# Content platforms

## Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

* Describe the features, advantages, and disadvantages of using a web site for your project
* Describe the features, advantages, and disadvantages of using eBooks for your project

Perhaps the most common way to deliver multimedia content is through a website. This can be achieved through a specialized set of programmed web pages or built upon a content management system such as WordPress.

## Web sites

### Why use a web site?

* It is the most common way multimedia is access today
* Even if you choose to use an eBook format for your project, you will still need your own space on the Internet to distribute your content.

### Why not use a website?

* Requires that the learner be online
* Can be more technically challenging to implement

### Web hosting

Regardless of whether you choose to use static web pages or a content management system, such as WordPress, you will still need to find a website hosting provider and to register for a domain name. Personally, I (Rebecca) use [Reclaim Hosting](https://reclaimhosting.com/) as my web hosting provider. I have no financial stake in this company. I recommend them because they are academic focused and they have excellent customer service. I usually get a response to tickets within hours, and they will back-out anything I break – so if I install a bad WordPress plugin that breaks my site, they can go in and fix it for me.

Note: if you don't renew your hosting service when you get your annual bill, you may lose your content. Always save a backup locally.

### Choosing a domain name

A creative domain name is always fun, but not always feasible. It can also be a challenge if your site speaks to different aspects of yourself. Personally, after using a subdomain of my travel blog (goingeast.ca), I finally moved my portfolio over to a blog with my name as the URL. You will now find me at <https://rebeccahogue.com>.

Don't stress over the name too much. The name doesn’t play a direct role in your searchability. You’ll soon learn that most people just bookmark it or put it into something like Diigo or Feedly or subscribe to updates on things like Facebook or emails via WordPress.

You can change your domain name later for a small cost, but any work that you do to build your online presence in one domain becomes an issue when you change – and you lose all your analytics (e.g. site visit history). I recently moved from rjh.goingeast.ca to rjhogue.name to rebeccahogue.com. The new site looks more like an ePortfolio than the old one does. The original was a place to blog and that was its purpose. I’ve now moved, but had to be careful to put a forwarder in place so that people who knew my old blog can find my new one.

You may want to have a couple of options as you cannot use a name that is already taken. Also, you may want to try googling common misspellings of your domain name, as that may happen – although really, most people find you via search or links you share on other social media profiles (e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook).

**Q**:  I need help choosing a domain name.  Where can I get ideas?

**A**:  You can use a version of your name.  Alternately, many domain name hosting providers now offer idea generation tools to help you to find a perfect name.  For example, Porkbun.com offers an AI Generated Search tool. You can also tell an AI like ChatGPT a little bit about yourself and ask it for suggestions. If you are using Google sites, it will generate a unique google-based subdomain for you automatically.

**Q**: Can you reserve a domain name without a web hosting service?

**A**:  Yes. If the name is available, a domain name registrar can reserve the name and 'park' it for you.

It may be helpful to know that you can also use a different provider for hosting your domain. For example, Felicia likes to shop around for the best prices on domain names. She currently registers her domains at Porkbun.com and hosts them at InterServer.net. When she is ready to use a domain name that is parked at InterServer, she updates her settings there to 'point' to her web hosting provider.

(Note - Whereas Reclaim Hosting is known for its service, InterServer.net is known for its value. InterServer is web hosting provider that offers a free student account and unlimited storage. As compared to Reclaim hosting, getting started with InterServer may require more know-how and additional steps. It renews at the same price as Reclaim hosting. So, of the two, Reclaim hosting is likely a better choice for users who are just getting started with WordPress and those who benefit from more support. Both Reclaim Hosting and InterServer are lesser known web host providers; examples of a well known web hosting providers include Hostinger, DreamHost, GoDaddy, and BlueHost.

**Q**. How much does it cost to reserve a domain name?

**A**.  The fee depends on the top level domain (TLD) that you choose. Examples of TLDs are .com, .org, and .name. At the time of this writing, Porkbun.com charges about $10/year for a .com domain, and over $2000/year for a .inc domain.  Note - Many companies offer deeply discounted prices for the first year. So, be mindful of the renewal rates.

**Q**. Can you host a Google site under your own domain name?

**A**.  We have not tried this ourselves, but according to this [support article from Google](https://support.google.com/sites/answer/9068867?hl=en), it is possible to set up a Google site under your own domain name if you would like.

### Website

You can use a tool like Dreamweaver to create a website that is coded directly with HTML/CSS. This approach works well when you want a complex design that isn’t easily created using a WordPress theme. It does require that you know how to do some coding directly in HTML and CSS.

W3School.com provide free [HTML](https://www.w3schools.com/html/default.asp) and [CSS](https://www.w3schools.com/css/default.asp) tutorials. I highly recommend that you learn enough HTML and CSS to be able to read existing code and make small edits, such as fixing a list or changing a font color.

### WordPress

WordPress isn’t just for blogging. WordPress can be considered a “content management system” as it has a database and provides tools to manage web pages in addition to blog posts. WordPress provides a way for those with less technical skills to create web pages that look great.

WordPress that is hosted on your own domain is not the same as WordPress that is hosted on WordPress.com. WordPress.com provides free and fremium (that is, you pay for extra functionality) hosting, however, you are very limited in what you are able to do. It does not take long for the cost of “features” on WordPress.com to become more expensive than hosting WordPress on your own domain.

Since WordPress is the most common website content management system out there, there are a lot of free themes and plugins that extend the functionality of WordPress. It is also constantly under attack from hackers. Fortunately, if your WordPress site is hosted at Reclaim Hosting, you can allow them to manage the update of your site to ensure that you always have the latest secure release.

### Google Sites

Google sites is Google's website builder. It has fewer features than an advanced website builder, like WordPress.  It's a free, menu driven site-builder with pre-configured and pre-formatted blocks for ease of use. It is an appealing choice for users who want to create simple websites for their portfolio, blog, business site, landing page, classrooms, etc.

## eBooks

eBooks are a special kind of media that typically can be read both online or offline. With advances in eBook technology and protocols, it is becoming more common to create educational multimedia eBooks like this one.

### Why use an eBook?

* eBooks can typically be access while offline
* The book format is a familiar way to deliver educational content
* Readers know how to interact with an eBook

### Why not use an eBook?

* You need a complicated navigation structure that doesn’t lend itself well to the more typically linear model of a book
* You need a way to publish/distribute your eBook, which can get complicated

### eBook authoring tools

There are a variety of tools that can be used to make eBooks – some more flexible than others. For example:

* [EdTechBooks.org](https://edtechbooks.org/).  EdTechBooks is a Open Source eBook platform that is hosted for free online. Signing up is quick and easy. The platform is flexible and easy-to-use. Content can be shared with reviewers, shared with those who have the link, and published. You will need to request that your ebook be unlisted. Feel free to mention that you are part of Rebecca's class. The admin (Royce) is great and usually responds to requests within a day. Because this tool is free, versatile and easy-to-use, this is the authoring tool that I recommend.
* [PressBooks](https://pressbooks.com). Pressbooks is a WordPress multi-site based content authoring platform. The initial version of this book was created in a self-hosted instance of Pressbooks on WordPress. This service can be very involved and time consuming to set-up and maintain. As a result, I no longer recommend this tool.
* [Scalar](https://scalar.me/anvc/). Scalar is a multimedia eBook platform that does not have a paper-based equivalent. It is intended for content that is born digital. It is free if you are using a self-hosted sign from Reclaim Hosting.
* [Sigil](https://sigil-ebook.com/). Sigil is an free tool that allows you to create eBooks in a variety of platforms such as ePub and Kindle. Note that unlike the other options, Sigil is not a hosting platform, so you would still need to find a way to host your creations.

In addition to the freely available tools, [Apple Pages](https://www.apple.com/ca/pages/) (replaced iBooks Author), [Adobe InDesign](https://www.adobe.com/products/indesign.html) (which is part of Adobe Creative Cloud) and [Literature & Latte’s Scrivener](https://www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener/overview) are two professional publishing products that can be used to create eBooks for multiple platforms.

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