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How to install Apache on a VPS and set up a virtual host

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How to install Apache on a VPS and set up a virtual host

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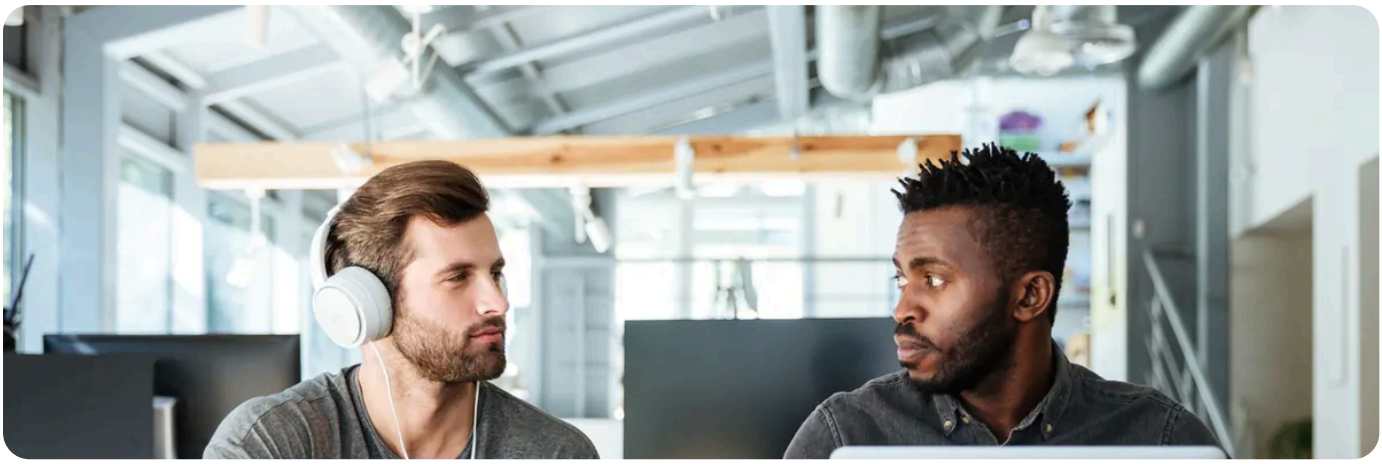

On Ubuntu or Debian you install Apache with `sudo apt install apache2`, write a site file in `/etc/apache2/sites-available/` holding a `VirtualHost` that points at your folder, enable it with `sudo a2ensite`, check it with `sudo apache2ctl configtest` and reload. On AlmaLinux or Rocky the package is called `httpd`. On an unmanaged VPS the installation and upkeep are yours.

A *virtual host* is how Apache serves different sites depending on the name in the request. With a single site it is still worth creating one: it keeps the configuration tidy for when the second site arrives.

Step by step on Debian and Ubuntu

1. **Install it.** `sudo apt update` and `sudo apt install apache2`. Open ports 80 and 443 in the firewall, if you have one (**ports and firewall on a VPS**).

2. **Create the site folder** and a test file: `sudo mkdir -p /var/www/yourdomain.tld/public`.

3. **Write the virtual host** in `sudo nano /etc/apache2/sites-available/yourdomain.tld.conf`

```
<VirtualHost *:80>
ServerName yourdomain.tld
ServerAlias www.yourdomain.tld
DocumentRoot /var/www/yourdomain.tld/public

<Directory /var/www/yourdomain.tld/public>
AllowOverride All
Require all granted
</Directory>

ErrorLog ${APACHE_LOG_DIR}/yourdomain.tld-error.log
CustomLog ${APACHE_LOG_DIR}/yourdomain.tld-access.log combined
</VirtualHost>
```

4 **Enable the site and disable the welcome one.** `sudo a2ensite yourdomain.tld.conf` and `sudo a2dissite 000-default.conf`.

5 **Switch on the rewrite module** if the application uses pretty addresses (WordPress, Laravel): `sudo a2enmod rewrite`.

6 **Test and reload.** `sudo apache2ctl configtest` should answer "Syntax OK"; then `sudo systemctl reload apache2`.

7 **Point the domain at the server IP** and check: **pointing a domain at your own VPS**. Error logs are in `/var/log/apache2/`.

What changes on AlmaLinux and Rocky

	Debian and Ubuntu	AlmaLinux and Rocky Linux
Package and service	`apache2`	`httpd` (`systemctl enable --now httpd`)
Where the site goes	`sites-available` + `a2ensite`	a `.conf` file in `/etc/httpd/conf.d/`
Test the configuration	`apache2ctl configtest`	`apachectl configtest`
Logs	`/var/log/apache2/`	`/var/log/httpd/`
Service user	`www-data`	`apache`

"AllowOverride All" lets `.htaccess` rule the site.
It is what WordPress and most PHP applications expect, but every request now looks for that file in every folder. If you control the server configuration you can put the rules in the virtual host itself and leave `AllowOverride None`. For the rewrite rules themselves, see **.htaccess for PHP projects**.

A "403 Forbidden" right at the start
is nearly always a missing `Require all granted` or a folder Apache's user cannot walk through: **file permissions on a VPS**. On AlmaLinux or Rocky it can be SELinux: **SELinux and AppArmor**.

Changed just a site file?

`Reload` is enough and drops nobody. Keep `restart` for when you add or remove modules.

NEED A HAND?

Installed it and the server stopped answering on the network? Tell us what you changed and we will check our side.

Open a support ticket →

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