

The Ultimate Web Hosting Checklist 2026

Choose, Migrate, and Optimise Your Web Hosting
Without Wasting Money

■ 47+ Points

■ 8 Categories

■ \$1,000+ Saved

from **CMZ Reviews** — Independent Hosting Comparisons & Deals

■ How to Use This Checklist

Print this checklist and tick off each item as you evaluate potential hosts. Keep it handy when comparing plans — it covers everything from performance benchmarks to hidden fees.

1. ■ Performance & Speed

- ✓ Server response time under 500ms
Target $\leq 300\text{ms}$ for WordPress sites using caching
- ✓ SSD/NVMe storage included
Avoid HDD — NVMe is 5x faster than SATA SSD
- ✓ CDN integrated or free add-on
Cloudflare or built-in CDN saves 40-60% load time
- ✓ At least 1 CPU core guaranteed
Shared hosting may throttle CPU — check fine print
- ✓ PHP 8.x ready
PHP 8.3+ delivers ~25% faster execution than PHP 7.4
- ✓ HTTP/2 or HTTP/3 supported
Required for modern performance; H3 uses QUIC protocol
- ✓ Built-in caching layer
Page cache, Redis, or Varnish — drops TTFB to $< 100\text{ms}$

2. ■ Security & Reliability

- ✓ 99.9% uptime SLA (minimum)
Many budget hosts offer 99.9% but only 99.5% actual
- ✓ SSL certificate included (free)
Let's Encrypt AutoSSL — no manual renewal needed
- ✓ Automatic daily backups
Verify backup retention: 7-30 days minimum
- ✓ DDoS protection included
Cloudflare integration counts as basic DDoS protection
- ✓ Malware scanning & removal
Premium feature on budget hosts — worth paying \$2-3/mo extra
- ✓ Web Application Firewall (WAF)
Blocks SQL injection, XSS, and brute force login attempts
- ✓ Staging environment available
Test updates before pushing to production

3. ■ Pricing & Value

- ✓ **Introductory vs renewal price clearly stated**
Many hosts inflate renewal 2-4x — check terms
- ✓ **Money-back guarantee (30+ days minimum)**
Avoid hosts with 14-day or no refund policy
- ✓ **No hidden setup fees**
Some cheap hosts charge \$15-50 'setup' on annual plans
- ✓ **Free domain for first year**
Saves ~\$14/year per domain — verify TLD availability
- ✓ **Resource limits disclosed**
PHP workers, MySQL connections, inode limits — check docs
- ✓ **Price lock / no surprise increases**
Does the host honour the intro price at renewal?

4. ■■ Support & Service

- ✓ **24/7 live chat (not just tickets)**
Test response time before buying — aim for <60 seconds
- ✓ **Phone support available**
Good for emergencies — verify hours (24/7 vs business hours)
- ✓ **Knowledge base & tutorials**
Solid docs reduce support tickets — quality matters
- ✓ **Average response time < 5 minutes**
Check recent Trustpilot/Reddit reviews for wait times
- ✓ **Technical support (not just billing)**
Can they help with .htaccess, PHP config, migration?

5. ■ Scalability

- ✓ **Clear upgrade path (shared → VPS → dedicated)**
Avoid hosts that trap you on shared plans
- ✓ **Easy plan upgrade without downtime**
Downtime-free migration between tiers
- ✓ **Traffic/resource limits published**
What happens when you exceed limits? Throttled? Charged?
- ✓ **Auto-scaling available**
Premium hosts (Kinsta, WP Engine) auto-scale on traffic spikes
- ✓ **Multiple data centre regions**
Choose closest to your audience — APAC, EU, US West/East
- ✓ **Resource monitoring dashboard**
Real-time usage stats help you spot growth before problems

6. ■ Migration & Onboarding

- ✓ Free migration service
Worth \$50-150 — many good hosts offer this free
- ✓ Migration guarantee — no data loss
Rollback if anything goes wrong during transfer
- ✓ WordPress/website import wizard
One-click import for DIY migrations
- ✓ Test/staging migration available
Preview the migrated site before DNS switch
- ✓ Estimated migration time provided
5-30 minutes for simple sites, 1-24 hours for complex

7. ■ Features & Compatibility

- ✓ One-click WordPress installer
Softaculous or similar — saves 15-20 min setup time
- ✓ Free site builder (if needed)
Beware: some are limited — Bluehost has a decent builder
- ✓ Git/SSH access
Essential for developers — verify shell access level
- ✓ FTP/SFTP access
Basic — but some budget hosts lock SFTP on cheapest plans
- ✓ Unlimited email accounts
Not critical but handy — check sending limits per hour
- ✓ Multisite/WordPress Network support
If managing multiple sites from one install
- ✓ Cron job scheduler available
Important for scheduled tasks, backups, and automation

8. ■ Final Decision Checklist

- ✓ Read 3+ recent independent reviews
Skip 5-star fluff — focus on detail and benchmarks
- ✓ Check Trustpilot / G2 / Reddit for complaints
Sort by most recent — that's today's reality
- ✓ Verify affiliate disclosure is transparent
Trustworthy sites disclose commissions clearly
- ✓ Compare 3 hosts side-by-side
Never buy the first option — competition drives value
- ✓ Calculate total first-year cost

Domain + hosting + SSL + CDN + email = real cost

■ ✓ **Read the Terms of Service (yes, really)**

Focus on refund, cancellation, and data ownership

■ Ready to Choose?

You've done your homework. Now it's time to pick the right host.
After reviewing 30+ hosting providers in 2026, here's our top recommendation:

Bluehost — Best Value Hosting for Beginners

■ Free domain | ■ Free SSL | ■ Free migration
■ 24/7 support | ■ 30-day guarantee | ■ Starting at \$2.95/mo

■ [Claim Your Bluehost Deal](#) →

■ **Pro Tip:** Use the coupon code **CMZ75** at Bluehost checkout for up to 75% off — exclusive to CMZ Reviews readers and not available on the public site.

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