



What is Shared or Virtual Hosting?

When looking for a web hosting company you may see the terms shared hosting or virtual hosting. These terms, which are identical in meaning, mean that the server housing your web site also houses many other web sites, often a few hundred. Although these other web sites are housed on the same server, they do not interact with your site in any way – they have their own domain name, and use their own files. All that they are sharing is the actual hardware – the server and its connections to the Internet.

The reason that this is done is primarily economic. Servers are expensive to purchase, and need constant care and attention to keep them running at an optimum level, which costs even more money. For most small businesses or groups or individuals, the costs involved in buying and maintaining a server would mean they would never be able to establish a web site. However with shared hosting the web hosting company provides the hardware, the network connections needed to access the Internet and the support staff and resources needed to maintain the server. Since these costs can then be spread amongst many users then the price per user is far lower.

Shared hosting has many advantages for the user. As mentioned above, the biggest of these is the cost. A shared hosting plan suitable for a simple web site will probably cost only a few dollars a month. Since the hosting company is responsible for any technical issues that may arise, all that the user has to do is to keep the web site updated. There is no need to hire technical support staff, and no need for expensive network connections.