True Green

Web Hosting for a Kind Planet

Go Green:
Easy Ways to Make Your
Website Sustainable & Profitable

www.yoursite.au

Contents

Going online?

With more people spending their lives online, it's a no-brainer that businesses need the World Wide Web.

Annoyingly, this World Wide Web also sucks up a lot of energy

And most of that energy is made up of dirty fossil fuels.

In fact, the internet is responsible for around 3% of global carbon emissions and is on track to deliver more C02 than our plane flying habits.

But we reckon there's a better way.
That's why we've built this guide for you.

- Will it make you green straight away?
  Nah, mate.

- Will it help you to take small steps to make bigger results long-term?
  Yes, it bloody well could!

So grab yourself a cuppa, get comfy, and keep reading on...

Step 1:

Media Makeover - Keep your files in shape

The most common cause for a slow website is large images and files. A slow website means your customers are more likely to go elsewhere, which isn't great for your biz hey?

Sadly, not many people are aware of the impact of too-large media files, let alone how to do better.

Here's a tip: Optimising images and files for the web will not only speed up your website, it also reduces the amount of energy your website uses. **We reckon that's a win-win!**
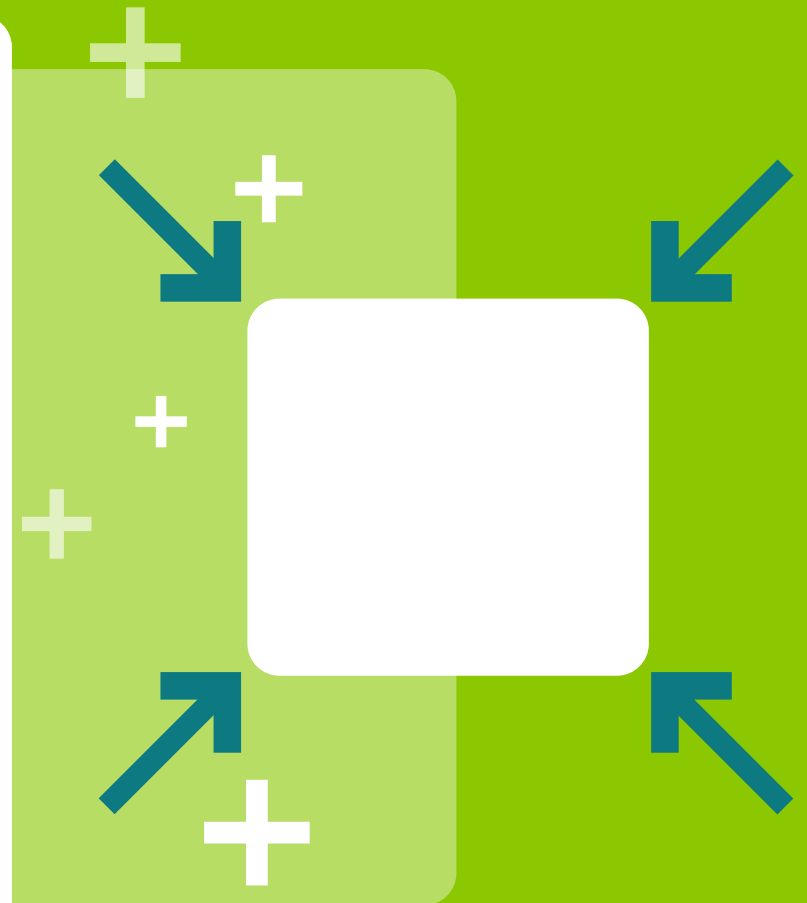
Here's how to start your website's media makeover:

- **Choose the right file format** - JPEG format is great for photographs, while PNG is suitable for graphics or illustrations. Webp (if supported) is also a great option for your images, and MP4 is a good format for videos.

- **Resize content to exact dimensions required** - We enjoy using **Canva** to do this, but many other image and video editing software can get the job done.

- **Compress your media files** - **TinyPNG** is our go-to for compressing images, while **Handbrake** is recommended for video compression. For PDFs, use **SmallPDF**. The changes made to compress your files are not visible to the naked eye but will help reduce their size by a lot.

- **Use YouTube for your videos** - Add videos to your website with Google's second largest search engine. You can mark a video as unlisted so that it's harder to find outside of your website.

Step 2:

Make it inclusive, or see yourself out

1 in 5 Australians have a disability.

And disabilities are not always visible.

When making a website online, it just makes sense to make sure your website is accessible.

It means that everyone can explore your surroundings, which means you'll appeal to more people.

There are so many resources online - including the official **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG) - that give you a good run through of the steps you can take.

To help you, here are a few quick wins:

- **Include alternative (ALT) text for images** - Simply put, **alt text** is a description of an image that assists users with visual impairment. It also helps search engines like Google find your content, which is great for getting more eyeballs on your website.

- **Keep your navigation simple** - Your menu should make sense to everyone. Adding fancy or creative names for pages may sound cool, but can lead to your pages being lost in the wild. So keep it simple and avoid having too many options. If you run a store, categories will be your life-saver here.

- **Use clear headings** - Keep your content in an organised and logical order so it's easy to follow and understand. Make use of Heading 2, 3 and 4 (in most website text editors) so people can easily navigate your content as intended.

- **Text contrast** - Using colours can make your website look good, but not at the risk of making it unreadable. Make sure your text can be read easily when using background colours or images. As much as we love a rainbow, overusing too many colours can confuse people and make it hard to digest your messages.

- **Keep your font simple** - Certain fonts can make words more difficult to read. Make sure you're **choosing the right font** that is accessible to all. Avoid using more than 2 fonts. We usually aim for one font for headings, and another font for paragraph text to keep it consistent.

- **Video subtitles** - Subtitles or captions can be easily added onto videos using specific tools like **Clideo** or even video editing apps like **Inshot**. You can also edit subtitles using **YouTube's free tool**.
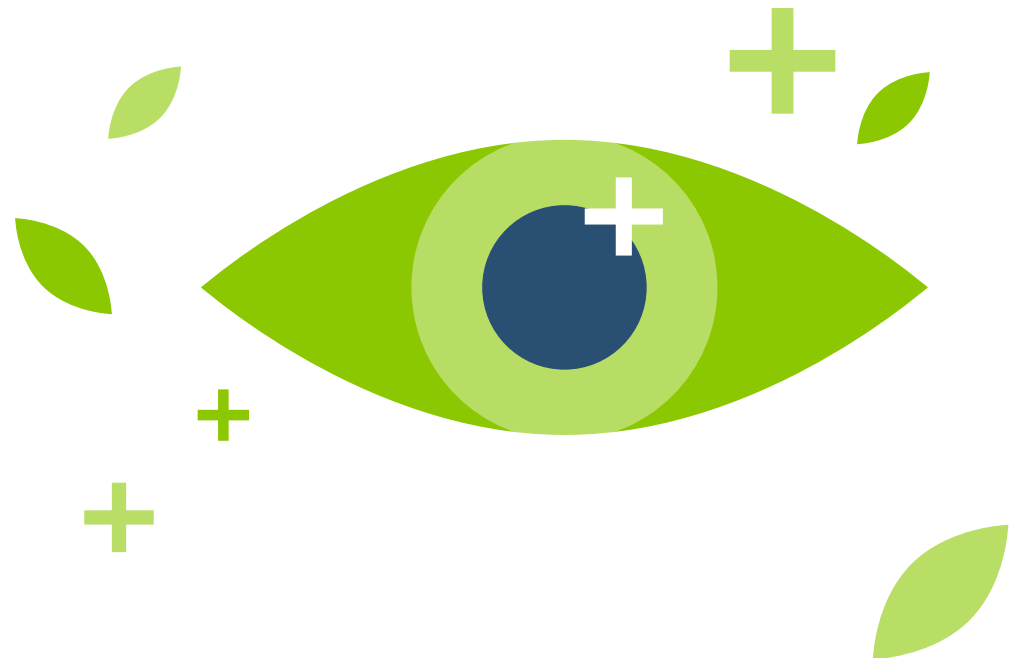
Step 3:

Make your home green, not filled with dirty coal

In 2023, the **True Green® Hosting network** measured that websites were making **332kg of C02 on average**. That's enough to power over 45,000 smartphones!

Imagine for a moment that you have a house on a street filled with large lumps of coal.

Yep, the dirty rock from deep underground. The same one Santa gives out to those on the naughty list.

All that coal stores a lot of carbon. So when it's burned, it releases those carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

If passers-by walked past your home and saw big lumps of coal in your front yard, would they be happy to know you? And if you started burning said coal, what would that do to your health?

That example is a little extreme, sure. But if we saw what powered our websites every day in our front yards, most people would run for the hills.

Well, we've got some good news: There's a better way.

While we can't change the fact that your website is powered by coal, we can do things to undo the harm caused by it. Things like supporting green initiatives like planting trees and investing in clean energy, for example.

Choose green web hosting.

Using the same house analogy from above, your choice of web host is the neighbourhood in which your home is located. A greener neighbourhood will help reduce the impact of all the coal-burning. And eventually, that same neighbourhood will be the first to help your home plug into clean energy so you can toss that coal back underground where it belongs.

Without web hosting, your website cannot exist on the Internet, so why not opt for **green web hosting**? You'll access a variety of eco-friendly perks without even trying!

Green web hosting reduces your website's carbon footprint, increases your website's energy efficiency, and puts your support toward reducing climate change.

Here's a few things to consider when searching for the best green web hosting provider for your website:

- **Reliability** - Choose a reliable web hosting provider so your website stays online. A good way to check a company's uptime score is by using tools like [Host Tracker](). We recommend choosing web hosts with **no less than 99% annual uptime**.

- **Credibility** - Research the company's social media presence and read their customer reviews to get a feel for their vibe. At the top of your list should be companies with 24/7 support - this feature is very useful in an emergency!

- **Transparency** - Clear communication and honest practices make for a trusting relationship. Look for ethical companies that allow you to make informed decisions based on honesty and transparency. Are their claims backed up by independent carbon or environmental organisations?

- **Core values** - Make sure your chosen web host has values that align with yours. Check out their website, social media accounts, and customer reviews. Pick a green web host that reflects eco-friendly values - they're more likely to resonate with sustainability-minded businesses like yours.

- **Scalability** - If you are planning to grow your business, you'll need to find a web host that can accommodate your website growth, too. Find one that offers multiple plans and makes it easy to upgrade your plan anytime.

- **Security** - All websites are always at risk of being cyber attacked, so be sure to choose a web host that provides essential security measures: Security Socket Layer (SSL) certificates for data encryption, daily backups for quick boo-boo recovery and built-in firewalls or tools that you don't have to fork out extra cash for.

- **User-friendliness** - The last thing you want to deal with when you're busy running a business is a complex website! Choose a web hosting company that lives by the mantra of keeping things simple.

To make your research go a little faster, we'll give you a little hint: [True Green]() has all of the above! Sustainability isn't a gimmick for us – it's who we are and why we exist. [Learn more about how we create a green web here]().

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Step 4:

## Keep add-ons and plugins to a minimum

Let's say you create your website and want to add as many features as possible.

Your web developer might even install plugins for you to make your wishlist come true.

The problem is that the more plugins, add-ons, or modules you add to your website, the slower it can become. It'll also use more energy.

If you use a content management system like WordPress, this is a pretty common problem. Same goes for Magento for eCommerce and other similar software.

The best way to get around it is to question whether you need the plugin or module at all. A minimalist approach will keep your website loading faster while still powering it up with all the neat features that your customers will appreciate.
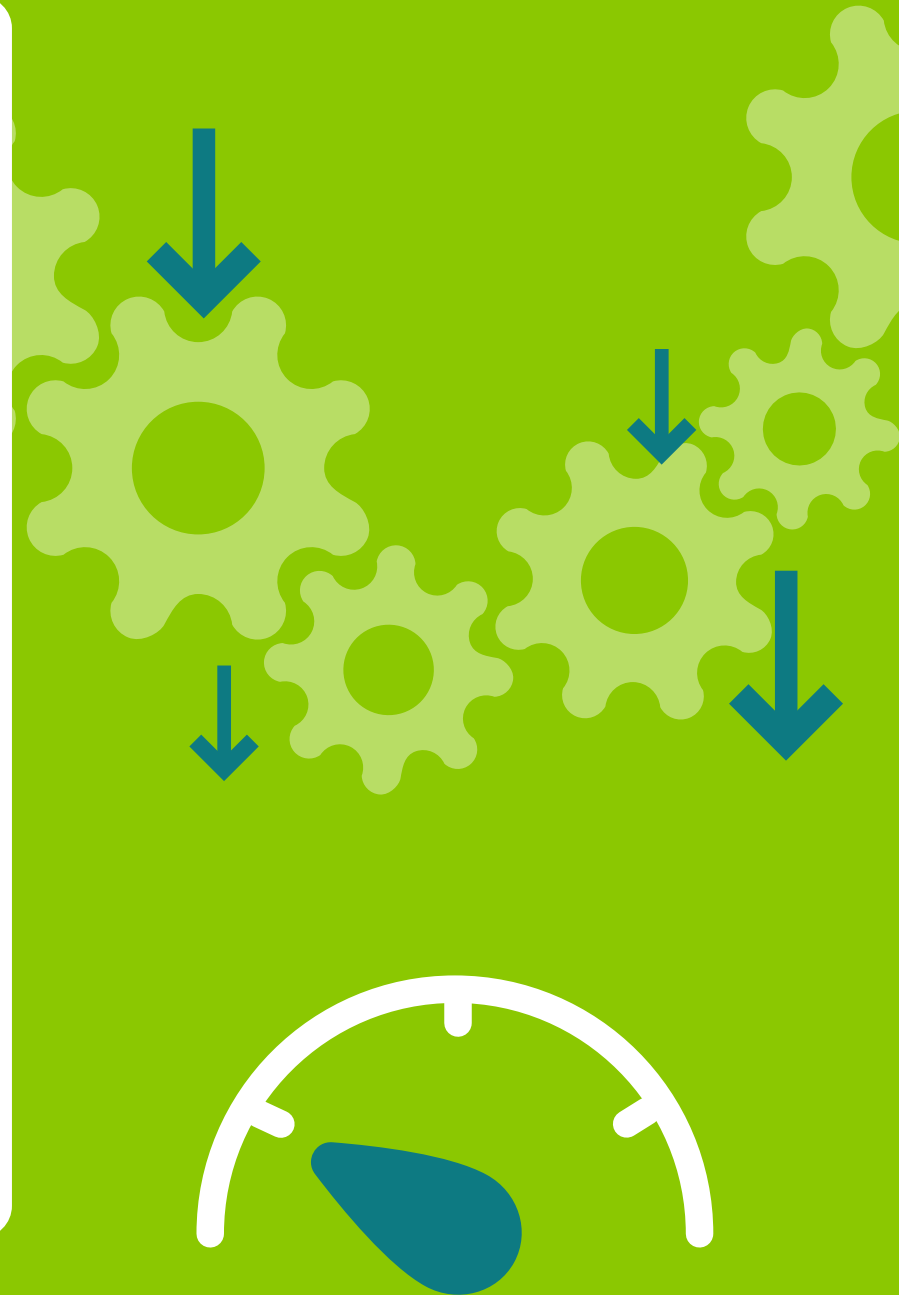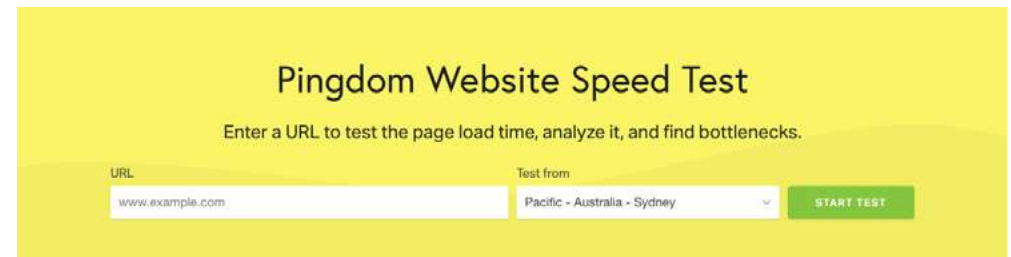
Ask yourself:

- What benefit does this plugin or module provide to my customers?

- Is this something that the customer will use and make things easier for them?

- Will the plugin or module conflict with others?

- Can I find a plugin that combines multiple features?

- Can I create something similar using my site builder e.g. Elementor, Divi for WordPress?

- Is it possible to custom code the change instead with a developer?

You can also test the impact of the plugin or module on your site speed by using a free speed tool such as **Pingdom**. Simply test your website before activating the plugin:

1. Pop your website address in and start the test

2. Record the result

3. Then activate or install the plugin or module

4. And test again to see the impact it makes

Pingdom Website Speed Test

Enter a URL to test the page load time, analyze it, and find bottlenecks.

URL	Test from	
www.example.com	Pacific - Australia - Sydney	START TEST

Make sure to choose the Sydney, Australia server location to test how fast your website loads locally.

Step 5:

Keep your website shell empty

Have you ever picked up a sea shell and heard the magic waves of the ocean?
Or been told about the sound it creates?

To hear those sounds safely, you want the shell to be empty.
No surprise crab claws, please!

The same goes for your website.

Make your website less crabby with these tips:

- **Keep it minimalist** - Nobody got time to read through a zillion sections, mate. Get to the point and make your layout easy to follow. Avoid moving content left to right, and around the twist. It confuses your readers and sends them into a tailspin.

- **Avoid large or complicated website theme** - If your website platform has themes, bear in mind that not all are created equal. Some themes need too many plugins to function and overload your website with unnecessary features you won't even use. Instead, look for simple themes like **Hello from Elementor** or **Astra** if you're using WordPress. There are plenty of others too - doing a bit of research will help you find the right one for you.

- **Optimised images and media** - As mentioned in Step 1, images and other website media that are optimised and compressed can keep your site speedy as ever.

- **Responsive design** - Look for themes and designs that change based on the user's device. Many tools now have a way to view or edit your website from different sizes across desktop, tablet and mobile. You can find out what device sizes to test by seeing what top devices are being used in your website analytics such as **Google Analytics**.

- **No more flashy objects** - Animations are cool, but when they are overused they get in the way of the user. It's why Google is encouraging websites to avoid large layout shifts with something they nicknamed **Google Core Web Vitals**. In brief, avoid moving or flashing objects and keep your site mostly static. That includes videos too, which should not be set to auto-play.

LOADING...

Step 6:

Love your local and lighten your travel load

Just like you love supporting a local business, the same rule should apply to your website.

When someone opens your website, a server springs into action to deliver your images and files.

When your website is hosted outside of Australia or away from your customer's location, this will increase the time it takes for your content to load and will result in more energy being used.

Similar to how you want to avoid excess baggage fees when travelling, you should avoid extra load time which gets in the way of your customer's journey.

We've got a few tips to lighten your load:

- **Enable caching** - Caching is basically just storing frequently used items within close reach. For people who return to your website, this means that certain content will be saved in their browser, so they won't have to be freshly loaded up from your server at every visit. This can be added in with a plugin such as WP Fastest Cache for **WordPress**.

- **Use local servers** - The further away your server location is from your website visitors, the more energy is used. This will also cause latency, meaning your website will be slower to load. Web hosts with local servers will load content faster.

- **Use an efficient Content Delivery Network (CDN)** - Choosing a reliable, high quality CDN like Cloudflare or Sucuri, will ensure that your data loads from your customer's closest server location, meaning a faster website load time and less of a carbon footprint.

Step 7:

Keep It Up

There's one word that allows good habits to stick long-term: consistency.

And that applies to keeping your website green and accessible.

The best way you can do this is by checking your website on a regular basis. And don't rest on your laurels.

Remember, a website will continue to get better with a little bit of love and care.

Here are a few quarterly checks you can run as part of your website audit:

- **Performance** - Use **Google PageSpeed Insights** as a guide to evaluate your website speed and overall performance.

- **Content optimisation** - Check that all your images and media have been compressed and sized properly.

- **Accessibility** - Ensure your website has alternative text in place and is meeting basic inclusion guides.

- **Security** - Double check all your website security measures, make sure you have regular backups, and reset your passwords with hectic characters that hackers can't guess.

- **Carbon footprint** - As a **True Green** client, we'll do this for you! We're the world's 1st Green Web Hosting provider with an annual carbon report card, which is personalised based on your actual website visits. We then offset your website's carbon footprint with an accredited carbon neutral project from **Carbon Neutral**.

Feel Like Going Green?

It only takes a few steps to make things greener on the web.

We believe you've got what it takes, and each step you take will get you to that level.

No cryptic coding spells or tech wizardry at play!

If you need a hand, keep an eye out for more tips in your inbox.

We deliver them once a month, so we don't flood you with too much noise.

And if you feel like you've got a great idea to add to this guide, reply to the email we sent this to you on, or email

yarn@truegreen.au with your thoughts.

> When you want a business to be true to its values, providing great service, fabulous people and making your world work that little bit easier - I recommend you talk to the team at **True Green**. 100% happy with them. Thanks guys."
>
> **Alison Hallworth**

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