

So you want to make a website...

Having a website of your own can be a rewarding experience, but if you're wanting to sell things through the site, be warned that you almost certainly will be disappointed in the outcome unless you have a large advertising budget and a loyal following of enthusiastic customers. Most artists' websites are intended to be, and work best as an on-line resume, introducing your work to potential clients and as a referral to venues where your work is sold.

So, if you're still interested...read on.

First off, you'll need to decide on whether you or someone else will build and maintain your site. This is an important decision as there are several pluses and minuses to consider...for example: it may cost several hundred, and perhaps a thousand dollars or more to have someone build a professional looking site for you. You may be restricted to unrealistic or unattractive contract terms, design options, page layouts, numbers of pages or numbers of allowed photos. Most importantly, if another person maintains your site, you may find it difficult to get timely updates made. On the other hand, learning how to build and maintain your own site will take considerable effort and dedication on your part.

My recommendation is that you learn how to do it yourself, for two reasons...it'll be much less expensive in the short and long run, and you'll avoid the inevitable disappointments that arise over the lack of timely updates, costs of add-ons and lots of other headaches associated with someone else doing it for you.

So, what do you need to design, build and maintain a website?

1. A **domain name** like yoyospin.com, woodturner.org, etc - think of something catchy, easy to remember and spell, and not too long. Eight to ten letters or less is best. Dial into this site to search the net to see if the name you've come up with is available: <http://www.networksolutions.com/> . Just type your selected name(s) into the "Find A Domain" box in the upper left-hand corner. It's also best to use a ".com" suffix, versus one of the other less common ones like ".biz" or ".us"...you want to select a domain name that people can remember and is easy to type. Once you have a name that is available, registering it will cost between \$7 and \$15 a year, depending on whom you register it through. It's best to register the domain name with the same company who will host your site. You may even find that registering a domain name is free if you sign up for hosting services from the same company.

2. **Select a host**, also known as a server. You can find a free or almost free host for your site, but I wouldn't recommend using that type of service...they will want to dominate your site with advertising, making the site look cluttered and off-topic. The host I like best is <http://www.hostway.com/> . They have hosted my site (<http://yoyospin.com>) for about eight years with zero problems. Another good one

I've used for my local woodturning club's site (less expensive) is www.godaddy.com . Costs for a hosting service, without e-commerce (credit card monthly fees), will run between \$5 and \$20 a month. There are literally hundreds of hosting companies and service levels to choose from. It's best to select one who has a good reputation for service and reliability, so look for recommendations from experienced friends or business acquaintances...don't depend on advertising or the yellow pages.

3. Next, you'll need software to build and maintain your site with. The most popular applications are Adobe [Dreamweaver](#) and Microsoft [FrontPage](#). These are expensive (\$300-600) and somewhat complicated. You can find an older but serviceable version of these applications on eBay for between \$10 and \$200. I'd suggest you consider the program suite that I've been using for the past five years called [Namo WebEditor](#) . It cost \$99.95 and you can get a 30-day free trial through the link above. You can also purchase an older version that is almost just as good as the latest revision, through eBay for under \$30...just do an eBay search for "Namo WebEditor".

4. If you want to sell your work through the website, set up a PayPal merchants account...easy to do and free: <https://www.paypal.com/>

5. You need to have a reasonably high-quality digital camera (\$150 to \$600) and know how to use it. To optimize your photography, including cropping and changing the size of the image, you'll need photo editing software like [Corel Paint Shop Pro](#). As with most software tools, you'll find dozens of different applications that are available with prices ranging from free to several hundred dollars. The one I like best is called ViewPrint. It's available through this site: <http://www.hamrick.com> for about \$30.00.

6. The final thing is to learn how to build your site and upload it onto your host's server...that's the hard part, and will take about 10 to 100 hours of your time to become proficient in - depending on your current level of computer literacy*. Website building software like those mentioned above, are relatively easy to learn, as they offer the use of pre-designed templates and menus that are fairly intuitive. You might also look into off-the-shelf website building tools offered by your host. In the case of Hostway (my host) and GoDaddy, they offer a free set of website building tools to subscribers that are reasonably easy to use. The alternative to off-the-shelf templates and the use of an advanced software application like Namo is having to learn a programming language like HTML - probably not something you want to pursue until your experience base is well established.

*Computer Literacy: I hear from a lot of people who want to have a personal website, but feel they are not computer savvy enough to accomplish the task. The main challenge (IMHO) is learning file management. That is, setting up file names, folders and directories on your computer in a way that you can remember

where you put things. Think of a file cabinet as an analogy...you get a bank statement in the mail and want to file a copy for future reference. So, you make a folder named "Bank Statements", put the piece of paper in the folder, and then place the folder alphabetically in your file cabinet. Computer hard drives work exactly the same way. Like all things worth doing, it just takes a little practice and discipline.

Best regards,

Ed Davidson

<http://yoyospin.com>