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Your first thirty minutes in cPanel

Access & Control Panels

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Your first thirty minutes in cPanel

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cPanel opens with dozens of icons, and nine out of ten you will never touch. This article walks you through the four that matter on day one, in order, and names the three things best left alone until you know what they do.

Getting in without memorising a password

The short route is through your account: sign in to **My Interweb**, open **My Services**, click the hosting plan and use the button that opens cPanel. The session is created for you and no password is typed anywhere. Alternatively you can reach it through your own domain by adding **/cpanel** to the address, and there you will be asked for the username and password.

1. Where the website files live

Open **File Manager**. The folder that matters is **public_html**: that one, and only that one, is what the world sees. A file placed outside it never shows up on the site, and it is the single most common confusion for newcomers.

Where	What it is
public_html	The root of the main site. Whatever sits here answers on your domain.
public_html/some-folder	Reachable as a folder inside the site. Handy for a second area, or for testing.
Outside public_html	Not served to the public. This is where system files, copies and anything that should stay out of sight belong.

The site home page is the file called **index** inside public_html. It is the first thing the server looks for, which is why a brand new site shows a welcome page until you put your own there.

2. Your first mailbox

1. Open **Email Accounts** and choose to create one.

2. Type the part before the at sign and pick the domain. Set a strong password: you can make one with our **password generator**.

3. Create it. The mailbox exists immediately.

4. To read mail without configuring anything, use webmail: your domain address with **/webmail** on the end.

Start with a generic address
, something like info or hello, and only then create the personal ones. Role addresses outlive people, so the contact on your site does not die when somebody leaves.

3. Where the database is

You only need this if the site runs WordPress, a shop, or anything that stores content. A site of plain pages uses no database at all.

1. Open **MySQL Databases**.

2. Create the database. Write down the full name it ends up with, including the prefix the panel adds.

3. Create a user, with a password of its own.

4. **Add the user to the database** with all privileges. This is the step everyone forgets, and without it the site connects and is turned away.

5. To look inside, use **phpMyAdmin**, in the same section.

If you are going to use WordPress
, none of this is needed by hand: the cPanel installer creates the database and the user for you.

4. What the account is using

The side column in cPanel lists the account statistics. It is the only place where the numbers are the real ones, and it is worth a glance now and then even when nothing is wrong.

What to look at	Why it matters
Disk used	It counts everything: site, mail and databases. Mail is almost always what grows without anyone noticing.
Mailboxes and databases	Every plan has a limit. Knowing where you stand beats finding out at the worst moment.
Domains and subdomains	How many of the ones your plan allows you have already used.

Backups already run on their own.
A copy is taken once a day, before dawn, and the copies from the last 30 days are kept for you to restore yourself from the panel. Nothing to configure on day one. What is worth knowing is that it exists, and where, before you need it.

Three things not to touch at the start

1. **The DNS zone editor.** This is where a site and its mail go down together, and the effect only shows hours later, when nobody connects the two any more. Come here only when you know exactly which record you are changing and why.

2. **File permissions.** If you find an instruction online telling you to set everything to 777 because "that makes it work", ignore it: it works, and it holds the door open for whoever walks past.

3. **The PHP version.** Changing it blindly is the quickest way to a blank site. If an application demands a different version, change it, but know why and test straight afterwards.

Store your login details somewhere safe, today.
The account creation e-mail carries the cPanel username and password, and it is precisely the e-mail everyone deletes and then goes hunting for. The cPanel password is not the same as your My Interweb password: they are two different things.

NEED A HAND?

Lost on one of the steps, or cannot find an icon? Tell us what you are trying to do and we will point at it.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- What each hosting plan includes
- Generate a strong password
- What support handles, and what stays with you

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