

talkingweb 

Getting started on the Internet

The absolute fundamentals of how the Internet and websites work, and how you can go about setting up a website.



Hi, I'm Lisa

I've been making websites for over 20 years and run an award winning web development agency based just outside Bristol in the UK. You can find [our website here](#).

I'm a speaker at events, a writer of all things web, and have taught SEO for longer than I care to remember. I work with clients all over the world, from small one-person-bands to household names and websites that can get millions of visitors a day. My clients include...



I also founded a not-for-profit to help people find the best web developer for their project, rather than fall foul of a smooth talking cowboy. From that role, I was asked to represent the industry in discussions with the EU about online privacy reform.

If you find this guide useful, please do make sure you're [signed up to my mailing list](#) to keep in touch, and following me on your choice of social network(s)...

[Instagram](#) [LinkedIn](#)

Why have I written this guide?

My friend Lindsey is going self-employed imminently. She just needs to get over the imposter syndrome and she'll be well away!

As a result, I've been getting lots of WhatsApp voice notes from her asking various questions about how she should go about setting up a website and getting started online.

In the end I said I'd just write down everything she needed to know.

And here it is! And I figured I'd share it with anyone else who wants to know it too!

Starting over 20 years ago...

As I just said, I started working on the web over 20 years ago and back then, you didn't specialise.

Now a days you have landing page designers, UX designers, developers for different parts of the website, specialists for different elements of SEO... 20 years ago, you just had to do it all! I know very experienced developers who have never needed to register a domain, but I've done it hundreds if not thousands of times.

And so whilst I strongly believe anyone who tells you they know everything about the Internet just doesn't realise how much there is to know, I did have a very good training ground of just making websites in the early 2000s. So let me walk you through what you need to know to get started...



Part 1: The Internet

The Internet

In a very summarised nutshell, the Internet began life in the 1960s as a way for the US Defence Department to share information between computers.

Fast forward 30 years and in 1989 Tim Berners-Lee proposed the World Wide Web, allowing “interlinked hypertext documents” (such as web pages) to be viewable, and consequently making well presented online information available to the public.

So that's the difference between the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW).

Now we use those hypertext documents for everything from banking to watching TV and whether you're a Farmer applying for a license or a freelancer paying your tax return you're increasingly being asked to do such tasks online.



Browsers

Everything you view online has been put on a "server" – a computer that is *serv*ing the information to you when you request it by typing in a web address or clicking a link in a search engine.

Web pages and documents stored on servers are typically accessed via a 'Web Browser'. You might just know it as the icon you click on for the Internet - mainstream examples are Chrome, Opera, Edge, Firefox and Safari.

A web browser is just a piece of software you have on your computer that knows how to read and display web pages to you. Each different browser has different features and people have their favourites. I use Chrome, and I happen to have a Samsung TV. Someone else might use Edge and happen to have a Sony TV! Just different options of the same thing.



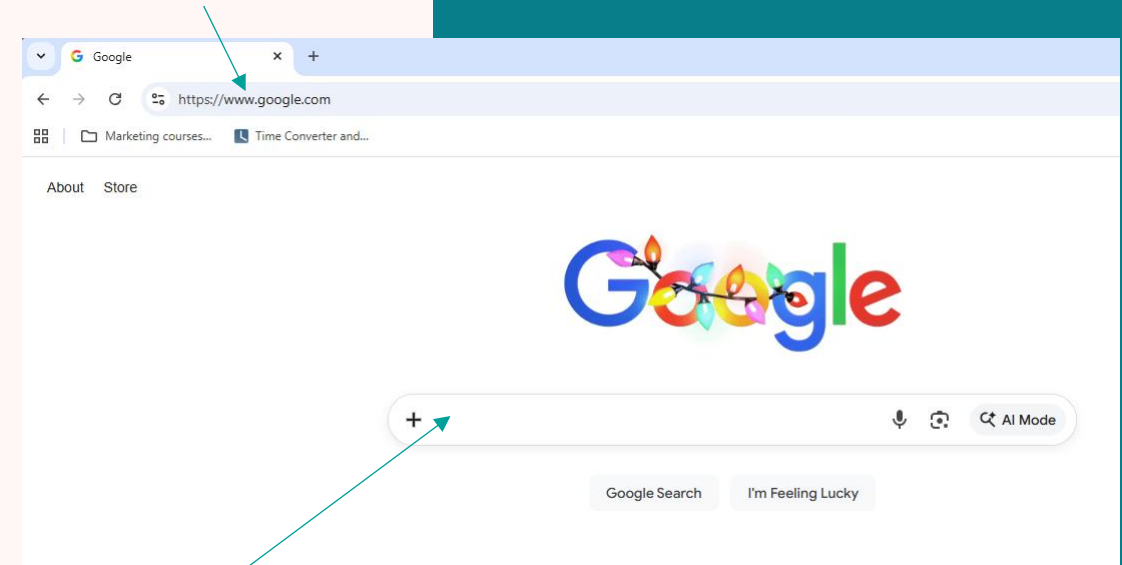
Accessing a website

You access a website by typing its address (often in the format of www.website.com) into the address bar on the browser.

This *domain name* address is like a redirect for the server the site is on – rather than you learn a complicated name of a computer which is lots of numbers (an IP address), websites have a name associated to them so you just have to type that in instead.

Many people think you access a website through the Google search bar, but no! No, no, no you don't! The proper way to access a website is via the address bar on your browser (which admittedly, modern browsers can tend to hide now a days). Using Google is like ringing Directory Enquiries and asking them to put you through to a phone number you're trying to ring; using the address bar is like phoning a friend directly.

Browser address bar



Google search bar

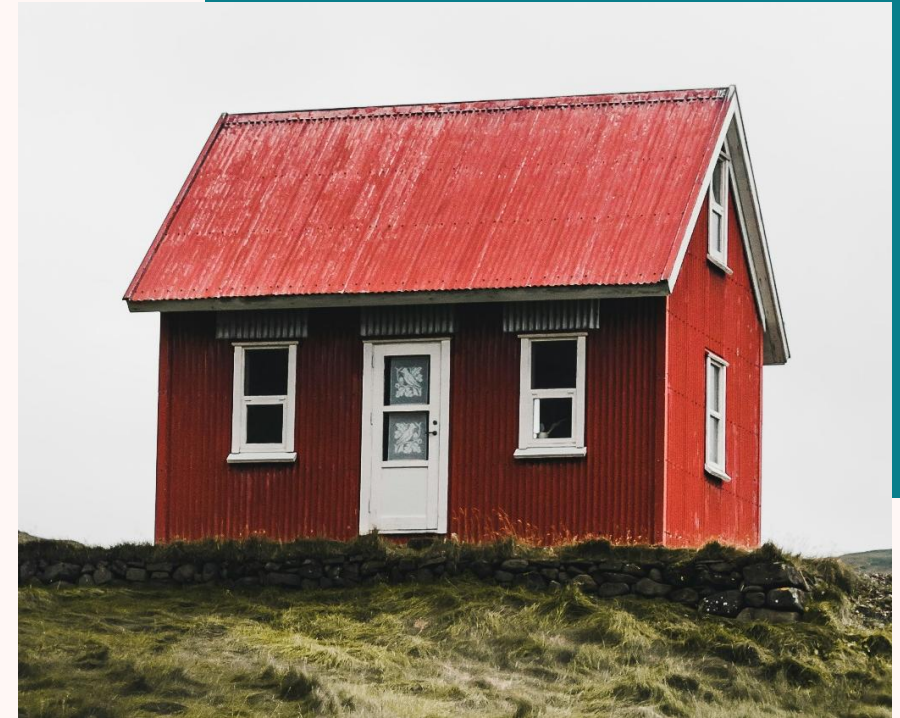
Part 2: Domain names

Domain names, hosting and email

To run a website you need a domain name and you need hosting. People often wonder what the difference is ... so read on, and all will be explained!

An acronym I've given people in the past is to think of your website as a house - your website is the actual bricks and mortar, but you can't be there without paying council tax (in the UK anyway!) which is like your hosting. Meanwhile you can't receive any mail until you have an address - your domain name.

You may get your hosting and your domain name from the same company, but they are very different services and it's wise to know what the terms refer to so that you can understand invoices and who you need to contact should one or the other have issues.



Domain names

To start a website, you need a domain name. So here's a background to what they are and how they work.

What is a domain name?

Your domain name is what people use as the address of your website. The real address for your website is lots of numbers and dots (an IP address) which relates to the server that's hosting your website - but that wouldn't be easy to remember or look good on a business card! So since the 1980s it's been possible to associate a domain name with your web server's IP - resulting in much easier to remember addresses.

How you associate the domain name with your server varies but you don't need to worry about that at this stage – your developer will do it for you, or the website builder you're using online will walk you through it.

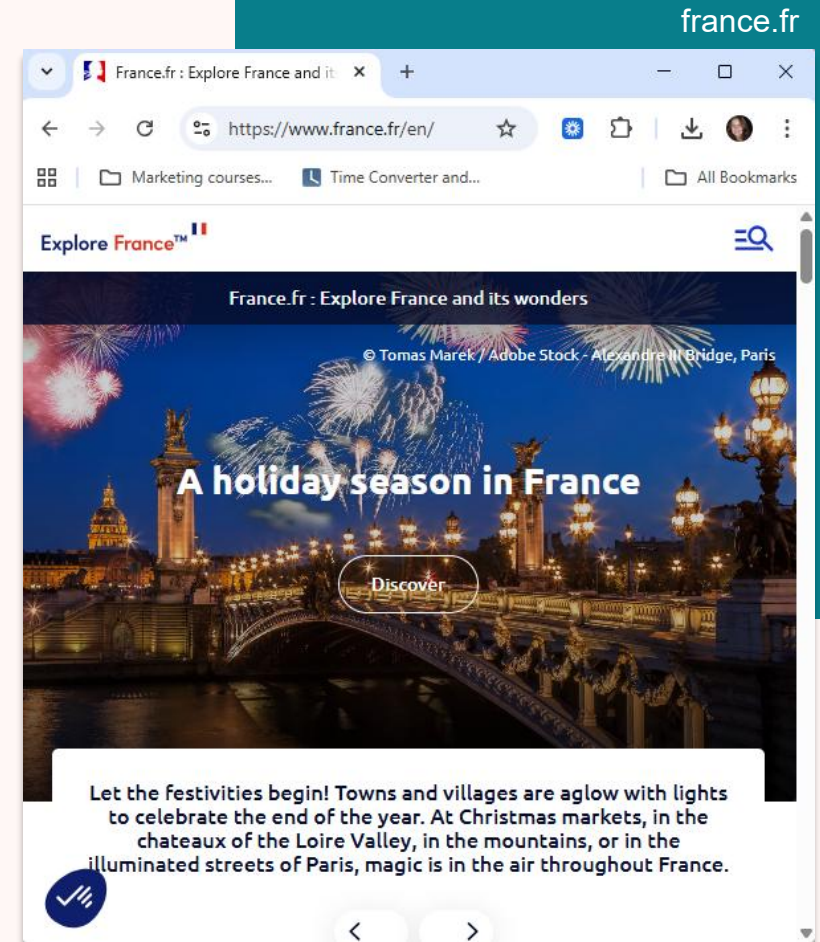
Domain names are unique – whereas you and your next door neighbour may share a UK post code, you don't share domain names. If someone has already registered the address you want, I'm afraid you'll have to think of an alternative.

TLDs

When we talk about domain name types – i.e. .co.uk, .com, .org. etc – we're actually talking about top-level-domains or TLDs.

You used to just see just a few different types but now a days you can even get ones like .florist! As of March 2025 ICANN (the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) had [1,264 valid TLDs](#) listed.

Traditionally, most different types of TLD (.co.uk, .com, .org, etc.) had a particular use in mind, or were from a particular country. For example, .co.uk domains are typically for UK based companies, whilst .org.uk means you are a UK based charity or organisation. The .com domain was initially for American businesses, but is perhaps now seen as a universal/international option. .it is for Italy, .de for Germany, .fr for France etc.



TLDs (cont.)

People have had fun over the years, with new domain types being released, creating funny domain names from the extensions now available. An example 10 years ago was the site Delicious; when they first launched they used a .us domain of “icio” and a sub-domain of del. (more on those later) to give them <http://del.icio.us>.

The moral of that story is, if you can't get exactly what you want – be creative!

A popular country domain name is .co – the domain for the country of Columbia, but instantly of interest to companies all over the world who haven't got their ideal domain.

Columbia



Redirecting

Your website should only run from 1 domain name.

But you might want to get the .com and the .co.uk for your brand, so that no competitors can put up a rival website, or someone else can't start a company that could be confused for yours.

You can register as many domains as you like. You then pick your main one, and redirect the others to that one.

Our website is 18aproductions.co.uk

If you visit 18aproductions.com, you'll see you still get to our website – but the address bar changes to say .co.uk.



Registering a domain name

The thing to know here is that you don't "buy" domain names - you register them with a domain registrar. This is because domain names don't become your property forever and ever - you register a domain name for a set amount of time. 1 year is usually the minimum for a .com, whilst .co.uk's tend to have a minimum of 2 years, but domain registrars are always trying to get you to register them for longer.

When it comes time to renew - don't worry - you get first refusal.

But you've got to make sure that you take note of any email reminders from your domain registrar and you keep your contact details (and possibly payment details) up to date on their website... if you don't pay the renewal invoice, your domain name will become publicly available again and will stop taking people to your website. And of course once it's back on the open market, someone else could come along and register it and then you won't be able to get it back (unless you get lucky and they let it expire in the future and you swoop in – but that'd be at least a year away).

I had a client accidentally not renew their domain the other month – they'd had it for 20 years and nearly lost it! But don't worry, I've got a tool to help you remember... I'll tell you about it later.

Choosing a domain name

One of the hardest things about starting a website can be choosing your domain name and, as explained earlier, every domain name has to be unique so if you want a name but another company is already using it, you can either try to buy it from them (unlikely / expensive), or you have to get imaginative and find an alternative.

A common misunderstanding from people getting to grips with websites is that many (and I mean many!) domain names have already been registered for no purpose other than to sell them on. You'll try to visit the domain name you ideally want to see if anything's there, and find a page saying "this domain is for sale". This means the domain has already been registered. It's taken.

If there's anything there at all, it means someone has bought the domain and is trying to sell it. And of course they'll want to sell it on for a profit so it's going to be more expensive to buy a domain from them than register one that's not previously been registered.



Choosing a domain name (cont.)

A new .com is about £10 / \$15 - buying a domain name privately can easily be hundreds or thousands (or millions if it's really sought after) of pounds/dollars.

So you can get in touch with the seller and make an offer – or you can get a fresh domain.

Just a tip if you are tempted to make an offer on an already-registered domain - email from a personal email address. Don't email them from yourname@yournotverygooddomain.com because the seller will realise that what they've got is all the more valuable to you!

My friend recently commented to me that she was surprised at how expensive domain names are... I asked her what domain she was looking at, and sure enough – it was a premium domain being resold for £3,000. I asked how she'd found it and she said she just typed it in to visit it.

That story was actually the inspiration for this guide, because I did NOT want her spending £3k on a domain when she could just find another combination of words!

Choosing a domain name (cont.)

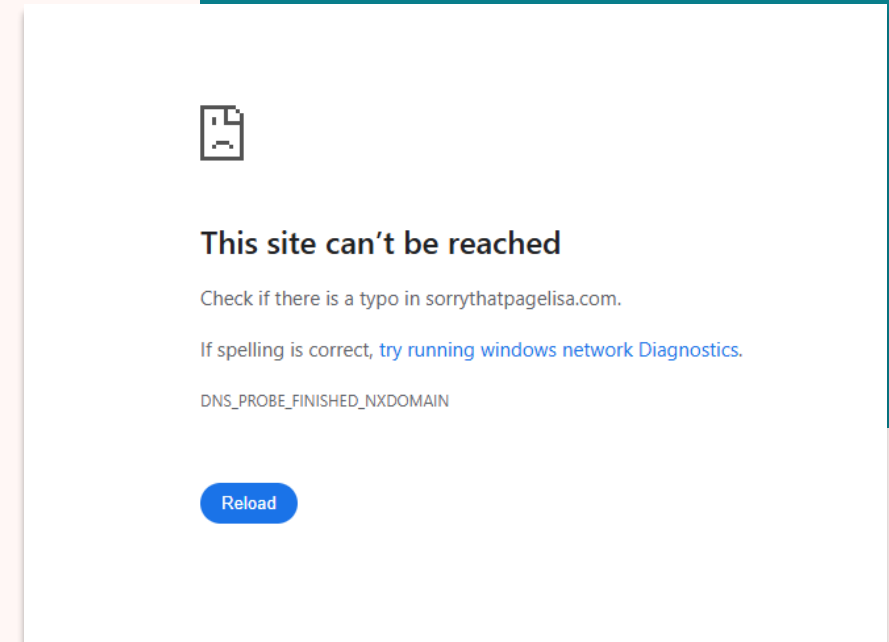
This is where it gets really surprising for people...

Even if you type in an address and you get a **plain white page**, it still means the domain is registered, as someone has had to put that blank page there.

If a domain hasn't been registered and so is free for you then all you will see when you try to visit it is some kind of “This site can't be reached” message from your browser. Because you are literally trying to view something that doesn't exist.

Of course – last hurdle – is that someone may have registered the domain name and just not done anything with it yet, in which case you'll also find absolutely nothing there. So, to truly know if a domain is free, you have to use a service to check if it's available or not.

Personally, I use 123-reg.co.uk.



Tips for choosing a domain

- Consider what domain type suits your business/organisation – if you're a UK based company you would traditionally use a .co.uk; an organisation would use a .org.uk.
- Sometimes you see domain names such as www.somethingltd.co.uk – and I've been asked why. The ltd is because the company is a Limited company. So you shouldn't use this unless you are Limited. (True story, years ago, a friend nearly registered something with ltd in it even though she wasn't Limited because she thought it'd just help her get the domain she wanted.)
- Consider hyphens – eg. www.your-company.co.uk. You can't use punctuation other than hyphens in domain names – so no question marks, underscores or full stops.
- Maybe use your location – if you're fixed/aren't likely to move.
Eg. www.yourcompanysouthwest.co.uk.

Tips for choosing a domain

(cont.)

- Think how your domain is going to be publicised – if it's going to be read out on radio advertisements then make it clear and memorable, and not something people are going to wonder how to spell. But if your promotion is going to be largely SEO and links from other websites, so people will be clicking on links rather than having to type in the address then spelling is not the same issue.
- As above, but with regards to length... if people are clicking on links it doesn't matter how long it is. If people need to type it in, keep it short.
- It doesn't have to make sense – what's “google” or “vimeo”?!
- Your whole entire domain name can be a maximum of... well people argue over the technicalities but it's either 253, 254 or 255 characters depending on your technical argument. But that includes EVERYTHING, including dots. So www.google.com would be 14 characters.

Domain registrars

There are so many Domain Registrars out there – by which I mean companies which help you register domains.

Personally I use [123-reg](#) and have done for over 20 years. They're not necessarily the best, but they're certainly not the worst and they let me get to all the DNS records I usually need to get to. *(That's not an affiliate link by the way – I was going to make it one but their affiliate programme needed all sorts of tax info that was going to take too long to fill in.)*

Others are [GoDaddy](#), or [IONOS](#).

NOTE: DON'T BUY HOSTING WHEN YOU BUY A DOMAIN.

If you end up using a web developer, they might have recommended hosting they can help you with, or if you end up using a site builder you probably won't need a separate hosting account because they'll take care of the hosting for you.

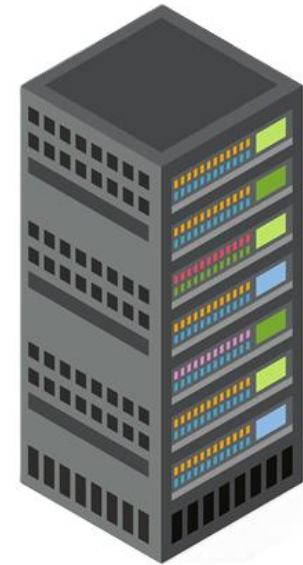
(But what is hosting?)

Hosting is basically your space on a server. And a server is just a computer that's connected to the Internet 24/7 and serves website files to the Internet.

You pay for hosting monthly or annually.

I'll give you more info about hosting another day... right now, I'm expecting you to either speak to a developer or not need it at this stage. *(The slight exception is if you do your own WordPress site... but I don't expect you will. That'll be covered in our WordPress review.)*

(Just to clarify – absolutely every site on the Internet has hosting – if it's on the Internet, it's on hosting – but I mean you won't need to buy a hosting account if you use a system where that's all packaged up with what you pay for the site builder).



IMPORTANT: If you register a .com

A new rule came in a few years ago that means all .com domain names need to be verified by who registered them. This means you'll be sent an email shortly after you register a .com from ICANN – quite soon or maybe a few days afterwards – with a button to click.

You need to click this button, otherwise 15 days after registration, your domain gets suspended and isn't usable.

If you do click the link after it's been suspended, it can be another 48 hours before you can use it again. So if you're using your name by then, no one will be able to visit it.



Transferring a domain

"Transferring" is the term used when passing a domain from one registrar to another - or from one person's registrar to another. It may be that you wish to use a different registrar from now on, so you transfer the domain from Registrar A to Registrar B. Or it may be that you've sold your company and so the new Directors need to have control over the domain - so again you may need to transfer it to Registrar B if they already have an account there, or they may have an account with Registrar A / your registrar, in which case you do an "internal transfer".

Exactly how you go about a transfer depends on the company you're moving from and the company you're moving to and their procedures. It also varies for different domain types. Sometimes it can all be done through the registrar's websites and sometimes you need to call or email their support team.

Overall, the process involves giving the new registrar the heads up that you're passing the domain to them, and then telling your old registrar details of the new registrar so they can pass it over. Sometimes there's not much for you to do, and sometimes you need to keep an eye on your email and enter some authorisation codes when prompted.

Sub-domains and domain name structure

A sub domain is whatever comes before the main part of your website address. For example, if your website address was **mywebsite.com**, a subdomain could be: **resources.mywebsite.com**.

Typically sub domains don't have www. in front of them but they can do if you wish - you just need to state your preference when it's set up. So the above address could be:

www.resources.mywebsite.com

Usually a sub-domain will need a new hosting account, but there are no extra domain registration fees to pay - you don't need to register sub domains, you can just create them once you have the main TLD.

Technically, if you have a subdomain, with it's own hosting account, it's actually a stand alone website – it's separate to your main website. But, now a days, Google says it'll take into account what's on a sub-domain when it comes to SEO (Google listing you in search results).

Part 3: Choosing *how* to build your website

The 2 types of ways to build a website

So “2” is perhaps an over simplification, but I’m talking about either:

1. Getting someone to code a website for you

or

2. Using a site builder so you can do it yourself (or get someone to set it up for you). *I’m going to give you info on various site builders to help you choose the right one for you if this is your chosen route.*



Option 1. Getting a developer to build a website for you

If you need something bespoke – something special because you’ve come up with a plan for a new RightMove.com or AutoTrader.com, then you need to go to a developer.

OR if you’re an established business and you know you want a very professional, polished website, which can change however you need it to whenever you need it to, with a team behind it, then you need to go to a developer.



Was going to search for a stock photo of a web developer – and then figured I’d just include me again!

Different web developers...

Now, where things get a bit hazy is that there are different levels of “developers”...

For example, at my company we can code whatever you need. We work with you to flesh out exactly what your tool/system/website needs to do and then design and build it so that everything is a beautifully perfectly smooth operation.

And when I say “build”, I mean we write tens of thousands of lines of code. The stuff shown on the picture on this slide – my guys literally sit and write that (I used to, but now I’m generally more “front of house”).

Whilst I know our prices/hourly rates are low compared to other agencies who do what we do, we’re generally more expensive than someone who doesn’t code, and creates a website by configuring options inside software.

Partly because that’s usually quicker, and also because it doesn’t generally take as much time to get good / experienced at it.



Different web developers... (cont.)

BUT coding can be overkill for someone who just wants a basic brochure site.

(So we will just do SquareSpace or similar for someone if they come to us and I think actual coding isn't required for them – there's no point in reinventing the wheel.)

BUT background knowledge of the web means can be a really valuable asset to your company.

What do I mean by that? I'll expand...

Technical support

I'm only really saying this for completeness – I'm not trying to sell a web developer to someone who totally doesn't need it. BUT...

Once upon a time we were building an e-learning tool for a big organisation. Meanwhile, inhouse, they built a brochure (sales) website for it. So people visited the brochure site to see what it was about, and then clicked to log in and use the big complicated tool we'd built.

The person who built the site couldn't code. As a result (and they were using something called Wordpress) they would install plugins for everything the site needed to do. But this meant they used a lot more plugins than they needed to – and plugins can reduce a site's security and speed. And when the client had a vaguely technical question – “why does that look different on this browser?”, “why can't I add this thing here?”, “why are some people telling me this happens when they visit?”, the website person didn't know the answers.

If you can code, and you've been doing it for a long time, you understand the ecosystem. And if you look after websites visited by millions of people, you see a lot in your day to day life which you can learn from. You, as a business with a website, don't **HAVE** to have that support, but I think you just need to understand whether it's there for you or not.

Not-for-profit

I'll get down off my soap box now.

I'd actually forgotten, until I was writing this, how passionate the subject of people buying a website and then finding they have no ongoing technical support gets me! So much so I actually started a not-for-profit in 2016 to help businesses find the best person to work with. The person (or agency) that really suits their requirements. I made it "dormant" a few years ago when babies took over my life, but I really hope to revive it in 2026.

I'm not saying everyone needs to work with a developer. And I'm not saying people who can't code shouldn't sell websites, because they generally produce very lovely sites! **But I'm just saying that you need to go into a working relationship understanding the skillset of who you're working with.**

You – businesses of any size or shape – need to know that there can be a difference in skillset or knowledge. And agencies and website creators need to be honest about how far their help can go.

Option 2. Website builders

When we started our agency nearly 20 years ago there were options like Vistaprint for making your own website online. But now they're actually good! And can make really great looking websites!

And from that, a whole industry has sprung up of people using them on a customer's behalf.

So you can go to wix.com, or squarespace.com or various others (reviews of each later) and either create an account and click and drag stuff around yourself, or you can find someone who's done it lots of times before and can do it for you.

I won't say a professional using these tools for you would be better than you'd do yourself because you might be a natural! But they'll know the tool, they'll be creative and have an eye for design, and they might be quicker at it than you because they know their way around the system.

Part 4: Choosing your website platform

When someone does it for you...

When you're working with a professional (coder, agency or otherwise), they may have their "go to" platform that they like to use. *(Because even developers usually have a starting point platform that they write their code around.)*

And that's great, as long as it's the right one for you. So do what research you can into the platform they tell you they're going to use and ask them why they think it'd be a good match to your requirements.

At the end of the day, if they show you how it can work for you, and you like them and think you'd have a good working relationship with them, then it doesn't really matter if arguably some other platform would be a smidge better suited to your needs. Your relationship – and communication channels – with the person you're working with are super important.



Beware the “specialist”...

We market ourselves as “platform agnostic” which means we weight up the client’s requirements and suggest the best platform (that we know of!) to suit their needs. As such I don’t market us as “WordPress specialists” or “Laravel specialists” and sometimes I think that works against us.

I’ve been working with WordPress for over 20 years and use it pretty much every day. Someone else who started working with WordPress and WordPress alone 3 years ago can come along and call themselves a “specialist” and suddenly they sound more experienced.

So – like with anything in life – read between the sales patter. Look at their case studies. Read their testimonials and reviews. Ask them why that piece of software would suit you. And overall, work with someone you’re comfortable talking to and sharing ideas with.



DIY websites

Why not DIY your website? You can totally do it yourself – you’ve got this!

There are lots of platforms in 2026 which let you build your own website, and increasingly they have “AI” builders, so that in theory you need to do even less than ever to get a great looking, relevant website live. I say “in theory” as the AI stuff is all quite new in this area, and so some tools are better than others.

We have been doing a massive study of the leaders in this area and are putting together comparison reports... I’m not going to talk about these in detail here, because the information would go out of date too quickly (as our report is growing) so instead, I’ll give you the link...

<https://www.18aproductions.co.uk/getting-started-with-a-website/>

Honestly, it’ll save you weeks of research (and quite possibly a lot of money).

Why does anyone even bother with code if you can use a site builder?

Just incase you're asking yourself this question, it's just about having something unique, exactly to your requirements. Site builders can do what they can do – and, especially with AI now, they can do a lot. But if you want something planned out *for you*, with the potential to grow however you need it to (both in features and traffic levels, as some of the free site builders have restricted bandwidth which limits how many visitors you can get a month), then you get it coded.

With site builders, there's often just 1 little box you can't quite line up exactly how you want to, or something that isn't perfectly aligned against something else. If you're really keen on design, that can be incredibly frustrating, but if you don't mind as long as it generally looks pretty smart, then you're fine.

A pragmatic approach can be to start off with something cheap / free whilst you're finding your feet, and then know you could do something different another day.

Part 5: Keywords and your niche

Researching keywords

Now, this isn't really what I saw as being in the remit of this guide, but I'm doing it for Lindsey, as she asked – because she keeps reading how you gotta find a niche – how she should research keywords to pick a domain based around a niche.

So I've got a few things to say about this before I suggest some tools –

1) You don't need a keyword in your domain name... that doesn't help get you found by Google anymore like it used to. But if you think it's catchy and helps your company name get remembered on socials etc. then that's up to you.

2) Don't fence yourself in. We called our web development company "18a" because it was our address at the time – we didn't want to be tied to "websites" if the business went in another direction another day.



SEO: Search Engine Optimisation

If you haven't heard about SEO before, it's the "art" of getting found in Google. And now on Insta too, especially as Instagram posts can now show up in Google (make sure you've got that set in your Insta profile – instructions on the next slide).

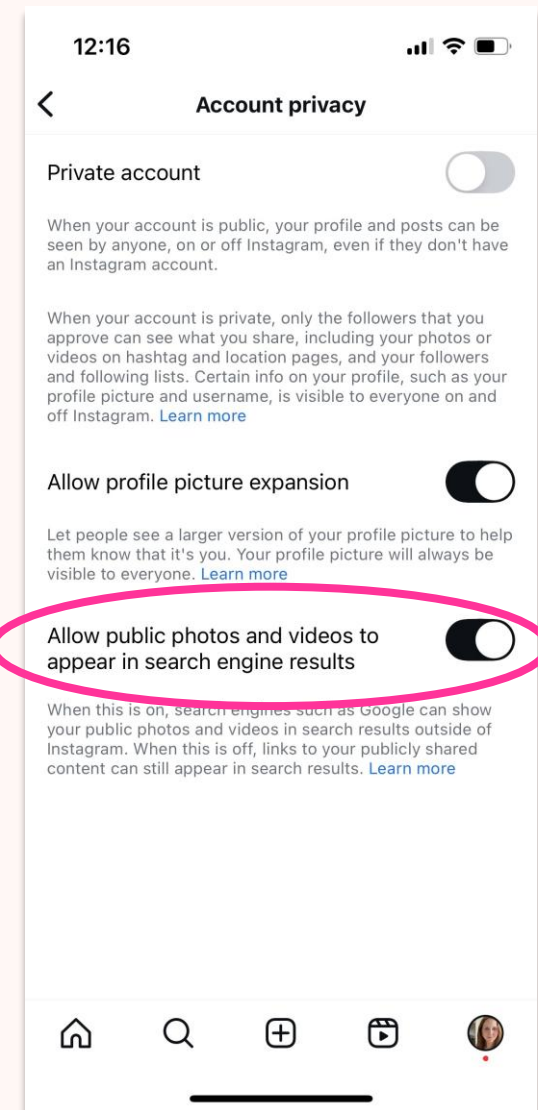
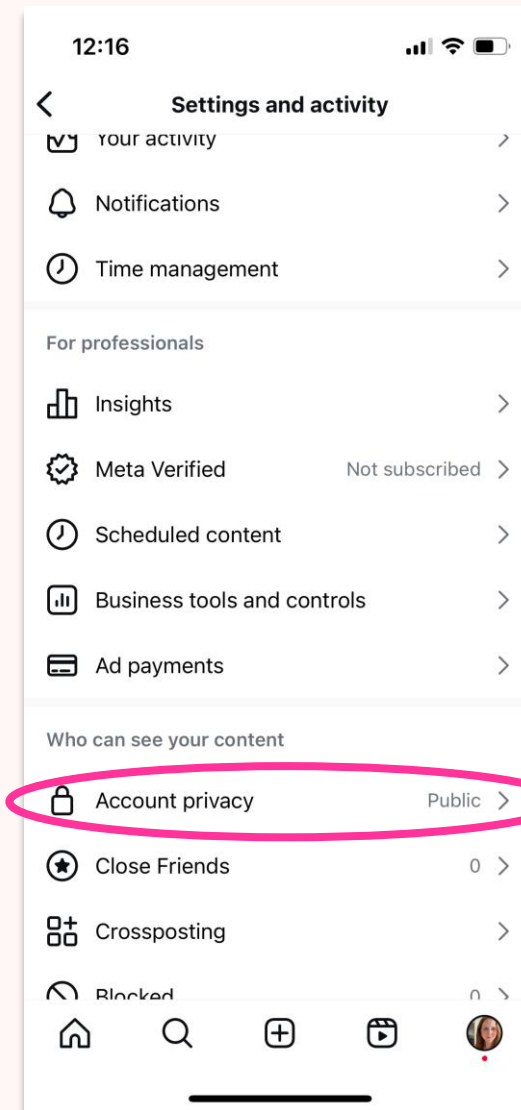
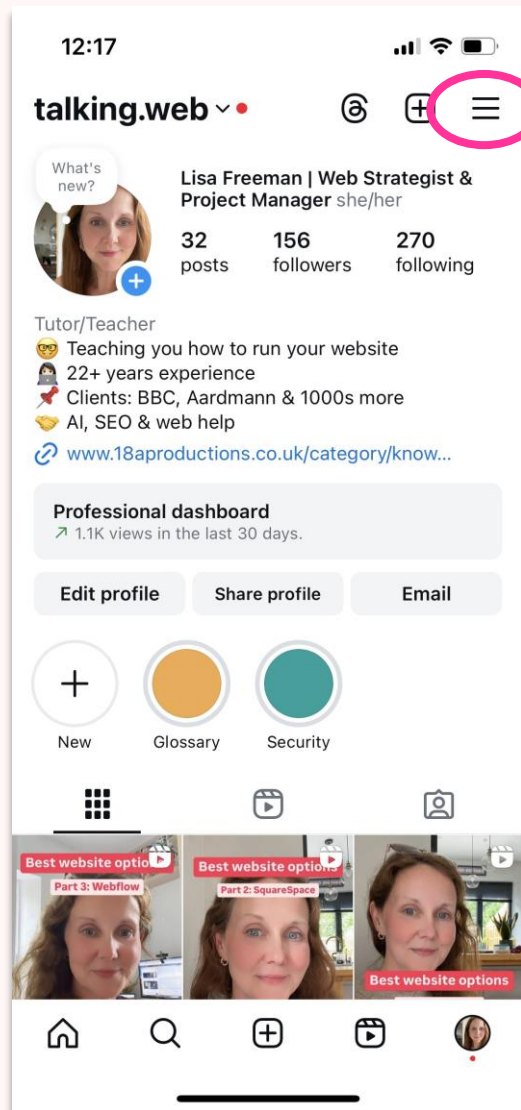
There's a lot to SEO (you can buy my [very detailed guide here](#), or follow me on Insta / stay on my newsletter for lots of random little tips) but a big part of it is making sure your content is using the terms you want to be found for ("rank" for). The days of having a list of actual "keywords" are long gone, as I explain in my guide, but just in general, it's good to know the sorts of things people are searching for.

If you want an idea of these sorts of words and terms before you start your website, you can use SEO tools like [ahrefs.com](#) or [moz.com](#) (again I need to sort out affiliate links for those but I haven't yet).

And you can also use Google's Keyword Planning Tool – it assumes you've got an ad account so just ignore all those bits and get to the planner tool... (more details coming up).

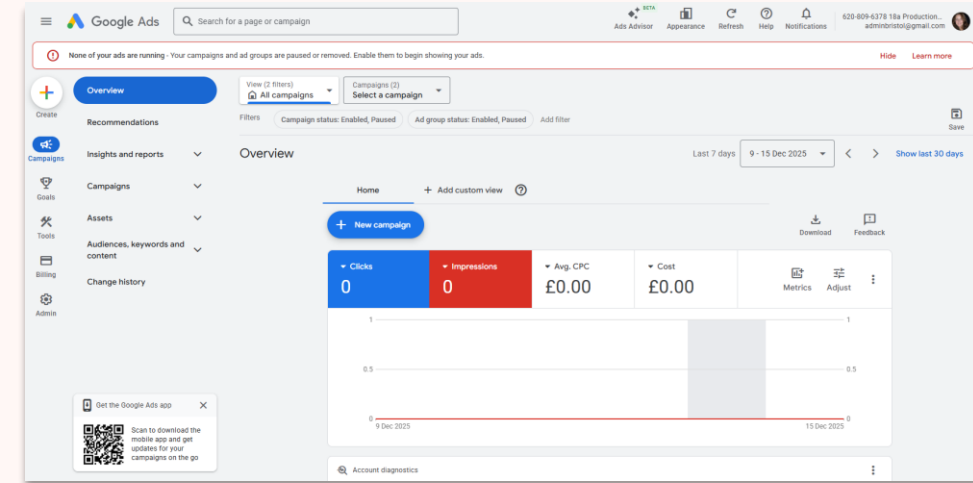
Ensure your Insta is open to search engines

1. Make sure you've got a creator or professional account.
2. View your profile and click on the 3 lines in the top right.
3. Scroll down to Account Privacy and click on it.
4. Make sure the bottom toggle – “Allow public photos and videos to appear in search engine results” etc. is set to on.



Google Keyword Planner

[Google's Keyword Planner Tool](#) is designed to help people running ads in Google choose what terms to bid on. Ads in Google work like an auction – you say what searches you want your ad to show on, and whoever is willing to pay the most for their ad to be shown, or has a great conversion rate (lots of people click on it when Google shows it), wins. And their ad gets shown.



The tool lets you type in keywords and it gives you suggestions of other related words on the same topic. It also shows you how popular they are, or if they're really competitive topics – so you'd avoid bidding on something loads of people were bidding on, or something which hardly anyone was searching for. (Or maybe you wouldn't – you might decide on a strategy where you aim at more niche terms which are cheaper to bid on so that the people who do see your ads are more focused on what you're offering).

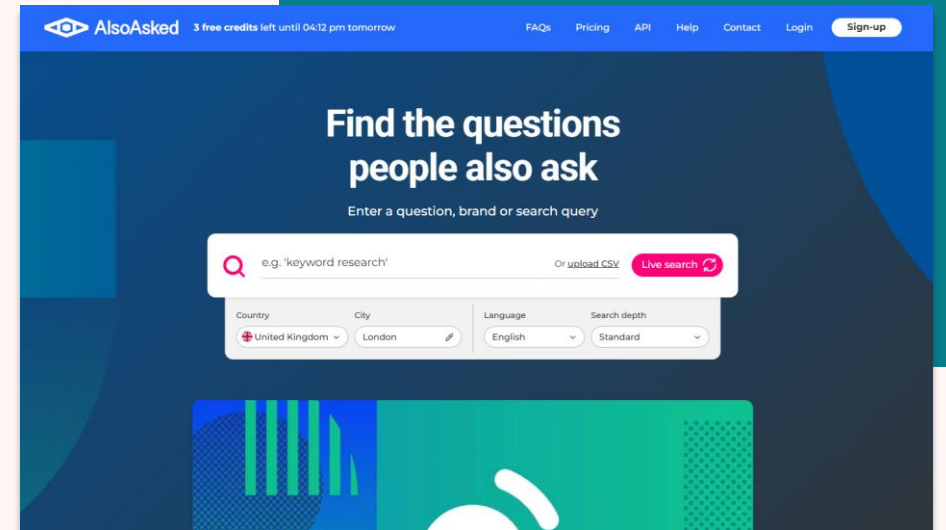
Point is, the Google Keyword Planner Tool suggests alternative keywords and lets you see how many people are searching Google for these terms and how competitive they are for ads – and if they're competitive for ads, you can bet your neighbour's cat they're competitive in organic search (normal search results which aren't ads) because why would people be paying to place ads if they could just rank highly for those terms anyway?

Also Asked

Whilst we're on the topic of keywords, another tool I highly recommend when you're researching content (and this is one you can go back to time and time again every time you write a blog post or produce any content) is alsoasked.com.

You know when you search for something on Google and it says “people also asked...” and you end up down a rabbit hole of related interesting stuff? Well alsoasked.com gets all that data from Google and helps you research what people also searched for when they looked for your topic.

It's great for creating FAQs at the bottom of blog posts (which are great for SEO and GEO – oh dear, that leads us onto something else...) and for just generally knowing how everyday Joe's are talking about your topics.



Part 6: GEO

GEO: Generative Engine Optimisation

GEO is basically concerned with getting you mentioned by ChatGPT and other AIs. Whilst SEO is for search engines, GEO is for AI (because AI as we know it at the moment is Generative Engines – you can [read my post here](#) on what the other sort of AI is that's coming in fast – Agentic AI).

Some people call it GEO, some people call it other things, some people say it doesn't need a name. Whatever, it's all the same thing – getting mentioned by the bots.

And I've done a [free guide to getting found by AI](#) – which you can [download here](#). (And you really should – it's 33 pages of pragmatic stuff that actually, once you're up and running, is easier to take in than this “getting started” guide – this one's a heavy beastie.)

There are though a few slides from it I'm going to share next as they're VERY relevant (and an easy box to tick) to someone just starting out and wanting to get found...

Structured data

Structured data has always been important for SEO – it means writing your website code in such a way that robots can know exactly what each section is. Behind the scenes you’re effectively saying, “hey Robot, this paragraph is about our company”, “hey Robot, this bit here is about me, the expert”, “hey Robot, this is an event with tickets you can buy”, “hey Robot, this is a recipe”.

AI relies on this even more, as it needs to quickly be able to grab the information it’s looking for. This isn’t something new, but whereas it used to be a “nice to have” in SEO for big companies, it’s really important now – and something it’d be great if you had from the get-go when starting your business. ***(And I’m going to tell you how to do it really easily.)***



Just to explain what Structured Data is...

I rarely show people code because it can be intimidating, but when it comes to Structured Data, I find it's the easiest way to get the point across. Imagine you had this written on your website:

“Next Monday, we’re holding our annual Christmas Party. It’s at 7 o’clock, at the Avon Gorge Hotel, and tickets are £5.”

A robot – such as a GoogleBot, or a bot from OpenAi’s ChatGPT, might find that and read it and just about make sense of it. But Google or a LLM wouldn’t (or would be very unlikely to) display it as an event in search results, or bring it back for a search of “Christmas parties next week” because it wouldn’t be 100% sure it had interpreted the date or time correctly. And **AI always wants to give the best answer it can.**

Structured data (cont.)

So instead, Structured Data presents it like this behind the scenes. Your visitors still see the sentence you wrote, or whatever content you want them to see – but robots can see:

```
<script type="application/ld+json">
{
  "@context": "https://schema.org",
  "@type": "Event",
  "name": "Christmas Party",
  "startDate": "2025-12-01T19:00",
  "endDate": "2025-12-01T23:00",
  "offers": {
    "@type": "Offer",
    "name": "Ticket",
    "price": "5",
    "priceCurrency": "",
    "validFrom": "",
    "url": "",
    "availability": "https://schema.org/InStock"
  }
}
</script>
```

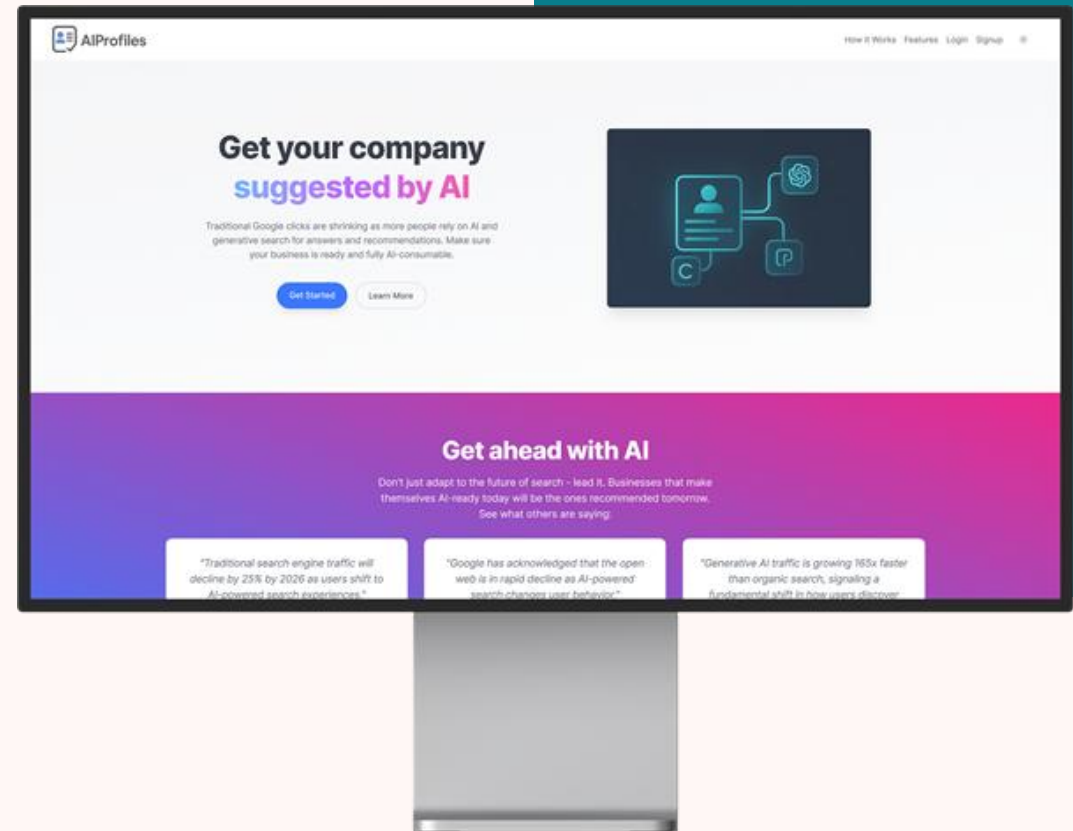
All of these labels aren't made up by whoever wrote this – they're universal rules for how to give details about an event in Structured Data. So robots know that this is the content type of "event" and the name of it, and the start date of it, etc.

And there are "*rules*" and "*labels*" like these for all sorts of different things besides events, including your company contact details, your services, products, you – the experts at your brand (super important in the age of the Expert), FAQs (that's a biggy for AI), reviews (also massive for AI), and loads more.

Structured data (cont.)

If you can code, you can add structured data yourself using schema.org as a reference.

But if you're just starting out, don't have a website, or your website can't do Structured Data, you can use [AiProfiles.co.uk](https://aiprofiles.co.uk) to create a comprehensive company listing, all built using detailed schema mark up. All you need to do is fill in some boxes with info about you and your brand.



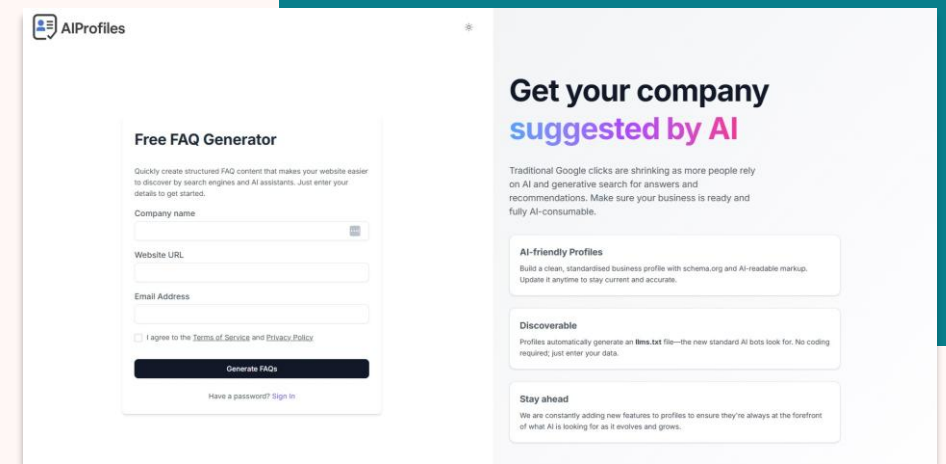
AiProfiles.co.uk

Full transparency – [AiProfiles.co.uk](https://aiprofiles.co.uk) is my product – I launched it in September '25 as it was the one part of getting mentioned by AI (and SEO) that not all my clients could do themselves. And I wanted to introduce a way for them to tick another box on the AI/SEO checklist really quickly and easily.

In an ideal world, you'd have Structured Data on your actual website. But if you can't code and don't want to pay a developer, **or you don't have a website yet**, having info about your brand marked up in Structured Data and available to robots via a profile on AiProfiles is the next best thing.

Visit [AiProfiles.co.uk](https://aiprofiles.co.uk) to build your schema profile and use code GETSTARTED to get it for £24 a year (that's a **60% discount** that will be locked in forever).

If you sign up and pay within 72 hours of requesting this guide, drop me an email and I'll give you a 2nd year for free.



The screenshot shows the AiProfiles website interface. On the left, there is a 'Free FAQ Generator' form with fields for 'Company name', 'Website URL', and 'Email Address'. Below these fields is a checkbox for 'I agree to the Terms of Service and Privacy Policy' and a 'Generate FAQs' button. On the right, there is a section titled 'Get your company suggested by AI' with a sub-section 'AI-friendly Profiles' and a 'Discoverable' section. The 'Discoverable' section mentions 'Profiles automatically generate an **hms.txt** file—the new standard AI bots look for. No coding required; just enter your data.'

Part 7: Analytics

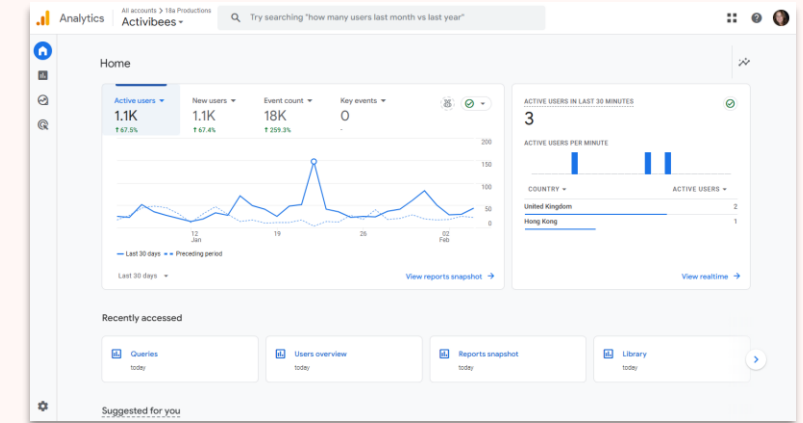
Google Analytics

Once you have a website, you ideally want to know how many people are visiting it. Not in a “constantly checking how many likes you’ve got on a post on Instagram” way, but it’s good to know which pages are getting the most visitors, how long people are spending browsing, how people are getting to you etc.

So for that, everyone (OK not everyone, but lots of people) use [Google Analytics](#), which is free. (There is a paid tier but I don’t know anyone who uses it – the clients who are big enough have something different anyway.)

A little while ago, Google released a version 4 of Google Analytics – so now it’s just known as GA4. And LOTS changed in very 4 so if you read anything about GA online, make sure you’re reading about GA4, not a previous version.

In our review of website builders we’ve got a check against which ones let you install GA4 – it’s just a case of copying and pasting some code generally. If you’d like to buy my guide about the main [3 reports you’ll need in GA4](#), it’s [here for £30](#), but code TW50 will get you 50% off, so it’d just be £15. Don’t worry if this feels like too much to learn – you can install GA4 at a later date, whenever you’re comfortable.

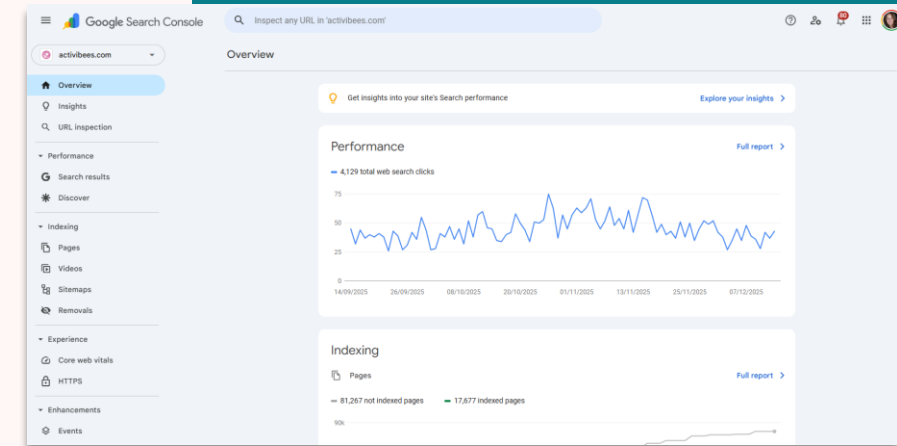


Google Search Console

[Google Search Console](#) (previously Google Webmaster Tools) is another great tool from, you guessed it, Google, to let you know how your site is doing with regards to being indexed or having any issues that means Google can't access it.

It also ties in nicely with Google Analytics with regards to telling you how people came to your site / what they searched for to get there.

GSC also sends you a monthly email telling you which pages are doing best for you via search, and what's gaining in popularity at different times. For instance I've got a days out blog and a detailed post on there about Lapland UK always goes crazy when the tickets are about to go on sale, and then again when people are about to start visiting. Again, you really don't need this from the get go – just once you're in the swing of things and feeling curious!



Site Vitals

[Site Vitals](#) is – full disclaimer – my tool! And I’ve devised it after 20 years of seeing the common problems people with websites can have and knowing what’s important to stay on top of. First and foremost, as soon as your site is live, [go there and sign up](#) for free (completely free) **uptime alerts**. This means you’ll get an email if your website goes offline. If that happens, you can check it and see if it’s anything you can do, or if you need to speak to your hosts / website provider. If you have lots of downtime, you should consider moving hosting or platform because it’s bad in Google’s eyes if your site is unreliable.

Then there are other optional upgrades so that you can check the site is secure, fast (important for Google), that your secure certificate is working and that your domain name isn’t about to expire. I literally had a client the other day not see the email to renew their domain – I think the card they had on file expired so it didn’t happen automatically – and they really nearly lost the domain they’d had for 20 years! Luckily they had free uptime reporting in place, and because they’re a big client, I saw their site had gone down on a Saturday evening, dug into it and found their domain had expired! Lots of phone calls and I managed to salvage it for them. If they’d had this higher level of SiteVitals checks in place, they’d have been made aware of the issue before the site went down and it all got so close to the wire. **If you start a paid subscription on sitevitals.co.uk within 72 hours of requesting this guide, drop me an email and I’ll give you a free upgrade for 3 months.**

Part 8: Starting a newsletter

Starting a newsletter

Again, not typical content for this guide, but something Lindsey asked me to cover. Because now a days it's all about "owning your audience". There have been too many horror stories about people getting locked out of their Instagram account and losing the audience they've worked so hard to build – OR just the algorithm changing so no one sees their stuff.

So how do you "own" your audience? It just means you have their email address, so you can email them and have a more "direct line" to communicate with them.

There are so many newsletter systems out there – but you might also want one that lets you build landing pages and potentially even sell digital products / guides / courses.

I've talked about a few on the following slide but actually, I spent weeks looking into all of this a while ago, so I'll write that all up and send it around next year to everyone on my mailing list.

Stay tuned!

Newsletter tools

[MailChimp](#)* have been my go to service for over a decade. The only problem is they have gotten a bit expensive. They'll also help you build a website but they're primarily about email, and email journeys, and learning about how your mailing list are engaging with your email. I've had a client recently switch to [EmailOctopus](#) because they're cheaper but I haven't used it enough to know if I like it yet.

[Kit.com](#) is who I use now I'm making landing pages and giving away downloadable guides (and [selling some](#)) and wanting to do email automations (when it sends an email x days after a person does y etc.). I chose them because their free tier gives me 1 automation and lots of email subscribers and sends. If I was starting over I might look at [Payhip](#) as they can be free forever with 5% commission on sales.

Before Kit, I was going to use [GumRoad](#) as they're completely free to use and just take a commission cut on anything you sell through them. I've heard big busy people complain that their 10% cut is actually really expensive if you're selling high ticket items, but for me the problem was you couldn't use the email features I wanted until you'd sold £100 worth of goods through them (to prove you're not spammy), so I switched to Kit. (If you like them though, you could just buy £100 worth of your own stuff.)

Newsletter tools (cont.)

I've also seen people use [FloDesk](#) but you can't send any emails for free, and [ThriveCart](#) but there's a reasonably big initial investment there. Other clients, just for the mailing list side of things, use [HubSpot](#), [DotDigital](#), [CampaignMonitor](#) – and, well, there's just loads.

Another approach is [Substack](#), where you write a blog and it's emailed to your mailing list. Substack are great for easing people into subscribing, but they don't have the landing page / selling a download option that I wanted.

*Woop – an actual affiliate link. Although I think it'll get me “chimp points” rather than cold hard cash.

Part 9: In summary...

In summary...

- Choose your domain name based on what is actually available, for around £15, from a domain registrar like 123-reg.co.uk
- Don't buy hosting when you buy your domain / until you have a plan
- Decide if you want a developer to build you a site, or if you want to use a site builder. If the latter, decide if you're going to do it yourself
 - If you're going to use a builder, [check out our report](#) into which one would be best for you
- Think about your SEO / keywords / niche
- [Ensure you've got structured data or set up a profile at AiProfiles.co.uk](#) (use code GETSTARTED to get it for £24+VAT a year)
- If you want to know about visitors, install Google Analytics (GA4)
- Consider Google Search Console
- [Once your site is set up, create an account at SiteVitals.co.uk](#) for free uptime monitoring

REMEMBER: If you subscribe to AiProfiles or SiteVitals within 72 hours of requesting this guide, email me and I'll give you a sneaky bonus!

Incase you're wondering...

You can absolutely ask me for a quote for us to build your website, from scratch or with a builder.

From scratch, on WordPress will cost *from* £4,000 (and for a fancy brochure site that can go up to about £17,000), plus around £200pa+VAT hosting, and you should budget *from* around £40 a month (or a quarter, but monthly is recommended) for upgrades. Something more than a brochure site or simple shop costs more and we probably wouldn't use WordPress for that.

BUT if you wanted us to help you with a website builder, that'd be *from* around £450 for something on SquareSpace. And then you'd pay their fees on top.

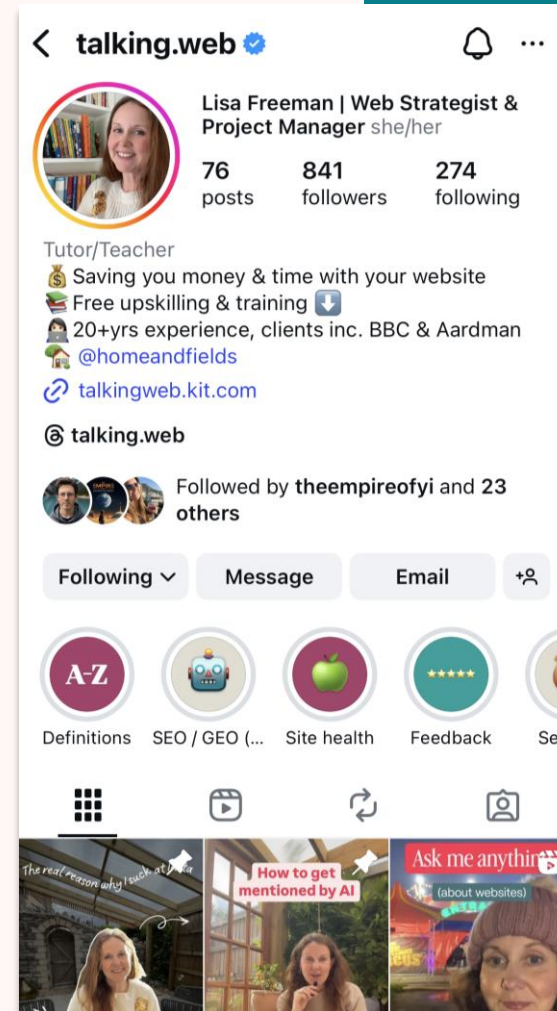
Sometimes I have an apprentice on board, and if I want to give them experience of building to client requirements, I'll help them produce you a website for more like £150 (on SquareSpace/Webflow/Canva/Shopify – a site builder) – so you get me overseeing everything they do, for a crazy low price. But that's only when there's an apprentice around! Feel free to message me to ask though.

All prices subject to VAT.

Any questions?

If you've got any questions about anything in this guide, please leave a comment on [any post on my Instagram](#).

And don't forget to [follow me](#) for lots of free advice and tutorials.



Thank you!

I really hope you found this useful?

Yes, it was great

No, I didn't like it

If you liked this guide...

I have [lots of others](#) covering topics such as:

- SEO
- GEO (AI)
- GA4 / Google Analytics
- Working with your developer
- How to save money on your web development
- Website launches
- DNS
- HTML Emails
- Speed optimisation
- Security

[Browse all guides](#)