

It is difficult to choose the ideal hosting plan for your project. An almost endless number of hosting companies exist, each offering different packages and additional features. One of the first choices that must be made is between Shared, Dedicated and VPS hosting.

What is Shared, Dedicated and VPS hosting?

Websites are stored on computers owned by the hosting company. These computers are called servers. There are three different methods that a hosting company use to store your website. Which you choose is a matter of cost and the size and complexity of your project. Below we identify the benefits and drawbacks of each type.

Shared Hosting

Shared hosting plans are best for small to medium websites without too much traffic. Shared hosting means that the server hosts more than one website, each using the same IP address. All the websites on the server will use the same resources for serving the data. This will mean less reliable performance and security than on a dedicated server. If the hosting company overloads a single server with too many sites to save money, performance and speed can drop noticeably.

The benefit of a shared server is low cost. Shared hosting is perfect for small to medium sized projects or when you are looking for an economical hosting option. Different hosting plans will give you access to a greater percentage of the server's resources. It is always possible to upgrade from shared hosting if your site outgrows it.

Dedicated Hosting

A Dedicated Hosting plan means that you are paying for your own server. The hosting company will build and run this computer for you. This server is completely dedicated to your website, and will not share resources with any other websites. A dedicated server is very powerful and efficient, and ideal for projects which will receive a lot of traffic, or which will take up many resources. It is also possible to run multiple websites of your own on a dedicated server.

Dedicated hosting plans are also perfect if you will be consuming a large amount of bandwidth, through streaming videos or games. The downside is they cost considerably more than a shared hosting plan.

VPS Hosting

Virtual Private Servers are a half way between shared and dedicated hosting. You will pay to have a 'virtual computer' created on a server. Like a dedicated plan you will receive more power and control over the software on your server, including a dedicated IP address and the capability to host unlimited domains. But like a shared server your virtual server will be sharing resources with other virtual servers.

VPS hosting is a true half way, costing more than a shared host, but less than a dedicated one. You will see a noticeable speed and performance benefit. If your site is of medium to large size, or you have outgrown the limitations of a shared hosting package, a VPS server could be ideal for you.

Extra Thoughts

Your experience on the different hosting methods can vary wildly depending on the hosting company. Some hosts may heavily overload a shared server to save money, causing a performance drop for all the sites on it. Another host may be careful to keep the number of sites low, to ensure each runs at full speed. The security benefits of a dedicated host can be compromised by bad administration by the hosting company. It is always worth checking reviews of each company to make sure you are getting a good deal.

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