

Sell Your Book Online

A Nontechnical Guide to Building a Website to Sell Your Book Online

Summary

This guide presents all the tools you need to create a website so you can sell your book online. This includes online credit card processing, online distribution, email newsletters, and SEO (search engine optimization for promoting the site.) Selling online has technical issues, such as building and maintaining a website, but selling online is still mostly a marketing project. As with any marketing effort, you must define your product, stand out from your competitors, promote your product, and offer a solid product with good sales and distribution service.

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Introduction

This guide will take you through the steps to create a simple website that you can use to sell products online. When completed, this website will allow you to collect credit card payments online.

To make it easy for everyone, this will be a simple site. Many more improvements and technical improvements are possible, but we want you to get your site up and running on your own. If you want to improve your site, we mention several books and sites you may find useful.

Tools

To build a simple site, you won't need any special software. The software is already on your Windows computer.

We will use:

- Windows PC
- Notepad: this is a simple text editor included with your computer. (Mac users can use BBEdit.)
- Microsoft Paint: A simple graphics program included with your computer.
- FTP: A file transfer program. This is included with these files.

Tip: You'll find it easier to develop and maintain your site if you use better tools, such as Microsoft FrontPage, Allaire HomeSite, or Adobe GoLive (GoLive is very popular and easy to use.) We also recommend reading Elizabeth Castro's book HTML 4. More at www.cookwood.com/html4_4e/

Example: mycat.com

In this guide, we will use mycat.com, a sample website to sell a book about my cat. We will assume that you're selling a book. As you'll see, you could be selling anything: a book, articles, newsletters, music, and so on. But we will use a book as an example.

What This Guide Will Cover

We will describe the process used to get web hosting, register a domain name, create a web page, add credit card payment capability to it, and put it on a web server.

What This Guide Will Not Cover

There are many aspects of online book distribution that we will not cover.

- How to write your book or produce your book. We assume you've already finished your book and you're ready to distribute it.
- How to market your book. You will need to market your book, both in traditional ways and on the web.
- How to deal with receipts, orders, shipping, sales taxes and so on.

Tip: These issues are covered in Dan Poynter's book, *The Self-Publishing Manual*. He explains how to write your book, how to produce it, how to market it, and how to deal with fulfillment and distribution. For more, see parapublishing.com

Does This Really Work?

The dotcom boom and crash was based on websites that cost tens of millions of dollars to build. Often staffed with hundreds of employees, these sites simply could not generate enough sales to cover their daily expenses, let alone the initial investment.

By building sites very cheaply and running them yourself, you build a site that works. A website will cost less than \$100 in the first year. A few sales will cover those costs.

In fact, a nicely designed and well-managed site can produce a living income. Stephanie and I each have a number of clients for whom we have built or currently manage websites. These websites provide a major part of their income.

What to Sell

You can sell just about anything:

- Books, articles, newsletters, and photos. You can sell books as ebooks (pdf files), or send out the printed book by postal mail.
- You can also sell other items that can be sent via email: software, computer games, music (as MP3s or CDs), and so on.
- You can sell services, such as computer support, legal services, accounting, massage, weekends at your B&B or spa, horseback riding trips, Grand Canyon tours, or whatever you can imagine selling. It's possible to create sites where customers can set up their own appointments and make payments.
- You can collect donations for projects, non-profits, and other causes..
- You can sell tickets for events, raffles, and so on. You get an email confirmation of each transaction, and you can use that to create a checklist of paid visitors. We used Paypal to handle the registration and payment for the self-publishing seminar.

Visit Paypal's list of stores and see how others are using Paypal.

Designing the Site

Clear and Simple

Before you start, you need to have a clear idea of your product and your market. You know you've got it if you can explain the site in a few simple sentences to your mom. "I sell my book about my travels in Turkey." "I sell my book on how to make a flower pot out of a computer." By having a clear idea of your site, you can select what is appropriate. You can also keep out whatever confuses the message.

Tip: If you have multiple products that are different from each other, then build several different sites for each one. You can always add cross links between the sites.

Overview of the Process

Here is a quick overview of the process.

- Look at your competitors, make notes, and design your site.
- Rent some space on a web server (\$5 per month.)
- Get a URL, such as mywebsite.com (\$13 to register the URL.)
- Register at Paypal and add a bit of code to your website so people can make online payments.
- Edit the web page template and copy it onto your web server.
- Publicize the web page in your marketing material.

Competitive Analysis

Check out your competitors. Visit at least the ten most popular pages. Study them carefully. See what they are doing online with their businesses. Many of your competitors have several years of experience in the market, and they may have discovered ideas that work. By looking at their sites, you can learn from their experience.

If you design a clean, friendly site, you can beat most of your competitors. In most fields, sites are poorly designed. They haven't been updated in years.

- To check Yahoo's list, go to Yahoo.com. In the search box, type "books about cats" and press Enter. In the list that appears, under the first entry, there is "More sites about: Shopping > Cat Books > Titles." Click this to see an alphabetical list of all books Yahoo lists about cats.

For most topics, you'll also see a list of the most popular sites. For example, search for Astrology. At the top of the results page is a list of the most popular Astrology sites. These are ranked by "most clicked."

You can also research your competitors at Google.com. Type the keywords that describe your project. Google will list sites ranked by significance.

Hosting

For your website to be on the web, you will need space on a web server. We chose Hostica.com because it is easy to use and inexpensive. You can use any web hosting service.

Note: If you already have a website, you can skip the next few chapters. Go to *Adding Online Payments*.

Costs

For a basic website, Hostica.com charges \$5.00 per month.

Note: Neither of us have any connections to Hostica, or any of the companies or services that we recommend here. We list these because we find them useful.

To Sign Up

- 1 Go to Hostica.com and select the \$5.00/month plan.
- 2 This takes you to the information page.
- 3 Click the “Buy Now” button to go to the online registration page.
- 4 Select “TheFive” plan (yes, the name changes.)
- 5 Select billing cycle (monthly or annual.)
- 6 Fill out the billing information at the bottom.
- 7 Click Next.

You’ll get a confirmation email, along with instructions on how to access your website.

For More Information

Go to www.hostica.com/contact.html

- **Billing and Sales** (310-375-7646 Monday - Friday 8am-5pm P.S.T.)
- **Tech Support** (310-406-8885 Monday - Sunday 8am-5pm P.S.T.)

Domain Names

You will need a domain name for your website, such as mycat.com, laurajenkins.com, and so on.

To Select a Domain Name

Over 30 million names have been registered. You'll have to check the list and find a name that isn't taken.

- To find variations on domain names, use www.netsol.com/en_US/name-it/keywords.jhtml

In general, it's fairly easy to get your first name plus last name (such as laurachandler.com and so on.)

How to Sign Up

You can register for a domain name at Hostica.com.

Costs

There's a registration fee for domain names.

At Hostica.com, it's \$13.00 per year. You can register for one, two, or more years.

Online Distribution

There are several ways to send your book to your customers.

- Send a printed book by postal mail.
- Send a digital file they can read on their computer. They can also print it out.

Digital distribution has benefits: it can be completely automated (both the payment and distribution.) The production and distribution costs are nearly zero.

Sending a digital file has several problems.

- Difficult to read on a screen.
- Difficult to print out. Very few people are going to print out a 400-page novel. That many unbound pages is also hard to handle.

There's also another problem with digital distribution. It's easy to make pirate copies.

Piracy

The problem with digital files is piracy. It's easy for others to copy and distribute your file. The music industry, even with their billions and their hundreds of lawsuits, are unable to stop the massive copying of music.

If you write a novel or book that turns out to be popular, and it is distributed online, tens of millions of copies will be made, but you'll only make a small number of sales.

Turn the Problem into an Advantage

Our solution involves several steps.

- Offer the table of contents and the first chapter for free at your website. The reader can get the free chapter, but only after signing up for your newsletter. This grows your newsletter list and adds potential customers.
- People will copy that free chapter and hopefully, they will distribute it to others. Encourage them to distribute it freely. If you're lucky, it will be sent to millions of people.
- In the free chapter, include your website and remind the reader that she can get the rest of the book at your website.
- You produce and distribute the book as a printed, bound book. When a reader buys the book, you get their mailing address and you send them a book by mail.

This two-step method increases your time and costs: printing, binding, storage, and mailing (both handling and postage.) Yet it is the only way to prevent piracy of your book.

To produce a printed book, you can use several methods, depending on quality and cost. Dan Poynter's book, *The Self-Publishing Manual* explains how to produce it for your book. For more on Dan Poynter, see parapublishing.com

Building the Site

First, we are going to create a web page and put it up on the server. In a later step, we will add the credit card payment process.

Notepad

You can use Notepad to edit these files. Notepad is a simple text editor. It is included with Windows. If you want, you can use other text editors or an HTML editor. That's up to you.

Tip: You'll find it easier to develop and maintain your site if you use better tools, such as Microsoft FrontPage, Allaire HomeSite, or Adobe GoLive (GoLive is very popular and easy to use.) We also recommend you read Elizabeth Castro's book *HTML 4*.

The Templates

There are several files included with this book. These are delivered as template.exe. When you doubleclick it, it will open and unpack several files onto your computer.

Unpack the Templates

- 1 Copy the template.exe file onto your computer. Create a folder called Webpages (or similar) and place the file there.
- 2 Doubleclick the file. A message box will appear and ask where the files should be placed.
- 3 Use Browse and navigate to a folder where you want the files.
- 4 Click Unzip.
- 5 It will be automatically unzipped and the files will appear on your computer.

What Are These Files?

- Template-guide.doc: A quick guide to the templates.
- Template-index.html: The order page.
- Template-thankyou.html: This is the page a customer sees after making a payment.
- Images folder: This folder contains several images, including a sample banner, icons of checks, credit cards, and a shopping cart.

Copy the Templates

Don't work with the originals. Make a copy. If you make a mistake, you can always retrieve the original and start again.

- 1 Create a folder on your computer, for example, Website.
- 2 Copy the templates into the folder.
- 3 Rename the files by deleting the word "template" from the file name, so that the new file is named index.html.

Open the Template

Use Notepad to edit the template.

- 1 In Windows, select Start | Run and type notepad.
- 2 In Notepad, select File | Open and then navigate to the folder where you placed index.html.
- 3 Select index.html and click Open.

Look at the Template

Before you start, let's look at the file. It's an HTML file, which means it has a bit of code and a bit of text. For the most part, you can ignore the code.

- Here's an example of code: `<h1> </h1>`

In between, you'll see text. You can change the text.

There are also comments in the file. These are notes from us to you. Here's an example of a comment:

```
<!-- Comment from andreas -->
```

You can delete the comments if you like.

Working with the Templates

To edit a template, there are several steps.

- 1 In Windows, select Start | Run and type notepad.
- 2 In Notepad, select File | Open and then navigate to the folder where you placed index.html.
- 3 Select index.html and click Open.
- 4 Open your web browser by doubleclicking it on your desktop. You'll see the HTML page as source code. This is what creates a webpage.
- 5 In your browser, select File | Open and click Browse. Navigate to the HTML file and open it. It will open as a webpage.
- 6 If you make a change to the source, save it, and refresh the webpage, your change will appear in the webpage.

Edit the Template

Let's make a change and see what happens. Follow the steps above so that both the source and the webpage are on your screen.

- 1 In Notepad, scroll down until you find `<H2>Welcome to mycat.com: A Book About My Cat's Backyard.</H2>`
- 2 Place the cursor at the word `Welcome` and type a new line. Delete the "Welcome to mycat.com: A Book About My Cat's Backyard" text and replace it with your welcome sentence.
- 3 When you finish, it should look like `<H2>Welcome to Cynthia.com and My Book about Astrology</H2>` or similar.
- 4 Select `File | Save As` and save the file with the name `index.html`.
- 5 Switch to your browser and press the Refresh button. In Explorer, it's F5. In Netscape, click the Reload button or press `Ctrl + R`. Your change will appear on the webpage.
- 6 As you make changes, repeat the last step over and over. Save the file, switch to your browser, and press the Refresh button. Your change will appear on the webpage.

Tip: There are e lots of links to useful resources for building and designing your website. See the links list at www.andreas.com/faq-links.html

When You're Finished

When you finish editing the file, save it as `index.html` onto your computer. The name "index.html" is a default name for websites. Whenever a browser visits your site, it will automatically open `index.html`, so you can tell your visitors to go to `mycat.com` (they don't need to type `mycat.com/index.html`.)

Upload with FTP

After you've finished creating the HTML files on your computer, you'll need to transfer them onto your web server.

What Is FTP?

FTP stands for *File Transfer Protocol*. It's a method of transferring files over the Internet. This is usually done with an ftp program, such as WS-FTP.

There are a number of ftp programs. You can use whatever you like. WS-FTP is perhaps the most popular, and most hosting services can help you with installation and configuration.

Where to Get It

Visit download.com and get WS FTP LE . It's free. At the top of the download.com website, search for *WS FTP LE*, and download the 32-bit version. It's a 690 KB file.

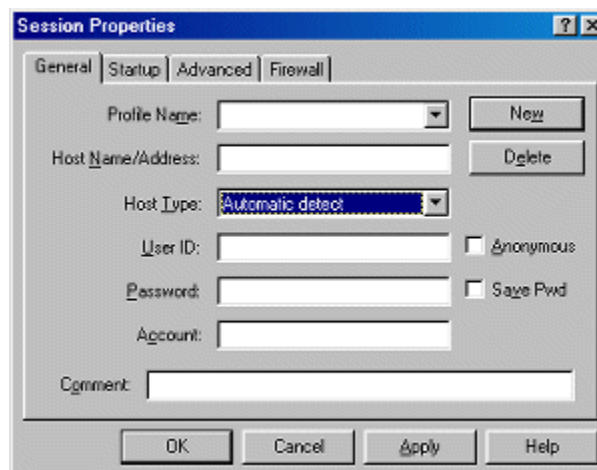
How to Install

WS FTP was probably downloaded into your My Download Files folder.

- 1 WS FTP is in your My Download Files folder.
- 2 Doubleclick the file ws_ftple.exe.
- 3 This starts the installation process.
- 4 Follow the prompts to install it.

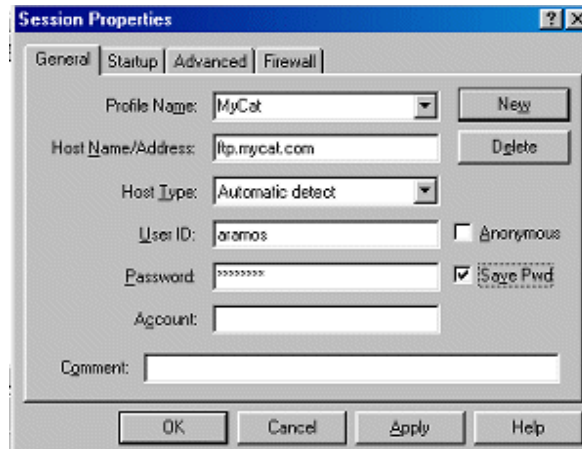
How to Configure

- 1 Doubleclick the FTP icon to start it.
- 2 Click New to set up a new account.



- 3 Enter a Profile name, such as mycat.com, your name, or whatever you like.

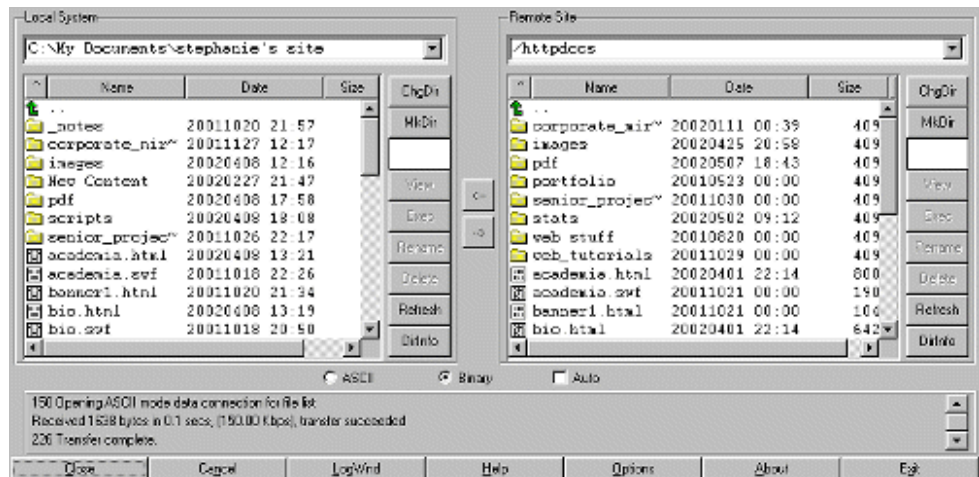
- 4 Enter your host name. This will usually be ftp.yourname.com. For the exact name, contact your ISP's technical support or look at their technical support. They usually have a page that explains how to set up WS F'TP. In hostica.com's case, it is ftp.mycat.com.
- 5 Under Host Type, select Automatic Detect.
- 6 Enter your username. This is your user name at your hostica.com account. For example, aramos (abbreviation of Andreas Ramos.)
- 7 Enter your password. This was also assigned to you as part of your account. To automatically enter your password next time, select Save Pwd.



- 8 Click Apply to save your changes.

How to Use It

- 1 To use F'TP, log in to the Internet and establish an online connection.
- 2 Start the FTP program.
- 3 Select your Profile. If you have only one, then it will appear. (If there are other profiles that you don't use, you can delete them.)
- 4 Click OK.
- 5 FTP will connect to your web host. You will see the following dialog box.



- 6 On the left side are the files on your computer (Local System.)
- 7 On the right side are the files on your web hosting space.
- 8 The first time you log in, you'll need to navigate to the web page folders. On the right side, there is a folder named httpdocs. This is the folder that holds your website files. Doubleclick it to enter it.
- 9 On the left side, navigate to your website's folder on your computer.
- 10 When you're ready, you'll have your files on your computer on the left side, and the web host site on the right side.
- 11 So you'll be in these folders in the future, you can save the current folders. Select Options, click the Session tab, and click *Save Current Folders as Connection Folders*. From now on, FTP will open in your folders, ready to go.
- 12 At the bottom of the windows, there are two boxes marked Binary and Auto. Select both of these. This lets FTP use the right setting to transfer your files.
- 13 To transfer HTML documents and images, select the file on one side and click the arrows in the middle to transfer the file to the other side.
- 14 You can transfer files from your computer to your website. You can also transfer files from the website to your computer.
- 15 You can also transfer a whole folder in one step. Click the folder to select it and then click the transfer arrow.
- 16 You can transfer multiple files simultaneously. Select all the files that you want to transfer and then click the transfer arrow.
- 17 And finally, you can open several FTP programs and transfer many files at the same time. In one, you can set it to transfer images, and in the other, you can transfer HTML files.
- 18 To see if it worked, open a browser and visit your website. The page should open in your browser.

For More Information

WS FTP is a powerful program with many features. You can edit programs on the server, you can change file permissions, you can create folders for backups, and more. For tutorials and more information on using WS FTP, visit www.ftpplanet.com/tutorial

Adding Online Payments

Now that you have a website, you can add online transactions to it.

Three Ways to Carry Out Transactions

There are three ways to do online transaction processing.

- **Traditional Merchant Account:** You have a traditional merchant account (a bank account for stores) and a credit card processor (one of those small keypads in shops, where they type your credit card number.) Someone places an order at your website and they send the credit card number to you, either by a secure CGI form or an email. You manually retype the credit card number and process the order. This is simple, and it works. Some online merchants use this because it's easy, they only have a few sales per day, and they don't mind the bit of work. However, as your business grows, you'll be too busy with orders to have time to develop a better system.
- **Online Merchant Account:** You get an online merchant account (not the same as a traditional merchant account), you buy a transaction processing software (\$600 or so), and you buy/rent shopping cart software (\$600 or so.) You can't buy these at various places and assemble them yourself. The banks obligate you to buy the account, their software, and their shopping cart software from them. On top of all of those fees, you also pay monthly fees, a percentage of each transaction, and the agreement is usually for a minimum of two or three years. Generally, a simple complete setup will cost about \$1,600 in fees for the first year and about \$1,200 in fees for every year after that, with about 5% in transaction fees. This is feasible for an established company. For a small business, it's risky to invest several thousand dollars and commit to three-year leases. If the project doesn't work out, you'll still have to pay the monthly fees for three years.
- **Transaction Processing:** Paypal.com offers a different model. You sign up at Paypal.com (it's free) and add a few lines of HTML (also free) to your web page. Paypal charges a small fee for each transaction. There are no monthly fees or minimum fees. There are several other similar services (Billpoint and CCNow,) but Paypal is the cheapest, most widely used, and easy to install and manage.

There are also various online store sites. These include web hosting, transaction processing, and other services. Amazon, Yahoo, and others offer these web stores. Generally, they have a monthly fee plus they take a percentage of the transaction. The problem with these is that by using them, you become part of their company. Both Amazon and Yahoo have been losing money for several years, and their future is not certain.

In our experience, Paypal is the best solution for a small business website with up to several hundred products. With your own site and Paypal, you are independent. You can design and manage your store as you like. In this guide, we will describe how to add Paypal to your website.

How It Works

What's it like for someone to buy a book at your site?

- 1 Laura comes to your site mycat.com. She reads about your book and decides to buy. Your book costs \$20.
- 2 She clicks on a button.
- 3 This opens a new page that is managed by Paypal. If she is already registered at Paypal, they have her name and credit card information, so she just clicks Okay.
- 4 If she has never used Paypal before, she registers by adding her name, address, and credit card information. She clicks Okay.
- 5 This brings her back to your website. You display a page that thanks her for her purchase. If you're sending the book via email or download, your page can tell her how to download the book.
- 6 If you're sending the book by postal mail, then your thankyou page can tell her to expect the book in 5-7 days.
- 7 Paypal deducts the \$20 from her credit card account.
- 8 Paypal charges a transaction fee (in this case, it's 88 cents.) Paypal deposits the \$19.20 into your Paypal account.
- 9 Paypal sends you an email and notifies you that a transaction has been made.
- 10 You can transfer the money from the Paypal account to your bank account at any time. Just click a button. Either they transfer it electronically, or they can send you a check. You can transfer it every day, every week, or whenever you like.
- 11 If you have a Paypal ATM card, you can withdraw that money at any ATM machine.
- 12 You can also just let the money accumulate in the Paypal account. The account pays 5% interest.
- 13 At your Paypal account, you can pull up a list of all transactions: names of customers, their mailing addresses, and email addresses. You can add these to your mailing list.

Setting It Up: An Overview

To set up Paypal, there are several steps. Here's an overview. Later, we'll go through this in detail.

- 1 You sign up at Paypal for a seller's account. You type in your credit card number and your bank account number. Paypal uses both of these to check your identity.
- 2 After a few days, Paypal will deposit a few cents into your bank account. You go back to your Paypal account and enter the amount. This insures that the bank account is really your account.
- 3 You copy a few lines of HTML text and add this to your website.
- 4 When someone clicks a button at your website, Paypal takes over and performs the transaction. Paypal uses SSL, so this is a secure (unhackable) transmission.
- 5 You can send the book in two ways: either as a digital file (an ebook) so the customer can download it, or you can ship a printed book by postal mail.
- 6 You can visit your Paypal account and see a list of payments, customer information, and totals. You visit your Paypal account and click a button to transfer the money into your bank account or have Paypal send you a check.

Transaction Fees

The standard Paypal transaction fee is 2.9% of the total amount of the transaction, plus a 30¢ fee per transaction.

For example, if you sell a book for \$20, then Paypal will charge 2.9% of \$20 (which is 58 cents) plus 30¢. Therefore the total cost for a \$20 sale is 88¢. Paypal will deposit \$19.12 into your account. This means that you keep 96% of the sale.

In contrast, any book publisher will give you only 7-10% in royalties (and they keep 85-90%.)

There are several levels of fees.

- **Standard Paypal Account:** 2.9% + 30¢ per transaction.
- **Preferred Paypal Account:** If you get a Paypal ATM card, the fee drops to 1.4% + 30¢.
- **Standard Paypal Business Account:** If you do more than \$1,000 per month in transactions, the fee drops to 2.2% + 30¢.
- **Preferred Paypal Business Account:** If you get a Paypal ATM card and do more than \$1,000 per month in transactions, the fee drops to 0.7% + 30¢.

Note: Occasionally, Paypal will change their fees. Visit Paypal for information on current fees.

Setting Up Paypal

- 1 Use a web browser and go to Paypal.com
- 2 Sign up as a new user.
- 3 Sign up for a Premium Personal account.
- 4 Paypal will send you an email.
- 5 Open the email and click the link.
- 6 Your account will open in a browser window.
- 7 Select the button Get Verified.
- 8 Fill out the form with your bank information (use a blank check from your bank account.)
- 9 In a Paypal page, you'll see a window with HTML code. Copy the code, add it to your web page, and modify it according to the instructions in the template.
- 10 Meanwhile, Paypal will verify that your bank account information is correct. Paypal will make two deposits of a few cents each into your bank account. For example, Paypal will deposit two cents and six cents. This will happen within three days of opening your Paypal account.
- 11 Check your bank account for new deposits. You'll find two new deposits of two and six cents. Write this down.
- 12 Return to Paypal, log into your account, and enter the amount of the two deposits. If they match, then Paypal will activate your account.

Your Paypal account is ready to use.

To Test the Account

Create an item and set the price to 50 cents. Have a friend visit your site and make a purchase. If everything is set up correctly, you'll get an email from Paypal with a notification of the transaction, and the fifty cents (minus the fee and the 30 cent fee) will be in your Paypal account.

Shopping Carts

With Paypal, you can also create a simple shopping cart. For example, from a dozen books, your customer can select three books, look at a list of the selected books (the books in the "shopping cart") add a fourth book, and remove a book. When she is finished, she clicks a checkout button to finish the order. This completes the transaction.

Note: A "shopping cart" is software that lets the customer select various items, adding or removing items, and making a final transaction payment at the end. It can also calculate and add shipping fees and local sales tax.

Shopping carts are added using the same method as the normal Paypal button; you add a bit of HTML code into your website.

To add a shopping Cart

- 1 First, create your Paypal account.
- 2 Go to your Paypal account and click Sell (upper right corner.)



- 3 Click Shopping Cart (right list, at the top.)
- 4 Type the title of the first book (My Cat's Backyard.)
- 5 Type the book's number (for example, 001.)
- 6 Type the sales price.
- 7 Choose an image. You can use Paypal's button, or you can create your own. (I've added several shopping cart icons in the template files.) For now, use Paypal's icon.
- 8 To add variable shipping costs and sales tax, click Add More Options.
- 9 At the top of the new page, click Shipping Preferences.
- 10 The Shipping Calculation page lets you add shipping costs, depending on the amount of the purchase. It's broken into categories at up to \$10, \$50, \$100, \$200, or higher. You can charge an amount or a percentage. Make your selection and click Save.
- 11 This returns to the previous page. Now click Tax Preferences.
- 12 The new page lets you set your sales tax rate. Call your local tax board and ask about the tax rate for your county. For example, in California, it's 7.5%, but in some counties, it's 7.75%

- 13 Finally, click Create Button.
- 14 A new page appears:



Add a button to your website

Copy your custom HTML code

Copy the code below just like you would normal text:

For Web Pages:

```
{'https://www.paypal.com/cart/add=1&business=andreas%40andreas.com&item_name=My+Cat%27s+Backyard&item_number=001&amount=20.00', 'cartwin', 'width=600,height=400,scrollbars,location,resizable,status');"></a>
```

View Cart Button

The HTML code below contains your "View Cart" button. Copy the code and paste it onto your webpage. When your customers press the button, they will be taken to a webpage listing the items they will purchase from you.

```
<a href="#" onclick="window.open ('https://www.paypal.com/cart/display=1&business=andreas%40andreas.com', 'cartwin', 'width=600,height=400,scrollbars,location,resizable,status');"></a>
```

Paste the HTML code onto your website or into your email

Go to Your Website: In your files, go to the HTML code for the web page where you want the payment button to appear. You can do this by using a text editor or your HTML editor.

- 15 Copy the code in each of these windows and paste it into your HTML.

```
<a href="#"
onclick="window.open ('https://www.paypal.com/cart/add=
1&business=andreas%40mycat.com&item_name=My+Cats+Backy
ard
&amount=20.00&return=http%3A//www.mycat.com/thankyou.h
tml', 'cartwin', 'width=600,height=400,scrollbars,locati
on,resizable');"></a>
```

```
<a href="#"
onclick="window.open ('https://www.paypal.com
/cart/display=1&business=andreas%40mycat.com',
'cartwin', 'width=600, height=400,
scrollbars,location, resizable' );"><img src=
"images/cart-view.gif" border="0"></a>
```

(These are examples. Don't use these for your site.)

- 16 Use the same steps to add your second book. Scroll to the bottom, click Create Another Button, and repeat the process.

Tip: The best way to build your site is to see how others have done it. Visit Paypal, click Shop, and look at some of the 25,000 shops. Find categories similar to yours.

Email Newsletters

What's an Email Newsletter?

Just as you send a group email to several friends or family, you can send an email about your book to several hundred people. This can be as many as several thousand people.

The newsletter email is sent monthly, usually at the same time. You can also send newsletters for special events, holidays, and so on.

Tip: Sending out a regular email newsletter is the most important thing we can tell you to do. This will be the foundation to your success online.

Why You Should Send a Newsletter

As part of your website, you should start a newsletter, collect user email addresses, and send out your newsletter regularly.

If a user makes her way to your website, she is interested in your product. Out of some 40 million websites, she came to yours. She is a potential customer. So you need to get her to give you her email address.

Perhaps she doesn't buy something this month. By sending her an email every month, you remind her about your site and book. Perhaps she won't buy for six months. But eventually, when she does decide to buy, she will remember your site. You'll stand out in her mind.

Remarkably, most sites don't send out newsletters. By having a newsletter, your site will stand out among your competitors.

Note: To put this in marketing jargon, by collecting email addresses, you are doing lead generation. An email newsletter lets you improve customer retention by branding the site.

How to Collect Email Addresses

When someone visits your site, you ask them to type in their email address.

The best way is to offer something in exchange. You offer to give them a free sample if they sign up for the newsletter. For example, you can offer a first chapter, a free MP3 of one of your songs, an article or paper on a subject, a product sample, or something else of comparable value.

Technically, you do this in two ways:

- **Email Link:** Offer a simple email link that they can click and by clicking, send an email to you. An example is included in the template.
- **CGI Form:** By using a CGI form, they can fill out a box and click a button. Their email is then sent to you.

There are several ways to automate the process. If you use an email link, you can add a processing rule to your email program so it will automatically reply to an email and send the file. If you use CGI forms, the computer can send the file to a user. Ask your local computer wizard how to do this.

In either case, you should automate the process. You can expect dozens or even hundreds of subscription emails per week.

Opt-in Email Lists

An opt-in list of addresses is a list in which each recipient has opted in (chosen) to receive the emails. They asked to join the list.

You build such a list by asking visitors for their email addresses or by renting a list.

Spam

Unsolicited email, also known as junk email or spam, is a problem on the Internet. You probably get already spam, with offers for porn, get-rich-quick scams, and otehr schemes.

When you set up a business, you'll also get offers to have your email sent out to 10 million users for only \$20. This is usually a scam: they collect your \$20 and nothing gets sent out.

Note: Don't use spam! Web hosts have a no-spam policy. If users complain to your web host, the host will shut off your email and web account, usually instantly.

Don't write your email to look like spam. Don't use gimmicky subject lines or sexual content. Many users have spam filters, and your email will be automatically deleted.

Buying a Mailing List

Aside from building your own list, you can also buy a mailing list. In practice, this means you pay a company to send your email to their list. You don't get a copy of the list.

The email addresses are opt-in emails. They have chosen to receive that information or they are interested in it.

Generally, opt-in lists have a two-to-three percent response rate. If you send to 100 users, two or three will reply. With a list of 10,000 names, 200-300 will respond.

There are hundreds of lists for all professions, interests, life styles, and so on. For example, if you are selling a book on architecture, then a list of architects would be a natural audience.

- To find lists, go to Yahoo.com or Google.com and search for *List Brokers*.

Generally, it costs ten to twenty-five cents per name to rent a list. For 10,000 names, this would be \$1,000 to \$2,500. Usually, there are minimum purchases in units of five thousand names. You can get volume discounts at hundreds of thousands or millions of names

Note: You can negotiate with list brokers. Find a broker, talk with her, and tell her about your product. She'll help you to find the most appropriate list. The better response to you, the more business she'll get from you. You can usually make a test mailing of several hundred names so you can see the quality of the list.

How to Write a Newsletter

- Your newsletter is your “voice.” Your email should be friendly and personal.
- Write to catch your readers’ attention.
- Keep the newsletters short and to the point.
- Readers often scan, so paraphrase, use bullet points, and highlight the content.
- What problem do you solve for the reader? Your readers want know how your product will benefit or enrich her life. Emphasize the benefits, not the features.

What to Write

Your newsletter should identify you clearly and remind your readers who you are. They get dozens, or hundreds, of emails per month. Here’s an example of a newsletter for mycat.com.

mycat.com, January 2002, Palo Alto.

Happy New Year! It’s sunny and warm in Palo Alto today. I finally finished the second book about my cat’s backyard.

My Cat Goes to the Vet. Holiday special, only \$11.95 with free shipping. For more, visit mycat.com

Mailbag: Sarah in Miami writes: “Dear Andreas, thanks for the book. But I have a dog! Can you write about dogs?”

Upcoming Events: I’ll be signing books at Borders in Hollywood on June 12.

See you again next month!
Andreas at mycat.com

Instead of a long email, write short paragraphs, and urge the reader to visit your website for more details. The purpose of the newsletter is to get the reader to visit your site.

If you have lots to write, then add a summary in bullet list form at the top of your email, so readers can select what they want to read.

What to Write About

- New books, specials, and holiday promotions, such as free gift wrapping for Mother's Day.
- Comments from readers.
- Book readings, tours, and upcoming events, such as "I'll be at Borders in Seattle on June 12th."
- Related items of interest, such as other books and websites, such as "Visit Friskies.com for a coupon for a free cat toy."

Unsubscribe

Always let people know that they can unsubscribe. For example, include the following at the top and bottom of your newsletter.

This newsletter is sent to subscribers who registered at mycat.com. To unsubscribe, send me an email and I'll remove you from the list.

How to Send Your Newsletter

Once you have a list of email addresses, copy them and paste them into the BCC field in a new email. Add yourself as the recipient in the To: field. Write the email and send it.

Using CC vs BCC

There are three ways to address an email:

- **To:** Put the user's name in the To: line. You can put as many names in the To line as you like. However, everyone will also see your entire list of addresses. They can copy that and take your list.
- **CC (Carbon Copy):** You can also put a list of names in the CC line. All of these will get a copy. However, everyone will also see your entire list of addresses. They can copy that and take your list.
- **BCC (Blind Carbon Copy):** This is the same as CC:, but each recipient doesn't see the email addresses of the others. Your list stays private.

Use BCC to send out your email newsletter.

Make a list of email addresses. Use BCC. Add your email address in the To: field.

Note: Remember to BCC your subscribers' email addresses to protect their privacy and to keep others from stealing your email list.

Sending Mass Email

There are also several ways to send out mass emails.

- From your email account, you can put several hundred email addresses in the CC or BCC field. We have sent single emails to 5,000 people this way.
- If your list grows to 50,000 or more, you can use mailing services. They handle rejects, expired addresses, and unsubscriptions. They can also create personalized emails for each user, including HTML emails that are adjusted for the user's particular browser. These services usually charge a fee, based on a few cents per email.

Email Format: ASCII vs HTML

There are the two ways to format a newsletter: ASCII or HTML.

- ASCII Email: is the simple text that you write in NotePad. No formatting, colors, or layout.
- HTML Email: It's also possible to send web pages as email. This lets you create an email that looks like a webpage: backgrounds, colored text, photographs, links, Flash animation, and sounds. Your newsletter will look like your website.

You can see examples of each type of email.

- ASCII Email: www.bulletmail.com/example.html
- HTML Email: www.bulletmail.com/html-sample.html

In the beginning, start with ASCII email. Just open your email program, write an email, and send it.

Later, as you learn more tools, you can learn how to send HTML emails.

- Most users in companies, and nearly all home users, now use the latest web browsers and email programs, so their computers can display HTML emails.
- Advanced users, technical users, and hardcore computer people still tend to use UNIX interfaces to the Internet. They often do not use programs that can display HTML emails.

If your audience is most business users or home users, then you can send HTML email. If your audience is comprised of hardcore techies, then send ASCII email.

Privacy

If someone gives you their email address, you should respect their privacy. Don't give that email address to anyone else.

When to Send Your Newsletter

From experience, we've learned that there are certain days and hours when you should send a newsletter.

- **Best Day:** Send on the fifteenth of the month. That's the second payday of the month. On the first payday, people pay their rent and major bills, so they have little money left over. On the fifteenth, they get their second paycheck and they're ready to shop.
- **Second Best Day:** The first of the month. It's a payday, and if they have money left over from their major bills, they'll look around for things to buy.
- **Best Hour:** There's also a best hour to send your newsletter. It's at noon on the East Coast (which is 9 AM on the West Coast.) People are at the office, and they are reading their email. Usually, they're bored, and if your email shows up, and it's something that interests them, they'll visit your website.

Don't send out a newsletter at 6 PM on Friday. Most web browsing is done during the work week, during work hours. If the 15th falls on Friday or a weekend, wait until Monday morning.

Note: This sounds amusing, but it's true. Most online sales are done during office hours. Employees are bored and cruising the web. Other web masters and small business websites have told us that most of their sales also occur on these days and at these times.

For More Information

- Ralph Wilson has an extensive site on web marketing, along with a free newsletter. Visit wilsonweb.com
- There's more on newsletter writing at wordbiz.com

More for Your Site

Illustrations

An attractive site has illustrations. You can either find illustrations online or you can buy CDs with tens of thousands of images that you can copy, edit, and paste.

Look at your competitors' sites. Think carefully about your site. What do you want to project to your visitors?

Often you can find students at local colleges who can make a few illustrations for you at acceptable prices. To find someone, visit your local college and put up a few flyers.

Design a Banner

You will need a banner at the top of your page.

The banner should contain the name of your website (mysite.com,) a brief statement of the purpose of your site, and perhaps an image.

A banner should be rectangle that is no more than 770 pixels wide and 100 pixels tall. It can also be smaller.

To see effective banners, visit:

- <http://pm.netratings.com/nnpm/owa/NRpublicreports.topbannerweekly>
- <http://www.banner4u.net/1banner.html>

For inspiration, look at the tens of thousands of images at the following sites:

- <http://dgl.microsoft.com/>
- allposters.com/

Search Engines

Now that everything is up and working, you need to register your site with a search engine. Luckily, you only need to register at one site. Google.com is the search engine behind the search engines at Yahoo, AOL, and so on. You can also register with msn.com's search engine. If you like, you can register with more search engines. But generally, Google and MSN are sufficient.

Don't bother with spam emails that offer to register you with 70 search engines for only \$20. These are usually scams. They take your money and don't register you.

Search engines are important, but they are not the main way to announce your site. You will get more customers if you put up flyers, use email newsletters, and cross link with relevant websites.

To Submit Your Site to Google

- 1 Go to google.com
- 2 Click Cool Stuff at the bottom right.
- 3 On the new page, click Submitting Your Site.
- 4 Type your URL, such as <http://www.mycat.com>
- 5 You don't need to add a comment.
- 6 Click Add URL.

That's it. It will take Google 2-4 weeks to add your site.

To Submit Your Site to MSN

- 1 Go to msn.com
- 2 Scroll to the bottom and click Search.
- 3 In the new window, under Search Resources, click Submit a website...
- 4 Choose either the \$49 fee or the free submission. For free submission, go to the bottom of the page.

If you chose the free submission, it can take several weeks, or even months, to be added.

Note: For more on using search engines to publicize your website, read Andreas' Search Engine Optimization White Paper. It discusses how sites are ranked by search engines rank, which search engines are the most important ones, how to make changes to your site for better ranking, and so on. More at www.andreas.com/faq-searchengines.html

Future Development

Things to do to enhance your website:

- **More Pages.** Expand your website by adding more pages. We kept it simple by using only two pages. You can grow your website to include examples, testimonials, frequently asked questions, and so on.
- **CSS Style Sheets:** With CSS, you can improve the look of your site.
- **Tables:** By adding tables with rows and cells, you can improve the layout of your site.
- **Illustrations:** The more photos, the better. You can add a photo of yourself, your book, sample illustrations from your book, and so on.
- **CGI Forms:** By using forms, you can design a page with fields for your customer to fill out.
- **Databases:** Using databases lets you handle large amounts of information. You can automate the collection of email address.

All of this can be done at many levels, from a simple online shop to a corporate site.

Appendix: Website = ROI

By Stephanie Cota, consultant for the Small Business Administration (SBA) Technology Advisory Program (TAP.)

Tip: TAP is a government-funded, unbiased management consulting practice specialized in improving business operations by providing free technology consulting services to small businesses in the San Francisco Bay Area. Visit the SBA TAP at sbdctap.com and the SBA at ecenteronline.org

Summary

Will a website really make money for your small business? Websites have proven ROI (*Return on Investment*.) For a relatively small investment in a website, a small business can see substantial ROI fairly quickly. I'll cover two types of websites and four case studies.

Note: This is a short version of Stephanie's ROI article. For a free copy of the article, visit her website at stephaniecota.com

Two Types of Business Websites

A website is just another part of your general business strategy. It is critical to examine your business goals before deploying a website, to make sure that the website fits into your business strategy.

There are two types of business websites:

- *E-Brochure Site:* An e-brochure is simply a website with information about your company. Let's say you want customers to be able to look up information on the web. An "e-brochure" website will have contact information, investor information, company details and mission, along with products or services.
- *E-Commerce Site:* An e-commerce site is a *sales* website. The purpose is to perform a sales transaction. Transactions can be: reservations for small hotels, buy travel packages buy books, professional services, distribution to vendors, and so on. The website should steer the customer to a transaction.

Lead Generation

When you pay for a newspaper ad or a radio spot, hundreds of people will see your ad but you'll never know who they are. But with a website and a strategy to collect email addresses, you can capture those interested viewers and quickly build up a substantial mailing list. Since it's basically free to send out emails, you can continue to market to your potential customers.

Even a modest site in a very small market can receive 10 to 20 visitors per day. There are several ways to collect email addresses: online marketing surveys, email newsletters, online

subscriptions, sign-ups for free white papers, offering small prizes and drawings, free notifications or updates on products and services, and so on. People will sign up and you'll build a customer list you can use to send out your monthly newsletter with product or service offers.

Case Studies

The following case studies will show different business models and how each one uses the web to increase ROI.

Case Study II: hairclippy.com

The No Slippy Hair Clippy is a hair clip for infants and toddlers. No Slippy Hair Clippy sells to 20 Bay Area stores and is expanding to 150-200 stores nationwide.

HairClippy.com contains company details and product information, contact information and press coverage sections, where articles that have been written about the product are posted.

An online product catalog shows seven different lines of hair clips. A retailer can sign up for access to this form and receive a free sample clip just for signing up.

No Slippy Hair Clippy is using the website to collect information on potential retailers. This is supported by the free sample sign-up. Other efforts for lead generation include the option to join their emailing list for newsletters, product updates, and industry news.

By implementing an online product catalog with product close-ups of clip styles across various lines, an ordering system including a password-protected ordering form, a unified messaging center, contact information, and a press coverage section, the owner has more time to work on customer acquisition and sales.

ROI can be measured in hours saved. By implementing an online catalog in conjunction with a unified messaging system, the amount of time needed for order processing alone was reduced by seven hours per week. By using the web to allow customers to learn about the company and products on their own, or see the latest hair clip styles, another 10 hours per week is saved. Per month, this fluctuates by 25-40 hours. This substantial saving warrants maintaining the website.

Case Study IV: DepthHypnosis.com

Depth Hypnosis is a therapeutic counseling service in San Francisco. Clients are treated by the owner-practitioner.

The website is an e-brochure site. It has information about the therapy services, the therapist, articles, and contact information.

Depth Hypnosis also sends out a monthly newsletter. Visitors are asked to type their email address and this is added to the list. The website has some 500 subscribers to the newsletter.

In early 2001, Depth Hypnosis added classes to their services. Upcoming classes are announced on the website and through the monthly newsletter. The first class was overfilled and subsequently, more classes were added, along with larger class sizes. In February 2002, Depth Hypnosis held a workshop in Hawaii. At \$1,200 per person, the class was sold out.

Depth Hypnosis's ROI is very healthy. The site was built for less than \$1,000 and it accounts for 80 percent of the therapist's annual income.

Summary

These are real businesses with websites that work. For a small business starting out, a website is critical to your businesses survival and growth, both for perceived image and ROI. A website gives your business an advantage against your competitors. Since the bottom line is ROI, the website must be carefully planned to increase customer acquisition, customer retention, and sales.

About Stephanie Cota

Stephanie Cota has a degree in web design and e-marketing. She builds business sites for small and mid-sized companies, advising clients on web marketing strategies and building the sites, using appropriate technologies. Contact her at stephanie@stephaniecota.com

Appendix: SEO White Paper

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is what you do to get listed higher in search engines. When people search, they click the first few links. The rest are ignored. The first links get ALL the traffic.

Highlights

- What generates more traffic (47%) than search engines (only 7%)?
- There are over 800 search engines. 65% of users visit only three. Which?
- Is it true that you must pay to be listed? Does it work?
- Are spammers ahead of you on a search engine's list? How do you delete them?
- Rankings of search engines: Which are the best? Four charts and tables.
- Outsourcing SEO: What to look for, what to avoid--and what to pay.

Does This Really Work?

Yes. We manage several sites. One of our sites is the Number One Most Popular in its category at Yahoo. Another site OWNS its own category at Yahoo. It gets 100% of all visitors to that category. In fact, it's too successful and has too many clients.

Authors of the SEO White Paper

- Andreas Ramos. At Dialpad.com, he managed the website as it grew to 10 million registered users, 60 million daily visits, and became one of the top 125 sites.
- Roan Bear. From her yurt in her private mini-redwood forest in Santa Cruz, she designs and manages commercial sites for Manxweb.com.

What Readers Say

- Highly recommended. This is a really useful paper on a topic that is ignored by many web marketers but which can make an immense difference. -- Moe Rubenzahl, Dir. of Internet Marketing for a major high-tech manufacturer.

How To Get It...

The SEO White Paper comprises 25 pages with illustrations and notes. For a copy, visit www.andreas.com/faq-searchengines.html

Glossary

Here are a few key concepts. For more definitions, see www.andreas.com/faq-glossary.html. There's also Whatis.com.

- *ASCII*: (pronounced *ASK-key*) American Standard Code for Information Interchange is a widespread standard for information. If a document was saved in an ASCII format, then it can be read by just about any other computer program.
- *Bandwidth*: The maximum amount of information that can pass through a connection. This is also called a pipe. Your modem is a small pipe; it has narrow bandwidth. It can only support one user at a time. A DSL connection has wider bandwidth; several people can use it at the same time. An ISP's T1 connection has lots of bandwidth so that several hundred people can connect at once without any system slowdown. Bandwidth is meaningless because there's no user limit. You can keep adding people to the system. It just gets slower.
- *Branding*: Building a recognizable name for your business. Calvin Klein, Eddie Bauer, and Martha Stewart have turned their names into brands.
- *Bugs*: An early mainframe was having problems. When they opened the cabinet, a moth was found. The system operator taped the moth to the computer's log book and wrote *we found the bug*. The page, with the moth, is in a Navy museum as the first computer bug. Bugs happen, for example, when two program instructions try to work at the same time. Every new program is filled with them. It takes feedback from users and a lot of work to get rid of the little critters.
- *CGI-bin*: Common Gateway Interface Binary Scripts. The name for the scripts or programs that carry out actions, such as HTML forms.
- *CSS* (Cascading Style Sheets): Control the layout of HTML documents.
- *DHTML* (Dynamic Hyper-text Markup Language): Adds interactivity to a website. Includes rollover tabs, cookies, forms and form verification, drop-down menus, and so on.
- *Extension*: The three-letter last name of a file. It often identifies the family of files which have the same format. DOC is the *extension* of MAIL.DOC.
- *Ezine* (electronic magazine): Another name for an email newsletter.
- *FAQ*: Frequently Asked Questions.
- *FTP*: File Transfer Protocol. Used to transfer files across Internet systems.
- *Home Page*: The home page is the web page that appears when you start up your web browser.
- *HTML*: Hyper Text Markup Language. The set of tags that define web documents.
- *HTTP*: Hyper Text Transfer Protocol. The set of rules which controls how web documents are passed around.

- *Pixel Dust*: The dust that collects on your screen.
- *Pixel*: PICture ELeMent. A single dot on the screen.
- *Platform*: A platform is the type of machine that runs your computer. For example, Notepad runs on the Windows platform but not the Macintosh or UNIX platforms. The Netscape browser is platform independent, which is to say that it works across all platforms.
- *SEO* (Search Engine Optimization): A strategy for raising one's ranking in search engines. By adjusting the way words are presented on the index page, you can improve your site's rank. For more, see <http://www.andreas.com/faq-searchengines.html>
- *Server*: A program on a website's computer that receives requests from browsers, retrieves the files, and sends them to the browser.
- *Shareware*: These are low-priced programs . If you like the program and use it, you send in the registration fee and receive the manuals and updated versions of the program.
- *UNIX*: An *operating system* that allows more than one user to work with the computer at the same time. In the same way that Windows is the operating system for PCs; UNIX is the operating system for UNIX computers. Mainframe and large network computers use UNIX. There are versions of UNIX, such as gnu and Linux, which are free.
- *URL*: Universal Resource Locator. This means the net address of an item. Just as you have a postal address so that anyone can reach you, every item on the Internet has a unique address, for example, apple.com.
- *Virus*: A virus is a small program that enters your computer via an infected disk or email and copies itself. Most viruses are harmless and only copy themselves. Some also do things to your computer, such as display a message. Other viruses may be harmful and delete your files. Kids like to put a virus onto popular software, especially games, and then pass it around to trick other kids. That's a good reason to avoid copied software. You can easily protect yourself against a virus by using anti-virus software.