# First Website Guide

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Your website is as much an investment in your business as a business premises. It is the foundation for the online part of any business and is often the first impression customers will gain of your business. It carries a lot of responsibility because it could draw customers to you and increase your visibility and profits.

There are a few key people who can help make that first impression a positive one: a graphic designer, a web designer and a copywriter.

Defining your business personality will help you with marketing your business and attracting the right clients. The steps below will help you with some key elements and you will use this information in the many stages of setting up your business..

1.  Business Name

    Have you decided on a name for your business? If yes, proceed to Item 2.

    If no, here are some things to keep in mind:

    Choose a name that appeals to you and that will appeal to the type of customers you want to attract.

    Keep it short and clear and memorable. And make sure it's easy for people to spell!

    Decide what you want the name to communicate. It should reinforce the key elements of your business.

    As an entrepreneur it's easy to  think in terms of using your name for your business. Think big! What if you decide to sell your business in a few years?

    Register your business with the appropriate local authority. In Ireland you can register your business with the CRO. Your accountant may be able to help you with this or you can go to the CRO website.

3. Logo

A logo isn't critical for your business nor does it have to be an image. It can simply be the way you always write your business name – the same font, same colour, etc.

I highly recommend using a graphic designer to create your logo because they will help you get the colours and design right and give you branding guidelines. They also help your logo to stand out and be professional. It may be a simple swish (like Nike) or a more elaborate graphic but the logo instantly gives people an impression of your business. Just as you go to any shop and see brands you are drawn to, some more than others. What is it about those that appeal to you? Your logo will be the same.

Hiring a graphic designer for this step is an investment in the foundation of your business. However, If you are unable to make this investment there are some online resources that can help you get started.

 https://www.designevo.com/ is a great starting point and source of inspiration and let's you create your own logo by choosing from an assortment of designs that might fit your business. Canva.com also has templates for logos. These logos won't have the same individuality as one made by a graphic designer because anyone could use the same template.

4. Values/Colours

Identifying your values is an important part of your business foundation. It will help guide you through any challenges that come up in the course of doing business as well as attracting the perfect clients. It is also helpful to include these in your design brief for a logo and a website so that your graphic designer and web designer can incorporate them in your website.

What are the colours you're using to represent your business? Do they present the image you wish to convey?  There are many sources of the meaning of colours which may help. Or your graphic designer will guide you.

Values can inform the colours you use. Blue is a common colour for trust and calm. Green is linked to eco-friendly, healthy, fresh and money  Red conveys power - it is forceful and bold. It can also be associated with danger. Dark colours like burgundy and deep green convey richness. Pink suggests romance. Vivid terracotta conveys earthiness. Orange conveys friendliness. Orange-yellow is welcoming.

5. Tagline

A tagline is a short sentence that describes your business or what makes you stand out from your competitors. Think of De Beers – "A Diamond is Forever", Nike's "Just Do It" or Apple's "Think Different."

One approach for coming up with your tagline is to just start writing a couple of sentences about your business. Then go back a couple of times and refine it until it's a short.

Your tagline will likely be used on flyers, stationary, signs, business cards, social media and your website. It's an opportunity to grab attention and make your customer want to learn more.

Another approach is to list the features and benefits that are unique about your service or product. Then identify what aspect of your service or product that makes you stand out from your competitors. Create a short, concise phrase about your business.

6. Types of Images

Deciding on the types of images you're going to use to represent your business not only fits into your brand personality but it will make your marketing efforts a lot easier.

Are you going to use photographs or illustrations?

If photos, what type of photos will best represent your business? Sometimes finding the right images for a service business when you don't have any physical products can seem like a challenge. You may show images of happy clients using your service. Or photos of you and your team at work.

If you're going to use illustrations think about the types of images you'll need and whether you can find stock images that will fit or you'll have to commission them from a graphic artist.

Before you commission any artwork or purchase any photos know what size images you'll need. Different use of the images (flyers, stationary, signs, business cards, social media and your website) will demand different size and resolution. See my Images and Video Guide for sources of stockphotos and videos you can use. Talk to your web developer to see if they have any image requirements for your website.

7.  Font

    Your graphic designer is likely to ask your preference about fonts or may make recommendations for you. Deciding on which font to use will help convey your business personality. Your choice of clothes says something about you. Well, so does your choice of font. This blog post is a good starting point: https://www.crazyegg.com/blog/finding-the-right-font/

    There are generally four types of fonts to consider: serif, sans-serif, display and handwriting.

    *   Serif are the fonts that have little 'feet' like Times Roman. These tend to be associated with words like tradition, respectable, reliable, comfort.
    *   San-serif are clean with no embellishments.
    *   Display are fonts that are good headline fonts with lots of impact.
    *   Handwriting fonts are also known as cursive and resemble handwriting, as the name implies.

    This resource has a good description of what the various font styles say about you. https://www.crazyegg.com/blog/psychology-of-fonts-infographic/

    If you're a wedding florist you might prefer a flowery, ornate font. That same font wouldn't work if you're a steel manufacturer or a plumber.

    It's good to pick two fonts, one for headings and the second for the body. You'll use these in the same types of documents mentioned above (flyers, stationary, website, etc.). Or you can use one font but using different styles like italics and all caps to make it more interesting.

    Canva has a great resource about pairing fonts that I highly recommend. https://www.canva.com/learn/the-ultimate-guide-to-font-pairing/

    You can find lots of free fonts at https://fonts.google.com.

8.  Social Media Presence

    Even if you're not ready to jump into social media yet, it's a good idea to reserve your name on the various social channels. Set up accounts under your business name on all social media accounts such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. This prevents anyone else from using the name.

    In Facebook you log into Facebook under your personal profile and create a Page for your business. Once you've created the page and clicked Publish to save everything you can go back and unpublish it until you're ready to set it up properly and use it.

    In Twitter and Instagram you can set up the accounts and just leave them dormant.

9.  Website

    Now that you've got the foundations set up it's time to plan your website.

    Some planning about the type of site you want will help you get reliable proposals from a website designer.

    One of the first points to make clear in your web design brief is whether you want to maintain the site (or at least be capable of maintaining it). If you are going to maintain it you want it to be easy and not time-consuming to learn and use.

    There are different platforms that may suit your site depending on the type of business.

    If you have a service business I recommend WordPress. There are two different types of WordPress. WordPress.com is a hosted platform which means your site resides on their website. It is somewhat restrictive and not the best for SEO (Search Engine Optimisation).

    WordPress.org is a free version of WordPress software that you host on a website hosting account (this is known as self-hosting WordPress).. You can choose your own hosting provider and pick a hosting plan that suits your business. Make sure your plan includes an SSL certificate which brings a level of security to your site.

    Wix and Weebly are what I consider beginner platforms but if you decide you've outgrown them you cannot easily move the content to a WordPress site, for example.

9.  Website, continued

I recommend self-hosted WordPress which gives you a strong foundation, is flexible for most businesses and is capable of growing with your business. In fifteen years I've had people ask me to transfer them away from Wix, Weebly, and others to WordPress but never away from WordPress.

10. Register Your Web Address (Domain)

The domain is your address on the web. It usually ends in .com. If you choose a .ie ending be aware that it's more expensive than a .com domain and requires some paperwork to prove to the hosting company you have the right to use it.

Once you've decided on the name for your business search the internet to see if it is being used by anyone else. Not only would you be competing with that business name for recognition on the web but could run into trademark issues. Also, search the domain to see if it's being used, in which case you can't use it. If both of these are clear you should register the domain. You can add hosting later but some hosts include the cost of the domain with their hosting plan.. See my [Hosting Guide](Hosting Guide) for tips on what you need for hosting.

You can register the domain by going to the website of any domain registry such as Name.com and Name Cheap or any hosting company. Registering the domain is an annual cost.

11. Signing up for additional tools/services

- Sign up for Google Analytics to track traffic to your site.
- Set up an email address for your business (can be done with your hosting company). Contact@yourdomain.com is more professional than businessname@gmail.com.
- Open a Business Bank Account.
- Sign up for PayPal or Stripe account if collecting payments on your site.

12. Website Content Items

The following  questions will help you determine the type of site that will suit your business and will form the basis of a design brief.

I break this information into two lists. The main one is applicable to all sites. The second list is applicable to e-commerce sites where you are selling items whether they are physical products or downloads.

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## Applicable to all sites:

- Company Name
- Tagline
- Description of your business
- Mission
- Values
- Unique Selling Points
- Competitors
- Inspirations
- Mood Board
- Sites you like
- Words associated with your business
- Colours you like
- Target market
- Words you'd like your target market to associate with your business
- Do you want to sell products on your site?
- Do you want a blog?
- What is the goal of the website? Sell products, sell services, build credibility?
- What stage is your business at? Startup, growth?
- What types of images will you use? Photos, illustrations? My Images and Videos Guide may be helpful in sourcing stockphotos.
- Content (I recommend hiring a copywriter with experience writing for websites)
- Images
- Contact information
- Privacy Policy
- Cookie Policy
- Terms & Conditions
- Link to e-mail capture for mailing list
- Testimonials

## Applicable to e-commerce sites, in addition to list above:

- Product Description
- Product Categories
- Product Images
- Product Prices
- Product SKU
- Stock/Quantities
- Shipping Rates
- Shipping Zones
- Tax Rates/Vat
- Distance Selling Policy
- Refund Policy
- Payment Gateway: Stripe, PayPal, etc.
- Text for thank you and confirmation emails