My Own Web Site

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I am regularly asked to suggest how someone might create their own photographic web site. I am assuming that you are not an expert at building web sites and that you will, at least, require it to display images in albums or sets.

If you are thinking of creating an online presence then you need to think about your requirements.

- Do you need additional pages of "static" text?
- Do you need a "blog"
- How many images and at what size?
- How "slick" should it look?
- Cost?
- Are you concerned about "image theft"?
- How much work or learning are you prepared to put into it?
- Do you want to sell your images, and if so how much price control do you need
- Do you need your own URL address (e.g. johnsmith.co.uk)

There are tradeoffs, it is unlikely you will get a super-duper web site with every possible feature for nothing. However the best should cost no more than around £100 / year and quite possibly some could meet your needs for free.

Most services are free for either a few days trial period or forever with limited features. The latter usually have an "upgrade" option where you can switch to the full service for an annual fee.

URL

If you want your web site to have its own URL, e.g. www.johnsmith.co.uk, then it needs to be unique and registered. The least expensive are the UK addresses, e.g. those ending in .CO.UK, .ORG.UK and .NET.UK, cost around £12 every 2 years. COM addresses are about £12 / year. Others can cost more.

Some services do not allow you to use your own URL. Others, e.g. WORDPRESS.COM, will charge extra to support your own URL. When you rent a web server to hold your own web site then your own URL is normally essential. All services allow some sort of unique URL, e.g. www.johnsmith.blogger.com.

Recommendations for the Less Experienced

For a simple "dumping" ground of images in sets or albums Picasa (now Google+) and Flickr are good. Facebook is a possibility.

For a blog site I would suggest looking at Blogger as one of the easiest to use

If you have just a few top images each month then try 500PX

If you want a good looking site to hold lots of albums then Zenfolio or Smugmug are worth investigating

If you want to roll-your-own web site try the free edition at Wordpress.com and if you want to move on rent space on a small hosting server and install Wordpress on that. Or use a program like Xara Web Designer to quickly create a polished web site.

Adobe now market a program called MUSE which appears to offer an easy to design and maintain very modern web site. I have not tried this program out but suspect that one needs to continually "rent" their software in order to update your web site.

Some sites offer a useful option to "approve" each order. The site notifies you when an order is received. You can then post process that particular image before it gets re-uploaded and released for printing. This lets you display many smaller images on the web site without having to spend too much time on post processing every image, e.g. cleaning up dust spots, as this only needs to be done on a larger copy of the original the first time that image is sold.

Reviews

There are a great many image hosting services. I am listing the more popular ones that I have come across. I am happy to learn of others.

Host / Software	Cost	Comments	Easy? (1=very 5=hard)
Picasa / G+	Free	Very easy to use. Add multiple albums, private and public Fixed format Comments supported Optional software for basic and novelty image editing. About max 7Gb of space for free. Works well. No web page Links to Google+ for web page and blog page Run by Google No personal URL Suits long term storage of albums for various life events http://www.picasa.com Picasa has been integrated into Google+, a social blogging web site, and in my opinion has become far more complicated to use. It is no longer a straight forward image album web site. See Google+ below	3
Blogger	Free	Very easy to use blog site Blog pages can contain images, no separate albums page Comments supported Web site can contain multiple "static" pages Multiple layout themes and designs but otherwise fixed format Suits day to day blogging with images Some add-ons You can redirect your own personal URL to your Blogger page Run by Google www.blogger.com	2

Google+	Free	Blog site with additions Blog pages can contain images, no separate albums page Comments supported Web site can contain multiple "static" pages More complex than Blogger Social media, Facebook competition Suits day to day blogging with images Public or private pages Add-ons Suits social interaction and business No personal URL Run by Google https://plus.google.com/ Now includes a strange integration with Picasa	3
Facebook	Free	Social media Recently updated to use large images May still "mangle" your images to keep down file size (not as bad as it once was) Public or private pages Lots of add-ons Lots of adverts No personal URL Suits social interaction and recording life events www.facebook.com	2
FlickR	Free	~~Free for the first 200 images then £25 / year~~ Now free with almost unlimited disk space. Albums (called collections and sets) and various image size support Private or public Many groups to join (including BCC) Fixed formats, can be confusing Updated in 2013 and can now be more confusing (but still not as complicated as Google+) Run by Yahoo Suits those looking for an image "dumping" ground No personal URL Lots of interaction with other organizations, e.g. a competition may require you to upload entries to Flickr www.flickr.com	2

Wordpress	Free/££	"open source" blogging package Free, 3Gb, site can be created on wordpress.com, with adverts and restrictions. Costs mount up as restrictions are removed. Can be installed on almost any inexpensive server for lower cost (e.g. from £25/year) and with more features Private or public Blog page and multiple fixed pages Many free themes to choose from, lots more can be bought Flexible format Lots of add-ons (e.g. image galleries) free and chargeable Can have own personal URL (additional cost) Suit professional blog site Personally I find it can become unstable, especially after an upgrade when (often free) add-ons have been used in the site. www.wordpress.com www.wordpress.org	3 - 5
Drupal	££	"open source" blogging package Can be installed on an inexpensive server (e.g. from £25/year) Private or public pages Blog pages and multiple fixed pages Several free themes, others cost money Flexible format Lots of add-ons Uses your own personal URL (additional cost) Suit professional web site or blog site www.drupal.org	5
Xara Web Designer	£40 +	A software program that creates web sites. Typically you need to find an inexpensive server (e.g. from £25/year) but they now offer some free space and additional space can be bought from Xara. Good looking web sites easily created on desktop and uploaded to server Around 30 formats included, more cost money Some add-ons Uses your own personal URL (additional cost) Suits someone who lacks web programming skills but needs to build multiple web sites http://site.xara.com/affiliate/code.asp?id=590895&prod=WebDesigner&type=text	3

Lightroom	£100 +	Adobe image management program, some editing features Create web sites which still need to be uploaded to almost any inexpensive server (e.g. from £25/year) Limited formats, good albums of images (only images, nothing else), some Flash based Some additional formats at cost Uses your own personal URL (additional cost) Suits someone who wants to create no-nonsense image album for an event, e.g. wedding photographer No built-in eCommerce but some add-ons can be purchased from 3rd parties www.adobe.com	3
Zenfolio	£25+ / yr	Dedicated image album service Create photo-centric web pages Limited formats Very easy to use Add-ons, e.g. sell images for additional annual charges Attractive presentation Private or public Optional, can have own personal URL at additional cost Suits image retailers and those wanting quick, impressive albums www.zenfolio.com	2
SmugMug	£25+/yr	Dedicated image album service Create photo-centric web pages Limited formats Very easy to use Add-ons, e.g. sell images for additional annual charges Attractive presentation Private or public Optional, can have own personal URL at additional cost Suits image retailers and those wanting quick, impressive albums www.smugmug.com	2

500PX	Free / $18 / $56 / year	Dedicated photo hosting service Good reputation for showcasing a few images with impact Free but restricted on number of uploads/week (20) $18 / year for unlimited uploads Can sell images but prints only in the USA, international shipping costs can be expensive Downloads can be sold. Prices fixed. Format fixed Not suitable for multiple images of an event Limited formats Comments allowed Public or private Suit photographers looking for good peer exposure, uploading just the one "top" image from an event No personal URL www.500px.com	2
Amazing Internet	£60+ / year	Various packages to display and market images www.amazinginternet.com	2
Beam	$30+ / month	Various packages to display and market images www.photoshelter.com/beam/	2
The Image File	£6+ / mth	Various packages to display and market images www.theimagefile.com	2
Layer Space	£8+ / mth	Various packages to display and market images www.layerspace.com	2
Clikpic	£40+ / yr	Various packages to display and market images www.clikpic.com	2
Big Black Bag	$9+ / mth	Various packages to display and market images www.bigblackbag.com	2
Square Space	$8 - $24 /month	Various packages to display and market images www.squarespace.com	2
Canon	Free (may change)	Canon sponsored online album web site for Canon users. As at December 2013 this is still a Beta version and one needs to apply for an invite to join. Allows images to be linked and seen on a Facebook or Flickr account. *I must admit I can see very little advantage in using this system* www.project1709.com I would imagine other camera manufacturers offer online album services	2

Printers	Free	There are many photo printing services that allow you to store albums of images. Typically these images are displayed only as small images as they want to sell prints. Many will delete your images after X weeks or if not used for a few months. Public or private Limited format (usually only the one design) No personal URL, heavily branded by printer Suit family photos, not very good for keen amateur or professional display Examples: www.snapfish.co.uk www.photobox.co.uk	1