

IT Toolbox 08

Activity 2:Running a web server

Deadline: midnight, Tuesday 14th October 2007

This second activity will take you a couple of hours spread over a couple of days and you will need to start it well before the deadline if you are to get your own hosted web server up and running in time.

Questions to think about

As usual in these activities I want you to have a set of questions in the back of your mind to think about while you are doing the task.

1. What can you learn from running a server?
2. What would you look for if you were asked to recommend hosting to a friend?
3. Why is choosing a good domain name so important?
4. What is the difference between the different hosting options?
5. What happens if you make the wrong decision?
6. What does hosting really mean and how does it work? (part 2)

I understand that some of you may be reluctant to spend money but the amounts are small (< £5 per month) and the rewards huge. Indeed if you get together with a group of other people you could even buy shared hosting for less than £10 per year per person in the group.

Just look at what you will be able to do (during and beyond this module)

	University	Free Tools	Own Hosting
Explore sysadmin issues	No	No	Yes
Access to your own stats	No	Some	Yes
Explore Google advertising	No	Yes	Yes
Investigate search engines and search engine reputation	No	Yes	Yes
Experiment with security and privacy issues	No	No	Yes
Run to your own mail server with your own personal email address	No	No	Yes
Experiment with FTP	No	No	Yes
Explore mashups and AJAX	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control your own domain name	No	No	Yes
Looks good on the CV	No	No	Yes
Run your own forums and discussion boards	No	Yes	Yes
Explore web design and ecommerce	Some	Yes	Yes
Run a blog	Yes	Yes	Yes
Display a portfolio of work	Yes	Yes	Yes
Experiment with PHP and MySQL	Yes	No	Yes
Create and show prototypes	Yes	Yes	Yes

What will you be doing during this activity?

1. Researching and choosing a domain name
2. Researching and choosing a web hosting company
3. Buying your domain name and hosting
4. Exploring what you have bought
5. Reporting back (part 1)
6. Reflecting on what you have actually bought (part 2)

Part 1: Choosing a domain name and hosting

Make notes as you go through this process.

1. Choose a domain name for your new site.

The domain name is the name that follows www in a web address and it must be unique.

It can also be used as part of an email address: me@domainname.com

Think carefully about what you want the name to say about you and what you are interested in.

Make sure that you could send a link to a prospective employer.

You need to find a name that is not being used and this can be very hard. Try putting together 2-3 words.

You could try and buy your own name and go for a domain such as www.jonathanbriggs.com

Read/watch the following to help you make up your mind

<http://www.thesitewizard.com/archive/domainname.shtml>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8u02gkIpdI>

Try one of these domain suggestion tools to explore what is available BUT don't buy just yet.

<http://domain-suggestions.domaintools.com/>

<http://www.domainsbot.com/>

<http://www.1and1.co.uk>

http://www.gi.net/domain.php?action=domain_suggest

Notice that names come with different extensions such as .com, .net, .tv and .biz and notice too that these cost different amounts. Choose a name with an extension that fits your purposes.

Avoid names that include punctuation or are difficult to spell

2. Buy a hosting package

If choosing a domain name was hard then choosing hosting looks harder but it's not. You want a list of features at a reasonable price (and you want them to register your domain name!)

Set your budget at around £40 per year (including the domain name)

Here are some of the features you **must** look for:

- Shared (or Virtual) Linux hosting (Do NOT choose Windows)
- Control panel (cPanel) to allow you to manipulate your space
- Fantastico (sometimes called Fantastico Deluxe) to allow you to install all sorts of software (including WordPress) really easily.
- FTP access
- Allows you to run your own mail server
- Allows you to run multiple domains/sub domains (vital if sharing)
- MySQL databases (may be useful later)

Here are some suggested hosting companies for you to look at (in no particular order). We strongly recommend that you choose one of these!

- <http://www.twentyhost.co.uk/shared/basic>
- <http://www.webhosting.uk.com/linux-hosting.php> (Basic)
- <http://www.600host.net/index.html>
- <http://webhosting.lycos.co.uk/consumer/starter/>
- <http://www.siteground.com/fantastico-hosting.htm>

A few things to consider before you make your decision

Are there any other features that you think you will need? Read all the details.

Should you do this with a friend? You can certainly save money but make sure that you can each control your own part of the virtual machine (multiple domain names/multiple ftp etc)

If you have no credit card the you will need to ask a friend or buy a pre-pay payment card from a PayPoint. Although this seems like a big deal, domain names can be moved from one hosting service to another if things go wrong.

What do you actually have to do?

1. Choose a domain name
2. Choose a web hosting company
3. Follow their instructions and buy a hosting package (may take 24-48 hours)
4. Follow any further instructions and get your web hosting set up so that you can type www.yourchosendomainname.com and you can see that your hosting is active

Follow the link below to feedback on your activity with the answers to the following questions:

1. Your domain name/web address?
2. Why did you choose this name?
3. Your hosting company?
4. Why did you choose this company?
5. The price you are paying annually?
6. What problems did you have with this activity and how did you solve them?

You will pass this activity if you give sensible answers to the above questions. We'll check that your domain name is up and running at your hosting company.

Feedback your results for PART 1 using this survey

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB228C8YL7SSZ>

Part 2: Where is your server?

Part 2 activities will generally be more open ended and require you to do some research on your own. In this activity I want you to find out as much as you can about your hosting. You must have completed part 1 first.

Here are the questions you need to research

1. What hardware/service have you actually bought? What make? How would you find out?
2. What do the following mean: virtual hosting, DNS, domain name
3. Where is your server located? How would you find out?

Here are some tools and information to help:

<http://computer.howstuffworks.com/dns.htm>

<http://whatismyipaddress.com/staticpages/index.php/tools-hostname-to-ip-address-lookup>

<http://www.hostip.info/index.html>

Then take this short quiz selecting the best answer for each question:

Virtual hosting

- a. I have a dedicated server computer for my own use
- b. I share a server with other customers
- c. I share a server and all my files with other customers

Domain Name Server

- a. a sort of A-Z of the web
- b. a sort of dictionary of the web
- c. a sort of phone book of the web

IP Address

- a. a reference number to identify a particular hosting location
- b. a reference number to identify a particular web site
- c. a reference number to identify a particular company

Domain name

- a. a unique name that is easier to remember than an IP address
- b. a shared name that is easier to remember than an IP address
- c. a random sequence of words known only to Google

Hosting

- a. providing private file storage space
- b. providing storage space visible from the Internet
- c. providing Internet storage space and customer control software

Finally try to answer the following questions (have a guess if you don't know)

1. Where is your hosting server located?
2. How did you find out?
3. What sort of computer is being used to host your site?
4. How did you find out?

You will pass this activity if you give sensible (not necessarily correct answers) to the above questions.

Feedback your results for PART 2 using this survey

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB228C8ZB7T92>

The small print again!

You should always print out these instructions

Every activity is broken up into at least 2 parts. You need to make sure that you always complete part 1 and if you are trying to get a good result for the module you should also complete part 2.

Every activity comes with things to do and things to think about. At the end of each part of the activity there is a feedback survey that allows you to prove that you have completed the work.

The feedback survey will not test every part of the activity and will also allow you to ask questions and report problems. Group feedback will be provided if you complete the survey before the stated deadline.

You should always make sure that you make notes (on paper or in a word processor) during the activity so that it is easy to fill in the feedback survey. This also ensures that if the feedback survey does not work for some reasons you can go back and fill it in again.

The software used for the survey Zoomerang is the market leader in commercial survey tools and is highly reliable.

Do remember that failure to take part in the activities will result in you having to take an examination (based on the same material).

Every activity will come with a list of useful links that should help you explore the questions asked. You may not need to use all of them but you may find them helpful for these activities and other parts of your course.

Do remember that these activities must be completed individually. This does not prevent group discussion or collaborative planning of the activities but each student must complete the feedback surveys on their own. We reserve the right to interview students whose answers are identical to other students and if copying or plagiarism is suspected both parties may be required to take the examination.