

BUILDING YOUR OWN WEB PAGE

Although not a comprehensive guide, the following tips may help you in building a website for your Scouting organization:

CONSIDERATIONS

First Things First - Planning

- Decide what kinds of information you want to publish
- Who will develop content and who will do the web publishing
- Where will you host your website
- How will you let your target audience know about your web page
- When will you update your content
- Who is your audience – Parents, Possible new members, the community at large, etc.

Setting Up A Website

- **Hosting:** Make arrangements with an Internet Service Provider to host your website.
 - **Uploading:** Look for a host that will allow you to upload files via File Transfer Protocol (FTP) instead of a proprietary web based device that forces you to load one file at a time.
 - **Server Space:** Make sure that the host offers enough free space for what you want to put on the web. Shoot for 5 megabytes or higher to start.
 - **Contract:** Review the hosting arrangement to make sure you do not have to include content from the host that might be inconsistent with the aims and objectives of Scouting; e.g., you do not want to have a banner add that changes to advertisements for alcoholic beverages or promotion of a site

with adult content.

○ **Free and Low-cost Hosting for Scouting:**

- www.scoutwebservices.com - Monthly Fee
- www.scoutinternethosting.com - Monthly Fee - Run by Scouters from Dan Beard Council
- www.scouttroop.org/ - Troops and Packs Online (TAPO) - Free Hosting
- www.scouters.com/hosting/ - SCOUTER.com Free
- www.yourscoutsites.com/ - Monthly Fee
- www.bsahosting.org/ - Monthly Fee
- www.kcwebhosting.com/templates/scouts1.html - Monthly Fee
- www.scoutingpages.org/ - Free Hosting
- www.scouts.freewebs.com/ - Free Hosting with Ads or Fee for No Ads
- www.scoutlander.com/ - Free Hosting with ads directed only to adults who are logged in but not public or youth
- www.soarol.com/ - Scouting Online, Affordable & Reliable – Monthly Fee
- www.agentz.com/scouts/ - Free Hosting
- www.escouting.net/ - Bristol TN based free website advice & tools
- www.scout-websites.com/
- www.doubleknot.com/ - Monthly Fee
- www.scoutswebsite.net/ - Terapad Corp Free basic site with upgrade options
- www.packwebsites.org/ - Monthly Fee
- www.packsonline.com/ - Monthly Fee
- <http://templates.entheosweb.com/Boy-Scout.asp> – One time fee to purchase scout theme design template
- <http://www.troopsonline.com/> - Monthly Fee
- www.scoutwebs.com/ - Monthly Fee
- www.orgsites.com/ - Free Hosting, not Scout Specific
- www.clubspaces.com/SportsMain/family.aspx - Free Hosting with Ads
- www.freeservers.com/ - Options of Free or Fee Based, not scout specific
- <http://groups.yahoo.com/> - Free or Fee based with no ads, used by many units as an e-mail list group management site
- www.tripod.lycos.com/ - Free or Fee based with no ads.

Not scout specific - Free or Fee based with no ads. Not scout specific

- www.angelfire.lycos.com/
- www.scouthosting.com - Monthly Fee

- **Social Networking Free Hosting Websites & other new Media**

- **Facebook.com** – By far the largest and fastest growing of the Social Networking sites. Most councils, the national office and thousands of Scout Units use this site. It is recommended that the site be set up as a Group so individual members can become a Fan of the site as opposed to creating a unit page in the same manner that an individual person would set up an account.
- **MySpace.com** – Second largest of the Social Networking sites, more options to customize the page
- **LinkedIn.com** – Used more for professional associations but some scout groups are using this to establish group sites
- **Twitter.com** – Used to send SMS (Text) updates to Cell Phones, Computers, etc. with breaking news and short messages.
- RSS Feeds – XXXXX
- **YouTube.com** – The largest of the video sites, allows users to upload videos and other presentations. The National BSA and many councils and a growing number of units are now using the service.

- **Free Hosting General:** You can visit [The NetCommish](#) or [WEBnME2 Free Hosting Links](#) where there are lists of ISPs (Internet Service Providers) that provide free website hosting.

In addition you may want to consult the agreement you entered into with your ISP to get access to the Internet. Most providers offer a limited amount of fee web space

- **Inexpensive Hosting:** Look for Scouters on the web who offer hosting at below market rates.
- **Local Resources:** Check with local Scouters in your area to see whether a local ISP offers free hosting. In some areas ISPs even compete to offer free hosting to non-profit organizations.
- **Plan a template for each of your web pages that includes:**
 - **Title Tags** - make sure that each page is identified with a title that describes the page. This is what search engine robots will use to index your website. Include key words related to the page including the word "Scout" and the name of your organization. The name of your city and state may also be helpful. Remember that when someone bookmarks your page the information in this tag will become the bookmark's name. Titles like "home page" are not very helpful. Instead try something like "Boy Scout Troop 13, Kilian, Texas - Home Page"
 - **Identify Your Site:** Use A Masthead or something that identifies your website on each page. You want visitors to know when they are on your website and when they have reached someone else's website. Include your City, type of unit (Pack, Troop, Crew, etc.) and your council.
 - **Make It Easy to Navigate** Navigation links - Always make sure you have links on each page that lead visitors back to your home page or any key web pages on your site.

At this point you may want to sit down and draw a diagram of how you want your website organized. Usually it is best to have a simple home page that only gives the most important information in very brief form to a visitor and links to the rest of your website. Most successful websites have a hierarchy of pages. The top level is the home page. The next level of pages are tables of contents arranged by subject area. Finally the

bulk of pages are at the third level where most of your information is presented. Be careful not to have too many levels. Most users will not go beyond four levels.

Example:

- Home Page
 - Calendar of Events
 - About our Troop
 - Meetings
 - Leaders
 - Getting Ready for Camp Checklist
 - How to Join
 - What's New
 - Activities
 - Campout
 - Summer Camp
 - Hike
 - Scouting for Food

If you use an image map for your navigation, make sure to also include text links. Otherwise, some people may not be able to get beyond your front door because their browser doesn't support image map links. Redundant navigation isn't bad.

- **Content Area:** The middle of your page is where you are going to place your content and perhaps links.
- **Footer information:** At the bottom of each page include information about copyrights, if you have any and contact information. Each page should provide a method of contacting the web page owner to make suggestions or alert you to problems. Generally including an hyperlink to an e-mail

address is sufficient. If you can include a link to a suggestion form that is better.

- **Develop a web policy for your pages**

- **Laws and Rules:** Check to see whether there any laws restricting what you can place on your website or any rules from your Scouting Association on web content
- **Council:** Incorporate your Council's web policy, if there is one. (US); example - [Mount Baker Council Internet Guidelines](http://www.mtbakerbsa.org/guidelines/Internet_Guidelines.html) http://www.mtbakerbsa.org/guidelines/Internet_Guidelines.html
- **District:** Incorporate your District's web policy, if there is one. (US)
- **Privacy:** Address privacy and youth protection issues
 - Avoid pictures of Scouts that identify the Scout by first and last name
 - Contact information should lead to an adult, avoid e-mail links to a youth member
 - Do not include personal information about anyone without the individual's permission (parents permission for a youth member)
 - [BSA Recommendations](#)
 - [U.S. Children's Online Privacy Protection Act](#) and [Related FTC Information](#)
- **Commercialism:** You may want to avoid links to commercial websites to avoid giving the appearance of a Scouting endorsement of a particular commercial product
- **Link Restrictions:** You may want to restrict links to only local Scouting units, your District, and your Council

- **Scouts with Disabilities:** You may want to require all pages to be compatible with a text based web browser like LYNX. This means that all graphics will need to use the "ALT" tag to identify the graphic and any link related to the graphic, if it is used for navigation. This will also help people with disabilities to navigate your site.

Writing the HTML

- **Look at How Others Do It:** It's a good idea to look at other pages and view the HTML source to find out how a certain effect can be achieved.
- **Free Template:** For a bare-bones, foot-in-the-door web presence, you can try using the templates that are available at the Troop 24 web site:
<http://www.emf.net/~troop24/template/>
- **Backgrounds:** Keep your background light and simple - a busy background will make it difficult to read your content. Also make sure that your text has good contrast values with your background. For example, light purple on bright yellow is hard too read and may make your visitor look for an air sickness bag.
- **Keep It Simple:** Don't overdo the bells and whistles - if you use java applets, javascripts, heavy graphics, etc. all on one page, it may take forever to load for a modem user and obscure the message you are trying to get across. While the page may look really neat to the author, most visitors will move on to another page, if it doesn't load in 15-30 seconds. Keep It Simple.
- **Graphics:** Use graphics to enhance your pages and help tell your story, but remember that the larger the graphic the slower your page will be to load. Try using only a few graphics for each page and keep them as small as possible. (Do not rely on width and height parameters in your html to make the graphic smaller. This does not decrease the file size of your graphic and actually takes longer to load because your user's browser has to calculate the resizing of the graphic. Instead resize the graphic to exactly what you want with a graphics editor program.)

Preferred graphics formats include PNG, GIF and JPEG. Other formats may not be supported by all browsers. GIF works best for small objects, line art, and lower resolution images. JPEG is preferred for complex images, such as photographs.

Attracting and Keeping Visitors

- There are two primary Scouter Unit Search websites in the United States. The U.S. Scouting Service Project's ScoutSite Search contains more than 25,000 links. The homepage is at:

<http://usscouts.org/databases/searchscoutsites.asp>

Check there first to insure that your unit is not already listed. If not you can submit a new link at:

<http://usscouts.org/mailform/addasite.asp>

The other primary Scout Search Engine is NetRoster on the SCOUTER.com Network at:

http://www.scouters.com/net_roster/default.asp

- Register your website with popular search engines
- E-mail an announcement about your website to online Scouting groups like Scouts-L, Your District website and your council webmaster. About 20% of all council websites actually offer links to unit websites within their council.
- E-mail local Scouters about the opening of your website
- Notify other Scouters that maintain link sites or indices to Scouting websites
- Notify public service websites for your community and ask for a link
- Put an announcement in your local Scouting newsletter
- Use word-of-mouth locally too
- Update your content regularly, stale content will suggest to a visitor that one visit is enough
- If available from your host, use website statistics to help you decide

what pages are being used and which ones are not. This may help you figure out what needs work, what needs to go and what needs to be expanded.

- As for comments and evaluation
- Respond to customer needs - don't argue with suggestions, use them when possible
- Make your content valuable - offer what customers want

More Info

- [Web Publishing Helps](#) from the webmaster at Orange County Council

