a gazillion companies offer Web hosting services. Most charge a monthly fee, which is often quite small, and some are even free. Most of the free ones require you to display advertising. Usually, the monthly fee varies, depending on the resources provided for your Web site. For instance, a Web site with 2MB (megabytes) of disk space for your Web page files costs less than a Web site with 10MB of disk space.

When looking for a place to host your Web site, make sure that the Web hosting company offers PHP. Some do not. Also, make sure the company offers a recent version of PHP. Web hosting companies may not offer a version that has just been released, but they should upgrade their PHP fairly soon after a new version is released.



Don't consider a Web hosting company that offers only PHP 3. PHP 4.3.1 was released in February 2003, so no Web hosting company should still be providing PHP older than 4.3.1, especially because a security issue was discovered in earlier versions and was fixed in PHP 4.3.1. Ideally, by the time you read this, most Web hosting companies will be offering PHP 5.

Other considerations when choosing a Web hosting company include the following:

- ✔ **Reliability:** You need a Web hosting company that you can depend on — one that won't go broke and disappear tomorrow. And you want one that has enough computer power and other resources to keep your Web site up. A Web site with more down time than up time is pretty useless. Hopefully, some research on the Web or among colleagues will identify Web hosting companies whose reliability is not up to snuff.
- ✔ **Speed:** Web pages that download slowly are a problem because users will get impatient and go elsewhere. Slow pages may be a result of a Web hosting company that started its business on a shoestring and has a shortage of good equipment, or the problem may be a Web hosting company that is so successful that its equipment is overwhelmed by new customers. Either way, Web hosting companies that deliver Web pages too slowly are unacceptable. In some cases, you can find sites that are hosted at the Web hosting company and see the download speed for these sites. Sometimes the Web hosting company's Web site provides some customer links, or the company's salespeople may provide you with this information.
- ✔ **Technical support:** Some Web hosting companies have no one available to answer questions or troubleshoot problems. Technical support is