

Small Business. Online Success.

Google offers insights and tools to help your business grow.



Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 5 |
| The basics: Get online | 6 |
| Ready-made sites | 6 |
| Google Sites | 7 |
| The next step: Attract and keep visitors | 8 |
| Reach customers through search | 8 |
| Google Places | 9 |
| Reach customers through advertising online | 10 |
| Webmaster Central | 12 |
| Additional features: Advanced site design | 13 |
| Google Analytics | 13 |
| Website Optimizer | 14 |
| Taking it further: Boost your revenue | 15 |
| Increase revenue through e-commerce on your site | 15 |
| Increase revenue through advertising on your site | 16 |
| Google Site Search | 17 |
| Starting from scratch | 19 |
| Buy an address | 19 |
| Find a home | 19 |
| Design your site | 20 |
| Blogger | 22 |
| blogger.com | 22 |
| Helpful websites | 23 |

Introduction

Why should I have a website?

The heart of the web's success is in connecting people with information, whether that be a student looking for the nearest pizza parlor, or a local shoe store displaying its spring collection to online shoppers. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, in 2008, 72% of Americans were online at least once a day, and 71% of online Americans have bought a product via the web. The Internet provides a growing and increasingly vital opportunity for businesses to reach new and existing customers with minimal costs. If your customers are online, then the best way to connect with them is to join them there!

But I'm not a technical person! And I can't afford to hire an expert!

That's okay—you don't need a PhD in computer science or a hefty amount of cash to get online. In fact, it's easier than ever. There are many inexpensive or free tools out there to help bring your business to the web. We've outlined the process in this step-by-step guide, which explains everything from how to buy a website address to tips for advanced site design.

THE BASICS: Get online

The first step in building your online presence is to get yourself a space on the web. There are two ways to do this:

1. **Use ready-made sites** which provide all the elements of a website in a template, or
2. **Build your site from scratch** with complete control over all the technical components, such as layout.

The second option is a bit more technical, so let's start with the easier option.

Ready-made sites

You can avoid the technical hassles of creating a website by using free tools to create and launch your site. These tools will allow you to choose a website address (known commonly as the website's URL), and will often host and run your site free of charge. Of course, because these sites are ready-made, you will have less control over some layout elements.



Google Sites

google.com/sites

Google Sites (visit www.google.com/sites) makes it easy for users to quickly gather a variety of information in one place—including text, calendars, images, and videos—and easily control who can edit and view the page, from a small group to the whole world. Google Sites provides a number of design templates and editing tools familiar to anybody who has used standard editing software such as word processing or email programs.

The screenshot shows the Organic City Intranet. At the top, there's a search bar and a navigation menu with options like 'Create new page', 'Edit page', and 'More actions'. The main content is divided into several sections: a 'Welcome' message with a tomato image, a '51 days until Harvest!' countdown, a 'Company News' section with articles about federal disaster assistance legislation and frost alerts, an 'Important Links' section with links to 'Benefits', 'Employee Handbook', 'Company Directory', 'Earning Reports', and 'Planning a Vacation?', and a 'What's Happening at Organic City!' section with a calendar for February 2008.

THE NEXT STEP:

Attract and keep visitors

Congratulations, you've made the leap online! However, just owning a site doesn't guarantee that the right audience will find you. The next step is to use basic tools to increase your visibility online and attract the relevant visitors.

Reach customers through search

Think of the last thing you searched for on the Internet. Maybe you looked for an airline's website or the nearest flower shop. Have you ever wondered how those sites ended up in the search results?



You can think of the web as a giant directory. Search engines like Google crawl all the information that is open to them on the web using automated machines and make a copy of the web. Then, they use signals—such as the popularity of the site or number of high-quality websites that link to the page—to determine the relevance of each site to given search terms, such as “airline website” or “flower shop.” They then return these results, in their order of relevance, to the person conducting the search.

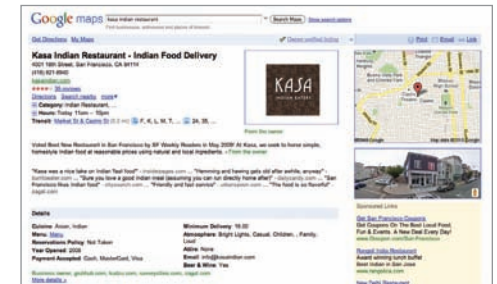
This leads to a question that most website owners ask themselves: how do I improve my site's ranking in search results? The most simple and effective answer is to make sure to give visitors the information they are looking for, as unique and relevant content is what will drive traffic to your site and help you retain it.

We also offer a full dashboard of information about your site in particular through our free Webmaster Tools program. Here's a taste of what Webmaster Tools can help you do:

- Diagnose potential problems in how Google accesses your pages
- Request removal of specific pages from our index
- See query and page statistics related to your website, including statistics about which search terms bring your site the most visitors, and how frequently Google crawls your page for updated information

Google Places

An additional step for business owners is to join Google Places (visit www.google.com/places), our online business listing directory. Google Places lets business owners claim local listings to get found online, communicate with customers, and gain insights to make business decisions. Features include creating coupons, receiving live traffic updates, and viewing how your business is doing with a real-time dashboard. After verifying your information in Google Places, potential customers searching on Google for relevant local information will be connected to your business: your address, hours of operation, even photos of your storefront or products. It's easy and free.





Reach customers through advertising online

Let's think again about the person who searched for "flower shop." He could be looking for images of flower shops or articles about flower shops, but he could also be looking to purchase flowers. That's where search advertising can really help boost your site's visibility and drive valuable traffic to your site. Using online advertising programs, businesses of all sizes can pay for affordable relevant text ads to appear alongside natural search results in a clearly defined advertising section on the page.

AdWords (visit www.google.com/adwords) is Google's online advertising program that enables you (the advertiser) to reach potential customers who are interested in your products or services. Advertisers use our online tools to create ads, decide which search terms (keywords) you would like your ads to show against, decide how much you are willing to pay for each ad, select the areas you would like your ads to show and set daily spending budgets. AdWords features an automated, user-friendly signup process that enables you to implement campaigns that can go live in 15 minutes or less.



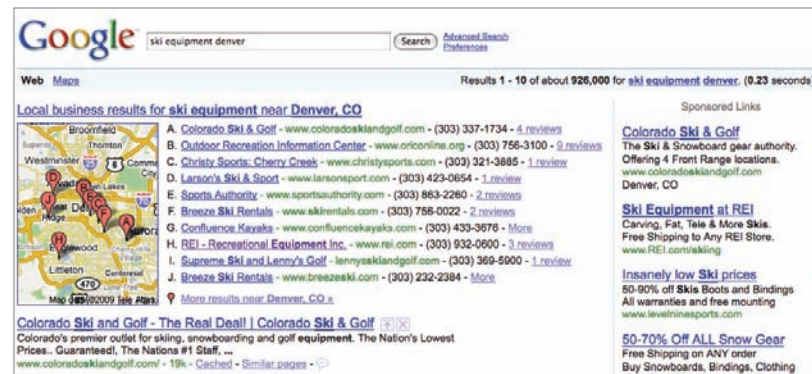
Website owners choose keywords that will trigger the ads, and your ads will only show when a user types in a related search. For example, a snow sports equipment shop in Denver might be interested in the following keywords:

ski equipment denver

snow sports shop in colorado

denver skis and snowboards

The benefit of this system is that the advertiser only pays if a user clicks on an ad. No click means no payment. You have complete control over your costs because you decide how much you are willing to spend per click.





Webmaster Central

There are additional things you can do to help search engines better understand your website. Google offers a one-stop shop for you to get all the information you need about how Google understands your websites. This destination is Webmaster Central (visit www.google.com/webmasters), which aims to provide free, scalable and equitable support for all webmasters and all websites, no matter how large or small.

Webmaster Central is a great resource for all web publishers. It comprehensively answers questions about crawling, indexing and ranking questions; provides an avenue for feedback and issues; and offers free diagnostic tools that help you understand and fix potential crawling problems.

Google Google Webmaster Central

Improve traffic with Google Webmaster Tools
 Welcome to your one-stop shop for webmaster resources that will help you with your crawling and indexing questions, introduce you to offerings that can enhance and increase traffic to your site, and connect you with your visitors.

- Connect with the webmaster community**
 Research and ask your specific question to our webmaster community
- See how users are reaching your site**
 Make your site more search engine friendly

Sign in to Webmaster Tools
 Don't have a Google Account?
[Create a new Google Account.](#)

Google Webmaster Blog
[Canonical Link Element: presentation from SMX West](#)
 25 Feb 2009
 A little while ago, Google and other search engines announced support for a canonical link element that can help site owners with duplicate content...

Webmaster Essentials

- [Help Center](#)
- [Webmaster Help Forum](#)
- [Webmaster Guidelines](#)

ADDITIONAL FEATURES:

Advanced site design

Once you've launched your site and discovered the basics of how search and advertising works, you may find yourself wondering about advanced tools and products that can take your site to the next level. We could go on and on about all the neat tools available, but here are a couple of examples to get you started.

Google Analytics

How many people are visiting your site? Where do they come from? Which pages do they like best? How many are first-time visitors? Has traffic grown over time? These are just some of the questions Google Analytics (visit www.google.com/analytics) can help you answer. By adding just a snippet of code to your website, you can start to understand how visitors interact with your site and then make improvements to make it even more efficient.



Google Analytics analytics.support@google.com | My Account | Help | Contact Us | Sign Out

Analytics Settings | View Reports: [www.googlestore.com](#) | My Analytics Accounts: [Google Store](#)

Dashboard
 Nov 19, 2007 - Dec 19, 2007
 Comparing to: Site

Visitors
 Traffic Sources
 Content
 Goals
 Ecommerce

Settings
 Email

Help Resources
 About this Report
 Conversion
 University
 Common Questions

Site Usage
 89,113 Visits
 67.04% Bounce Rate



Website Optimizer

Page design can truly impact visitor behavior on your site. Why guess what site content and designs your visitors like best when you can find out directly from their behavior? Using our web-based interface, you can provide us with the content—headlines, images, or text, for example—and design alternatives you would like to test.

Website Optimizer (visit www.google.com/websiteoptimizer) will then show these content and design alternatives to your site visitors, all the while monitoring which combinations lead to the highest conversion rates (a conversion occurs when a visitor performs a certain specified action, such as advance to the next page, click on a payment button, or submit a form). The intuitive reports generated by the tool allow you to quickly and easily identify and implement the best combination.

Google Website Optimizer [Help](#) | [Sign Out](#)

Website Optimizer: Start Testing Today

Website Optimizer is an easy-to-use tool for testing site content that delivers actionable results. Below are just three of the many benefits that testing brings.

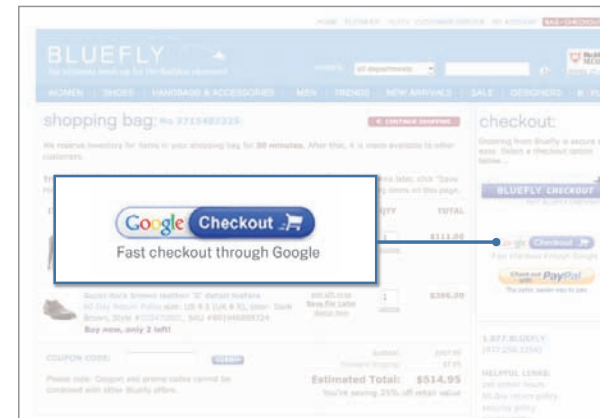
- Listen to your visitors**
Testing makes it easy to get direct feedback from your site visitors. [Our five minute demo](#) explains how.
- Increase conversions**
Testing makes it easy to [increase your site effectiveness and visitor satisfaction](#), which leads to higher conversion rates and a higher return on your investments.
- Eliminate guesswork**
With Website Optimizer, you can try any combination of content to find out what leads to the most conversions. [Clear reports](#) will tell you what worked the best.

TAKING IT FURTHER:

Boost your revenue

Increase revenue through e-commerce on your site

If you are selling products or services on your website, it might make sense to look into e-commerce tools that allow your visitors to purchase goods directly from your site. Google Checkout (visit www.google.com/checkout), is a checkout option you can integrate with your site, enabling customers to purchase quickly & securely using a single username and password.



Increase revenue through advertising on your site

As a website owner, you can also earn additional money from targeted ads on your site. Google's AdSense program (visit www.google.com/adsense) enables websites to automatically serve text and image ads that are precisely targeted to the site's content and audience—so well-matched, in fact, that visitors actually find them useful. For example, this gardening website (below) is hosting ads for flowers!

Site owners earn revenue when users view or click on the ads. You can customize the look and feel of the ads, and can specify which types of ads to include or exclude (after all, you probably don't want advertisements to appear from a competitor).

AdSense is free, has no lock-in contract, and payments are always on time. Sign up today to begin unlocking your site's revenue potential.

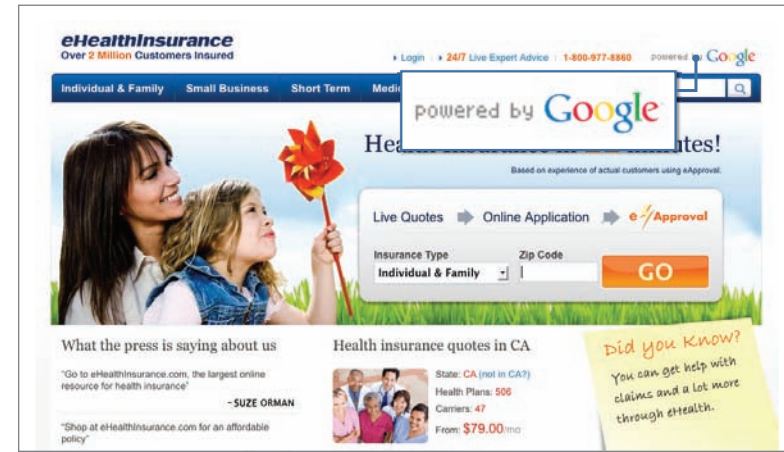


The image shows a screenshot of a gardening website. A large white box with a blue border is overlaid on the page, containing the text: "Roses, Daisies and more Local florists. Same day delivery Freshest flowers from \$10.99 www.greengardengifts.com". A green arrow points from the bottom of this box to the text "Place ads on your site". The background shows a "Green Garden" section with various articles and a "Gardening Tips" section.



Google Site Search

Finally, once visitors land on your website you want to keep them there by making sure that they can quickly and easily search the content of your site to find what they are looking for. Google Site Search (visit www.google.com/sitesearch) is an online, hosted service which allows customers and visitors to search a website using the power of Google's search technology. All you do is add a search box to your site, which you can customize by adding your own logo. By improving the ease, speed and accuracy with which users can find what they need, businesses can ensure their website justifies the investments made.



The image shows a screenshot of the eHealthInsurance website. A search box is overlaid on the page, containing the text "powered by Google" and "Hea...ates!". The search box is white with a blue border and a magnifying glass icon. The background shows the eHealthInsurance website with a navigation bar, a search bar, and a "GO" button. There are also some statistics and a "Did you know?" note on the page.

Starting from scratch

Designing a site from scratch can be a bit more complicated, but allows for greater freedom in design. There are a few basic steps to follow if you decide to build a website from the ground up, starting with purchasing an address.

Buy an address

Your first task is to decide on an address, or URL, for your website. In most cases it makes sense to use a name related to your business; for example, if you own a store called “Chocolate Shop on Main”, you could consider the following URLs:

[*www.chocolateshoponmain.com*](http://www.chocolateshoponmain.com)

[*www.chocolateshopmainstreet.com*](http://www.chocolateshopmainstreet.com)

[*www.chocolateshoponmainstreet.com*](http://www.chocolateshoponmainstreet.com)

Once you have come up with a few possibilities, you’ll need to buy your address from a domain registrar such as www.godaddy.com. Here, you can check the availability of your desired website address, or domain name, and “rent” it for minimal annual fee.

Find a home

Information on the Internet doesn’t float about in cyberspace—it lives on real, physical computers (called servers) owned by hosting companies. Hosting companies store your site on their servers for a small monthly or annual fee, and in return make your site accessible to people visiting your website address.

In many cases, site owners can bypass the hosting fee by agreeing to show ads on their sites. Doing a simple search on the Internet for “free hosting” can turn up a number of hosting companies that offer this kind of arrangement.

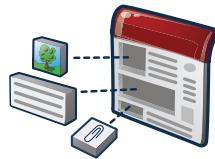
Once you have found a webhost, you will need to return to the domain registrar from whom you bought your web address and point them to the webhosting company who will serve your content. There should be instructions on the domain registrar’s page to explain how to do this.

Design your site

You have a name and a home, and now you need content for your site!

First, you’ll want to consider your website layout, as this will determine how visitors interact with the information on your site. Here are a few common types of pages:

- **Home Page:** This is the page that visitors see first when they visit your website address. Typically, home pages provide a snapshot of the basic information for your business including the name of your business, address, and a brief description of your services.
- **Contact Page:** This page goes into more depth about where your business is located and how visitors can contact you.
- **About Page:** Here, visitors can view basic information about your business.



You should also consider additional pages to help your visitors navigate the information on your site. These will depend on the function of your business; for example, real estate companies often provide a page with all current property listings. Websites for larger organizations will often publish biographies of key figures at the company, or schedules of events.

Once you have a page layout in mind, it's time to design the actual site. There are two ways to do this: using site-editing tools, which are based on templates and therefore less customizable, and working directly with the HTML or CSS code (which is more technical). For most first-time website owners, using the editing tools provided by most of the free hosting companies is the simplest and fastest way to create a site. These tools offer intuitive site editing functions familiar to anybody who has used basic applications (e.g. word processing, email, etc.).

Some other businesses choose to employ an independent site designer at this stage. Fees for this service can vary greatly, but for some businesses the site design is worth the extra cost.

Blogger

blogger.com

If the purpose of your website is primarily to share your thoughts—perhaps in a newsletter format, or through ongoing discussions with your visitors—you may want to consider using Google's free site tool, Blogger. Blogger provides design templates and easy editing tools as well as additional features like reader comments. Similar to Google Sites, Blogger also allows for easy management of editing and viewing access to the site (or blog).



Helpful Websites

[Small Business Solutions](http://google.com/smallbusiness) google.com/smallbusiness

[Google Sites](http://google.com/sites) google.com/sites

[Google Places](http://google.com/places) google.com/places

[Google AdWords](http://google.com/adwords) google.com/adwords

[Webmaster Central](http://google.com/webmasters) google.com/webmasters

[Google Analytics](http://google.com/analytics) google.com/analytics

[Website Optimizer](http://google.com/websiteoptimizer) google.com/websiteoptimizer

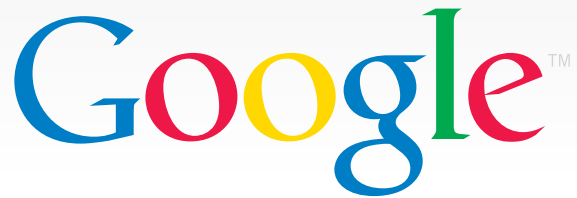
[Google Checkout](http://google.com/checkout) google.com/checkout

[Google AdSense](http://google.com/adsense) google.com/adsense

[Google Site Search](http://google.com/sitesearch) google.com/sitesearch

[Blogger](http://blogger.com) blogger.com

[Google Apps](http://google.com/apps) google.com/apps

The Google logo is centered on the page. It consists of the word "Google" in its signature multi-colored font: the first 'G' is blue, the first 'o' is red, the second 'o' is yellow, the 'g' is blue, the 'l' is green, and the 'e' is red. A small "TM" trademark symbol is positioned to the upper right of the 'e'.

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