

# Customizing Your FreeToastHost Homepage



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## Customizing Your FreeToastHost Homepage

FreeToastHost is an easy-to-use tool for generating Toastmasters Club websites. Each club's website can be used for marketing the club to the outside world and for use by club members to schedule meetings and exchange ideas.


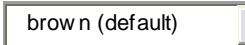
The first part of this series is about how to customize the FreeToastHost template home page – your public face – in order to create a club website that reflects your club's unique identity and attract new members. Customizing your website is important to make your club stand out and to provide current information to potential new members.

Covered in this part are:

- [Selecting a theme and color scheme](#)
- [Customizing your banner](#)
- [Designing the center frame](#)
- [Editing the left navigation menu](#)

### **Selecting a Theme and Color Scheme**

When you receive your FreeToastHost account, you will be able to pick from a variety of themes. The theme acts as a template for all the pages and will set the color scheme for your site. To preview all the different themes, follow these steps:


1. Log in as the administrator.
2. Click on the settings icon at the top of the page. 
3. Scroll down until you see **Choose Color Scheme**.
4. Click on [preview the themes](http://www.freetoasthost.org/themes/) (www.freetoasthost.org/themes/) to see all the available themes.
5. Use the drop-down menu to select a color scheme for your theme. 
6. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click **update settings**.

**Note:** If you change themes, any customized logo will be replaced with the default logo for the color scheme. When you switch back to a color scheme, your custom logo will be restored.

### **Customizing Your Banner**

Once you have a theme and color scheme, it is time to customize the homepage banner. Having an attractive and informative banner immediately conveys professionalism and important information, two ways to attract new members. You will need a graphics editing program such as Photoshop, Image Ready, Microsoft Paint or other tool in order to produce a banner that has your club name, motto, logo or other text. Information and pricing (some are free or can be used for a limited amount of time for free) on graphics editing programs can be found at <http://www.tucows.com/Windows/DesignTools/Image/ImageEditors/>

The banner is a graphic file that is uploaded to your site. The graphic file must be formatted as a .jpg file to be visible on the Web and be compatible with the FreeToastHost system. The graphic must measure precisely 670 pixels wide by 75 pixels tall. To customize a banner follow these steps:

1. Log in as the administrator.
2. Click on the settings icon at the top of the page. 
3. Scroll down until you see **Upload Custom Logo**.
4. Click on [preview the logo templates](#) to see all the available logos for your theme.
5. Right click on the image and save the image to your hard drive. This is the file you edit with the graphics program.
6. Open the file you just downloaded in a graphics program. You can add your club name, motto, or other identifying information.
7. Save the edited file with the exact name it downloaded with.
8. Click the Browse button adjacent to **Upload Custom Logo**.
9. Find the file you saved and select it. Its name will appear in the text box.
10. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click **update settings**.
11. Refresh your page to see the new banner.

### **For More Advanced Users**

It is possible to design a completely new banner without using one of the existing logos. Create a new file in a graphics program and name it using the file name of one of the existing logos. The file must be exactly the same size, precisely 670 pixels wide by 75 pixels tall. Keep in mind your color scheme in order to design a banner file that matches the existing theme

## Designing the Center Frame

The information in the center frame of the FreeToastHost template is an example of the different types of content that can be included there. It is not designed to be used “right out of the box.” It is meant to be customized by each club.

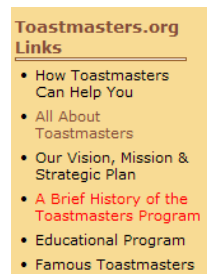
Some tips on the elements of good web design appear below. Remember, what you place here is the first impression all visitors will get when they land on your site. Work to make your center frame attractive and unique.

- Place important information at the top of the page. The most important information you can give visitors to your site includes:
  - Name of your club (if it is not in the banner)
  - Date and time of meetings
  - Place of meetings
  - Welcoming invitation to a meeting
  - Any directions for finding more information, for example, “See the [Directions](#) link on the menu to find our club.”
  - Contact information.
- Do not make visitors scroll down to the bottom of the page to find critical information because they will probably miss it.
- Include an image from your club. Format the image so that it loads quickly and does not take up the entire page (see [Adding Images](#) for more information).
- Make sure the text on the page is big enough so that people can read it easily. 10, 12, or 14 point type is a good rule.
- Make sure there is enough contrast between the back ground of your page and the text. A dark color text on a light color background is easiest to read.
- Do not refer to any content on your page that does not exist. For example, if you have not created Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), do not invite people to read them, and remove the link from the side menu (more on that in another section).


## Center Frame Tips

The center frame of your home page is the most important part of your design. I recommend deleting all the existing content in the template and start from scratch. Much of the content that comes with the template can be found in other places. For example, the history of Toastmasters can be found on the left navigation menu. When visitors click on the link [A Brief History of the Toastmasters Program](#), a new window will open that contains the same information as the template. Use the space in the center frame to provide information about **your** club.

Consider including the date and time of meetings, personalized information about your club – what makes it special. Invite people to visit. Include links to other pages for more info. Use a colorful image, either your club’s logo, mascot, or photographs from a meeting. Use this space to make a positive first impression on your visitors.



To edit the center frame of your home page, follow these steps:

1. Log in as the administrator.
2. Click on the Edit HTML Pages icon at the top of the page. 
3. In the HTML Page table, click the edit icon adjacent to Home Page.



4. Enter a Page Title in the text box. The page title is the text that gets bookmarked or saved as a favorite. Make the page title descriptive so people who save it can easily identify your web page link in a list of favorites.
5. Use the text box editor to add and format text, tables and images, on your page. The editor works like a basic word processing program. Type directly in the box or copy and paste text into it. You can then format the text by changing the size, color and font. Be sure to click **Edit Page / Save Changes** to save your new page.



### For More Advanced Users

If you are familiar with HTML coding, you can copy and paste HTML code into the text box by clicking the View/Edit Source icon. The icon is the last icon on the top tool bar and looks like this < >. You can also edit the source code of your page using this function.

### Adding Images

In order to add images to your web page, they must be prepared in a graphics editing program or taken from another web page. All images that appear on the Internet must be formatted as a .jpg, .gif, or .png file. Information on preparing images for the Internet can be found on many websites. This one is easy to understand [www.webstyleguide.com/graphics/gifs.html](http://www.webstyleguide.com/graphics/gifs.html)

Here are a few tips for formatting graphics for your web page:

- Use .jpg for photographs.
- Use .gif for logos and clip art.
- Size your image in your graphics editor before you upload it. Do not resize it in the text box editor by selecting and dragging the corner.
- Give your files names that are meaningful so you will be able to identify them among a long list of files.
- Some images are copyrighted, but many are not copyrighted as long as you do not sell them, for example clipart available at Microsoft.com, [office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/default.aspx](http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/default.aspx) so make sure you have permission to use them on your webpage.
- Give credit to photographers and others who produce images for your site.

After your images are formatted, they must be uploaded to FreeToastHost. To upload an image, follow these steps:

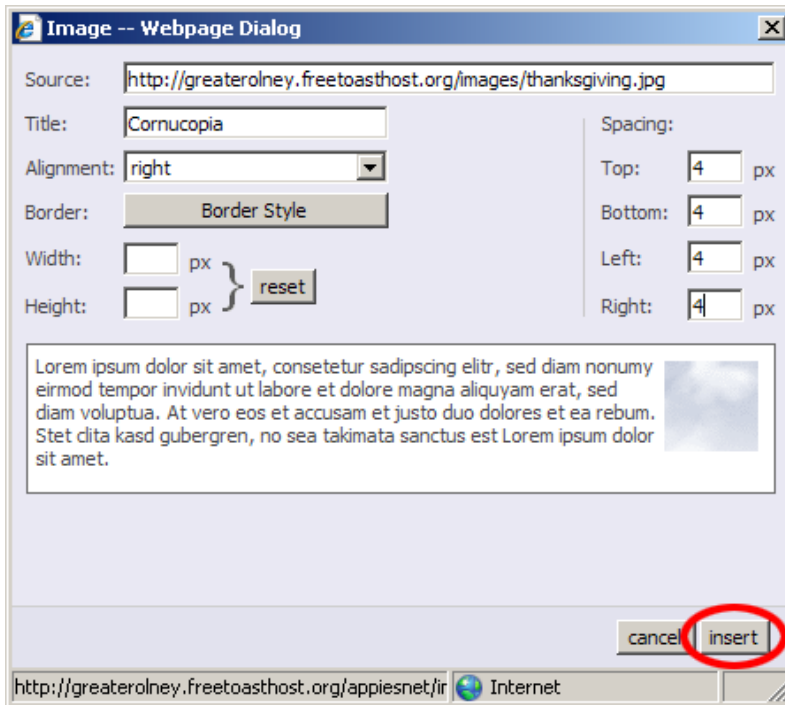
1. Scroll down to upload new image from your local computer.
2. Click Browse and find the image you wish to upload. Click Open to place the path and file name in the text box.



3. Click **upload new image**.
4. Your image will appear in a list of images arranged alphabetically by file name. The magnifying glass will open the image in a new window so you can see it. The “X” will delete the image from the list.

To add an uploaded image to a web page using the text box editor, follow these steps:

1. From the list of uploaded images, select the URL (full path and image name) and then copy it.(ctrl+c in windows) For example  
**http://greaterolney.FreeToastHost.org/images/thanksgiving.jpg**
2. Place your cursor where you want your image to appear in the text box editor.
3. Click the image icon and paste the URL for the image you are using in the Image Webpage Dialog box.



4. Add a title for the image. When people mouse over the image, the title will appear. It is also read by screen reading programs so that people with disabilities can understand that there is an image and what the image is according to the title you provide.
5. Set the alignment of the image – right, left, middle and so on. The preview box at the bottom shows you what each alignment looks like.
6. Add a border around your image (a frame) by clicking the Border Style button and selecting a border. This is optional and in most cases unnecessary.
7. You can reset the width and height of the image – making it bigger or smaller, but unless you know the exact proportions, I would not recommend using this method. Resize your image in your image editing application.
8. Add blank space around your image so that the text or other images do not appear touching.
9. Click insert to add the image.

### ***Editing the Left Navigation Panel***

As important as the banner and center frame, the left navigation panel helps visitors find the pages and information they are looking for. Because your home page is your public face and it is important to make a good impression, plan your navigation links carefully. Don't include links to content that is not available or is being updated. If you don't have a club calendar ready, remove the link. If you don't have FAQs (frequently asked questions) remove the link. Do include links to your district website, newsletter, and other Toastmasters resources your club members and website visitors will find interesting and useful.

There are four main groups of links on the navigation panel:

- **Main Menu** – These links are the most important to visitors. They appear “above the fold”. All of the main menu links can be removed except for Home Page. Spend your time developing content for these links first so visitors can quickly find the information they need.
  - **Club News** – This is a link to the discussion board area of the site, called forums.
  - **Membership Information** – Use this page to provide information on how to join your club. You might add a dues schedule and membership application.
  - **Frequently Asked Questions** – This is a small searchable database you can build that answers questions visitors frequently ask. You can visit other clubs to see what they have posted in their FAQs for ideas. Answers are best if they are personalized and detailed, not generic.
  - **Club Calendar** – This is an interactive calendar where important dates can be posted. Email reminders can be set up to notify members of upcoming events.
  - **Directions** – Use this page to give visitors information to find you. You might include a map, walking directions, driving directions, and the nearest public transportation connections. Include any parking restrictions and security protocols visitors will need.
  - **Meet Our Members** – Club members can post photos of themselves and include any information they wish to share. This is a public webpage, and private information such as an unlisted phone number or email address should not be included here.
  - **Contact Us** – Add your contact information here. Include an invitation to visit.
  - **Public Downloads** – Use this space to provide information on public speaking or pdf flyers concerning Toastmasters that visitor can read at a later time.
- **Toastmasters.org Links** – These links cannot be removed from the template. They do contain a lot of the content in the template home page, such as the history of Toastmasters.
- **Articles** – These links cannot be removed from the template. They are maintained by the creator of FreeToastHost, Bo Bennet.
- **Members Only** – All of these links except for “Forgot Your Login?” can be removed.

- **Club Goals** – This is an explanation of the Club Success Plan and a form where you can record each club goal as it is achieved.
- **Member Goals** – This is a table where individual member goals can plan and track their goals. If you do not want to share your goals with your fellow Toastmasters, then check the "private" box and your goals will only be visible to you and officers of the club.
- **Forgot Your Login?** – If a member forgets his or her login, it will be sent to the member by email using the address in their profile.
- **Available Downloads** – Use this opens a table where members can download files from the website. You might add contest rules, a dues table, and evaluation forms.
- **Edit Your Member Profile / Private Member Directory** – Members can edit their personal information, upload a photo, and view any meeting roles if the duty roster is in use. Adding and administering members will be covered in another part of this series, Supporting Your Members.


You are allowed to add up to nine custom HTML pages, three each under the categories Main Menu, Articles, and Members Only. Adding a page will automatically add it to the navigation panel. The panel can get very long, longer than the content of the main frame, so add new pages wisely.

You are also allowed to add up to fifteen custom links, five each under the categories Main Menu, Articles, and Members Only. Consider adding links to your district website, online newsletter, or other relevant links. Adding many links will lengthen the navigation panel, so add new links wisely.

### Removing Links from the Navigation Panel

Keeping all the links on the navigation panel functional is extremely important. Visitors will jump away from your site and probably not return if they click a link that is broken or that has little or no content. Removing any of the pages in the template from the navigation panel (not custom pages or custom links) does not delete the pages from your site. The pages still exist, but they are not available to visitors.

To remove a link to a page in the template from the navigation panel, follow these steps:

1. Log in as the administrator.
2. Click on the edit links icon at the top of the page. 

### 3. Scroll down to **Remove Items From Your Menu**.

**Remove Items From Your Menu**

- Remove the videos before the main menu.
- Remove the "Club News" link under the main menu.
- Remove the "Membership Information" link under the main menu.
- Remove the "Frequently Asked Questions" link under the main menu.
- Remove the "Meet the Members" link under the main menu.
- Remove the "Club Calendar" link under the main menu.
- Remove the "Directions" link under the main menu.
- Remove the "Contact Us" link under the main menu.
- Remove the "Public Downloads" link under the main menu.
- Remove the "Duty Roster" link under the members only menu.
- Remove the "Club Goals" link under the members only menu.
- Remove the "Member Goals" link under the members only menu.
- Remove the "Mentor/Mentee Request Form" link under the members only menu.
- Remove the "Speech Feedback" link under the members only menu.
- Remove the "Brainstorming" link under the members only menu.
- Remove the "Speaking Tips and Tricks" link under the members only menu.
- Remove the "Available Downloads" link under the members only menu.
- Remove the "Edit Your Member Profile / Private Member Directory" link under the members only menu.

4. Check the selection boxes adjacent to the pages you wish to remove.

5. Scroll down and click the **update settings** button.



### **Adding Links to the Navigation Panel**

To add a link from the template back to the navigation panel follow these steps:

1. Log in as the administrator.

2. Click on the edit links icon at the top of the page. 

3. Scroll down to **Remove Items From Your Menu**.

4. Remove the check from the selection boxes for the pages you wish to add.

5. Scroll down and click the **update settings** button.

## Getting Help

There are many ways you can get help using FreeToastHost. Every FreeToastHost template contains the official FreeToastHost.org Website User Guide created for club members. The manual can be accessed by clicking the Public Downloads link on the navigation panel. The file is named FTH\_User\_Guide.pdf. This file cannot be removed for the website and it is available to any user.

Administrators can find online help when they visit [www.FreeToastHost.org](http://www.FreeToastHost.org) and click the Take the Tour (webmasters) link on the navigation panel. The link begins an online multimedia tutorial that goes over the basics of setting up a FreeToastHost site.

More in depth information and help can be found by clicking the links at the top of the admin page in your website:

Technical Support Area: [ [FAQ's](#) ] [ [FTH Forum](#) ] [ [Service Updates](#) ]

All of these links lead to an online tool called "igroop." You have to join the group and login (it is free) to gain access to the resources. Once you are a member, you can search the FAQs, ask questions, request new features, participate in live web conferences, and take part in discussions. I have had fast and professional responses to all my questions, and recommend joining if you continue to build out you club's website.

## Toastmasters Guidelines

Toastmasters International has some important Internet Guidelines Directions pertaining to Toastmasters Club Websites that can be found here:

<http://www.toastmasters.org/artisan/member.asp?CategoryID=1&SubCategoryID=7>

Once you have created a club website, be sure to update your club information with Toastmasters International. To report your new website, follow these steps:

1. Go to the TMI website <http://www.toastmasters.org>
2. On the left side of the screen, under Club Business, click Update Club Info
3. Click on the text that says, "Click here..."
4. Log on using your club number and password
5. Click "Change my club's meeting and/or club officer information"
6. In the field on the form that says "Website" enter your club's URL **without** the "http://"
7. Scroll down to the end of the page
8. Enter the information necessary in the "Submitted By" fields
9. Click the button that says "Continue to Confirmation Page"
10. You'll go to a summary page to review your changes
11. If everything looks okay, click the button at the bottom of the page that says "Confirm and Return to Main Menu"
12. You'll be returned to the Conduct Club Business page