



Friends of the Earth

YOU'VE GOT THE POWER...

# WWW.DIY.WEBSITE

Continuing the regular series of pull out features for *Change Your World*: four pages on how to design your own website.

In this feature, Chas Linn, FOE's Web Producer, tells you all you need to know.

## Introduction

The popularity of the internet is increasing massively, and the number of people with access has increased by 35 per cent since Christmas. More than a quarter of the UK population now has access to the internet, and it is rapidly becoming the most cost effective method of getting your message across to the general public. To give you some idea of the scale of internet readership, our national website currently has about half a million pages of information read a month, and caters for about 70,000 users a month (although many of those may be repeat visits). So get yourself a website: it's fun, mostly free and if you do it right it can really work for you.

After reading this guide you should be fully armed with all the information you need in order to set up your own site, and then make it a highly successful recruitment, fundraising and campaigning tool.



Jennifer Bates/FOE

Chas Linn

Press here to continue

Good Luck!

## Why have a web site?

This is a very good question to ask yourself before you start. I can think of many reasons, but you need to work out how it will work for you. You might like to consider the following:

- 21 per cent of the UK now have internet access and use it twice a month or more. This is expected to reach 40 per cent by 2003.
- Web space is generally free for non-commercial use and if you have an existing email account you should also be offered web space. Otherwise try [www.freeserve.co.uk](http://www.freeserve.co.uk) to get started without any set up costs.
- Once you have a website you can very quickly fill it with information on all your campaigns – most modern word processors have the ability to save as HTML (internet page format), which you can then link directly into your website.
- Even if the only function that your website performs is to advertise the time of meetings and the areas you campaign on, you may well start to recruit active new members very quickly.

## Who is doing it well?

There are lots of groups who have extensive websites and the list changes very quickly. To find a full list of current Local Group websites that we know of, take a look at [www.foe.co.uk/local/](http://www.foe.co.uk/local/)

I have some favourites, including:

Birmingham <http://ds.dial.pipex.com/beep/>

Exeter <http://www.eclipse.co.uk/exeter/foe/>

Islington <http://www.islington-foe.demon.co.uk/home.htm>

Nottingham [http://www.gn.apc.org/nott\\_foe/index.htm](http://www.gn.apc.org/nott_foe/index.htm)

Have a look through the list and see which ones are most similar to what you would like to do.

Next

## YOU'VE GOT THE POWER...

### How do I get a website?

BackForwardHome

#### Internet Service Providers (ISPs)

In order to get your pages on to the web you will need two things:

1. An account with an ISP which will host your web pages.
2. Internet access, and therefore a modem for your PC to plug into the telephone network.

You can find an excellent list of ISPs and a breakdown of their recent performance in the back of *Internet Magazine* (available at newsagents).

In particular check out:

- Demon <http://www.demon.net>
- PIPEX <http://www.dial.pipex.com/sales>
- Easynet <http://www.easynet.net>

Also worth looking at are some free services:

- Freeserve [www.freeserve.net](http://www.freeserve.net)
- Virgin [www.virgin.net](http://www.virgin.net)

### The Language

Web pages are written in their own special language which you will need to understand a little of. Don't let this put you off: it is simpler than it looks. There are also web page production programmes which you can use which write the language for you and you just type in the text. An example of this is Microsoft 'Frontpage'. These type of packages are called WYSIWYG programmes and they can be good for getting you started. As you get more proficient you might like to start working in HTML (the language of web pages), the results are generally better and it is more satisfying to know what is going on. My favorite code editor is Homesite by Allaire which is good for PCs and costs £70. If you are using a Mac try Bbedit.

HTML is a relatively simple language to learn. The place to start is an online tutorial rather than a book as these are more interactive, with good examples. If you are limited in the amount of time you can spend online however, and want to work from a book instead, ask in your local book store for their bestsellers.

There are several online tutorials, so check out the following:

- <http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/tut/> (my recommendation).
- <http://www.webpagethatsuck.com> (Excellent, funny/serious tutorial site demonstrating how to design web pages through examples of really bad design – fun for those who have mastered the basics.)
- [www.webreference.com](http://www.webreference.com) (a fantastic resource for any intermediate level web developers, covering all new technology developments, and new styles.)

### Before you start making your pages...

Although it is fun to jump in at the deep end with web page design, do plan your pages before you begin, taking into account the following:

#### Objectives

Writing the HTML really is the last thing to be done: before that there are many issues to decide upon. First of all, the objectives of the website need to be agreed. This sounds like a simple task, but it is vital to the success of the site to try and define these in a "SMART" fashion (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reviewed and Time Specific). For example: "The website should be visited by 1,000 people in the first six months, 20 per cent of whom are then inspired to make contact with the group, either by email, phone or coming along to meetings."

#### Audience

Define your audience and what exactly you want them to do. If you would like your audience to look at lots of different pages, and do several different things (e.g. order a publication, join a network, etc.), which is the most important? With careful web design, it is possible to encourage people to visit the most important page/pages with a gentle textual nudge and a link, e.g. "If you are finding this information useful, then perhaps you should consider [giving us your support](#)", leading to a join page.

Next



### Structure / navigation

The next stage is to agree on the main functions/areas of the web site. This will allow you to decide what should go on your navigation bar. Navigation can be carried out in different ways – check out [www.oneworld.org](http://www.oneworld.org) or [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk). Hopefully with good navigation, any reader will be able to tell where s/he is in the site, how to get home, and most importantly, how to find the information s/he is looking for with the minimum number of clicks; give people what they want to keep them happy and coming back.

### Artwork / design

Having agreed on the above, then think about getting some graphic design input. You may be lucky enough to know a designer, but otherwise, it may be worth asking at a local college or university to see if there are any students willing to help you, or even look up your local internet design companies to see if they fancy doing some voluntary work for you. Don't worry if you can't find any budding designers; just remember to keep things simple and concentrate on telling people what is going on locally, which is what they are interested in.

### Analyse how your site is performing

When people look at your web page, a record of each page that they look at will be made by your ISP (they will also record all the images). You can get hold of this information from your ISP by asking for the 'access logs'. Check out these logs to see if the pages which you think are most important are the ones which people are looking at most. If they are not then you will have to make the reason for going there clearer. This is vital if you want people to take action on what they read.

### Regular site maintenance

Work out who will do the updating of the site, which areas are likely to go out of date, and how often you are going to change your site. Again this is very important, as old information gives the impression of neglect and people will lose confidence in your site.

### Marketing

The final stage of any website policy is to define a marketing strategy. More often than not, websites are created with some effort and then no one looks at them because they are not aware of them. A marketing strategy is therefore very important. Things to think about are:

- Which organisations would you like to link to you?
- How visible is the site to certain search words for example "local, pollution, UK"?
- Have you submitted your pages to search engines?
- Do you want to collect interested parties email addresses so that you can email them when there are updates?
- Can you press release the site to local papers, or even get them to link to you?
- Are you in your local directories such as Yellow pages ([www.yell.co.uk](http://www.yell.co.uk)), Scoot, Yahoo UK and local government funded initiatives such as Virtual Brighton?

### Getting to the top of the search engines

There are only a few search engines which people actually use: Altavista.com, hotbot.com, lycos.co.uk, excite.co.uk, infoseek.co.uk, searchuk.com, ukmax.com, yahoo.co.uk (not strictly a search engine but a directory), scoot.co.uk (directory). If you can get to appear at the top of a search engine then lots of people will visit your site.

This means two things for you. First design your pages so that they will do well in search engine listings. This can be difficult, as everyone is trying to do it, but I have made a guide to help you which is on our website – see [www.foe.co.uk/local/search.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/local/search.html). Secondly go to the search engine websites and 'submit' the locations of your pages to these search engines. This will all take a while, but it will be worth it many times over in the end.

For more information on search engines, see the excellent [www.searchenginewatch.com](http://www.searchenginewatch.com)



## YOU'VE GOT THE POWER...

### Design

You will find many examples of bright backgrounds on the web and people often think that their use brightens up otherwise dull pages. In truth it detracts from the page's readability. Try and use black text on a white background most of the time as it is the content of the page, not its colour which people are generally interested in.

Other simple design rules are:

1. Try to use capitals and bold sparingly, as you can only highlight so much, or you effectively highlight nothing.
2. Avoid using huge fonts on your page. You rarely need to use Heading1 and it normally just takes up lots of space which could be used for something else.
3. Restrict the line width of the page using tables, so that the number of words to a line is no more than about 15. More words in a line is difficult to read. Give it a try and see what you think.
4. Spell check all your pages before putting them live. You would be surprised how often typos creep into your web pages and people are sure to notice.
5. Don't use the BLINK tag – it is very annoying.
6. Give people a way to contact you with feedback about your site – an invaluable way of getting good suggestions as well as finding out things that don't work.
8. Think about using simple buttons and icons, as they can really liven up your site. These can be simply designed using lots of free software readily available. Explore one of the free software CDs with one of the internet magazines. For an example of a FOE website which makes good use of icons/images, check out Exeter FOE at <http://www.eclipse.co.uk/exeter/foe/>
9. Try and keep each page short enough to fit into one browser window. Long scrolling pages are difficult to take in, so break them up into lots of linked smaller pages.
10. Try and keep the file size of your images to below 30Kbytes for the whole page. This should allow your pages to load quickly.
11. Avoid the use of counters as this either makes it look like the pages aren't very well visited, or it looks like you feel you need to tell people how popular you are.
12. Check your pages using **www.websitegarage.com** which will tell you about any problems and what you need to do to correct them.

Ultimately, the best way to learn how to do webpages is to have a go, make mistakes, get a colleague to review it and then revise the site until you become one of the experts. That's what I did.

### Using webpages themselves as inspiration

One of the great features of the internet is that if you see something that you like in someone else's page design, you can;

- i) use 'View', 'Document Source' – this will show you the code used to create the page;
- ii) use 'File', 'Save As' – this will save their files on to your computer so that you can copy their format directly;
- iii) position the mouse over images and press the right hand button – this will then give you the option of 'Save the image as', allowing you to save the image into your area and use it for your own benefit.

The ease of saving other people's work using your internet browser is very handy as it means that you can borrow other people's ideas and designs, and put a site together very quickly. Borrowing people's HTML in general is totally acceptable and in fact encouraged, but you have to be more careful taking images, as you are infringing copyright and you must ask if it is OK with the owner first. This is particularly relevant with logos and photographs, so beware.

### And Finally ...

That should be it really. If you can follow these tips and recommendations, then you should be well on your way to a successful website. Let's hope that the donations and members pour in, and that you have fun in the process!

A circular button with an orange border and a dark center containing the word "Back" in white text.A circular button with an orange border and a dark center containing the word "Forward" in white text.A circular button with an orange border and a dark center containing the word "Home" in white text.A large orange diamond-shaped button with the word "End" in white text.