



# Senior Website Designer

View the world with a Web journalist's eyes, and you'll find the story in everything. Build yourself a safe space online where you can show your readers what moves you and share stories and causes with friends. You might end up getting to know yourself a little better, too!

## Steps

1. Find a worthwhile subject for your website or blog
2. Be the host with the most
3. Build a blueprint
4. Create must-see content
5. Go live—then drive!

## Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know how to design, build, and promote my own website.

### Step 1: Find a worthwhile subject for your website or blog

Think of your website as a living thing—with moving parts, a heart, and a voice. Make frequent updates with new content to keep your site lively and charged with positive, vital energy. And remember—anything you post online is available to the world, so use common sense and be careful about your choices. When in doubt, don't. Choose one of these, or another creative, useful idea that inspires you.

### CHOICES – DO ONE:

**The adventures of you and your friends on a Girl Scout Leadership Journey or your progress on a Girl Scout Gold Award.** Craft a blog or website chronicling your progress as you strive for your Gold Award. Your website will document your goals and achievements so family and friends can stay updated and cheer you on.

**A place you volunteer at. Almost every organization could benefit from an official website.** A thoughtfully crafted, informative site explaining the passions and goals of the organization could really help bolster the cause! Before you start, talk to the organization about your project, and find out what would be most beneficial for both of you.

**An extracurricular group or hobby.** Fill the world in on something you are passionate about. Turn band practice into a photo journal. Keep a blog about your horseback-riding lessons: which horse you rode, what skill you practiced, etc. Maybe your sports team needs a website, or you'd like to document your life on the team from a personal perspective? If you are a camp or outdoor enthusiast, share that.



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## **SIDEBAR: Copyright and Permissions**

Make sure all content on your site is original material created by you. If you'd like to include content created by someone else now and then, first contact the author for permission. After you get the go-ahead, send the author a note of thanks, and be sure to give them proper credit on your site. And remember, absolutely no plagiarizing! **Tip:** If you're planning to include photos of other people on your site, get their permission first. (Photos of children require their parents' permission.)

## **Step 2: Be the host with the most**

Now that you know what your site is about, figure out where it will live. You have lots of site-hosting options. Free sites are handy and easy. Paid sites offer more content storage space and may be free of ads (always get permission from an adult before buying anything online). Building your own site takes a lot of expertise, but gives you freedom to make it whatever you want it to be.

## **CHOICES - DO ONE:**

**Research free services online and review the pros and cons.** Doing a little homework before deciding on a free hosting site will help you choose one that fits your needs. Visiting sites and finding out about things like bandwidth and storage space can help you make the right choice. Talking to friends about their experiences is also a great research strategy.

**Get opinions from bloggers/sites you like.** Many bloggers welcome comments and feedback, and list their contact e-mail addresses on their sites. Similarly, a website's "Contact Us" section can help you track down someone to answer your questions. Contact a blogger or a Webmaster on a website you like to find out which hosting sites they've tried and why they like the one they now use.

**Teach yourself to build a site from scratch.** Create something that is truly your own! Check out books about website building, take an online course, or network to get tips from family members or your computer teacher at school. It's a lot of work, but you can use what you learn to help others build amazing websites and blogs! (Get a parent's permission before signing up for classes, especially since many require a fee.)

## **SIDEBAR: Online Safety**

Always make safety your number-one priority when reaching out to others online or posting anything to the Internet. Does your e-mail address say too much about your identity? If so, create a new one that doesn't give clues about your personal life, such as



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your birth date or street address. Always get permission before contacting anyone outside of your circle of friends, and keep your parents and other trusted adults updated on whom you've contacted online and why. If you're going to share personal opinions, consider securing your site so that only people you know in real life have access. (And encourage friends and family to follow the same rules for safety; even on secure sites it's not a good idea to share personal contact information.)

### Step 3: Build a blueprint

A website's blueprint is its foundation—it maps out how it's organized and navigated, which page you "land" on, and how you link pages together. Constructing a solid blueprint takes planning and research. Start by looking at sites with themes similar to yours to find the right structure and get tips for sections to include.

#### CHOICES - DO ONE:

**Find a mentor.** Use the power of networking to find a Webmaster or blogger willing to teach you the basics of website building. This may be another girl who has built her own site, a knowledgeable neighbor, or the person in charge of the computer lab at the library.

**Take a class.** Check your local community center, library, or community college for a beginner's Web programming class to help you learn the basics of creating a site blueprint.

**Meet up.** Arrange a gathering of others who are passionate about your site's topic to discuss its needs and requirements. These decisions will be important in hashing out the "wireframe" (the skeleton) for your site and making sure the basic parts are thought out and accounted for so you can start building!

#### SIDEBAR: Design 101

Do as the experts do and create a mood board, complete with colors, fonts, and the kinds of images you might want for your site. This will help you visualize atmosphere and find an overall "mood" that's in line with your vision.

### Step 4: Create must-see content

Now is the time for a vital decision—what will be the main attraction on your site when you launch? Choose one of these, and create your content in this step.

#### CHOICES - DO ONE:



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**Blog posts.** If your site will mainly serve as a blog, write a few posts before going live. A blog with five or so thought-provoking pieces is more engaging than a blog with one lonely post. With several topics to browse, readers are more likely to share your blog with others and be eager to come back for more.

**A knockout lead story.** Start building a solid readership right away with an attention-grabbing centerpiece that steals the spotlight when you launch your site. Give it the works—add photos, an exclusive video clip, or compose an article that includes interviews with fun and relevant quotes.

**Start with a compelling photo gallery, with captions.** A picture is worth a thousand words, so why not grab your camera and tell a visual tale? Add captions to draw the pieces together. You'll delight readers with the photo feast, and get a reputation for versatile storytelling that will keep them coming back.

## **SIDEBAR: More to Explore**

**Add Flash.** Spice up your site with some Flash animation. Creating this takes extra programming skills you can get from a class or from an expert willing to help you

## **SIDEBAR: Careers to Explore**

- Advertising art director
- Advertising copywriter
- Advertising sales director
- Digital-arts professor
- Digital-marketing specialist
- Graphic designer
- Journalist
- Media planner
- Mobile-app developer
- Professional blogger
- Search-engine marketing analyst
- Web video producer
- Webmaster
- Website designer
- Website developer
- Technical writer
- Video game designer



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## SIDEBAR: Female Web Entrepreneurs

- **Poornima Vijayashanker**, founding software engineer of Mint.com and creator of software company BizzeeBee
- **Arianna Huffington**, founder of the news site Huffingtonpost.com
- **Carol Bartz**, CEO of Yahoo
- **Caterina Fake**, cofounder of photo-sharing site Flickr.com
- **Eileen Gittens**, cofounder of Blurb, a print-on-demand company
- **Meg Whitman**, former CEO of eBay Jen Yates, blogger and author
- **Alexa Andrzejewski**, cofounder of Foodspotting.com

## Step 5: Go live—then drive!

Going live is only the first step of launching your site. After that, you need to find ways to drive traffic to your pages and create a loyal readership. Use one of these tactics to keep your site updated for at least one month.

## CHOICES - DO ONE:

**Go social.** Use your social network to help spread the word. Link your blog posts to your social networking account, and let your friends know when there's something new and exciting on your site to read and share!

**Throw a launch party.** There's nothing wrong with generating a little hype! Invite friends, fellow Girl Scouts, teachers, people who helped you, and perhaps even the local press to your party, then include full details and photos on your site. Tip: E-mailing a party profile link to the people involved will help drum up readership and give you a solid reputation.

**Link up.** Build a network. Start by adding links to sites similar to yours, then contact those sites and request a link to your site in return. (Remember safety guidelines!) Linking to other sites is key for showing up in Internet searches. Adding hyperlinks within your stories also attracts readers. For example, if you write about your favorite ice-cream shop, include a link to its website—that will help drive traffic to both the shop's site and yours.

## SIDEBAR: Site Traffic

Find out how to measure your results. Using online tracking tools helps you get to know your audience and find out which areas of your site drive the most traffic. The results may surprise you! It's a great way to decide which parts to play up and which can go when you do a content makeover.



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**Tip:** If your site includes multimedia elements— photo slide shows, videos, or animation—it could cost more to host it. Consider how long you’ll want your site up and what the monthly fees might be. Could you turn the expense into a money-raising opportunity?

Now that I’ve earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Building and launching a website for a community organization
- Helping my school create a website—or joining the student Web team, if there already is one
- Creating a website to educate and inspire others about an issue I care about

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