

Some examples from a series of simple explanations as to how servers work for non-technical people

Simplifying Technology

INFO: Shared hosting v. Virtual Private Server

I was asked a while ago to explain the difference between shared web hosting and a virtual private server (VPS) and as VPS is a term some folks will be unfamiliar with. Think of this in terms of your web-site being a person rather than a web-space and it all makes sense...

Shared hosting: This uses resources on a shared server but you have to share all the server resources with every other user on the same server. It's like a house or flat shared by a group of friends. Each person has their own bedsit [web-site] but share a bathroom [MySQL server] and kitchen [PHP scripting] as well as the building structure [server] and entrance way [internet connection.] If one flatmate wants to take a bath it impacts on other flatmates' use of the bathroom... lots of overlaps between users of resources means that at some times we can't have a bath or even wash up because everyone else has run off all the hot water [server connection failures.]

Virtual Private Hosting: Here we are one of a small number of users on a server. The server is split into sections using special software, each section has shared use of the server hardware and internet connection but exclusive use of their own section resources, thus ring-fencing those allocated to that section. Back to the flat share analogy, this time we're in a block of self-contained flats where each occupant has their own bedroom bathroom and kitchen [website, PHP scripting, MySQL server] but where only the building itself [server] and the entrance way [internet connection] are shared with the other occupants of the block, so we can take a bath when we want and no-one else can use our water!

INFO: What does "Built in redundancy" mean?

"Built in redundancy" means that in the event of one route to a server being affected by an outage e.g. cable failure or severe weather then their other routes handle the traffic and the routing information is updated automatically. The routing system is never being used at full capacity so there is always that redundancy to allow for outages on any part of the network.

It's like having a spare bedroom available for unexpected guests - it's kept with the bed made up and aired, and not stuffed full of boxes of junk and Xmas decorations so you can't get in the door!