

STORM INTERNET

8 Things You Should Be Checking When You Work with a New Hosting Provider

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Choosing a new hosting provider can feel like diving into murky waters - there's a lot beneath the surface that can either keep your site afloat or sink it when you least expect it. The wrong choice could mean costly downtime, frustrating support experiences, or limitations that stifle your growth.
To make the right decision and avoid painful surprises, here are eight critical things you should be checking before (and after) you commit to a hosting provider.

1. Uptime and Reliability

If your website is offline, you're losing money, credibility, and visitors - period. Uptime isn't a bonus feature; it's a foundational expectation.

What to look for:

- **Uptime guarantee:** Aim for providers offering at least a 99.9% uptime SLA.
- **Historical performance:** Use tools like UptimeRobot or Pingdom to verify performance over time.
- **Redundancy and failover:** Check for load balancing, multiple data centers, and redundant network connections.
- **Monitoring and proactive response:** Does the provider monitor servers 24/7 and act before you even notice something's wrong?

High uptime is the result of strong infrastructure, network stability, real-time monitoring, backup power supplies, and proactive maintenance. If a provider can't commit to reliable uptime, they're not worth your business.

Case in point: 24-Hour outage wrecks reputation

A Belgian online driving school, Permis Online, experienced multiple outages - including a full 24-hour blackout - due to an unreliable hosting provider that failed to resolve critical server issues. The downtime not only cost them revenue but seriously damaged their credibility, ultimately forcing them to change providers.

Lesson: Even a few hours of downtime can cause lasting financial and reputational harm.

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2. Customer Support Quality and Availability

Support matters - especially when something breaks and you don't have hours to spare. A good hosting provider doesn't just sell server space - they offer peace of mind.

Ask these questions:

- Is support available 24/7?
- Can I get help via live chat, phone, and email/tickets?
- Are agents technical or just front-line responders reading from scripts?
- Do they help with real-world issues like malware recovery or email configuration?

In 2025, quality hosts are moving toward **proactive and personalised support**, offering onboarding assistance, AI-enhanced troubleshooting, and a blend of automation and human expertise. Great support anticipates problems and helps you grow - not just react when something breaks.

Case in point: When support fails, so does your recovery

UK-based hosting company 123-Reg left customers scrambling after a hardware failure revealed that their so-called "daily backups" were months old. Support was slow to respond, and many businesses permanently lost critical data.

Lesson: Backup claims are meaningless without timely support to act on them. Always verify what "support" really includes.

3. Security Features

Today's hosting environment must go beyond basic security if you want to protect your site and your users.

Must-have security features:

- **SSL certificates:** Free and auto-renewing certificates (e.g., Let's Encrypt) should be standard.

- **DDoS protection & firewalls:** Protects your site from malicious traffic and attacks.
- **Malware scanning & patching:** Regular scans and automatic patching close vulnerabilities fast.
- **IP blocking & login protection:** Tools that prevent brute-force attacks and unauthorised access.
- **Zero trust access & MFA:** The best hosts implement role-based access controls and never assume trust by default.

Case in point: A host that lost it all

In 2021, Web Hosting Canada experienced a devastating failure that wiped out both live data and backups across multiple customer accounts. The breach occurred due to inadequate safeguards and mismanaged infrastructure. Many businesses never recovered their websites - and a class-action lawsuit soon followed.

Lesson: Don't just ask if a host has backups - ask how they protect them.

4. Backup and Restore Options

Things go wrong, whether it's human error, plugin conflicts, or cyberattacks. When they do, your backup system becomes your lifeline.

What to Check:

- **Backup frequency:** Daily or real-time backups are ideal for dynamic sites.
- **Retention policy:** Can you restore from backups taken 7, 30, or 90 days ago?
- **Backup location:** Are backups stored offsite or geo-redundantly?
- **Restore process:** Is it one-click, self-service, or do you need to file a ticket and wait?
- **Granular restore:** Can you restore individual files or databases—not just the entire site?

Case in point: Double failure, no recovery

Web Hosting Canada's 2021 disaster wasn't just about losing live data - it was the

simultaneous loss of backups that made it catastrophic. Without an offsite, protected backup solution, many businesses faced total data loss.

Lesson: Backups are only valuable if they're secure, separate, and verified.

5. Scalability and Resource Limits

Your site today may only get a few hundred visits per day - but what happens when it goes viral, or your business starts to scale?

Avoid These Scalability Pitfalls:

- **CPU/RAM throttling:** Many shared hosts will quietly cap your resources and slow your site if you hit limits.
- **Inode or file count caps:** These are often hidden in the fine print and can prevent site expansion.
- **Upgrade path clarity:** Can you easily move to a VPS or cloud server without migrating everything manually?
- **Bandwidth limits:** Unlimited plans are rarely truly unlimited - watch out for soft caps or "fair use" policies.

6. Technical Features and Control Panel

Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned developer, your control panel should empower you - not get in the way.

Look for these features:

- User-friendly dashboard
- Database management tools
- Staging environments
- FTP/SFTP, Git, and cron jobs
- PHP configuration controls
- One-click app installers

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7. Network Performance and Server Location

Speed matters - for SEO, conversions, and user experience. The closer your server is to your users, the faster your site loads.

Key Performance Factors:

- Data centre proximity
- CDN integration
- Bandwidth and latency
- Caching support

Case in Point: When Speed Hurts Search Rankings

Although not tied to a single company, many businesses have learned the hard way that slow sites caused by poor hosting can damage SEO performance. Reduced visibility in search engines means fewer visitors and fewer sales.

Lesson: Hosting performance directly impacts both user experience and your position in search results.

8. Pricing Transparency and Contract Terms

Hosting plans can be like mobile phone contracts - packed with hidden fees, fine print, and sudden price jumps.

Be Sure to Review:

- Renewal rates
- Refund & trial policies
- What's included vs. add-ons
- Real-time cost tracking
- Termination policies
- Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

Case in point: OVHcloud

In 2021, a massive fire at an OVHcloud data center destroyed hundreds of customer servers - along with their backups. Despite claims of offsite redundancy, many backups were housed in the same location. Lawsuits followed.

Lesson: Read the fine print on where your data and backups are stored—and how SLAs handle disaster recovery.

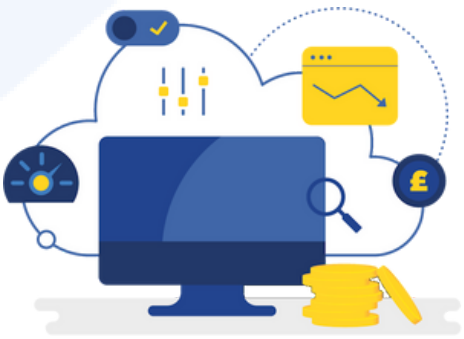
Final Thoughts: Choose Hosting Like Your Business Depends on It (Because It Does)

Great hosting isn't just about storing files - it's about performance, protection, and peace of mind. Before you commit to a new provider, take the time to evaluate these eight areas thoroughly.

Here's a quick recap of what to check:

1. Uptime and reliability – Confirm they're built for availability.
2. Customer support – Make sure you can get real help, fast.
3. Security features – Look for end-to-end protection.
4. Backup and restore – Don't assume backups are included.
5. Scalability and limits – Choose a provider that grows with you.
6. Technical tools and control – Your control panel should work with you.
7. Network speed and location – Fast servers = happy users.
8. Pricing and contracts – Read the fine print. Twice.

Make informed decisions now, and you'll save yourself headaches (and downtime) later. Because when hosting works well, it becomes invisible. But when it goes wrong, it's the only thing you notice.



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