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Redirecting HTTP to HTTPS and www to the bare domain in nginx or Apache

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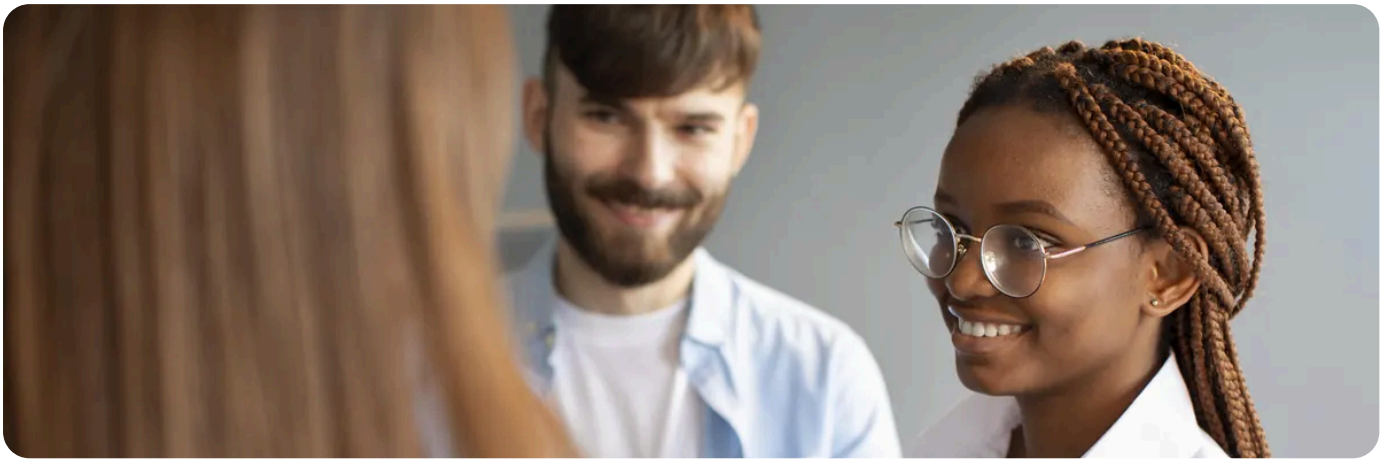
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Redirecting HTTP to HTTPS and www to the bare domain in nginx or Apache

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On a VPS you choose **one canonical address** (for example `https://yourdomain.tld`) and send everything else there with a **301** redirect: HTTP to HTTPS, and `www` to the bare name (or the other way, if you prefer www). In nginx you do it with `return 301`; in Apache with `Redirect permanent`. It is all server configuration, no `.htaccess` involved.

Prerequisite: the certificate must already work for **both names** (with and without www). If only one has a certificate, a visitor going to the other sees the browser warning before reaching the redirect. See **the certificate with certbot**.

In nginx

1. **A block for port 80** that forwards everything, keeping the path and parameters:

```
server {
listen 80;
server_name yourdomain.tld www.yourdomain.tld;
return 301 https://yourdomain.tld$request_uri;
}
```

2. **A block for www over HTTPS** that sends to the bare name (it needs the certificate, even though it only forwards):

```
server {
listen 443 ssl;
server_name www.yourdomain.tld;
ssl_certificate /etc/letsencrypt/live/yourdomain.tld/fullchain.pem;
ssl_certificate_key /etc/letsencrypt/live/yourdomain.tld/privkey.pem;
return 301 https://yourdomain.tld$request_uri;
}
```

3. **The real site's block** keeps only `server_name yourdomain.tld;` and `listen 443 ssl;`.

4. **Test and reload:** `sudo nginx -t` and `sudo systemctl reload nginx`.

In Apache

1. **The port-80 virtual host** forwards everything:

```
<VirtualHost *:80>
ServerName yourdomain.tld
ServerAlias www.yourdomain.tld
Redirect permanent / https://yourdomain.tld/
</VirtualHost>
```

2. **The www virtual host on 443** (with the same certificate lines as the site's) ends with `Redirect permanent / https://yourdomain.tld/`.

3. **Test and reload:** `sudo apache2ctl configtest` (or `apachectl` on AlmaLinux and Rocky) and `sudo systemctl reload apache2`.

Checking it came out right

From your own computer: `curl -I http://www.yourdomain.tld/page`. The answer should be `301` and the `Location:` line should be the full final address, page included. Follow it with `curl -I` on the `Location` address until you see a `200`. More than two hops means too many redirects.

What you see	Likely cause
"Too many redirects" (a loop)	Something in front (Cloudflare in flexible mode, for example) talks HTTP to your server, and your server sends it to HTTPS again. See **switching on SSL at Cloudflare without breaking the site**.
www shows a certificate warning	The certificate does not include the www name. Issue it for both.
The page loses its path	You wrote the target without `$request_uri` (nginx) or without the trailing slash in `Redirect` (Apache).
It still opens over HTTP	The port-80 block is not the one answering that name; check the `server_name` and whether the default site is still enabled.

Use 301 only when you are sure.

Browsers remember a 301 for a long time; a wrong target sticks to everyone who already visited. While you rehearse, use 302 (`return 302 ...`) and switch to 301 once it is right.

certbot can do part of this itself:

The `--redirect` option (or the question it asks) adds the HTTP-to-HTTPS redirect. The www-to-bare one is yours to write. For redirecting pages and domains with Google in mind, see **301 redirects**.

NEED A HAND?

Did the site stop opening after you changed the configuration? If the server stopped answering on the network, we check that from our side.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- HTTPS for a container: a certificate and a domain →
- When the certbot renewal fails →
- No padlock on your site: the causes, in order →
- Redirecting to HTTPS with .htaccess (shared hosting) →

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