

10 Questions to ask a possible web developer to design your website.

May I see some examples of your work? This is a must. Make sure you can view actual websites they have designed that are open to the public and fully functional.

What is your process for creating a web site? This question is important not only to know what their process is, but to see if they even have one. A good process for creating a web site will include planning, design, development, testing and promotion.

What graphics software do you use? Look for companies that use Adobe graphics software such as Photoshop and Illustrator, or something comparable such as The Gimp or Fireworks.

What development software do you use? Important: make sure the designer does not use any technology or development methods that lock you into using specific software to manage the website or requires over the top web hosting services. Programs can be used to create excellent web sites, but they are often relied upon as crutches, ask if they know how to program basic HTML by hand.

What programming languages do you use? This is a great question to weed out designers who don't know how to create anything more than a nice-looking, static web site. Look for developers who know more than just HTML -- most should be well versed in a scripting language such as PHP and/or ASP.

What happens if I want changes? Changes in the scope of a project, as well as the design and functionality of a site, are bound to occur. Make sure it is determined ahead of time what will happen if revisions must be made, for example whether you pay for the changes or if certain modifications will be made at no additional charge. **Important:** Another issue to discuss is how ongoing maintenance will be done -- you will almost definitely have to pay for future enhancements and updates to the site, but some companies do things differently than others.

Do you provide hosting? Although some firms provide web hosting in-house, most individual developers and many development companies do not. In this case, they will often set up a hosting account with another company and have that company bill you directly. Beware of any developer that does not give you a choice regarding hosting -- usually it's easier if the development company provides hosting, but you do have a choice. (Note that your hosting options will depend on the technology required to build your site, **Important:** remember to not get put in a position to be locked into one company, but don't believe anyone that tells you that you only have one option.)

Will you register a domain name for us? Most developers will gladly register a domain name on your behalf. After all, every web site has to have an address, so it's a necessity for any business. **Important:** Make sure that the developer registers the domain under your company's name, so that you are the owner of the name and not the developer.

How long have you been in business? An obvious but essential question that should be asked of any company you contract with.

Important: Protect yourself by making sure if you part ways with your developer that the website is maintainable by another developer with little amount of time invested to take over site management.