Choosing Between Shared and VPS: A Guide

You've read the reviews, talked with your friends and colleagues, and you're now ready to launch your website on A2 Hosting. Congrats! Welcome. Now which plan should you choose? Deciding between Shared Hosting and VPS, Turbo or Standard, Unmanaged or Managed... What is the right choice for you? The answer (as it always is) depends on your situation.

The first step in making this decision is to understand the differences between Shared and VPS...

The Differences Between Shared and VPS Hosting

Imagine you are living in an apartment building. Your building has 10 apartments total. Think of Shared Hosting like this apartment except that the size of each unit changes based on the needs of each tenant. For example, if Dale in Apartment 3B decides on Saturday night to have 50 of his closest friends over for a party his apartment will automatically grow from 800sq feet to 2000sq ft during the time of the party. Similarly if Beth in Apartment 4B throws an equal sized party at the same time, you may find yourself and all your possessions squeezed into a room the size of a hall closet. Turn on the

Key VPS Stats

Processors	AMD EPYC Between 2 and 8 Cores
RAM	Between 1GB and 32GB
Hard Drives	SSD Standard, NVMe on Turbo Plans
Tools	Webuzo 1 Click Software Installer
Security	Perpetual Security & DDoS Protection
Uptime	99.9% Commitment

faucet for a glass of water?... Sorry Beth and Dale are using all that too. Want to turn on a light to read?... Sorry about the blinking, Dale bought a disco light.

You may be thinking, why would I ever want my hosting to be in a situation like that? One of the key features of A2's Shared Hosting is that we limit the number of people who you can share your server with. This reduces the chances of a resource draining scenario like this from happening to your site. Plus, Shared Hosting also limits how much of the resources can be used by any one individual. If your neighbors have extra space to hold parties and everyone is happy with their portion of the resources available, then you would most likely never have a problem.

But even in the best situations when everyone gets along, there is always a chance that one of your neighbors

may need to take more and it could affect your website if you are also in a peak period at the same time. This is why Shared Hosting is the most inexpensive hosting option and for many is a perfect, low cost solution for their website.

Using the same analogy, VPS (or Virtual Private Server) is also like an apartment The difference? While you are still sharing the server hardware with other people, all of the specifications of the portion you are alloted are fixed. If you have an 800sq feet apartment, it is always there and doesn't change... the walls never move. It's dedicated to you and you alone. You have increased security, guaranteed and fixed resource allocation, and you know that won't change.

It all Depends on What Type of Website You Are Running

If you are running a website to show off your photography, a collection, or maybe even selling some items on the side, Shared Hosting is probably just fine for you. This type of hosting is made for the individual, the blogger, and the simple website. It allows those who want to have a cost-effective presence online to have one! Most Shared Hosting users use WordPress and A2 has a one click option to install it when you set up your account. To keep the apartment analogy going even further, with the options available it's like choosing what you want to furnish it with at the time as signing the lease.

But if your website is a mission-critical or key component of your business then Shared Hosting is most likely not the best option for you. Why? Because

Virtuozzo

A Word from Our Partner

Patrick Dolan is the Director of Hosting Development at Virtuozzo, the technology behind A2's VPS product offerings. He has been in the hosting industry for more than 20 years and we asked him to provide us with some guidance for our clients when they are having trouble deciding between Shared Hosting and VPS Hosting.

As a shared hosting customer, when do you know you should switch to a different type of hosting?

In my case, I switched when it became painfully obvious. I am not a technical web developer, but I have experienced a lot as a nascent, hobbyist, and small business owner over a 20-year period. During this time, I have volunteered to build numerous websites, one of which was for a new charitable foundation. It was (I thought) the best I had ever built. My excitement was quickly diminished when I went to demo the website and it just sat there, failing to load.

While the person I built the website for was ecstatic. For me, I was disappointed as I spent more time trying to "fix" the website and the issues related to the speed than it took me to build the website itself.

With years of experience as a business user and many of those years working within the hosting industry, I still find myself reluctant to spend what I fear as hours working on migrating my entire hosting account or just a website to something that will perform better.

A2 Hosting gives a good recommendation; right from the start on the front page of their website, Shared Hosting is a "great solution for a blog or a personal website."

That is what shared hosting is best for. Even with a blog, if you are expecting higher traffic and to monetize the website, you should think of it as a business website. If your website is for a business, you need a Virtual Private Server (VPS) or higher. If you are not a technical user, you need a Managed plan.

Whether or not you made the decision recently or many years ago, if you are like me, when is it time to make the move to a better hosting solution?

My personal decision can be attributed to a few different factors. I was running a WordPress website on an account with multiple other WordPress websites and other types as well. It was too much.

WordPress can be tricky to optimize and you might not ever get it to where you want it to be with all of the plugins tried and image compression. Shared hosting resources can have a tough time keeping up with the demands and VPS is a great option to give your website a boost.

There are ways you can check the performance of your website and receive recommendations of how to make improvements. To start, you can use free tools like Pingdom and GTmetrix, with the latter now powered by Lighthouse, Google's latest set of tools for website developers. If you are still experiencing performance issues, once you feel you have done all you can on your own you may want to find a freelancer to help you with continuing to improve your website.

In the end, it is really simple, if your website is a core part of your business, Shared Hosting is probably not the best option for you. If you are selling something, this becomes even more important. Whether it is Magento, PrestaShop, Woocommercem or another eCommerce option, you will be better off using VPS over Shared Hosting.

using a more dedicated environment increases stability, performs better (generally speaking), and it is more secure and not affected by the noisy neighbor. These are all things you want to have when hosting a website that includes handling credit card transactions, sales leads, etc. Now this is not to say that Shared Hosting is not secure, stable, or performant. In fact, I'd put A2's Shared Hosting toe-to-toe against any other hosting provider in any of these areas and we would compete. It is just that there is more control and more options with a VPS hosting plan than with Shared.

In addition, while a Shared Hosting plan may "give you" enough resources to run your site, if the site begins experiencing a spike the resources may, in reality, not be available... because your neighbor may be using them.

Our VPS partner, Virtuozzo, recommends that you ask yourself these questions when trying to decide which is right for you...

- Is the website a core part of your business?
- Is your website performing as well as you would like?
- Do you sell products or services online?
- Do you drive traffic to your website through paid advertisements, social media or through other means?
- Are search engine rankings important to you?

If the answer is yes to any of these items, then VPS Hosting is most likely a better option.... BUT, there's a caveat to this you should think about...

Do You Have the Technical Chops for VPS?

Shared Hosting is designed to be simple. With each step of the journey A2 tries to make it as easy as possible. This means that you will have a graphic interface (or GUI) throughout the process. Whether it's cPanel or the WordPress Admin, most of the interactions you will have with a Shared plan will be by clicking on stuff on a screen to make things happen.

VPS, on the other hand, requires a bit more technical knowledge. Because a virtual machine can use a number of different operating systems and underlying software, it does not come with a cPanel (although it is available as an add-on). This means that the initial interactions with the server (to set up any operating systems, tools, or applications) will be done through a Command Line Interface (or CLI). Using a CLI requires specialized knowledge and training and is usually only something a SysAdmin, Server Admin, or Developer would most likely undertake.

To use our apartment analogy one more time, while you have a nice 800sq foot apartment with the water and electric allotment you need there really aren't any doors... that is except the secret one that only the technical folks know how to use.

This is Where Managed Comes In

So, what if you are a cake-and-eat-it-too kind of person? You want to have the security, performance and stability of VPS but you don't have the technical skill set required to set everything up or maintain it. For this A2 offers Managed VPS hosting plans. These plans offer you all the benefits of an unmanaged plan with additional support to help you get things setup and keep those things up-to-date.

Managed VPS plans also come with a cPanel license giving back the GUI interface to make things easier on you from a technical perspective.

With the additional help from the A2 Guru Team, Managed VPS is a great option if you don't have or don't want to have to hire someone with those extra technical skills required to make it successful.

Comparing VPS vs Shared Hosting

Whether to choose Shared or VPS for your hosting is largely based on your situation and use case. Here are some of the pros and cons to consider to help you choose the one that's best for you.

Shared Hosting	VPS Hosting
Lowest price	Higher price point, but could provide a better value when you look at the resource allotment
Requires less technical skills	Requires more technical skills (unless you are on Managed where there are people available to help with that technical burdon)
You don't know who shares your server, "your neighbors" and how they might affect the performance you receive if they go over their resource allocations.	There is no sharing with or problems that come from bad neighbors.
Fixed options	Highly customizable to your needs
cPanel included	cPanel included with Managed, but there is an extra cost on Unmanaged and may require you to be on a higher plan to be able to run it
Allocated resources with limits	Dedicated resources
Scalable to a degree	Very scalable
35-50 concurrent connections (this is how many can be on your site at the same time)	150 concurrent connections (with the availability of increasing)

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Shared is Fine, But I Want More Performance

So if you start down this path and find yourself realizing that Shared Hosting is just fine for what you are doing, but you still want to have increased experience for your users, A2 offers Turbo Boost and Turbo Max plans. These shared environments offer better hard drives (NVMe which are 3X faster than standard SSD), improved processors, and built-in caching. They also offer LightSpeed, which is a software application designed to improve the performance of the server you are on by up to 11X.

One thing to remember, however, is that it might not be the server that is making your website run slowly. To get best performance you should remember to optimize your site. You could have very large images that are taking time for your site to load. If you are using WordPress there are several plugins that can help with image compression and caching that can improve the speed and performance of your website. It would be a good idea to look at these options and see how that helps before making the move to a faster hosting plan.

If that sounds daunting, For WordPress users we offer Managed WordPress hosting plans that give you extra help and support while on a Shared Plan.

VPS Hosting may seem a little daunting for the non-technical user, but if you are running a website that is key to the success of your business or necessary to provide income, Managed VPS Hosting is the right choice.

A Note from the CEO

In late 2020, A2 Hosting launched a series of new VPS hosting products.These new VPS offerings took us to the next level when it came to performance, stability and security.

A2 made the strategic decision to partner with Virtuozzo, a market-leading provider of container virtualization. Utilizing their modern software and it's included toolset, we are now able to offer our products state-of-the-art virtual environments.

Once we implemented the new solution, performance on the new servers increased by more than 40%, furthering our brand promise of Our Speed, Your Success. We are committed to providing the fastest, most stable hosting experience because, as the world moves faster, search engine algorithms seem to change on a weekly basis and visitor attention spans continue to shorten. This all impacts metrics like cart abandonment and bounce rate. The last thing our customers want to worry about is their web hosting. Our customers rely on us to provide hosting speeds that give them the edge for better rankings, better conversion rates and better bounce rates, which we deliver consistently."

We promise to continue to improve the performance of our VPS offerings.

- Bryan Muthig, CEO

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