

## Why You Want to Include an FAQ In Your Site

by: Richard Lowe, Jr. Congratulations! You've got a brand new site and it's doing pretty well. You check your statistics every day and the hits and page views keep climbing, your links are all in order and everything looks very good. On top of that, your guestbook is filling with great comments and you're getting a few emails now and then with praise and perhaps a question or two. Now is a good time to sit back and examine the subject (or subjects) of your site. What is the theme? What are you trying to accomplish? Then once you've got your site visualized, start to think about it from the perspective of a new visitor. Put yourself in their shoes, and assume you know nothing. What questions would you have? Write down these questions or type them into a document as you think of them. What you are creating is a list of frequently asked questions (commonly abbreviated as FAQ). These are questions that your visitors may have about your site, the subject or theme, or even about you. Just about any question is valid, as long as it is helpful to your visitors. Let's create an example of, say, a web site about model railroading. Now, what questions would you have if you surfed to that site? You might want to know "what is it?", "when did it start?", "how much does it cost?", "why does this site exist?" and "who is the webmaster?". That last question is more important than it seems at first glance, as putting a face behind a web site increases its credibility and makes it more likely that your visitors will (a) return, (b) tell their friends, and (c) purchase something (if your site is commercial). Some web guru's will tell you never to include information the webmaster - these people simply do not understand human nature. In general, people will trust another person far more easily than they will trust a web site or a machine. Once you've got your list of questions, go ahead and create one or more web pages (create as many as you like). Add the questions to the pages, along with the answers. If you feel like linking to articles within your site go ahead. I would avoid including external links at this point, as you want to get people interested in your site, not someone else's. Remember to keep your answers short and to the point. You are not trying to duplicate your web site. Your goal is to give your visitors some quick answers to their questions to get them more interested in looking around further. As you are adding your questions and answers, you will most likely come up with additional questions. By all means, add those to your frequently asked questions as well. Some webmasters like to include a form at the bottom of their questions to allow people to submit additional one's if desired. This is a great idea, as it is an easy way to improve your web site's interactivity - which is usually very good for getting people to return later. I would not recommend, however, doing what I've seen some webmasters do - automate this function. I guess the idea is to get your visitors involved in answering the questions. In this case, the FAQ becomes more or less a moderated message board. I prefer just to receive my visitors questions in an email, which I can then either answer directly or add to the FAQ when I get the chance. FAQ's are great for answering simple questions that your visitors may have before they send you an email. It is important to remember to include a link to the FAQ in a prominent place on every single page of your website - you want people looking at them when they have questions. In summary, FAQ's tend to pull visitors into your site and make them feel better about it, which means they are more likely to return for more again and again.

## About the Author

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