



INTRODUCTION TO THE WEB

A beginner's guide to understanding and using the web

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Introduction

This guide is an overview of what the web is and how to access and use it via a web browser. It is designed for people that would like to understand the basics a bit better.

Skill Level

Basic The topics in this guide are suitable for anyone who has basic PC knowledge.

Terminology

You will come across the following terminology in this guide which you need to be familiar with:

Term	Explanation
Web Browser	This is an application you use to view websites. There are many web browsers for example, Internet Explorer, Firefox and Safari.
Mobile web	Accessing the web through a browser on a mobile phone.
Search Engine	Software that helps you find what you are looking for on the web. Google uses a search engine to find relevant results.
Hyperlink	Pages on the web are linked together via clickable links. These are called hyperlinks.
Broadband	A faster way of accessing content on the web. You generally pay a telecom operator a fee to get broadband
WiFi	WiFi is a way of accessing the web without any physical connection. So you can have a laptop, for example, connected to the web but not plugged in and no network cable connected.
Wireless hotspot	A place where you can get access to a wireless network.

Video Tutorials



Indicates a video tutorial. Click on the icon to watch the video. These videos demonstrate how to carry out a particular task. In order to watch the video tutorials in this guide, you will need to have Adobe Flash Player v9.0.28 or above installed on your computer.

Note: When you go to watch the video, a check is done to make sure you have the correct software installed. If you do not have the correct version installed you will be provided with a prompt to download and install the correct version.

How Does the Web Work?

The web is a series of pages. Each webpage has a unique address which when entered in to a web browser will take you directly to that page. Most web addresses begin with the letters www (which stands for World Wide Web).

For example, www.google.com

A group of related pages are referred to as a website and the address of all the pages within that website will generally start with the same name. For example, here is a list of pages on the Failte Ireland website:

- www.failteireland.ie
- www.failteireland.ie/websupports

Linking Between Pages

A very important part of the web is hyperlinks. This is how you can easily navigate between two pages that are linked. If you are reading a page quite often you can click on a link that will bring you off to another page on that website or another page on another site.

When you hover over a piece of text or an image on a webpage that is a link, you will notice that your cursor will change from a pointer to a hand, as shown here:



The screenshot shows the Fáilte Ireland homepage. At the top, there's a banner featuring a man and a woman smiling, with the text "BUSINESS PLAN" and "INNOVATION" overlaid. Below the banner is a navigation menu with links: Home (highlighted in yellow), About Us, Business Supports, Seminars & Events, Market Supports, Research & Statistics, and a dropdown menu for "Events". The main content area has a heading "Welcome to Fáilte Ireland's Corporate Website". Below it is a paragraph about the organization's mission. In the bottom right corner of the content area, there's a link "» View the Events Calendar" with a hand cursor icon. A red oval highlights this link. At the very bottom, there's a footer menu with categories: Trade Events, Web Supports Events, Festivals & Events, and Professional Development.

Linking is extremely important as it connects many pages and websites around the web.

What do I need to access the web?

There are a few items required to access the web:

- Computer (PC or Laptop) — if you are buying a computer make sure that it can be connected to a wireless network. You may not use a wireless network straight away but it's worth having the ability to connect to a wireless connection.
- Internet Connection— you will need to pay to get a connection in your house which will allow you to access the internet. This service is provided by an ISP (Internet Service provider) and is normally available from companies such as your telephone company, cable provider, and so on. Typically when they provide you with the connection they will provide you with a piece of hardware (referred to as a modem) and you will create a connection from your PC to this device to get your internet connection. Typically there are two options:
 - Connect your computer using a network cable that connects in to your telephone line or cable line.
 - Connect using a wireless connection. If your computer also supports wireless then you can establish a connection to the device without making any physical connection to it. This is referred to as connecting to a WiFi network.
- Web browser — once you have an internet connection then you'll need to have an internet browser on your computer. This browser allows you to browse websites. For more information on web browsers, see the section that follows.

Web Browsers

A web browser is a program you use to access content on the web. There are a variety of browsers available but the most popular are:

- Internet Explorer or IE (from Microsoft)
- Firefox (from Mozilla)
- Safari (from Apple)
- Chrome (from Google)

They all provide similar functionality so if you're going to be using the basic functionality you can really use of any of these browsers. All of the above browsers have all the necessary functionality to support you browsing the web. Generally when you buy a computer you will already have a browser installed and this is normally Internet Explorer.

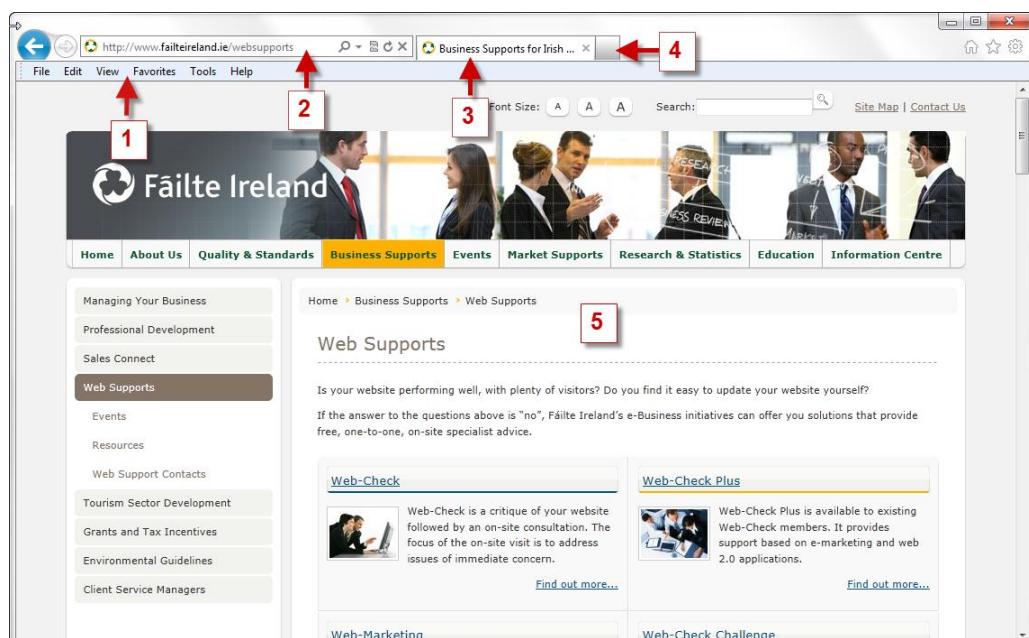


VIDEO: Using your Web Browser

This shows you the functionality typically provided in a browser – Address Bar, favourites, printing pages and so on.

When you are ready, click the PLAY icon to start the video.

The following shows a typical web browser.



- 1. Menu** — these are your menu options for your browser. Generally you will have an option of bookmarking a page which allows you easily find the page again in the future. You will also have a history option which allows you to find pages that you recently viewed.
- 2. Address bar** — this is where you type in the address of the webpage or website you want to go to. When you are typing in the address the website will generally require 'http://' before the remainder of the address. For example, <http://www.failteireland.ie>.
- 3. Title** — every page on the web has a page title and it's very important because when Google is indexing content on the web it will check the page title to see what the page is about.
- 4. New Tab** — click on this to open up a new web page. This way you can have multiple websites open at the same time and simply jump between them.
- 5. Main window** — this is where the content of the webpage you want to view is displayed. So as you can see here it is displaying information from the Web Supports page on the Fáilte Ireland website.

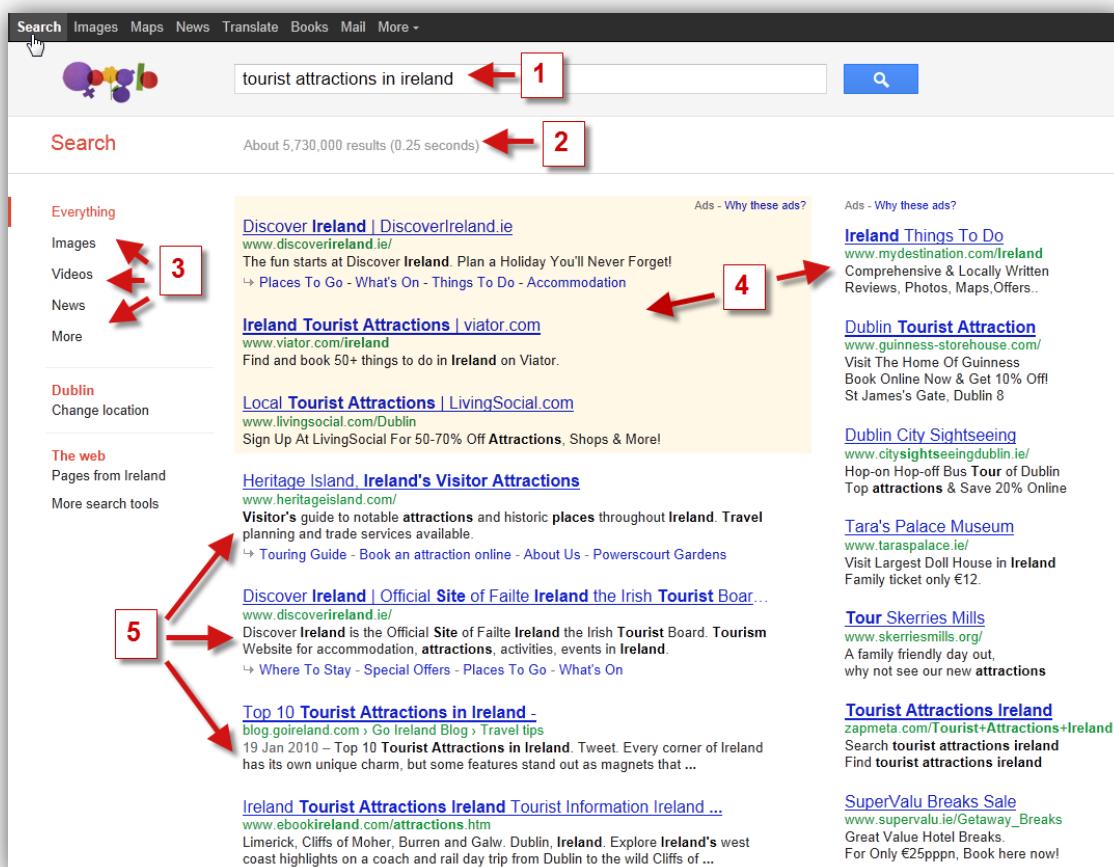
TIP: *If you have a website, go through each of the pages and check the page title for every page. If it's not unique and/or doesn't accurately describe what the page is about then you need to get your website guys to change it to increase your chances of being found through a search engine.*

For more information on page titles and their importance, see the guide on "Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)" which is part of this series of guides.

Search Engines

A search engine is a program which helps you find content that you are looking for. There are a variety of search engines but the most widely used one is Google's search engine.

Typically you type in to Google what you are looking for and a screen similar to the following is displayed.



1. This is the search term you have typed in.
2. This is where Google lists out the total results it has found based on these search terms (see the section "Guidelines on Searching" that follows). In the example above, Google found over 5.7 million web pages that it thought matched or closely matched the search term 'tourist attractions in ireland'.
3. Google displays other types of search results based on this query. For example, you may want to look at videos that match the words 'tourist attractions in ireland', images, news articles, and so on.

4. Google displays advertisements both at the top of the results list and over on the right hand side. The advertisements that are displayed are based on you searching for information that is relevant to them. The advertiser does not pay any money for these ads unless you actually click on the advertisement. If you click on the advertisement you are brought to a web page containing more information.
5. This is the search results. On the first page of search results Google displays a list of the web pages that it thinks most accurately match the search terms. For the first search result in the list you will see there are additional links for Contact Us, Recruitment, and so on. Google will automatically display these for certain sites and it's generally for sites that are very popular.

Guidelines on Searching

To get the best use out of searching you really need to know the basics of how to use search. The best way of explaining this is through an example.

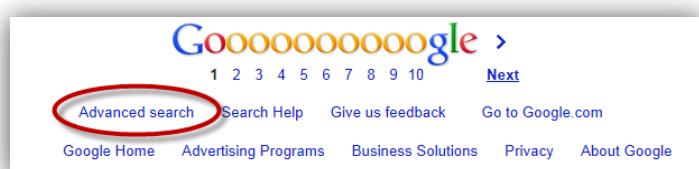
The following table shows the different types of searches you can perform about tourism in Ireland. The results column shows how many pages Google has found that matches the search.

Searching for	Results at time of search	What this means
Tourism Ireland	28,000,000	Google will return a list of web pages that contain the words 'tourism' and 'Ireland' on the same page.
"Tourism Ireland"	147,000	If you put your search in quotes you want an exact phrase match. This means Google is only returning results for pages where "Tourism Ireland" appears together on a page on the web.
"Tourism Ireland" site:ie	14,000	Display web pages for websites registered in Ireland that have the phrase "Tourism Ireland" in them.
"Tourism Ireland" filetype:doc	276	Displays Microsoft Word documents on the web that have the phrase "Tourism Ireland" in them.

When Google displays the search results it works out what it thinks is the most suitable match for the search terms you entered and then displays the most relevant search results first.

As you can see there are many different ways of searching and it's very important to get familiar with this as it will save you more time. The easiest way of creating a search that is going to find you exactly the results you are looking for is using Google's Advanced Search.

To access this, enter something in the Search box. This will automatically take you to the Search results list. Scroll to the



very bottom of this screen and click on the **Advanced Search** link, as shown.

When you click on the Advanced Search link the following screen is displayed.

Advanced Search

<p>Find pages with...</p> <p>all these words: <input type="text" value="tourism ireland"/> Type the important words: tri-colour rat terrier</p> <p>this exact word or phrase: <input type="text"/> Put exact words in quotes: "rat terrier"</p> <p>any of these words: <input type="text"/> Type OR between all the words you want: miniature OR standard</p> <p>none of these words: <input type="text"/> Put a minus sign just before words that you don't want: -rodent, -"Jack Russell"</p> <p>numbers ranging from: <input type="text"/> to <input type="text"/> Put two full stops between the numbers and add a unit of measurement: 10..35 kg, £300..£500, 2010..2011</p>	<p>To do this in the search box...</p>
<p>Then narrow your results by...</p> <p>language: <input type="text" value="any language"/> Find pages in the language that you select.</p> <p>region: <input type="text" value="any region"/> Find pages published in a particular region.</p> <p>last update: <input type="text" value="anytime"/> Find pages updated within the time that you specify.</p> <p>site or domain: <input type="text"/> Search one site (like wikipedia.org) or limit your results to a domain like .edu, .org or .gov</p> <p>terms appearing: <input type="text" value="anywhere in the page"/> Search for terms in the whole page, page title or web address, or links to the page you're looking for.</p> <p>SafeSearch: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no filtering <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> strict Tell SafeSearch how much explicit sexual content to filter.</p> <p>reading level: <input type="text" value="no reading level displayed"/> Find pages at one reading level or just view the level info.</p> <p>file type: <input type="text" value="any format"/> Find pages in the format that you prefer.</p> <p>usage rights: <input type="text" value="not filtered by licence"/> Find pages that you are free to use yourself.</p>	
<input type="button" value="Advanced Search"/>	

Find pages with...

- All these words — you want to display web pages that contain all the words you type in. The words can appear in any order, they just need to appear on the page somewhere.
- This exact wording or phrase — this is a phrase match. So if you put in 2 words then Google will try to find matches for these exact 2 words and they must appear on the page together and in the order you typed them in.
- Any of these words — to find a match Google just needs to find any of the word combinations you put in. For example, guesthouse OR hotel.
- None of these words — this is a negative match. For example, I may want to display pages that contain certain words but remove pages that have other words in them.
- Numbers ranging from/to — search for specific types of numbers in a range. For example, you could search for accommodation within a certain price range by entering €300..€500. Make sure to enter the unit of measurement or symbol.

Then narrow your results by...

- Language — this allows you to select what language pages you are looking for. For example, you may want to display French websites that contain the words 'Tourism Ireland' in them.
- Region — specify the country whose websites you want to search. For example, if you specified Ireland then only websites that were published in Ireland would be included.
- Last update — you can specify how recent or current you want the web pages content to be. So if you want really up-to-date information, then specify in the past week or month, that way you will only see pages that were updated in that timeframe.
- Search within a site or domain — this allows you to restrict a search for specific websites or for sites registered in specific countries. For example, I could run a search that only shows results from 'youtube.com' or I could run a search that only shows results for websites registered in Ireland (i.e. www.irishtimes.ie, www.tourismireland.ie, and so on).
- Terms appearing — you can specify exactly where on the page the words need to appear, for example, in the text, in links, or even in the web address (URL) of the page.
- Reading level — this is a new feature provided by Google that lets you filter your search results to a specific reading level. For example, a primary school teacher searching for information for their pupils might want web pages written at a basic reading level. Whereas a university lecturer may want to limit results to those at advanced reading levels.
- File Type — this allows you to search for specific file types. For example, if I put in Microsoft Word then instead of searching web pages for these words I am searching for any Word document that is available through a web page that contains the relevant words.
- Safe search and Usage rights — these are more advanced options and you generally won't need to use them.

**VIDEO: Using Google Search**

This shows you how to use Google Search, which includes both basic and advanced searches. It also takes a look at the search results page and how you can filter the results displayed.

When you are ready, click the PLAY icon to start the video.

The Mobile Web

The use of mobile devices is continually growing and one of the biggest growth areas is smart phones. Smart phones (such as, iPhone, Blackberry's, Samsung Galaxy, etc) provide more advanced functionality than a typical phone and will have a web browser built in. Over the next couple of years there is a move towards all phones being smart phones so it means that everybody will have access to the internet in their pocket.

Typically on the phone you will have a choice of browsing the web using a browser designed for the mobile device or use applications that are developed specifically for the phone.

An example of this is the iPhone. There is a whole suite of applications developed specifically for the iPhone. The reason people develop these applications specific to the phone is that you can take full advantages of the functionality available through the phone.



Because of the physical size of the screen on your phone, when you view a website on your mobile phone it's much harder to read a lot of content and see some of the graphics. As a result, more and more companies are starting to develop specific versions of their website suitable for viewing on a mobile phone.

For example, it is likely that somebody on a mobile looking up information on a hotel won't want to read a lot of information on their mobile. Instead they want to see a cut-down version of the information available from the main website. So you may provide a mobile specific version of the website that allows people to easily access information such as a booking facility, contact details and getting directions. Your requirements as a mobile user will generally be different than a web user so ideally the mobile version of the site caters for this.

So, from a mobile point of view you can still use the same browser and have the same functionality in the browser but the website may be different and/or harder to navigate and use if it's not designed specifically for the mobile device.

Social Media and the Web

Social media is really how the web has evolved. Initially people set up websites and used them to broadcast information. Your website was basically a copy of your brochure online.

Web users are now a little bit bored with these types of websites and want to interact more online. So many websites have now sprung up that enable this interaction. These are referred to as "social networks" and are basically websites that allow people to communicate and interact online.

The most widely used and well known social network is Facebook. As people spend more and more time on Facebook they are spending less time on websites, so businesses are starting to create a presence here. You can create a business page on Facebook to promote your business and over time you will see that most companies will offer the opportunity to buy and sell your products through this business page.

Already companies in the US are considering if they need a website at all and can they do all their business within a social network such as Facebook. The web is still important at the moment but you need to keep a close eye on where this is all going.

Here are some other examples of social media applications on the web:

Type	Details
Social Networks	A social network is an online network of people and companies that communicate and share online. For example, LinkedIn is the largest professional and business social network, whereas, Facebook is a personal social network but with significant business opportunities also.
Micro blogging	Micro blogging is the ability to send short messages, normally 140 characters, to one or many people at the same time. An example of a micro blogging website is Twitter.
Ratings/Reviews	A business that uses social media effectively will get consumers marketing to other consumers. One way of doing this is making the facility available for users to interact with each other by providing recommendations and ratings for products or services. An example of the effectiveness of this is Amazon. They rely significantly on the user review process to drive sales.
Forums	A forum is a public meeting place for open discussion on various topics. A forum may also be referred to as a bulletin board or discussion area. Forums come in all shapes and sizes. The main objective is to provide an area where users can interact with questions, answers and discussions on a given topic.
Blogging	Blogs are online journals where the author can write (blog) about any interest or topic they want. The blogger can also use the blog to share content picked up from other social media sites (e.g. YouTube) by taking advantage of the facilities available to easily share content.

Type	Details
Video	Content may also be distributed in video format through video distribution networks, such as, YouTube or Vimeo.
Podcasting	Podcasting is the distribution of content through voice online.
Wiki's	A wiki refers to content created online as a result of multiple users working on the same content, but at different times and from different places. Wikipedia is a perfect example of this.
Social Bookmarking	Social bookmarking applications allow users to share their favourite online content with one another while also creating online bookmarks that the user can refer to in the same way he would a bookmark created in his web browser.
Photo Sharing	Photo sharing sites (e.g. Flickr) are where people can upload photos to share either privately, with only selected users or publicly. Creative Commons licensing rights can grant permissions for others to use the photos. When you come across pictures that you want to use, check to see if "Creative Commons Licensing" is mentioned on the picture.
Presentation sharing	There are various sites which allow sharing of presentation content which can be in document form or available through slides (e.g. www.slideshare.net).

Researching on the Web

There is a huge wealth of information available on the web that will help you assess what the trends in the market place are, what your competitors are doing, what are the latest products and services you should be offering and much more. And the best part of this is that it can be done without moving from your chair.

Here are some examples of what you can do if you want to do some research and get some ideas.

Social Media

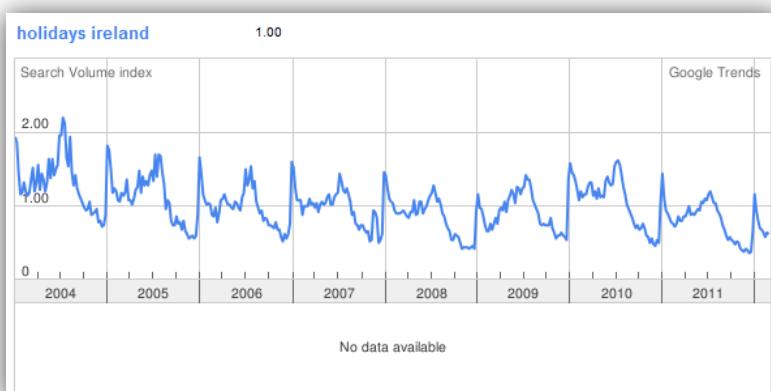
There are so many people having conversations online that can add significant value to your business, and you have access to them. For example, LinkedIn is a business networking tool with over 150 million members. When you register with LinkedIn you can ask questions, run polls and interact with like minded people through relevant groups.

By spending a little bit of time using LinkedIn you can get amazing ideas and insights from people around the world. Link up with people that may have similar businesses as you in different parts of the world, get some ideas and inspiration.

Google Tools

There are some great free tools that are provided by Google that can be very useful for research purposes.

- **Google Trends** – This allows you to see what people are searching on and how this is trending. The following shows the search results over the last few years for the term "holidays Ireland". You will see that in most years the searches spike in the middle of the year around summer and then trails off towards the end of the year.



- **Google Keyword tool** – Google provides a free tool called 'Google keyword tool' that allows you to track how many people searched for particular keywords over the previous month. It will also show you other related keywords and what the search results are. This is particularly useful if you are thinking of writing some content on your website that you think people might be interested in reading about. If they are not searching for it then they may not be interested in reading about it!

Requirements for a Website

The role of the website is changing, especially in the tourism sector. Your online presence in the future will not just be your website. It will be your Facebook presence, your YouTube presence, and so on.

So if you are investing in a website you really need to consider how this fits in with how the current environment is changing. Question how much you really need to spend on it and what its real function is.

The following gives you some areas that you should consider.

- **Content Management System** — If you have decided that you need a website there are many things to consider but one of the most important things is that it is easy to maintain and update. So you always need to ask for a content management system. The content management system allows you to update content easily without requiring help from a developer or technical person.
- **Social Media** — Your website should certainly have a social aspect to it. It's not just a brochure anymore and spending money on big flashy moving images is generally not advisable. Web users have no patience and want to get access to information as quickly as possible. But web users also like to interact with you and other people. They are also looking for valuable and useful information that may not be directly related to your business but could draw them to your website. So consider how you will interact with these people online. For example, if you run a bed and breakfast, why don't you write about all the events that are happening in your area? So people will search the web and may find your site and then may stay in your B&B. If you have a Facebook business page why not link this with your website.
- **Calls to actions** — A call to action is a request for someone to do something. As web users have very little time and don't read a lot of content it's important to direct them to the right place. If you want to achieve a booking make sure there is a big 'Book Now' or equivalent button available on all the pages of your website, but in particular your home

page. If you want people to sign up to a newsletter make sure this is very obvious on the page. Calls to action are very important!

- **Content** — Really think about what content your visitor wants and make sure all this content is easily accessible and delivered in manageable chunks. If you provide a full page of text to a website user they are very unlikely to read it. Break it up into chunks, highlight sections so users can skip to areas of interest, add pictures and videos. Video content is becoming more and more popular so really think about how you could use this.
- **Analytics** — A website without analytics is like a business without accounts. You need to track how many people are coming to your site, what they are doing when they arrive, what is your conversion rate, and so on. Google provides a free easy to setup tool called Google Analytics.

For more information on building your website and what you need to look out for, see the guide "Getting the Most from Your Website" which is part of this series of guides.

Summary

The web is becoming increasingly important for businesses and it's the first place people go to when they are researching for information about their upcoming holiday. It's very important to have a strong web presence but that doesn't necessarily mean having a website and/or spending a lot of money on your website.

Tread carefully, get your requirements clear, understand where social media fits in and research lots.



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