

The Web makes it easy to share your deepest thoughts and most passionate opinions with the entire world, but how do you get started? Futurenet's **David Sikk** explains the basics in the first of six easy-to-follow tutorials on Web page design.



This month

The basics, paragraphs, horizontal rules, background colours, special characters.

Next month

Structure, internal and external links, links to other services, lists.

Create your own Web site

Part one

Ask a roomful of Internet gurus for advice on setting up a Web site and they'll start going on about Sparc Stations, 20Mbit lines, hive minds and JavaScript. Unfortunately, this sort of jargon scares off most newcomers – unnecessarily so, because you don't actually need any of these things.

Still with me? Good. Next, you'll meet Internet cynics who feel they have a God-given right to proclaim that the best sites on the Web are all froth and no substance. Meanwhile, those sites continue to get bigger

and better while the cynic's site looks more prehistoric every day.

Ignore these people. With a bit of thought, it's simple enough to create vibrant and interesting Internet sites that are a pleasure to look at and browse through. All you need is common sense, a computer and access to the Internet. And with **.net**, starting right here, you have a no-nonsense step-by-step guide to making your own Web site, right from the basics. So ignore the techies, gurus and cynics, get it together and let us show you what a doddle it really is.

Why do I need it?

If you are an Internet user, a **.net** reader or have been awake over the last few years, you will know how amazing the Web is. If not, there's a quick reminder. First, it enables anyone to publish information quickly and make it available worldwide. Second, it is a great way to share interests and ideas with others, no matter where they are. Third, it is way cool and groovy... or, man.

Given these benefits, at some point most Internet users feel the need to put something back into the Net. This can take the form of an e-mail, a posting to a newsgroup discussion or the creation of their own Web site. Many businesses are also discovering the benefits of having a site on-line and are developing their own pages.

Others, sadly, are not convinced. Thanks to a chorus of jargon-wielding tech heads, they feel creating Web pages is something best left to those same jargon wielders. This is untrue, but it has the tech heads laughing all the way to the bank.

How it all works

The first thing you will need is an idea for a site. If you already have the inspiration for your masterpiece, be it for business or pleasure, then you're

set. If not, then zooming around the Web should provide you with a few ideas. The undeniable and joyful truth is that you can put up more or less anything provided you have some material. The world could finally hear the sound of your kazoo, watch video clips of your attempt to break the world pogo-stick record and share your fascination with rare algae.

Next, you will need some Web space. I'm not trying to sound futuristic here – Web space is a little corner of the Internet you can call your own and start building on. If you

have an Internet account, you may already have some space kindly supplied by your Internet service provider. Most offer enough space to let you create a fairly snazzy site, so it would be a good idea to ring up yours and check.

Alternatively, **.net** subscribers get 500K of free space courtesy of Virtual Computer, which also offers **.net** subscribers special deals if your on-line ambitions extend beyond your allocation of free space.

Finally, you will need to close the part of your mind that gets freaked

out by the words code and language and open it again to the system which makes the Web possible.

HyperText Markup Language (HTML) is the bedrock of the Web and the means by which you prepare your pages. The bad thing is that its techie-sounding name is enough to have some people running for cover straight away. The good thing is that it's easy to pick up, especially because we are going to show you how it works right here. Plus, you'll sound dead smart when you tell your mates you can hack code.

TOP ADVICE SITES

Microsoft

<http://www.microsoft.com/msdownload/#pubtool>
There are lots of Internet publishing and development tools for the PC ready to be downloaded from the Microsoft site.

HTML tools

<http://info.london.on.ca/Services/PDA/MacEditors.html>
This site has lots of tools to help you create your own Web pages, site or server on a Mac. Two of the more useful ones are BBEdit and ColorMeister.

BBEdit is a popular and critically acclaimed text editor for programmers, HTML authors, users of on-line services and anyone else who needs to edit plain text files. It has a handy search and replace facility.

ColorMeister makes it easier to choose colours. It

enables you to pick the path to a background picture, the background colour, the text colour, the link colour, the active link colour and the viewed link colour and will generate a BODY statement which can then be selected, copied and pasted into your page. Also, you can have the program output a text file with the framework for a page which uses the BODY statement.

Special Characters Site

<http://ece.wpi.edu/~jonday/spc-ent.html>

This site provides you with special characters aplenty. The entity names are a part of the specification and they should work on all browsers, but they are all case sensitive, so watch out when you use them. See the Tip of the Month box on page 88 for a more detailed explanation.