

# Build Your Own Website

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## My Background

- First computer experience – 1956 (IBM 650)
- BASIC time-sharing computer – 1968
  - From Dartmouth to Smith
- First home “Internet” connection – 1994
- First website – rfabian.com in 1997
- Current websites:
  - fabian.ca, LIFEcourses.ca, 510yonge.ca, beasuloeilcurvelake.ca

## Why a Website

- You've got something to
  - Say
  - Share
  - Ask
  - Receive
  - Sell
- The web will easily reach (most of) your intended audience
  - **Do you need a website?**

## Plan

- Assumptions
- Website Basics:
  - Web Address, Web Server
  - HTML page, style sheet
  - Web page examples
  - Content Management System
- Three “cloud” options
  - WordPress
  - Weebly
  - Drupal Gardens
- Your next step

## 1<sup>st</sup> Assumption

- You want to do more than is offered by:
  - Twitter: Great for short, on-the-fly messages
  - Dropbox: Great for a shared (cloud) directory
  - Facebook: Everyone's doing it, should you
- These are only three popular examples of Internet services that are (mostly) free for individuals to use

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Assumption

- You don't plan to provide your own tech support
  - Install the software you will use
  - Establish the database you will use
  - Configure the theme and modules
  - Install all of the security patches
  - Follow good operating procedures
- For most people, using an online web hosting service makes technical sense

## Website

- Every website needs an address, e.g. [www.LIFECourses.ca](http://www.LIFECourses.ca)
- The address must point to a web server configured to “serve” web pages
- When a request is received, the server ships the appropriate page to the requester
- The site author must populate the web pages and then maintain their content

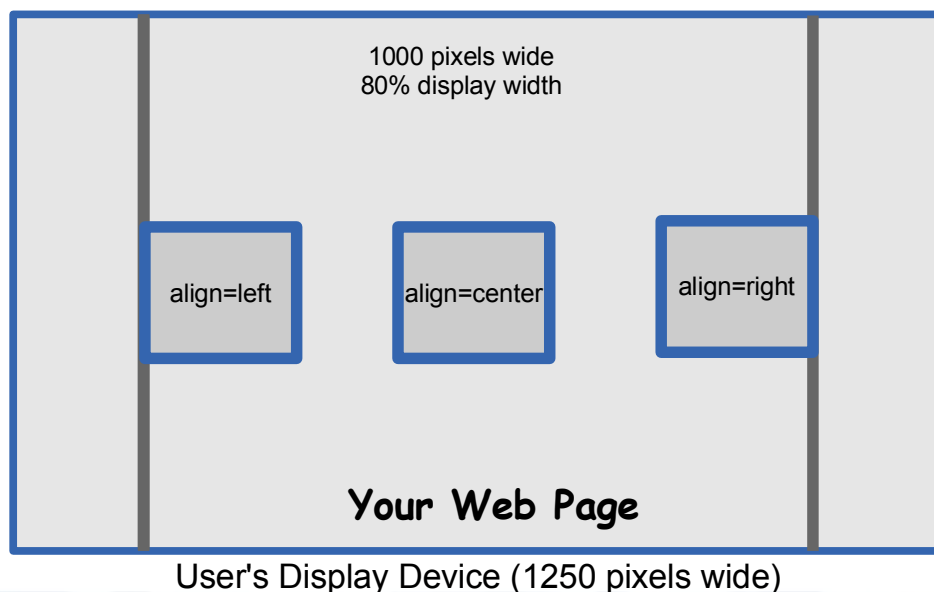
## What does the user see?

- The user is looking at the site through a visual display – can range from a small smartphone to a wall-sized unit
- The web page gets shipped along with a style sheet and the receiving device decides how it is to be presented on the display
- Not really layout as found in a word processing program, but close

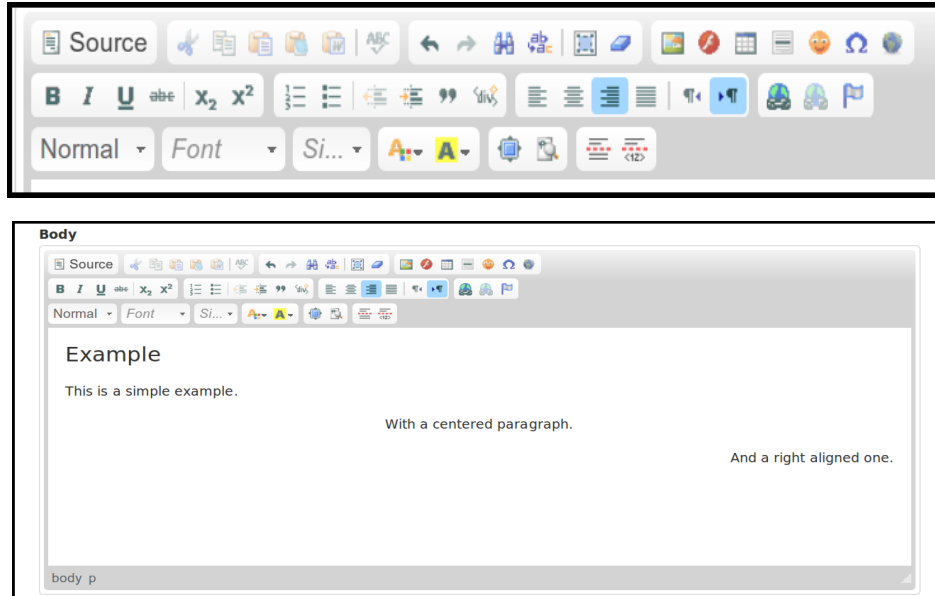
# HTML

- HTML puts formatting tags around the content provided by the page author
- The author specifies `<strong>Strong Text</strong>`, and the user's browser takes its best shot at displaying "Strong Text"
  - May use a style sheet (CSS) provide with the page
  - May use a default style sheet from the browser
- Cannot fully predict what the user will see

# HTML Context



# LIFECourses.ca Editor



## Content Management System

- It is possible to write a website one page at a time, putting in all links by hand
  - That's how it was done 20 years ago
- Can become a maintenance nightmare
  - One simple change can touch many pages
- The alternative is to use a CMS that will display the content you provide, using a theme you select, and automatically take care of all the necessary housekeeping

## 3 Popular Examples

- WordPress
  - Originally built as a blogging tool. Has been generalized, but still does a great job with blogs.
- Weebly
  - “Modern” website building system, complete with the ability to drag objects to the editor.
- Drupal (Gardens)
  - One of the most powerful open source CMS, now available as a cloud based option.

## WordPress

### Pros and Cons of WordPress.com

#### Pros

- Simple-to-use, but with a lot of potential for power.
- It's built for people who know *very* little about hosting web sites; there are even prompts to teach you how to buy your own domain name and point it to your new web site.
- Great user community: There are tutorials and blogs and forums *everywhere* about WordPress. It's very easy to find someone who can help, even if you need to pay a developer to do a little work for you.

#### Cons

- A lot of customizations that are free with a self-hosted WordPress account (like custom CSS) cost money for a WordPress.com account.
- It's built for blogging, so you have to tweak a few settings to create a non-blog-based web site.

<http://www.staffhacker.com/tag/hosting>

# Weebly

- **Weebly**

- Weebly is HTML-based (non-Flash), but unlike Google Sites and WordPress, it features drag-and-drop site creation.



- **Pros**

- Extremely simple to set up.
- Drag-and-drop design.
- Edit in place.
- HTML, not Flash.

- **Cons**

- Less features than Google Sites and WordPress.

<http://www.staffhacker.com/tag/hosting>

# Drupal Gardens

## Pros and Cons of Drupal Gardens

### Pros

- Drupal is very powerful, and Drupal Gardens is the first site offering the power of Drupal without the complexity of installing it on your own server.
- Your organization may be rolling out Drupal across their own web sites, which might make it worth your consideration.

### Cons

- Drupal Gardens is a little more developer-focused rather than end-user focused, so there will be some confusing descriptions and instructions at times
- Even with Drupal Gardens doing all the work up front, Drupal is laid out in a way that's different than the CMSes you're
- Drupal's page framework is usually pretty static—a three-column layout with a banner at the top—and if you want anything different, there aren't always a lot of easy ways to customize it if you're not a developer.

<http://www.staffhacker.com/tag/hosting>



## “Free” Means ...

- You're an individual, not a company
- You're content with their address
- You're content with a no frills service
- You'll accept some advertisements
- Alternatives:
  - Build your own (less than \$100/year)
  - Add “deluxe” features (from \$10/mo to \$50/mo)
  - Buy a “professional” site (from \$100/mo, up)

## Open Source (Free)

- WordPress and Drupal both open source
- You're free to download and use a copy
- You'll need an inexpensive LAMP host
  - Linux, Apache, mySQL, PHP
- Initial installation often automatic with LAMP
- But you must select: Theme & Modules
- And you must configure the site
- And then you must maintain the site

## One Targeted Option

- WildApricot
  - Toronto firm (with offices in Russia)
  - Focused on Association websites
  - Solution: member management
  - Solution: event management
  - Solution: funds management
  - \$25+/month; 7,000 paying customers
- Many targeted web options
  - Can make sense on many levels

## Questions

- What topics didn't I cover?
- What new questions arose from this session?
- Is there a next website step for you?
- Overall comments?



*thanks*