FREE INFORMATION NETWORK · FREE GUIDE

BUILD YOUR OWN WEBSITE WITH AI

By J Leslie · jlesliemusic.com · November 2026

You can build a professional website with AI, host it for free or close to it, and cut your yearly cost by up to 85%. No coding required.

I moved jlesliemusic.com off a $204-a-year website builder in November 2026. I rebuilt it with AI, hosted it for free, and now pay only for the domain name. Everything I learned is below, with the real numbers. No course to buy, no upsell at the end. That's the Free Information Network standard: real information, freely shared, genuinely helpful.

WHAT IT COSTS

My yearly cost dropped from about $232 to about $28, a saving of roughly $176 every year.

COST	BEFORE (WEBSITE BUILDER)	AFTER (AI + FREE HOSTING)
Website plan / hosting	$204 a year	$0 (Netlify free plan)
Domain name	about $28 a year	about $28 a year ($56.50 for 2 years)
Total	**about $232 a year**	**about $28 a year**

The AI assistant is the one cost that varies. Free AI plans exist, and paid plans are a monthly subscription that many people already have for other work.

The lesson I learned the hard way: free hosting has a monthly limit. The free plan gives 300 credits a month. Every upload of your site uses 15, so about 20 uploads, and visitor traffic uses 20 per GB. The credits are shared by every site in your account, and when they run out, all of your sites go offline until the next month. I hit 75% in nine days while building two sites.

YOUR SITUATION	PLAN	YEARLY COST WITH DOMAIN
One small site you rarely change	Free (300 credits a month)	about $28
Several sites, or frequent updates	Personal, $9 a month (1,000 credits)	about $136

Either way, you still save compared with a $204-a-year builder. To stretch your credits, bundle changes into one upload, and put videos on YouTube instead of hosting them yourself. (Sources: netlify.com/pricing and Netlify's billing FAQ)

HOW LONG IT TAKES

Plan on one long evening of hands-on work, plus up to a day of waiting while your domain switches over.

STAGE	MY TIME	WHAT YOU'RE DOING
Gather your material	1 to 2 hours	Photos, bio, logos, links, book or album covers, videos
Build and revise with AI	about 9 hours, one evening	Describing what you want, reviewing, asking for changes
Connect your domain	about 30 minutes	Copying four addresses from your host into your domain account
Wait for the switch	a few hours to 2 days	Nothing: the internet catches up on its own

My site has seven pages, four videos, and 13 book covers. A simpler site, like a one-page business card, can be done in an afternoon. Most of my nine hours went to fine-tuning, not the first build.

WHAT YOU NEED

You need no coding skills. If you can describe what you want, drag a folder, and copy and paste, you can do this.

- **An AI assistant** that can write and edit website code and hand you the files.
- **A free hosting account.** I use Netlify; you upload your site by dragging a folder onto the page.
- **A domain name** you own, such as yourname.com, kept on auto-renew.
- **Your real material:** a good headshot, your bio, logos, links to your music, books or business, and any videos.
- **Patience for revisions.** The first version is a draft. The good version comes from plain-English requests like "use the other headshot" or "move this video lower."

THE SEVEN STEPS

Do these in order. The order is what keeps your current site up until the new one is ready.

1. **Gather your material.** Put your photos, bio, covers, links and videos in one folder. Use full-size images; small thumbnails look blurry on a website.
2. **Describe the site to the AI.** Say who you are, who the site is for, which pages you want, and the look (for example, "black and gold, elegant, like a jazz club"). If you have an old site, share it as a starting point.
3. **Review it on a free test address.** Upload the folder to your host. You get a free address like yourname.netlify.app. Check it on your phone, your laptop and, if you have one, a large monitor.
4. **Revise in plain English.** Ask for one or a few changes at a time, then upload the updated folder. Repeat until it feels right.
5. **Turn on your forms.** Switch on form detection in your host, upload once more, and set up an email notification so signups and messages reach your inbox. Send yourself a test.

6. **Point your domain to the new site.** Your host gives you its nameserver addresses. Enter them in your domain account (where you bought the domain). Expect a few hours to 2 days before everyone sees the new site, and allow time for the secure padlock (https) to appear.
7. **Cancel the old website plan last.** You can turn off its auto-renew early, since the plan runs until the end of what you already paid. Just don't disconnect your domain from it until the new site is ready. Keep the domain itself on auto-renew.

GETTING FOUND ON GOOGLE AND AI SEARCH

A good-looking site does nothing if nobody finds it. Ask the AI to build these in from the start, by name; my site has all of them.

Built into the site:

- **Page title and description:** the two lines people see under your link in Google results.
- **Social preview tags (Open Graph):** so a shared link shows your photo and title instead of a blank box.
- **Structured data (schema.org):** a hidden summary that tells Google and AI tools exactly who you are, what you make, and which social profiles are officially yours.
- **Alt text on every image:** a short description that search engines and screen readers can read.
- **A sitemap and robots file:** a map of your pages, and a note telling search engines they're welcome.
- **Fast, phone-friendly pages:** compressed images and a layout that works on a phone, since Google judges your site by its mobile version.

Keywords, the words people actually type:

- **Make a short list first.** Write down 5 to 10 phrases a stranger would search to find you, such as "smooth jazz guitarist Portland," "memoir writing service Oregon," or "self-help books for teens." Type each into Google and see what it suggests as you type.
- **Use them naturally where they count:** the page title, the description, headings, the first paragraph of each page, and image alt text.
- **Add your location** if you work locally. "Mobile notary Beaverton" beats "mobile notary."
- **Don't stuff them.** Repeating a phrase over and over reads badly and can hurt your ranking. The old hidden "keywords" tag is ignored by Google, so skip it.

For AI search (ChatGPT, Google's AI answers, Copilot):

- Write plain, factual sentences about who you are and what you do, with names, dates and places. AI tools repeat clear statements and skip vague ones.
- Use the same name, photo and bio everywhere (website, Amazon, Spotify, YouTube, social media) and link them to each other, so AI tools connect them as one person.
- Answer the questions people actually ask: what you offer, where, how to book, how to reach you.

After launch, tell the search engines:

1. **Google Search Console** (search.google.com/search-console): add your domain, verify that you own it, and submit your sitemap (yoursite.com/sitemap.xml).
2. **Bing Webmaster Tools** (bing.com/webmasters): import your site from Google Search Console in a few clicks. Bing also feeds Microsoft Copilot.
3. **Give it time:** a new site usually takes days to a few weeks to show up in search.

No one can guarantee a top ranking. These steps make sure search engines and AI tools can find your site, read it, and describe you correctly.

LESSONS FROM MY BUILD

The AI does the code; you are still the editor. These are the things I had to catch.

- **Check every fact about you.** AI will summarize your history confidently. Compare it with your own records; my label's story needed the accurate version.
- **Watch for AI images that claim things.** One generated studio photo of me had a magazine cover and gold records on the wall I never earned. We cropped them out. Visitors read pictures as facts.
- **Use your real, full-size photos and covers.** Blurry thumbnails make a good design look cheap.
- **Test on a big screen.** My first version looked fine on a laptop but tiny on a large monitor. One fix made it scale properly.
- **Never let the domain lapse.** It is the one thing you can lose for good. Keep it on auto-renew.
- **Keep the files.** Save the site folder you upload. It is your backup and the starting point for every future update.

PASS IT ON

If this guide helped you, share it freely. Build your site, then help the next person build theirs.

Member of the Free Information Network (FIN)