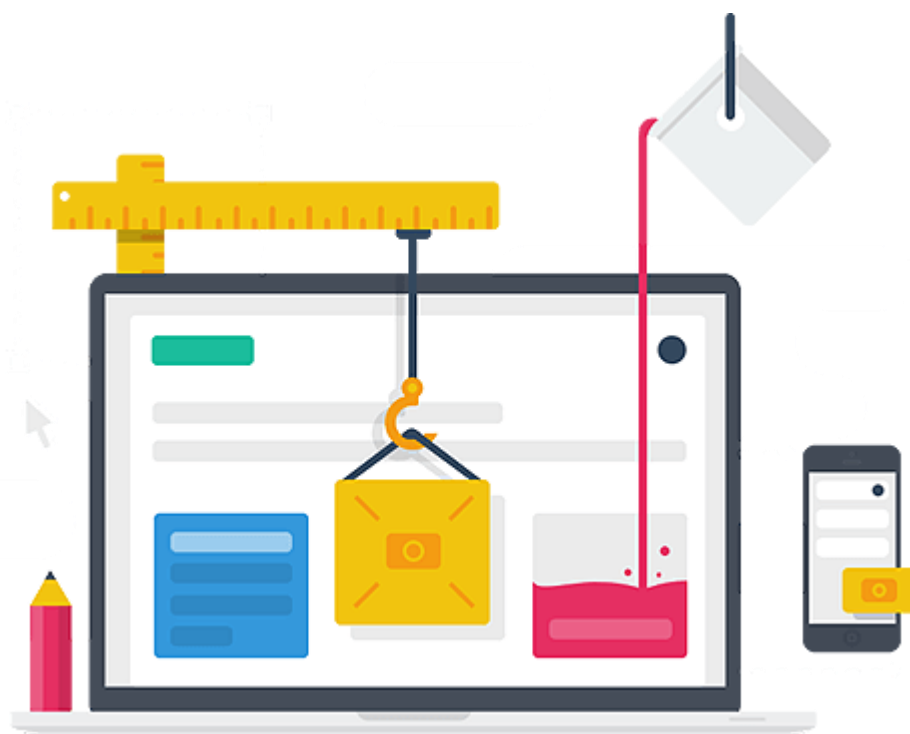


BUILD YOUR OWN WEBSITE BASICS



In the past, website building was a task only available to coders and website developers. Now, anyone can build a website with the click of the mouse thanks to user friendly website building platforms! This guide will walk you through the different components needed to build a website, suggest website building platforms, provide design tips, and introduce resources to learn HTML and CSS coding!

GETTING STARTED

Create a Plan

The first step to building a website is determine what kind of website you want and what kind of content it will have. A fancy, multi-page website would be pointless if there is no content to fill each page. While there are plenty of **content management systems (CMS)**, or **website building platforms**, designed for beginners, no CMS is going to help you write the content of your website. Examples of website building platforms are WordPress, Google Sites, and Weebly, which we will talk about more later.

Questions to ask yourself: Does your website need to look professional? Do you want to create an online store? Do you want to create a blog? Is your website a digital portfolio? Do you need a booking system?

A good **ecommerce website** (or online store) should accept online payments and order processing, which will narrow options for website building platforms. **Non-commerce websites** (like blogs or portfolios) will have greater options and flexibility. Overall, I recommend to start simple and basic, and allow your website to evolve overtime based on the needs of your visitors. *You won't know exactly what you need until you know how your visitors interact with your website.*

Domain Name

Your **domain name** is the unique URL address to your website. Ideally, you want your domain name to match the name of you website and/or company. For instance, if you run a blog titled *Cheap Recipes*, your domain name should be *www.cheaprecipes.com*. Domain names are like real estate for the internet. They must be registered and paid for annually, but not every domain name will be available. Depending on domain name popularity, the annually cost is usually \$20/year. Once you've purchased a domain, you can use it on any website building platform of your choice.

Domain Name Registrars

- ♦ *Domains.Google*
- ♦ *GoDaddy.com*
- ♦ *NameCheap.com*
- ♦ *Wix.com*
- ♦ *Weebly.com*
- ♦ *Squarespace.com*

The 9 Things You Need

1. Domain Name
2. Business Email Address
3. Website Building Software
4. Website Hosting
5. Website Template Design
6. Logo
7. High Quality Images
8. Image Editor
9. Google Analytics

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Set Up a Business Email Address

Nothing is more professional than having a custom business email address. Let's face it, email addresses that use AOL, Gmail, Yahoo, etc. are great for personal use but do not look professional! Once you've secured a domain name, the next step is to create your own email address (ex: *yourname@yourdomain.com*). Some website builder platforms (GoDaddy and Jimdo) also provide email services, but not every website builder does. The good news is that many website builders (Wix, Squarespace, and Weebly) have partnered with Google to offer business email addresses using **G Suite**. **G Suite** offers the same Gmail interface, but allows you to use your domain name for just a couple bucks a month! Visit gsuite.google.com to set up your business email and for further assistance.

Website Building Software

Website building software has evolved over the last few years, opening the door for beginners to create websites with little or no coding knowledge. There are dozens of options to choose from, so this class is only going to highlight a couple. The gold standard **content management system (CMS)**, or website building platform, is **WordPress**. **WordPress** powers over 50% of the websites in existence, including websites for major companies. WordPress is chosen by many because it is both powerful and flexible, however, this means that there is also a higher learning curve to get started. Whereas other platforms only need a day to build a website, WordPress would require a couple of days (or possibly weeks) to get a website set up. Once the website is set up, maintaining and updating is easy. As a result, some businesses will hire a website designer or developer to initially set up the website via WordPress. **Therefore, WordPress is not recommended for first time website builders.**

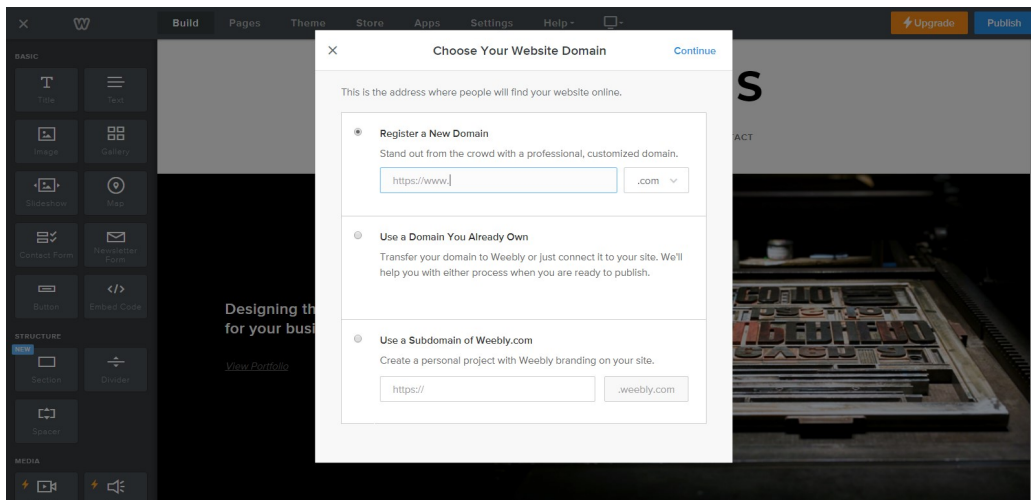
Drag and drop website builders are recommended for beginners. Many of these will let you **sign up for free using a subdomain** (ex: *weebly.com/yourname*), and will have **free or paid templates** available. Your website can easily be upgraded from a subdomain to a new or existing custom domain at a later time. Many of these sites offer premium plans for additional features, like ecommerce and more storage.

- ♦ **Google Sites** (sites.google.com) — great for a personal website, like a travel blog
- ♦ **About.me**— fast and easy option for single page websites that link to social media or other sites
- ♦ **Wix.com**— best overall website builder, with options to upgrade to an ecommerce website
- ♦ **Squarespace.com**— the most elegant website templates—highly recommended for portfolios
- ♦ **Weebly.com**—the most user friendly and recommended for those with beginner level technology skills
- ♦ **Shopify.com**— highly recommended for ecommerce websites— Point of Sale features that combine both the online and offline aspects of a purchase transaction

WEEBLY

Weebly and Your Domain

Your website will need a **domain**. The **free Weebly account** requires you to use a **subdomain**, like *weebly.com/yourname*. You can also register a new domain or link it to an existing domain, but this does requiring an upgraded plan (see below). **Websites using subdomains can always be transferred to a unique domain at a later time.** Start with a subdomain until your website has been tested and ready to go.



Weebly Plans

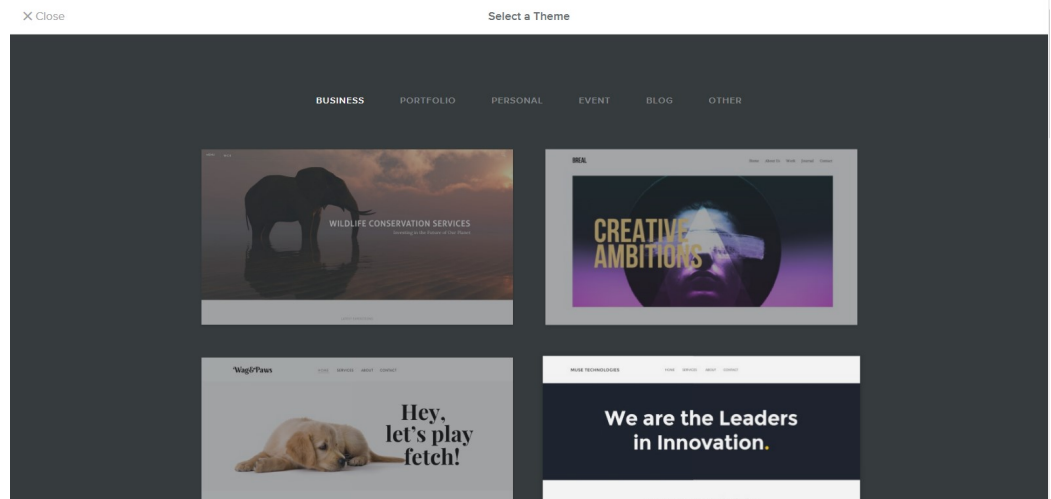
Signing up for Weebly is free, however, certain features require upgrading the Weebly account to one of the package plans. For instance, free accounts must use the Weebly subdomain (ex: *weebly.com/yourname*). The **Connect Plan** (\$4/month) will allow you to **register your own domain for free** (ex: *yourwebsite.com*), but for ecommerce and other features, you will need to upgrade to at least the **Starter Plan** (\$8/month). It is recommended to start with a basic plan (the Connect or Start Plans) until you know exactly what features you need. Your account can always be upgraded to a premium plan at a later time.

CONNECT CONNECT A DOMAIN	STARTER PERSONAL USE	PRO GROUPS & ORGANIZATIONS	BUSINESS SMALL BUSINESSES & STORES
\$ 4	\$ 8	\$ 12	\$ 25
PER MONTH BILLED ANNUALLY	PER MONTH BILLED ANNUALLY	PER MONTH BILLED ANNUALLY	PER MONTH BILLED ANNUALLY
SELECT	SELECT	SELECT	SELECT
★ Free Domain (\$19 value)	✓	✓	✓

WEEBLY

Getting Started on Weebly

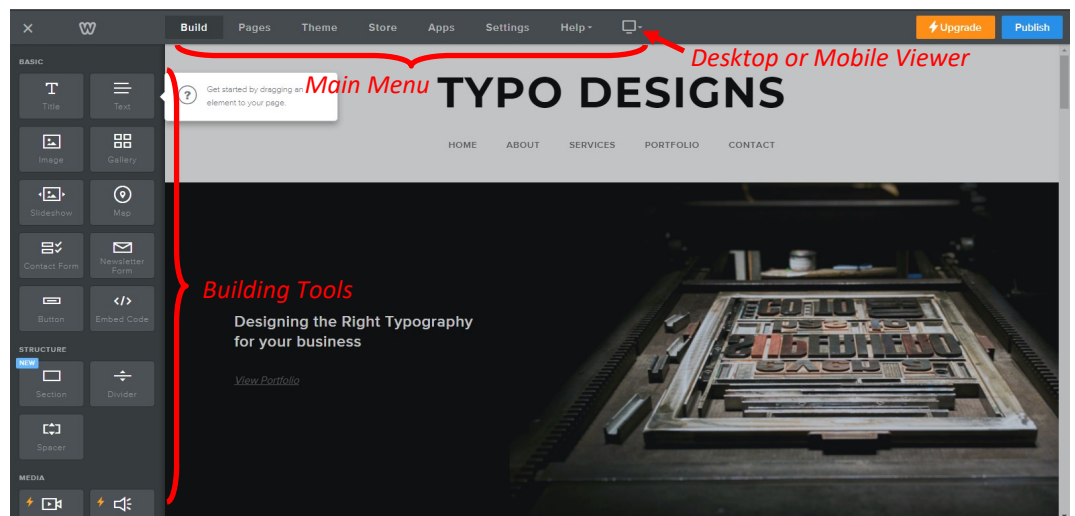
Once you are signed up, you have access to a variety of **themes** and **website templates**. Select a theme to customize.



Customize a Theme

Once you've selected a theme, it is now time to customize and personalize it with your own content and photos. Weebly is a **drag and drop website builder**.

Editing the template is as easy as using a mouse! Use the menu on the right to click and drag features onto your website. Existing text boxes or images can be edited, replaced, or removed.



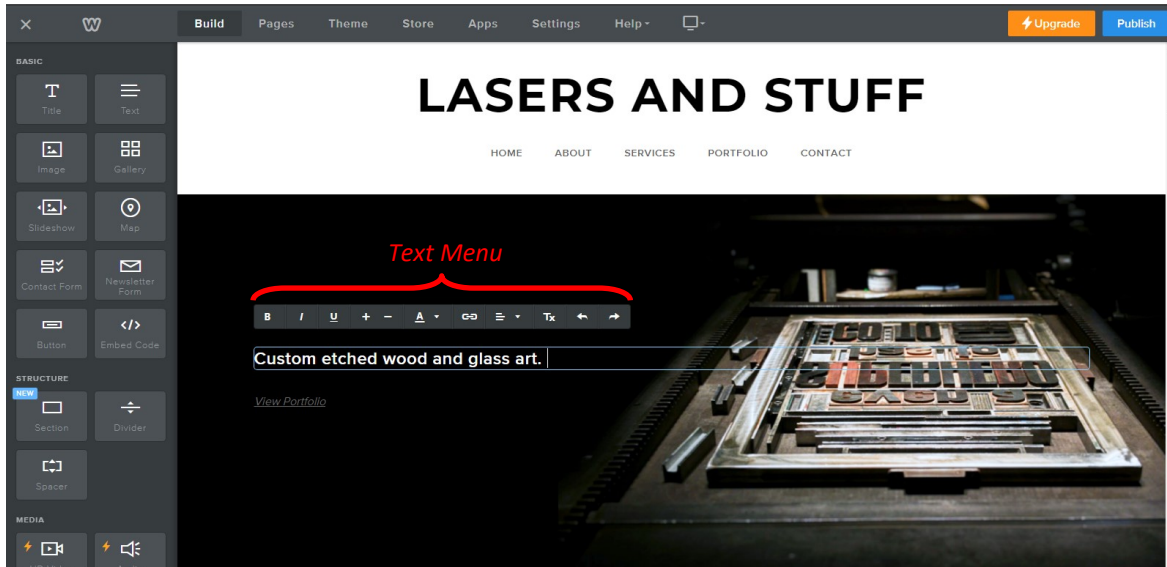
Logo Design

A logo is a great way to create a brand for yourself. One option to getting a logo is to hire a graphic designer. **99Designs.com** connects you with thousands of graphic designers. Post a design brief and select a pricing package, then designers will send your logos to choose from. However, it can be time consuming and cost \$300+. The second option is to use a logo generator to create your own design in minutes. **Tailorbrands.com** is a suggested logo generator. **Canva.com** is a simple graphic design software that can be used to create logos, too.

WEEBLY

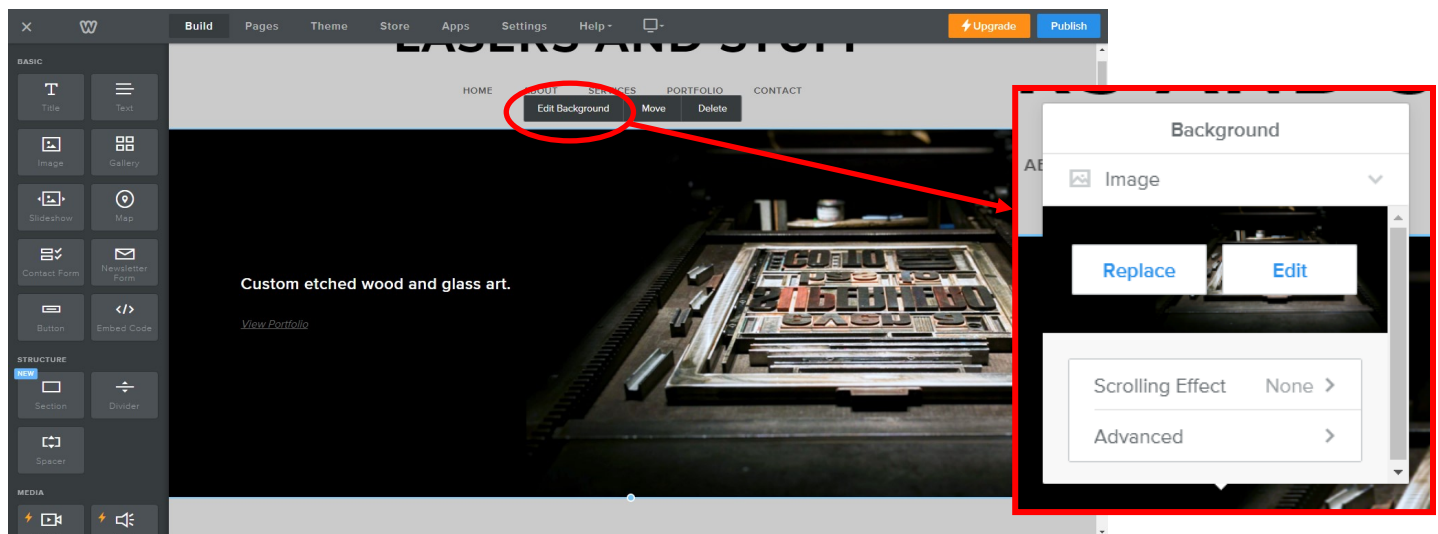
Text Editing

Either click on an existing text box or drag a new text box onto your website. A cursor should appear in your text box with a menu shown above it. Editing text boxes is very similar to editing Word and Google documents. Font, size, and alignment can be selected using the **text menu**.



Replacing or Adding Photos

Click on the image or background and select **Edit**. A menu will appear with options to replace, edit, and more. If you chose replace, an additional menu will appear to allow you to upload your personal photos.



WEEBLY

Editing Images

Selecting **Edit** in the image or background menu will open up Weebly's built-in *photo editor*. The photo editor provides basic editing functions like cropping.

High Quality Images

Don't risk ruining your website with fuzzy images of fake stock models. Seek high quality images to help your website stand out! Depending on your website needs and budget, you might want to consider hiring a professional photographer to take photos for your website. Or, you can DIY the photos yourself with equipment available at Elmhurst Public Library, including a DSLR camera for checkout!

Some website building platforms will have a library of photos available for free or for a fee. Additional resources include:

- ♦ **Unsplash.com** (free)
- ♦ **500px.com** (free and paid)
- ♦ **GettyImages.com** (paid)
- ♦ **Shutterstock.com** (paid)
- ♦ **Bigstock.com** (paid)

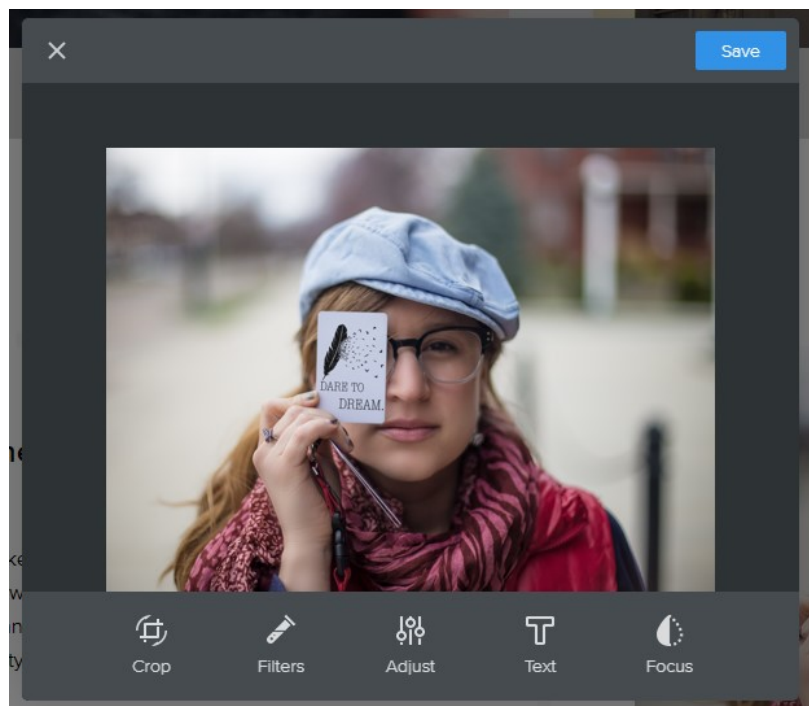


Image Editor

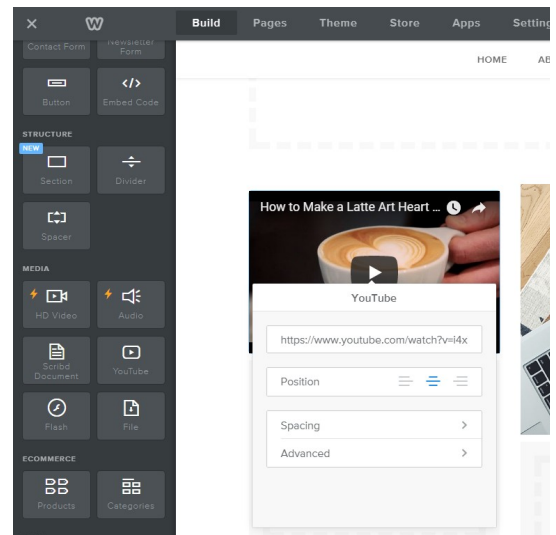
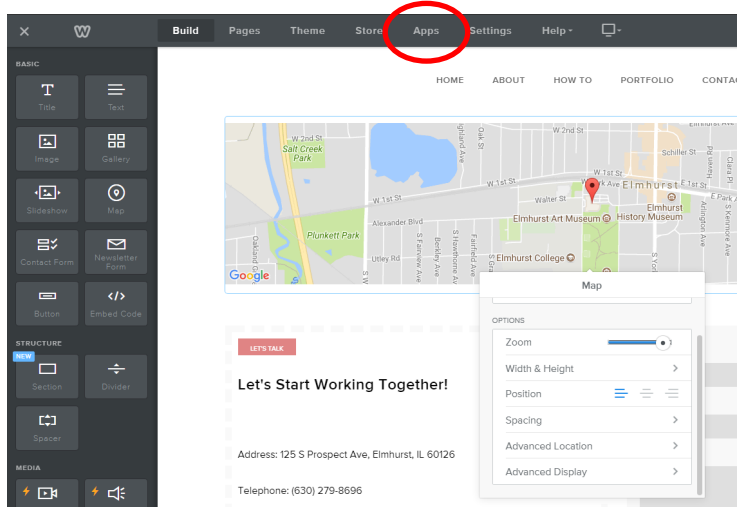
Even if you don't have a graphic heavy website, you will still need to crop, rotate, and resize images at some point. Some website builders will have basic image editing functions available. **Photoshop** is the preferred image editor by professionals, and both **Photoshop Elements** and **Photoshop CC** are available at Elmhurst Public Library. Free, online image editors include:

- ♦ **Pixlr.com**
- ♦ **BeFunky.com**
- ♦ **PicMonkey.com**

WEEBLY

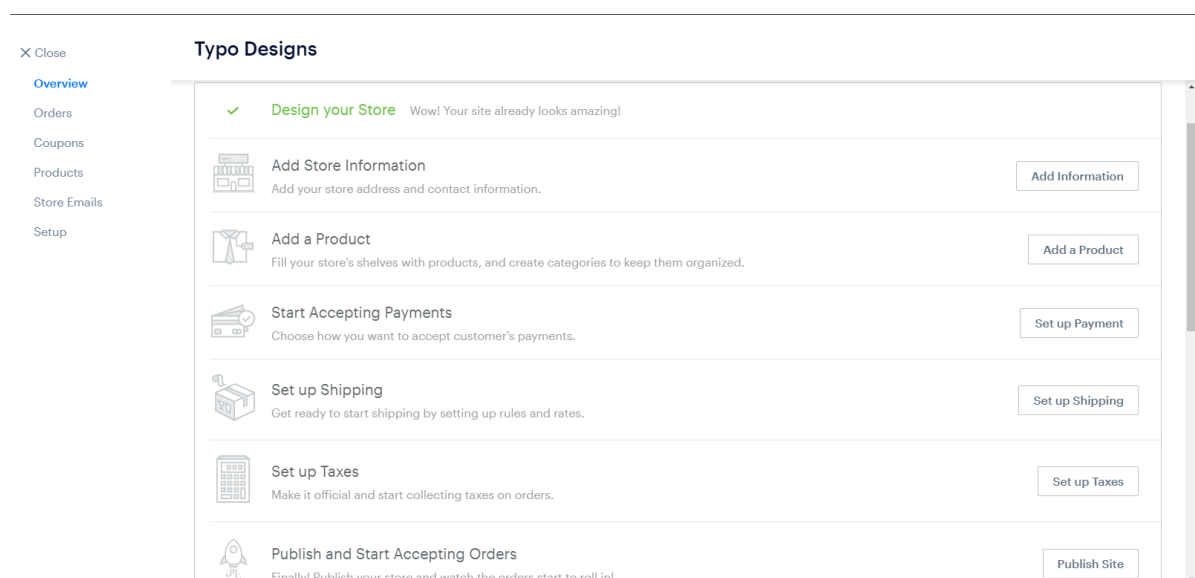
Additional Media

Weebly supports additional media and tools, like incorporating **Google Maps** and **YouTube videos**. **Google AdSense** can also be added to your website as a way to gain a few extra bucks. Additional functionality can be added by finding new tools in Weebly's **Apps** menu.



Ecommerce Features

Weebly supports **ecommerce** websites, but it does require upgrading your Weebly account to at least the **Starter Plan** (\$8/month). The **Weebly Store settings** include adding products, accepting payments, setting up taxes, processing orders and more.



SITE TRAFFIC

Website Hosting

A host is like a storage unit where your web content lives. When visitors go to your website, browsers will fetch the content from your web host. The cost of hosting will increase as your site becomes more popular, requiring a need to upgrade from basic to advanced hosting. There are four types of hosting:

- ♦ **Share Hosting**—sharing a server with other websites
- ♦ **VPS Hosting**—still sharing a server with other websites, but you get greater capacity to handle more visitors
- ♦ **Dedicated Hosting**—having a server all to yourself
- ♦ **Free Hosting**—provided and fully managed by drag and drop websites

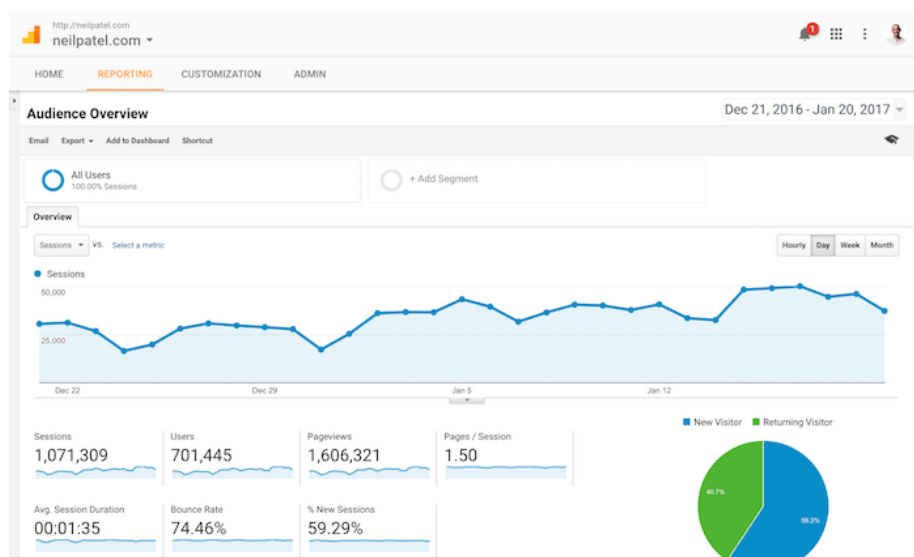
If you are using drag and drop website builders like Wix or Weebly, you are covered. Those companies will handle your hosting, which frees up your time. However, if you decide to switch to dedicated hosting, it might be difficult to export your site and upload it to a full scale hosting service. **BlueHost.com** is great for basic hosting. For advanced hosting, **WP Engine** is recommended. Additional hosting services include **DreamHost** and **HostGator**. All dedicated hosting services will allow for one-click installation of WordPress.

Google Analytics

Google Analytics is *the* data analytics tool you need to understand how your visitors are interacting with your website. It gathers data on how many people visit your site, which pages they visit the most, how long they stay on each page, which page do they visit next, which page do visitors exit, and more! All drag and drop website builders have tutorials on how to get your **Google Analytics** set up.



Google Analytics

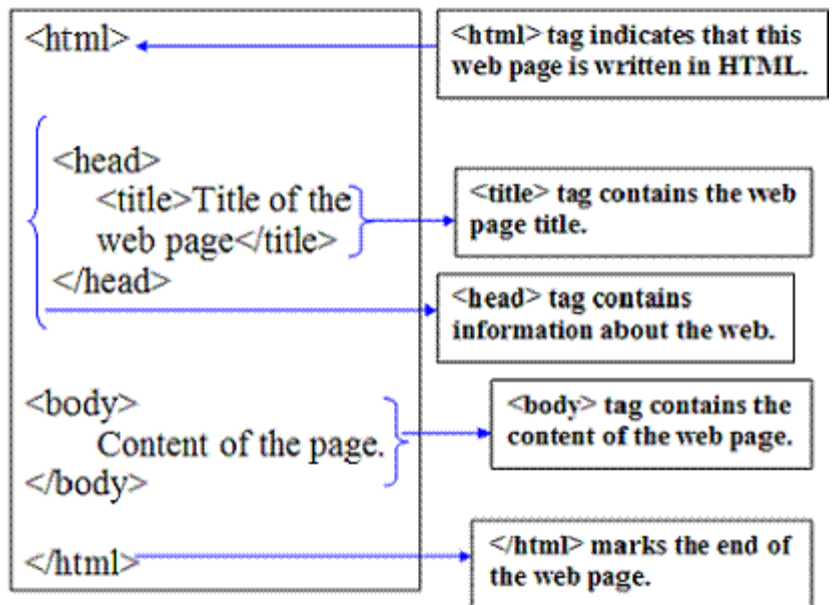


HTML CODE

HTML Basics

While drag and drop website building platforms have made it easy to build a website without any coding experience, it is helpful to know a little bit of code. Learning **HTML** will enhance your understanding of website building and allow you to fix and tweak your website more freely. **HTML** is a **Hypertext Markup Language** used to achieve font, color, graphic, and hyperlink effects on a website. Becoming HTML proficient does take about 6+ months. If your website is built using Weebly or WordPress, you will have access to the HTML code to view and/or edit. The current release is **HTML5**. To further improve the functionality of your website, it is ideal to learn additional markup languages such as **CSS (Cascading Style Sheets)** and **PHP (Hypertext Preprocessor)** to add to your HTML code.

For those interested in building a website from scratch using HTML code, I recommend using CMS options like **WordPress**, **Drupal**, or **Joomla**. Additionally, **Adobe Dreamweaver** is a desktop website creation software used to build a website from scratch. **Adobe Dreamweaver** is only available as part of the **Adobe Creative Cloud** subscription, but is available to Elmhurst Library Card Holders in the **Creative Studios**.



Resources to Learn HTML

- ♦ **Codecademy.com**—free, online classes in various coding languages
- ♦ **Lynda.com**—online classes in web development and coding, available to Elmhurst Library Card Holders through elmlib.org/eLearning
- ♦ w3schools.com/html/html_basic.asp—guide to HTML terminology

Further Resources

- ♦ Websitesetup.org
- ♦ Websitebuilderexpert.com
- ♦ Makeawebsitehub.com