

Your Club is contemplating having a web site, so what should you know at the start? This article aims to set the scene and is the first of a series helping you to build your web site.

What's it all about?

Remember that a web site is all about communication, so the content is all-important. Decide from the outset what information you want the World to see about your Club – if you are not sure, why not take a look at what other Clubs are saying on their web sites?

When I was re-designing this web site the first thing I did was to work out what the content should be and how it might be organised. Talk it over in your Club - I planned this site by talking with your National Development Officer and we agreed the content.

How is the content organised?

Once you have decided upon what you want to say, do remember that a web site is made up of a number of web pages linked together – don't try to put it all on one page. Split your content up into logical sections so that each section can form one of the web pages on your site. This makes it much easier for a visitor to read than having one long page.

You don't need a lot of web pages – 4 to 6 is usually quite adequate for a basic site.

The sort of content that is often included in a web site might be:

- A 'Home' page that introduces your Club – this is the first thing that a visitor to your site will see
- Your programme for the year
- News and events
- Contact details
- Links to other sites – other Clubs, maybe, certainly to the ASC website

These are really a minimum for a viable site – look at other Club sites to see what they have done, in particular those Clubs that have been 'Website of the Month'.

It is often a good idea to write the content for each page out as a separate document in a word processor and print it off – this is your reference material.

What's the process?

There are five stages in the web design process:

1. Decide the content
2. Consider the layout and design of your site
3. Build your site

4. Have your site 'hosted' on the internet
5. Update and maintain your site

Does that sound daunting? It needn't be, for it is a lot easier now than it used to be and these WebSPEAKER guides should help you.

Layout and design

This can be easy for those of you with a flair for design – or a pitfall for those with two thumbs!

You will want to make an impression on your visitors and have a distinctive 'look and feel' to your site. When I was designing my own Wolverhampton SC site I decided to use the colours of Wolverhampton Wanderers FC!

Again, a good tip is to look at other web sites – whether ASC websites or others – to get an idea of what others have done. All of the ASC Club web sites are listed on the national site.

Alternatively, you could use a site template, where you just fill-in the blanks. I shall be providing an ongoing series of templates on this site that you can download and use if you wish.

Also some community sites offer free hosting and templates for clubs, an example used by some of our Clubs is Communigate at <http://www.communigate.co.uk> .

Building your site

This is where some folk get frightened! Don't worry, because the process of building a web site can range from 'simple' all the way up to 'difficult', and I would encourage new designers to opt for the simple way.

Over the coming weeks and months I shall be writing these WebSPEAKER Guides to help with a lot of the methods – Guide No.2 will show you how to set up a site using a template; Guide No 3 will show you how to use a Community site for clubs.

The various methods involve different software:

- Online site creation in free or community web site providers
- Using templates in a word processor, e.g. Word
- Using a word processor to design a site from scratch
- Using a free web site building program, e.g. Mozilla Composer
- Using a commercial web design program, e.g. Dreamweaver
- Using other software that has web design capabilities, e.g. Page Plus
- Or you could get someone else to do it for you!

Guides 2 and 3 will be ready soon.

Hosting your site

If all that you do is create your web site, nobody will be able to see it, no matter how good it is! Your site must be made 'live' on the internet and to do this you will need to use the services of a web hosting company.

A web hosting company will store your web site and make it available on the internet. They will also be able to provide you with that most important thing – your web address.

There are a number of choices you can make:

- Community hosting sites. Usually free.
- Free hosting sites. These usually contain advertisements.
- Internet Service Providers, e.g. Tiscali, BTInternet, AOL etc. If you have your web and e-mail provided by one of these there is usually free web space available to you.

These are free services and it is usually easy to get your web site uploaded to their web space, but a downside is that the web address of your site is very long and cumbersome: not easy for anyone to remember and not easily picked up by search engines such as Google.

- Alternatively you can use a commercial web hosting company, who will make a charge for their services. They will also arrange a web address for you, probably with a '.co.uk' or a '.org.uk' ending.

Charges for a small site are typically around £5 per month, with a small charge for the web address. Some services include a free web site builder with templates and also give you a number of e-mail addresses that you can personalise for use by your Club officers. Some services offer a free package of web design and management software.

In the next Guide ... "Using ASC web templates with a word processor"