

# Resource limitations on shared hosting? What are they and how do they affect your web sites?



Quite often, we'll see threads opened on web hosting forums that pertain to unlimited offers from web hosting providers that offer shared hosting services, complaining about restrictions that make unlimited bandwidth somewhat limited (to the surprise of those who don't read their Terms of Service).

## **In comparison to some cellular providers**

In a world that has increasingly gone broadband, this reminds me of certain cellular providers which offered unlimited bandwidth, but in reality, throttled bandwidths to kbps once their clients reached at certain threshold. While still maintaining that bandwidth was unlimited, in reality it was not worth the paper their contract was written on.

## **The reality of shared hosting**

When you contract for shared hosting services, your new web hosting provider emails you the nameservers you should use on your domain, to point to the location on the server that will host your site. The CPU, RAM and disk space of that server is shared between all clients on that server, so that if one client were to abuse their service, it would adversely affect

all other clients on that server. To combat this, shared hosting providers throttle the amount of resources that any one client can use over a given period of time.

## **Not all shared web hosting providers offer the same amount of resources**

At issue to clients not 'in the know' about web hosting, even when reading a prospective web hosting provider's TOS, it's hard to relate those resources to what is actually happening on their site. If you're not allowed to use over 10% of a CPU's resources over a given period of time, does that mean once a certain number of visitors simultaneously request information from your site, that your provider will suspend your account – and accounts get suspended all the time over resource limitations.

## **What do resource clauses look like?**

Without naming providers (a lot of hosts use the same verbiage), here are some resource clauses I found in a few Terms of Service:

### **▪ Examples of Vague Limits:**

- Reserves the right to limit processor time, bandwidth, processes, or memory in cases where it is necessary to prevent negatively impacting other Subscribers.
- May request that the number of files/inodes, database tables, or total database usage be reduced to ensure proper performance or may terminate the Subscriber's account, with or without notice.
- Expressly reserves the right to review every shared account for excessive usage of CPU, disk space and other resources that may be caused by a violation of this Agreement or the Acceptable Use Policy.

- Reserves the right to limit users of the affected machine to a lower limit to preserve the effectiveness of the service for all users. If a particular user is in extreme excess of what the average users of the machine have in use (actually used) of their resource allotments, that customer may be asked to remove content, cut resource usage, or relocate to a dedicated service provider.
- **An Example of Exact limits:**
  - 10% CPU Usage
  - 5% Memory Usage (or 512 MB)
  - 50 Running Processes
  - 15 Minute Max Execution Time
  - 100,000 Total Inodes
  - 500 outgoing email messages per 60-minute period (all excess messages will be discarded and not delivered)

### **Would a VPS or Dedicated Server help?**

Typically, with either a VPS or a dedicated server, these types of resource limitations do not apply, hence if you're reasonably sure your active site will create issues if hosted on a shared account, this is absolutely the next best solution. The resources that you contract for on a VPS or dedicated server are yours to use as needed.

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