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# Installing a ready-made platform: what the installer does for you

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RLX Angola, Lda. · Group RLX Holdings
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# Installing a ready-made platform: what the installer does for you

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Your cPanel carries the **Softaculous Apps Installer**, under **Software**. It is the same tool for everything: Joomla, Drupal, Magento, PrestaShop, OpenCart, Moodle, Flarum, Mautic, Laravel and a few hundred more. On the day this article was written it offered **485 applications**.

This article covers what every installation has in common. Each platform then has its own article for what makes it different.

## What the installer does for you, in seconds

1. **Creates the database and its user**, with a password you never need to see. If you want to understand what is happening underneath, read **creating databases and using phpMyAdmin**.
2. **Downloads and unpacks the files** for the version you picked, straight onto the server. Nothing goes through your computer or your FTP client.
3. **Writes the application configuration file** with the database details, the site address and the security keys.
4. **Runs the installation** and creates your administrator account.
5. **Records the installation in its list.** From then on Softaculous knows where it lives and can back it up, clone it, upgrade it or remove it.

## Three questions before you press Install

| Question | What to decide |
|---|---|
| **At which address?** | The form asks for the **protocol** (always pick **https**), the **domain** and the **directory**. Leaving the directory **empty** installs at the root of the site. Typing *shop* installs at */shop*. If you are installing on an addon domain or a subdomain, create it first: see **adding another domain or a subdomain**. |
| **Which PHP version?** | Every application demands a minimum version, and the installer refuses to go on if yours is older. You change it in **Select PHP Version**: see **changing your PHP version without breaking the site**. |
| **Any missing PHP extensions?** | Some platforms need extensions that arrive **switched off** on a new account. You turn them on in the same **Select PHP Version** screen, on the extensions tab. The table below says which. |

## What each platform demands, measured on our servers

These values were read from the installer itself on the day this article was written. They change when a new release lands: the screen in front of you is always the authority, and it spells out in red exactly what is missing.

| Platform | Minimum PHP | Extensions you must switch on yourself |
|---|---|---|
| **Joomla 5** | 8.1 | None. Everything it needs is already on. |
| **Drupal 10** | 8.1 | None. |
| **Drupal CMS** | 8.3 | None. |
| **OpenCart 4** | 8.1 | None. |
| **Flarum** | 8.2 | None. |
| **Laravel** | 8.2 | None. |
| **PrestaShop 8** | 7.2 | **intl** and **fileinfo**. |
| **Mautic** | 8.2 | **intl**. |
| **Magento 2.4** | 8.2 | **intl**, **soap**, **sodium** and **fileinfo**. |
| **Moodle 5** | 8.2 | **intl**, **soap**, **sodium** and **fileinfo**. |

**Switching an extension on is one click and breaks nothing.**
Open **Select PHP Version**, pick your version, go to **Extensions**, tick the box and close. The installer will then let you through. If you cannot find the option, tell us and we will switch it on.

**Some versions in the list will not install, and that is the installer doing its job.**
The newest Magento release asks for a database engine newer than the one our shared servers run. The installer says so and stops. Pick the previous release, which passes, or talk to us about a server of your own.

## Before you install on top of something

**The installer writes into the directory you give it, and anything there with the same name is overwritten.**
Never point a fresh installation at the directory of a live site without taking a copy first. See **making and keeping your own backup**.

## What you get afterwards

In the Softaculous installations list, each row carries a set of buttons. Not all of them exist for every platform, and this is what we measured:

| Button | What it does, and where it exists |
|---|---|
| **Backup** | Stores files and database in a Softaculous backup that you restore from the same screen. Works for any installation. |
| **Upgrade** | Moves the installation to a newer release. Present for **Joomla**, **Drupal**, **Moodle** and WordPress. |
| **Clone** | Makes a working copy in another directory or on another domain. Present for Joomla, Drupal, Magento, PrestaShop, OpenCart, Moodle, Flarum and WordPress. |
| **Change admin password** | Present for Joomla, Drupal, PrestaShop, OpenCart, Moodle, Flarum, Mautic and WordPress. **Not present for Magento**: for that one, see **recovering the Magento administrator password**. |
| **Import** | Pulls an installation you did by hand into the list, so it gets backups and upgrades from here on. Works for all of them. |

**Turn on automatic upgrades and automatic backups, in that order.**
Both options sit in the same installation form, under **Advanced Options**. One without the other is what produces the bad mornings.

## The ones that are not in the installer

Softaculous installs PHP applications. **Django** and **Ruby on Rails** are not there, and nothing is broken: they run in another language and have their own cPanel tools, **Setup Python App** and **Setup Ruby App**. See **getting Django running** and **getting Rails running**.

Whichever platform you pick, every installation spends space and thousands of your account files. Before you fill a plan with experiments, read **the limits of your account**.

NEED A HAND?

Installer stopped with a warning you cannot decode? Copy the message and send it to us. It is nearly always one extension away.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **Hosting plans and what each one includes** →
- **Hosting migration** →
- **Support Policy** →

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| TAX ID (NIF) | 500 260 5724 |
| COMMERCIAL REGISTRATION NO. | 26464-25/250724 |
| REGISTERED OFFICE | Rua Direita do Patriota, Bairro Dangereux<br>Belas, Luanda, Angola |
| CONTACT | info@interweb.ao · +244 942 011 191 · www.interweb.ao |
| OPENING HOURS | Monday to Friday - 08 AM to 04 PM<br>Saturday & Sunday - Closed |

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