

DEVELOPING A WEBSITE

*Steve Thompson:
DIGITAL INCLUSION COORDINATOR
Catalyst Stockton*

I'm a firm believer in people and/or organisations taking charge of their own websites. Many people pay a developer to create their site but if you rely on a developer to also update your content it could run up quite a bill over time. There are ways you can even develop your own website as well without paying a developer a penny.

There are many tools for website creation. These days the most popular ones are online rather than software driven. I'm sure there are many more than the ones I've listed below but here's your starter for 10. You can try them all for free so even if you eventually use a web developer you could ask them to use one of the tools below once you've had a look.

Blogger

www.blogger.com

Don't let the name put you off. All Blog software also allows you to create pages as well as the blog. If you consider the chronological blog section to be your "news" section then it all falls into place. Blogger was one of the first such tools going back to 1999. Google purchased the platform so if you have a Google account (see <https://vimeo.com/581834342>) you can create blogger sites for free. Your first attempt will be addressed as www.yoursitename.blogspot.com but you can register a domain name and apply it to your site. (see <https://vimeo.com/578012463>) In my opinion a Blogger site looks a bit clunky but it may suit your needs.

Google Sites

Not everyone's cup of tea but again, free if you have a Google account. The URLs (web addresses) created are a bit convoluted but you can apply a custom domain name to your site.

Wordpress (hosted)

You can get a free account at www.wordpress.com and create several Wordpress sites. The generated web address would be www.yoursitename.wordpress.com but you can apply a domain name

Wordpress self hosted

www.wordpress.org

For this method you download the Wordpress software and install it on your own web space. The software is free but strictly speaking it's not a free method as you need to purchase web hosting. (see separate document for costings). Many web hosts now offer one-click installation of Wordpress (and other software). There are some free or low cost web hosts that provide one click installation. These are OK for testing but if you decide to go with the hosted Wordpress solution, I would not recommend using a free host long term.

Wix

www.wix.com

You can sign up for a free Wix account and try it out. This is a template driven solution and the provision of resources is quite comprehensive. If you decide to go with it there are reasonable monthly plans. You can even build an ecommerce site using Wix. The free version will generate web addresses like:

www.yoursitename.wixsite.com/my-site-1 but the paid solutions allow the addition of a custom domain name.

Weebly

Very similar to Wix. The free version will generate a web address of www.yoursitename.weebly.com but you can apply a domain name.

CONCLUSION

All the named resources are free so it's really worth designating a simple website on paper and then trying to create your ideas in each of the examples above and find out which one works best for you.