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- Take your site online and attract visitors who come back

David A. Crowder

Author of Google Earth For Dummies



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DUMMIES®
4TH EDITION

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by David A. Crowder



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About the Author

David A. Crowder has authored or coauthored nearly 30 books on subjects ranging from computers to historical mysteries, including popular bestsellers such as *Sherlock Holmes For Dummies*, *Building a Web Site For Dummies* and *CliffsNotes Getting on the Internet*. He was selling hypertext systems back in the days when you had to explain to people what the word meant. He's been involved in the online community since its inception and is the recipient of several awards for his work, including *NetGuide Magazine's* Gold Site Award.

He is the son of a teacher and a college president, and his dedication to spreading knowledge, especially about the computer revolution, goes beyond his writing. He also founded three Internet mailing lists (discussion groups), JavaScript Talk, Java Talk, and Delphi Talk, all of which were sold to Ziff-Davis. One of his most treasured memories is the message he received from an old-timer on one of those lists who said that he had never seen such a free and open exchange of information since the days when computers were built by hobbyists in home workshops.

When he isn't writing, he spends his time with his wife Angela, wandering through villages in the Andes or frolicking in the Caribbean surf.

Dedication

For Angela. *Eres mi sol, nena, eres mi luna.*

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Contents at a Glance

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Part I: Building Your First Web Site</i>	<i>7</i>
Chapter 1: Planning for Good Site Design.....	9
Chapter 2: Creating a Web Page with Basic HTML Tags.....	17
Chapter 3: Arranging Your Text with Tables and Other Advanced Tags	31
Chapter 4: Working with WYSIWYG.....	47
Chapter 5: Letting the World In: Choosing a Host and Domain Name	59
<i>Part II: Building Better Web Pages</i>	<i>71</i>
Chapter 6: Using Cascading Style Sheets.....	73
Chapter 7: Adding Images.....	95
Chapter 8: Adding Forms	117
<i>Part III: Adding Frills and Fancy Stuff.....</i>	<i>145</i>
Chapter 9: Exploring JavaScript and DHTML.....	147
Chapter 10: Adding Image-Based Buttons and Image Maps.....	169
Chapter 11: Web Sights and Sounds.....	183
Chapter 12: Adding a Blog	199
<i>Part IV: Making Money</i>	<i>211</i>
Chapter 13: Attracting an Audience: Publicizing Your Site.....	213
Chapter 14: Designing for Internet Commerce.....	231
Chapter 15: Checking Out Online Payment Methods.....	253
<i>Part V: The Part of Tens</i>	<i>273</i>
Chapter 16: Ten Great Web Sites to Get Advice	275
Chapter 17: Ten Fabulous Tools for E-Commerce.....	285
Chapter 18: Ten More Great Add-Ins.....	297
<i>Glossary.....</i>	<i>307</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>325</i>

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

About This Book	1
How to Use This Book.....	1
Foolish Assumptions	2
Conventions Used in This Book.....	2
How This Book Is Organized	3
Part I: Building Your First Web Site	3
Part II: Building Better Web Pages	3
Part III: Adding Frills and Fancy Stuff	3
Part IV: Making Money	4
Part V: The Part of Tens	4
Icons Used in This Book	4
Where to Go from Here.....	5

Part 1: Building Your First Web Site..... 7

Chapter 1: Planning for Good Site Design 9

Drafting a Plan.....	9
What do you want to accomplish?	10
Who do you want to reach?.....	10
Keeping your site fresh	11
User-generated content.....	12
Designing the Look of Your Site.....	12
Appealing to your audience.....	12
Avoiding clutter	13
Achieving Usability.....	14
The Big Rules for Planning Your Site	15
Online Sources for Web Design	16

Chapter 2: Creating a Web Page with Basic HTML Tags 17

Tagging Along with HTML	17
Getting Wordy.....	19
Paragraphs.....	19
Headings.....	20
Fonts	22
Lines	23
Using Color	25
Creating Links	26

Picturing It: Using Images	26
Images	27
Background images	28
Putting It All Together.....	29
Online Sources for Web Page Building	30

Chapter 3: Arranging Your Text with Tables and Other Advanced Tags31

Creating Tables	31
Defining rows and columns	32
Setting table dimensions.....	32
Defining cell sizes.....	33
Padding and spacing cells	35
Spanning rows and columns.....	38
Playing with alignments	40
Using Frames and Framesets	42
Building pages with frames and framesets	42
Adding borders and margins to frames	44
Online Sources for Tables and Frames	46

Chapter 4: Working with WYSIWYG47

Creating the Basic Page in CoffeeCup.....	48
Setting the page properties	48
Working with text and links.....	50
Adding images	53
Switching views.....	54
Working with Website Projects	55
Online Sources for WYSIWYG	57

Chapter 5: Letting the World In: Choosing a Host and Domain Name . . .59

Going Live: Choosing a Host	60
ISPs	60
Virtual servers.....	60
Dedicated servers	61
Finding your match.....	62
Keeping It Cheap: Free Web-Site Providers.....	63
Getting Your Own Domain Name.....	64
Picking a name	66
Finding a registrar.....	67
Online Sources for Web Hosting and Domain Registration	68

Part 11: Building Better Web Pages..... 71**Chapter 6: Using Cascading Style Sheets73**

Merging CSS and HTML.....	74
Selectors, Classes, and IDs	76
Using classes	77
Using IDs	78
Redefining Elements	78
Contextual Selectors	80
Going Beyond the Basics	81
CSS colors	81
Borders.....	82
CSS and WYSIWYG.....	83
Layers.....	89
Absolute positioning	90
Relative positioning.....	91
Online Sources for CSS.....	92

Chapter 7: Adding Images.....95

Getting Graphics — for Free!.....	95
Heeding copyrights and credits.....	95
Creating your own images	96
Differentiating among graphics file formats	97
Putting Your Graphics on a Diet with GIFWorks	98
Creating a Logo with CoolText.com.....	101
Editing Images.....	105
Resizing	106
Cropping	107
Rotating and flipping	107
Adjusting color	109
Using special effects filters	111
Basic Design with Images	112
Placing images for maximum effectiveness.....	112
Sizing images in HTML	114
Online Sources for Quality Graphics.....	114

Chapter 8: Adding Forms117

Getting Input	118
Typing in text boxes	120
Using text areas.....	122

Choosing radio buttons or check boxes	123
Setting up SELECT and OPTION	126
Submitting the form	127
Processing the Form	129
Why your ISP often won't help	129
Finding a CGI provider	130
Using remotely hosted CGI scripts	131
Adding CGI Scripts	132
Basic techniques	132
Solving problems	133
Trying Out Form and Poll Makers	134
Response-O-Matic	135
FormSite.com	140
Online Sources for CGI and Forms	144

Part III: Adding Frills and Fancy Stuff..... 145

Chapter 9: Exploring JavaScript and DHTML147

Principles of Programming	147
Constants and variables	148
Doing the math	150
Branches	151
Loops	151
Creating JavaScript Functions	152
Incorporating JavaScripts	153
Basic techniques	153
Dealing with problems	155
The Document Object Model (DOM)	156
Making Choices with JavaScript Events	156
Mouseovers and clicks	158
Keyboard input	158
Adding Interactive Menus	159
Making drop-down lists	159
Making a menu with CoffeeCup	160
Online Sources for JavaScript and DHTML	166

Chapter 10: Adding Image-Based Buttons and Image Maps169

Creating Buttons	170
Creating Image Maps	177
Online Sources for Buttons and Image Maps	182

Chapter 11: Web Sights and Sounds183

Getting Music and Video	184
Finding music houses	184
Finding public-domain music and video	186
Picking a File Format	187

Compressing Files	189
Adding Audio and Video Files to Your Site	193
Adding a Flash music player	194
Importing YouTube video	196
Online Sources for Web Audio and Video	197
Chapter 12: Adding a Blog	199
Adding Blogger to Your Site	199
Bloggin' with WordPress	205
Adding a post in WordPress	207
Altering the General Settings	208
Online Sources for Blogs	209
 <i>Part IV: Making Money.....</i>	 211
Chapter 13: Attracting an Audience: Publicizing Your Site	213
Working Keywords into Your Pages	215
Adding meta tags	216
Incorporating keywords in the content	217
Avoiding keyword trickery	218
Analyzing keywords that other sites are using	219
Keyword advertising	221
Submitting to the Search Sites	222
Doing it yourself	223
Using submission services	224
Keeping out of the search sites	225
Checking Your Search Site Position	227
Investigating Reciprocal Linking	227
Finding sites to link to	228
Joining Web rings	229
Joining a banner exchange	230
Online Sources for Getting the Word Out about Your Site	230
 Chapter 14: Designing for Internet Commerce	 231
Learning the Real Secret to Internet Success	232
Developing the right attitude	232
Focusing on your business	233
Getting supplies flowing	234
Designing for E-Commerce	237
Adding a Search Function	238
Using Google Site Search	238
Getting a free search engine with FreeFind	244
Dropping in Perl CGI scripts such as Simple Search	248
Adding a FAQ	252
Online Sources for Internet Commerce	252

Chapter 15: Checking Out Online Payment Methods 253

Checking Out Online Payment Methods.....	253
PayPal.....	254
Google Checkout.....	255
Cash alternatives	256
Phones, faxes, and snail mail.....	257
Getting a Merchant Account	258
Choosing which acquirers to sign up with	258
Deciding which cards to take	259
Signing up.....	260
Watching out for fees	261
Protecting against credit card fraud	263
Building on a Business Platform.....	264
Converting Currencies	266
Adding the converter to your Web page	266
Customizing the converter	267
Online Sources for Merchant Services.....	271

Part V: The Part of Tens 273**Chapter 16: Ten Great Web Sites to Get Advice 275**

Bizy Moms	275
Cozahost Newsletter	276
Geek/Talk Forums for Webmasters.....	277
grammarNOW!.....	278
LivePerson.....	279
LawGuru.com	280
webmaster-talk.com	281
The Small Business Advisor	282
Web Developer's Journal.....	283
Website Tips.....	283

Chapter 17: Ten Fabulous Tools for E-Commerce. 285

CafePress.com.....	285
DMA Privacy Policy Generator	286
ECommerce Guide	288
HumanClick	288
MapQuest	288
osCommerce	290
S&H greenpoints	292
SYSTRAN Translation Software	292
TRUSTe	294
WorldPay	294

Chapter 18: Ten More Great Add-Ins	297
@watch	297
Crossword Compiler	297
Everyone.net	299
GeoPhrase	299
VFM Leonardo.....	301
localendar	301
Merriam-Webster Online	301
SuperStats.....	303
Google Friend Connect	304
theFinancials.com.....	305
 <i>Glossary.....</i>	 307
<i>Index</i>	325

Introduction

Maybe you already have your own Web site and you're not quite satisfied with it. Or perhaps you're still in the planning stages and want to know what you can do to make your site as good as it can be. You've been to Web sites that have all the bells and whistles, and you wouldn't be human if you weren't just a wee bit envious. Well, now you can have it all too. In *Building a Web Site For Dummies*, 4th Edition, I show you some of the best stuff around, and I tell you just how to go about putting it on your site.

About This Book

This isn't just another Web design book. It's special. Really. I set out to write the one book I'd want by my side if I were looking to set up a really fancy Web site and not break the bank doing it. I tracked down and tested zillions of Web-site enhancements and selected the top of the line to share with you. And I'm honestly proud of the results. I've authored or coauthored more than 20 books on computers and the Internet, and this one is my hands-down favorite.

It's full of things you're sure to love. It's packed with fun stuff, but it's got plenty of serious stuff, too, like how to get past the hype and really make money through your Web site. You'll wonder how in the world you ever got along without having these features on your Web site.

How to Use This Book

Keep this book next to your computer and never lend it to anybody. It's far too precious for that. Make your friends buy their own copies. If you need to make space on your bookshelf, throw away anything else you own to make room for it. When you travel, take it with you. Hold it in your arms at night and tell it how much you love it.

Each chapter is a stand-alone entity. (Don't you just love that word?) You don't have to read the whole thing, and it's a rare person who will read the book from cover to cover right off the bat. Go ahead — hit the table of contents or the index

and jump to the parts you're most interested in. But don't forget to explore the rest of the book after you're done with the parts that excite you most. You won't regret spending the time — you'll find wonders in every chapter.

Foolish Assumptions

I assume that you have a favorite Web-page creation program — whether it's Dreamweaver, plain old Notepad, or the UNIX-based text editor `vi` — and you know how to use it. So when I say to copy and paste text or save your file, you know what you need to do. Just in case you don't have a good Web-authoring program, I include sources for some good HTML editors in this book.

Conventions Used in This Book

It's all organized; I promise. Even though it's rather plebeian compared with finding free content for your site, lots of people worked very hard to make sure that this book follows some straightforward rules and typographical conventions.

Code listings, of which there are plenty, look like this:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<SCRIPT>
...
</SCRIPT>
<TITLE>
...
</TITLE>
</HEAD>
...
```

HTML elements in this book are in uppercase, and their attributes are in lowercase, as in this example:

```
<INPUT type="hidden" name="answer" value="yes">
```

If the value of an attribute is in normal type, you enter it exactly as shown. If it's in italics, it's only a placeholder value, and you need to replace it with a real value. In the following example, you replace *myownimage* with the name of the image file you intend to use:

```
<IMG src="myownimage">
```

Whenever you see the URL for one of the top sites I've tracked down, it appears in a special typeface within the paragraph, like this: `www.dummies.com`. Or it may appear on a separate line, like this:

```
www.dummies.com
```

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into six parts. I organized it that way, with a little help from the folks you see in the Acknowledgments. You did read the Acknowledgments, didn't you? Don't tell me that you're the kind of person who reads the Introduction but doesn't read the Acknowledgments. Please tell me that you didn't miss the Dedication, too?

Each part has chapters in it. And each chapter has headings and subheadings. All the sections under these headings and subheadings have text that enlightens the heart and soul. Here, take a look.

Part I: Building Your First Web Site

Part I spills the secrets of how to plan a successful site from the ground up. It tosses in a quick refresher course in basic HTML, then goes into more depth with some of the more advanced approaches such as tables and frames. Toss in a look at WYSIWYG site creation and some advice on getting your material on the Net, and you're ready to transform a bunch of Web pages into a coherent Web site.

Part II: Building Better Web Pages

Part II introduces you to Cascading Style Sheets, and different ways to add images and forms to your site.

Part III: Adding Frills and Fancy Stuff

Part III gives you a ton of ways to make your site work, look, and sound great. This part demystifies JavaScript and DHTML (Dynamic HTML), then it covers the different ways that you add new features like blogs to your Web site and shows you where to get great multimedia.

Part IV: Making Money

Part IV takes a look at making money from your site. It explodes the myths about Internet income and shows you how to really make a profit, how to get a credit card merchant account, and how to work both ends of the affiliates game.

Part V: The Part of Tens

Part V is The Part of Tens. Well, it just wouldn't be a *For Dummies* book without The Part of Tens at the end, right? This part comprises three chapters, so you've got 30 extra bits here that tell you all sorts of wonderful things, like where to go for Web-site design advice and ways to add value to your site.

Finally, at the end of the book is a glossary of all the tech terms that might otherwise leave you baffled.

Icons Used in This Book



The icons in the margins of this book point out items of special interest. Keep an eye out for them — they're important.



Psst! Listen, pal, I wouldn't tell just anybody about this, but here's a way to make things a bit easier or get a little bit more out of it.



Time to tiptoe on eggshells. Make one false step, and things can get pretty messy.



You don't really need to know this stuff, but I just like to show off sometimes. Humor me.

Well, of course, it's all memorable material. But these bits are ones you'll especially want to keep in mind.

Where to Go from Here

Well, keep turning pages, of course. And use the material to make your own Web site the hottest thing there ever was.

One of the hardest parts about getting this book together was categorizing the material in it. Many times, a Web site add-in could've been slotted into a different chapter than the one it ended up in because it had multiple features or attributes. So when you're visiting any of the sites that I mention in this book, be sure to take a good look around. A site that has a great chat room might also have a fine affiliates program. One that offers a good series of Java applets could have some solid tutorials on Web design. A site that has good information on dedicated servers may have the best e-commerce solution for you. I encourage you to browse up a storm.

Additionally, you can go to this book's companion Web site, at www.dummies.com/go/buildingawebsite4efd, where you can find links to many of the sites discussed in the book.

Part I

Building Your First Web Site

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Give him air! Give him air! He'll be okay. He's just been exposed to some raw HTML code. It must have accidentally flashed across his screen from the server."

In this part . . .

I start off by covering all the things you need to know to put together a Web site. Chapter 1 shows you the differences between a random bunch of Web pages and a coherent Web site, while Chapter 2 is a quick refresher course in basic HTML. Chapter 3 goes into some more advanced areas like tables. Chapter 4 shows you how to use a WYSIWYG editor to visually design your pages. Finally, Chapter 5 gives you everything you need to know about different Web-hosting options.

Chapter 1

Planning for Good Site Design

In This Chapter

- ▶ Determining your site's purpose
 - ▶ Analyzing the audience
 - ▶ Appealing to visitors
 - ▶ Keeping your site lean
-

People argue about what the number-one factor in quality Web site design is, and they probably always will. Some say great graphics are the key. Others say worthwhile information is everything. Still others think that ease of use is the most important factor. I'm not so sure that there's such a thing as a linear ranking for these kinds of things. After all, a good-looking site that doesn't work well is useless. A site with a combination of good content and lousy graphics is nothing to crow about either. This book shows you how to do it all and how it all fits together to make a Web site that's actually worth visiting. If you want to get the basics of Web page structure down pat, check out Chapters 2 and 3 on HTML; for the lowdown on graphic design, make sure you spend some time with Chapter 7.

In this chapter, I walk you through the fundamental things you should consider as you create your Web site. And at the end of the chapter, I give you four basic rules for creating Web sites that work. Take 'em with a grain of salt — remember, you're the ultimate judge.

Drafting a Plan

Are you publicizing a political candidate? Trumpeting your favorite cause? Looking for a job? Selling shoe polish? Notice the verbs in each example. They're the key factors in determining your site's *purpose*, as opposed to its *topic*.

What do you want to accomplish?

Just having a topic isn't enough — you need a purpose, too. The *topic* is merely what the site is about; the *purpose* is what the site does. Say, for example, that you want to create a site about penguins. Okay, that's a nice starting point. You like penguins — they're cute, unusual, and pretty interesting; many people share your interest in them. But why do you want to create a Web site about them? Do you have something to say? Do you have information to give, an opinion to share, or a particular point of view that you want to put across?

You don't need to have a PhD in aquatic ornithology to create such a site. Maybe you just like funny-looking birds that swim. But you still need a purpose, or the site just won't work out in the long run. Perhaps you spent ages plowing through the search engines, and you've gathered together the world's greatest collection of penguin links. But why did you go to all that trouble? What's your purpose?

If the purpose for creating a penguin site is for your own personal enjoyment, you really don't need to do much with the site. In fact, you can just create a Web page on your own hard drive or even settle for leaving the links in your Web browser's bookmarks. If you do want your page on the World Wide Web, however, you need to take into account the needs of your potential visitors, as well as your own needs for creating such a site.

Suppose you're putting your penguin page on the Web for the purpose of sharing everything you know about these birds with the world. How does that purpose change your approach to site design? You need to include more on the Web site than a bare list of links, for one thing. Everything you do with the site must help people understand its purpose. If you're setting up your own domain name, for example, you want to pick one that clearly describes your site's content — such as `www.penguinfacts.com`. (Grab it quick — it still wasn't taken at press time.)

The purpose of your site trickles down through each step you take in creating it. You want the title of each page in the site to specify how it supports the site's purpose. The textual content of each page needs to lead naturally into some specific aspect of the topic that furthers your goal. Each graphical image must be just the right one to drive home or emphasize a critical point.

Who do you want to reach?

Who are the people you expect to visit your site? What geographical or cultural groups do you want the site to appeal to? Without at least a general idea of your potential audience, you can't have much of an idea about what type of site to create.