

# DIY or Pro for My Website?



HTML, CSS, PHP: These are just a few of the languages that make websites work. When your only option for building a website for your organization was learning one or more of these languages, it led to an easy decision for most—hire a web developer to build it for you. However, that is not the case today. There are many content management systems (CMS) and “what you see is what you get” (WYSIWYG) editors available to help you build a website even if you have little or no coding knowledge.

This leads to the inevitable question: Should I pay someone to build my website for me, or am I better off doing it myself? Well, the answer is...it depends! First, you need to rate your technical ability on a scale of 1–10. Any answer is acceptable as long as it’s an honest one! If you are fairly low on the scale, then you are likely better off paying a professional to do it for you. If you’re in the middle or on the higher end of the scale, then you can probably do it on your own if you are willing to put in the time required.

## Hiring a Pro

First, let’s go over the advantages and disadvantages of hiring a pro to do the work for you. The big advantage is the amount of time you would save. Look at it this way: If you want to paint your house, you are likely fully capable of doing it. However, if you hire professional painters to do it, they will bring in their expertise and equipment and do it in a quarter of the time that it would have taken you.

However, this leads to the main disadvantage: You have to pay the painter for his or her time. The question now, of course, is how much does a professional website design cost? You may be able to guess the answer...it depends! Very basic sites can cost as little as \$500, but

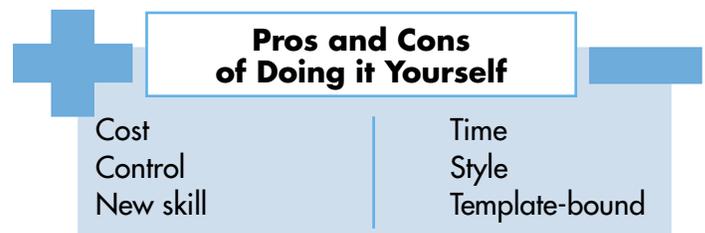
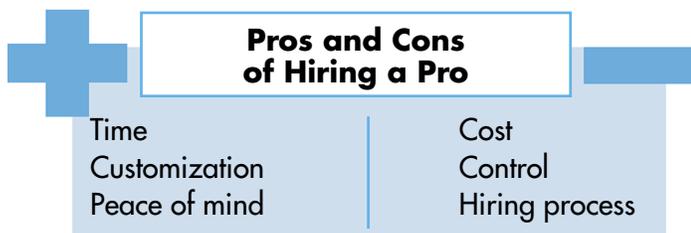
very complex ones can go into the tens of thousands of dollars. However, typically you can expect the average professionally built website to cost anywhere between \$2,000 and \$5,000. Remember that adding an e-commerce component brings another layer of complexity and will cost you more.

Another advantage of hiring a professional is being able to add more advanced features to your website. With a pro, you will be able to have any look you want and add whatever advanced features you need. Let’s stick with the painting example. Instead of painting walls a solid color, imagine you are painting a child’s room and want pictures of superheroes on the walls. That job is definitely more advanced than just putting on a single color, and most people would likely be better off hiring someone for this more advanced job. The same logic applies to your website design.

Here’s one final note: If you do hire a pro, you should purchase your own domain name before contracting with an expert to build your website. Your domain name is the web address that people will use to find you. It’s much better for you to own it, rather than your web developer, in case you decide to change developers in the future.

## DIY

So what about building a website yourself? Let’s start with a major advantage: Most of the do-it-yourself builders offer free trials. This way, you can try them out before you ever spend a penny! When you are looking at plans, see if they offer a free trial. Remember, they will always be glad to take more of your money in the future, so there is no reason to pay more than you need to in the beginning.



This ties into the major advantage of doing it yourself: It can potentially save you a great deal of money. It can cost as little as \$8 per month to host a basic website through a WYSIWYG editor. When starting a business, you must create a balance between how you spend your money and time. The trade-off in this scenario is that it will require much more of your time.

What about the other question: Can I do it? Well, think back to how you rated your ability on a scale of 1–10. If you are anywhere on the upper half of that scale, you will likely be able to develop a website on your own, as long as you are willing and able to put in the time to learn what to do and then do it.

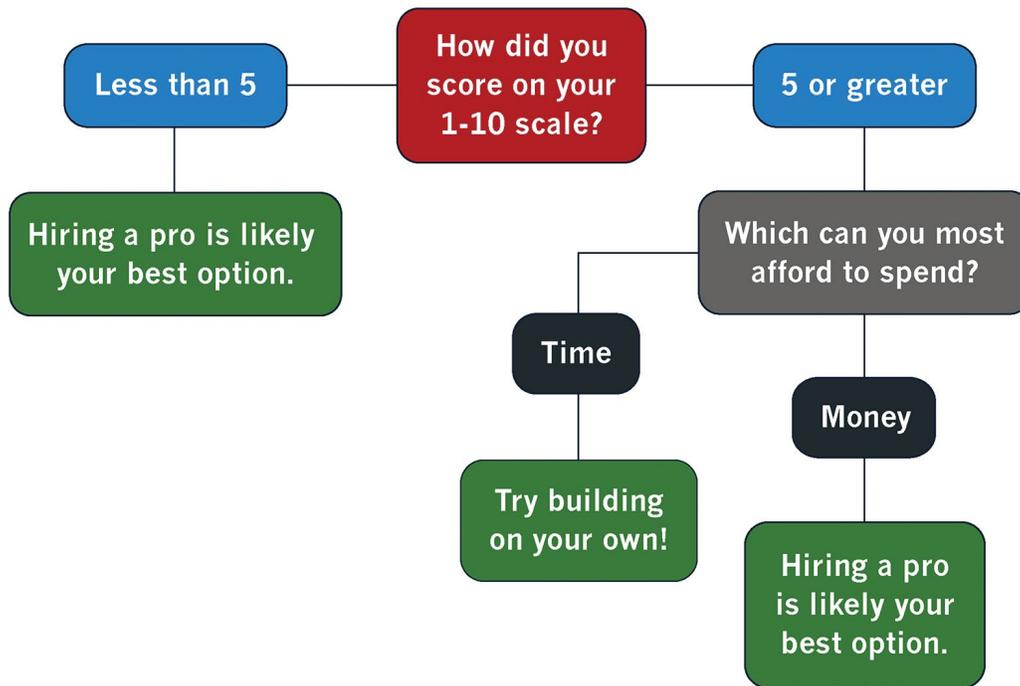
How much time, you may ask? Well...it depends! If you use a simpler builder and have enough technical skills, you may be able to do it in a matter of a few hours. For most, you can expect to have a good end product in a few

weeks if you are able to work on the website a few hours per day. If you go through this process, you will have more than a new website to show for it. You will have learned a valuable new skill that could come in handy in the future.

Finally, when you build everything yourself, you are in complete control of it. Want to fire yourself and hire someone else as developer? Done. Want to update your *About Us* page at 3 a.m. on a Saturday? Done. Need to adjust your hours listed because of bad weather? Change it on your timeline, not someone else's.

## Summary

As you can see, there are pros and cons to each approach. But do remember that your website is an integral part of your business or organization. It is the first thing that many of your clients will see, so it's important that you make a great first impression.



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