Using this tool

1. Assemble a web development team made up of the staff, parents or students who will work on your website (including information technology experts).

2. Discuss why you want to develop a website, who is the intended audience, what you are going to include on the site and how you are going to store your web pages (i.e. your Internet Service Provider).

3. Use this tool to help you develop, maintain, and benefit from your school website.

A website is an opportunity to showcase the creative and vibrant nature of a school environment. Many schools have already established their web presence, while others are in the process of building a website for the first time.

This kit contains information on:

- why publish a website?
- how to get started
- identifying your audience
- identifying the website purpose
- developing the website structure
- website design
- tips for writing on the web
- learning HTML
- adding graphics
- accessibility issues
- testing and approval of your web pages
- storing your web pages
- maintenance of your website
- keeping children and staff safe
- web resources.

Templates/samples included:

- Sample site map
- Sample website structure
- Student Release Form for Publication of Student Work on the Internet.
Why publish a website?

No doubt you can identify several reasons why a website is an effective way of communicating with teachers, parents, students, the media, and the local and international community. However, there may be opportunities associated with your school website you haven’t considered.

Your school website can be used to:

- promote what your school has to offer (e.g. specialist programs)
- promote upcoming activities (e.g. fundraisers)
- enable teachers to access information and share resources
- support students’ web learning and experience
- support collaborative projects with other schools/organisations
- promote students’ achievements
- identify useful contacts for parents wanting specific information
- provide information on school policies (e.g. bullying, homework)
- provide a way for ex-pupils to keep in touch with their year level
- attract new teachers to your school
- provide a forum for community consultation.
How to get started

So how do you go about setting up a website? Every school will approach this differently depending on their access to resources and their level of internet and computer knowledge.

Running a website, keeping it updated and in good working order takes some effort and planning. Sharing the load makes it easier – think about setting up a group of people responsible for managing the website.

Whether you plan to do it yourself or have it professionally built, it helps to do some research. Seek advice from IT technicians and people with publishing, public relations, marketing, and internet and programming knowledge. What does your school IT provider say? Do your office and library staff have some thoughts? What about your English coordinator and your Computer Science teacher? Maybe some parents or students are tech-savvy or have already built their own sites. It’s even worth talking to other schools with websites to find out about their experience.

Another way to gain some web know-how is to enrol in a training course. Short courses are offered at many TAFE institutes and adult education centres. An introductory course may be all you need to get you started while other courses can help you gain specific skills or experience with programming and software packages.

And don’t forget, the Internet is a great free resource. There are plenty of references, helpful tutorials and people offering advice online. A list of online resources is provided at the end of this Toolkit.
Identifying your audience

The first thing to do is identify who the audience will be for your website.

Any internet user worldwide can access your website once it is online. Realistically though, you are probably developing your website to communicate with a smaller audience. Try to keep them in mind when building your site. Your audience may include:

- your own school (e.g. parents, students, teachers)
- the wider school community
- the local community (e.g. people living in your geographic region)
- other students – locally, nationally and internationally
- colleagues and others who might be interested in your school’s work
- parents considering enrolling their child in your school.

Once you have decided who your main audience is, it will be easier to define the purpose and structure of your website.

Identifying the website purpose

The second thing you should do is identify the purpose of the website.

- Is it intended to be a promotional tool?
- Is it a resource used by staff, students or parents, or both?
- Is it a collaborative resource with other schools or organisations?

Having a clear sense of the purpose of the website will make it easier to design a site that meets your needs. This enables you to more accurately judge the relevance of proposed content, and it will also help you to measure the effectiveness of the site.
Case study

A journey of web discovery: Gresswell Cluster

The four schools in the Gresswell Cluster (Macleod College and Kingsbury, Rosanna Golf Links and Rosanna primary schools) took website activity one step further when they set up a site to support the Schools for Innovation and Excellence initiative.

The website initially supported the cluster’s environmental management, restoration and monitoring projects undertaken on a multi-age, multi-school basis. Since its humble beginnings, the site has developed into a popular information resource for people inside the cluster and around Victoria.

This website is an example of the flexibility a site can offer. Initially catering for students and teachers, the site provided basic information on resources, contacts for excursions and ideas for assessments. It now includes topic areas such as professional development, strategies for embedding the Principles of Learning and Teaching into classroom practice and implementation strategies for the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. A section is also dedicated to helping parents support their children’s education needs at home.

Setting it up took some self-education and a little advice from the college IT technician. It is managed using the web program, Front Page, which the site developer found easy to learn and use. Periodic updates are made every few weeks. Each term a different focus is promoted on the ‘contents page’ to keep the site looking fresh and new.

Feedback and input is critical in creating a site that your audience wants to use. In putting together the Gresswell Cluster website, teachers were asked what they would like it to include. A bit of ‘road-testing’ was also undertaken to fine-tune layout and improve navigation for site users.

The site reaches a variety of audiences including teachers, students and families in the cluster region. Audience reach also extends beyond the local community, with other schools and organisations in Victoria and interstate tapping into it.

People learn about the site in a number of ways including word-of-mouth or by stumbling across it when surfing the Net. Conscious efforts are made to promote it through meetings, professional development presentations and discussions with people who may be potential users.

The website has worked publicity magic for the schools and for cluster initiatives. The cluster has received media coverage and fielded many calls about the site each week over the past 18 months. Also, many external organisations involved in cluster activities are impressed with the site because it provides a tangible output of initiatives undertaken, and they can link their site to the Gresswell Cluster site. These external links help promote and further expand the cluster’s work and its online audience.
Developing the website structure

Planning the structure of a website is about organising content so that the audience can move around the site easily.

Developing website content

One of the first things to look at when designing your website structure is what information should be included on the website. It is a good idea to speak with principals, teachers, parents and students about what they think should be included on your website. Some ideas worth considering include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About us</th>
<th>Teaching and learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>school contact details – staff and general enquiries</td>
<td>curriculum areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principal’s welcome</td>
<td>co-curricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principal’s update</td>
<td>curriculum updates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mission and vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history of the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who’s who (teacher contact details)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employment opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>News and dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>copies of school newsletters</td>
<td>school calendar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enrolment information</td>
<td>upcoming school events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neighbourhood zones</td>
<td>school and student achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>booklists</td>
<td>excursions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school policies</td>
<td>exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uniform information</td>
<td>curriculum days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before- and after-school care details</td>
<td>parent-teacher evenings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parent forms available for downloading (e.g. excursion and camp approvals, permission to publish student work, change/ update of contact details, release form for any photography or filming involving students)</td>
<td>sport days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>school term/holiday periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>work experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>music nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>information sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>school tours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other local schools’ events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>school news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>local community news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Education &amp; Training news</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued on next page)
Links

- local libraries
- local government
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority www.vcaa.vic.edu.au
- Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre www.vtac.edu.au
- booklist provider
- study guides and strategies www.studygs.net/
- other schools (e.g. feeder primary schools)
- Local Learning and Employment Network
- local TAFE
- Victoria’s Vocational Education and Training program website www.education.vic.gov.au/waytogo

Networks

- alumni program (i.e. reunions, networking opportunities)
- parent and friends associations
- community organisations

Website also provide you with the chance to dabble in the creative side of new media production and communication. While accessing information is a key purpose for your online audience, you can also think about adding some creative content that engages them in a broader view of school life. It can add a different dimension to interacting and communicating with your school community.

Once you know what content you want on the site, the next thing to do is map your pages. This kit includes a sample of a basic website structure (see below). If you don’t have a well-defined structure for the way a user will move through the web pages, there is a good chance that they will become lost.

**Sample website structure**

One of the most basic website structures is called the 3-level website structure.

- Your home page (otherwise known as your index page or top level page) is referred to as a Level 1 page. This page is the main index to your site, not unlike the index in a book or magazine.
- Links from your Level 1 page should connect to Level 2 pages. These are sub-index pages which break down the index items on the Level 1 page even further.
- Level 2 pages normally link to Level 3 pages. Level 3 pages are single topic content pages.
The sample website structure below represents a basic website. Your school may include additional pages at Level 2 and Level 3.
Website design

Your home page provides a gateway to the rest of your site. Try to keep your home page creative, original and fun. You can then offer links to other pages on your website with much more content.

Navigation

The best way to encourage people to visit your site, and to return to it, is to make your website easy to navigate. Navigation is much easier if you have a well-designed website structure and clear directions.

Using coloured backgrounds

Avoid using brightly coloured backgrounds in your website. White or very light-coloured backgrounds are best because sites with dark backgrounds are hard to read for extended periods.

Design tips

Ideas for ensuring your website is user-friendly include:

• Place clear navigation links/buttons on every page.
• Split large pages into groups of smaller ones when appropriate.
• Include links back to the home page or the start of a section on each page.
• If you must have links to pages which are ‘under construction’ (i.e. to help conceptualise the completed webspace or indicate what is coming), turn off those links until there is content on the page. An ‘under construction’ notice is frustrating to users.
• Ask someone who has never seen your site before to visit it. Watch what they do and where they go, noting any difficulties they encounter during the process.
• If possible, include a site map (see page 4.11).
• Leave room in your website structure for expansion later on.
Case study

The case of the travelling bear: Vermont Primary School

Having a website gives schools a chance to communicate with the school community in creative ways. Vermont Primary School’s website adds a fun dimension to the practical policy and procedural information living on its site. It set up a subsection that showcases Vernon, the staff mascot, and his travelling expeditions around the world. It’s a creative, entertaining way of incorporating some humour and pictures into the site.

Parents and the wider school community can see a different, relaxed side of staff as opposed to their official roles and responsibilities encountered in day-to-day interactions with the school. Capturing a more personal view can add to relationships parents and students share with staff as it’s always nice to be reminded of the human side of others.

Integrating ideas such as a travelling mascot that is shared among staff can help build morale and a sense of school spirit. Most of all – it’s a fun, cooperative activity that is ongoing.
Sample site map

About us
For example:
- school contact details
- principal welcome
- principal update
- mission and values
- history of the school

Teaching and learning
For example:
- curriculum areas
  - English
  - Information Technology
  - Languages
  - Maths
  - Physical Education
  - Science
- co-curricular activities
  - Music
  - Sport etc.
- curriculum updates

Resources
For example:
- copies of school newsletters
- enrolment information
- neighbourhood zones
- booklists
- school policies
  - sun protection
  - excursions

News and dates
For example:
- school calendar
- upcoming school events
- excursions
- exams
- curriculum days

Links
For example:
- local libraries
- local government
- Department of Education & Training
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

Networks
For example:
- alumni program
- parent and friends associations
- community organisations
Tips for writing on the Web

Writing for the web is unique. It provides an interactive experience for the reader that is very different to traditional print media (e.g. written newsletters). It also means there are some additional points to consider when writing content.

What’s not different?

Good writing standards are just as important on the Internet as in print media. Because your website might be someone’s first impression of your school, it is important to ensure it is an accurate reflection of your school’s standards. Spelling mistakes and poor grammar show little attention to detail and will create a negative impression of your school. It is a good idea to consult a style manual such as The *Cambridge Australian English Style Guide* or *News Limited’s Style*. Such books will help with all your writing, not just writing for the Web and can be purchased at any good bookstore.

The web writing style

Most content on web pages is scanned rather than read, so it helps if your web writing is direct and concise. Readers respond well to brief sentences, short paragraphs and simple language. Sub-headings, bold text and italicised text can also break up the information.

Avoid using underlined text, as this can be easily mistaken for a link.

Links and anchors

Links and anchors are an integral part of web writing. Links give the reader the ability to interact with a web page. This can be as a link to a ‘named anchor’ on the same page (i.e. you are taken to a sub-heading on the same webpage). Links can also be to another page on the same site or to an external site.

When using a link, it is important to choose the most suitable words to describe the link. Try to avoid using ‘click here’ for link descriptions.

Consider including links to local kindergartens, other schools in your area, libraries, local businesses, local government and the Department of Education & Training. It is courteous to let them know that you are considering doing so. It may also be worth contacting some of these groups to ask whether they will provide a reciprocal link to your website.

Using white space

White space is the blank space not used for text or images. Liberal use of white space makes a page look less cluttered and allows the reader to find information more easily.
Learning HTML

HTML, or Hyper Text Markup Language, is the language of the World Wide Web. It is used to format text and graphics into files ready for the web. HTML consists of additional formatting code in a text file, called ‘tags’. If you select Source from the View menu in Internet Explorer (or the equivalent in your browser) you will see the contents of the HTML file you are browsing.

HTML editing programs are especially designed to make writing HTML easier. Although they can make the task of building your website less time-consuming, it is worthwhile becoming familiar with the actual tags.

The Resources section at the end of this tool provides links to online tutorials, web references and further detail on the technical aspects of building your website.

Adding graphics

Graphics are a great way to capture the attention of visitors entering your site. Keep in mind that not everyone will have the same type of computer, browser or internet connection as you. Too many graphics can actually lose your audience, as the internet can be slow and graphics slow it down further. Visitors tend to lose patience and move on.

Photos from school activities and events are a great way of adding colour and interest. When selecting graphics and images for your website, ensure that you have approval to use them and that you do not breach copyright.

It is important to read the ‘Keeping children and staff safe’ section on page 4.17 of this kit to ensure that you are following safe procedures when using photos of students and staff.
Accessibility issues

Consider accessibility issues when creating your site. This might include the bandwidth (internet speed) available to your audience or issues related to disabled user access. Most web authoring software includes functionality to improve accessibility (e.g. ‘ALT’ tags for graphic images). See the Web resources section on page 4.18 for further information.

Testing for accessibility is important if you wish to reach a wide audience. Any website that is developed should be tested on a variety of computers with varying speeds, browsers, settings and screen sizes. In addition, testing your site against the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) guidelines for accessibility is a good way to ensure you are meeting accessibility standards. See the Web resources section on page 4.18 for further information.

There are a variety of tools available to assist you in testing your site’s accessibility; some of these are offered free and others will incur a charge. Ask your IT technicians, people with internet and programming knowledge, your computer science teacher, parents or students who are tech-savvy or have already built their own sites, to help.

Testing and approval of your web pages

One important aspect of quality control is ensuring you have appropriate guidelines for publishing and an acceptable procedure for signing pages off before publication. This may involve forming a publication committee that is responsible for approving all material that is electronically published on your school’s website. This committee could consist of students, teachers, parents and members of the wider community.

You should also check your website for broken links on a regular basis. Broken links frustrate visitors and could give a poor impression of your school. Automated link checking programs are available that will help you check for broken links.
Storing your web pages

Talk to your Internet Service Provider (ISP) to see if they can store your web pages on their server machine. This is normally a standard service provided by ISPs but you may like to ask the following questions:

- is there a charge for this service?
- how much space is available?
- is there direct File Transfer Protocol (FTP) access? [FTP is used on the Internet to send files from one computer to another. It is the quickest method of transferring files from your computer to your ISP and pages will be updated almost instantly]
- if they do not provide FTP, ask your provider how long it will take to implement changes to the site.

Schools are required to obtain their Internet services from a DE&T-approved service provider. The Department has worked with ISPs to establish a range of affordable internet services for schools.

See the Web resources section on page 4.18 for further information.

Maintenance of your website

Maintaining your website is as important as the original design. If visitors feel that the information is outdated or no longer valid they probably won’t return (even though you may have updated it in the meantime). Ideally, your website should be constantly updated. This may sound like a huge task but remember that some pages need more attention than others. For example, school policies may require little or no change, whereas a page providing information on upcoming events may need to be updated regularly.

Ideas for maintaining your website:

- Enter today’s date on your pages whenever you revise them, so that people know how old the material is (your web software may do this automatically).
- If you have links to other sites, try and include links to the home page rather than actual pages on their site. Home pages are less likely to be altered than specific pages in an external site.
- If you include the school newsletter on your website, assign a regular day of the week and time that it is added. Parents will then learn when they are able to access the information. Consider file formats that can be used by people with accessibility issues (e.g. Rich Text Format (RTF) and Portable Document Format (PDF)).
- Prioritise the pages that need regular updating and ensure that someone is responsible for managing these web pages.
Case study

New website attracts new students: Serpell Primary School

Serpell Primary School created a simple website that downloads quickly and is aimed at encouraging people to visit the school. Principal Wilma Culton reports that the website paid for itself within three months through prospective parents who found the school via a web search. The successful strategy included tuning the website to rank highly under Google searches and a ‘Parents’ section with testimonials.

Case study

Saving resources via the school website: Mount View Primary School

At Mount View Primary School, 520 copies of the School Charter were downloaded from the website in one year. If those online enquiries had to be handled manually, the cost would be something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent of a prospective student phones the school and requests the School Charter</th>
<th>x 520</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Answers the phone, takes the person’s details, puts a copy of the School Charter in an envelope and sends it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document cost</td>
<td>Print, collate, bind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Envelope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Counting newsletters, forms and price lists a total of 9071 documents were downloaded from the website in the same year. By moving high-volume and high-cost documents onto their website, Mount View Primary School achieved significant savings.
Keeping children and staff safe

The safety of students and staff is of paramount importance when publishing a school website. This includes obvious things such as not publishing addresses and telephone details, and not publishing details that might enable the identification of individual staff and students. If your home page provides an email link to the school, the mailbox should be checked by teachers first.

If you wish to publish student photographs or student work on the web you need to make sure that you get signed permission from parents using a release form (see template on page 4.19).

Here are some simple steps you can take to protect students when publishing student images or work on the web:

- Do not publish students’ last names or other information that might make students individually identifiable.

- Do not publish students’ personal contact details (e.g. home phone numbers, addresses or personal email addresses). Where contact details are to be included use class email addresses or the school’s telephone number.

- Where possible, publish group photographs rather than individual images of students. It’s preferable to publish the image of a class or a group activity, and identify the student group generically (e.g. ‘Grade 4A’, or the ‘Year 7 hockey team’).
Web resources

The Internet offers an abundance of resources to help you build your website. You can start by searching with Google (www.google.com). Search using terms like ‘website design’. You might make use of the many website templates available for free or for a small cost. Here are some sites that offer free web pages:

- **Aussie School House** (www.schools.ash.org.au/) Aussie School House, with Microsoft and Optus Vision, are providing schools with the opportunity to store their pages on a school listing with 10 MB free disk space each.
- **Geocities** (geocities.yahoo.com/) Home pages up to 1 MB in size are offered to users.
- **PowerNet** (www.pwrnet.com/) Personal home pages up to 100 k are available to anyone.
- **Tripod** (www.tripod.lycos.com/) Tripod offers free 100k home pages using a forms-based creation system when you register. The main rule is that you may only have one page. If you accidentally create an extra page you are required to delete it.

The Department of Education & Training resources:
- **Website Tool Kit** (www.sofweb.vic.edu/toolkit/)
- **Internet Services for schools** (www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/ict/edunet/compare.htm)

For information on the more technical aspects of website design, you can start browsing the following sites:

- webreferences.com provides information about the Internet, from learning how to use the web through to advanced web design.
- **World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)** (www.w3.org/)
- **www.egov.vic.gov.au** provides a link to the Victorian Government website guidelines and detailed information regarding accessibility.

Online tutorials help you pick up skills quickly. Here are a few sites offering tutorials and advice on programming language:

- an introduction to Java Script tutorial (www.w3schools.com/js/default.asp)
- an introduction to HTML tutorial (www.w3schools.com/html/default.asp, www.htmlcodetutorial.com/)
Release Form for Publication of Student Work on the Internet

WHERE STUDENT IS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

From:  Position:

Name (i.e. teacher/principal)

Class/subject area:

School name:  Phone no:

Date………../…………/…………

Student’s name:

Dear [Insert name of parent or guardian of student]

The schoolwork* of the student named above has been selected for publication on the Internet at: [insert web address here]

Permission is granted to:

(please tick relevant sections below)

☐ publish the student’s schoolwork on the Internet

☐ name the student on the Internet in direct reference to the published work

☐ only publish the student’s first name

☐ publish a photo of the student

Name of work:

Reason for publication:

Please sign below to give permission for publication.

(Signature of parent/guardian)

(Print name clearly)

Date………../…………/…………

*Please note that student work published on web pages can be accessed by a global audience.