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Cloudflare: what it is, what changes, and what stays the same

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Cloudflare: what it is, what changes, and what stays the same

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Cloudflare is a company that puts its network in front of your site: visitors reach it first, and it comes to us for what it needs. It does three things at once: serves pages from nearby, filters traffic, and presents a certificate at the door.

> **It is not our service and we do not sell it.**
> We have no CDN product in the shop, nothing in the panel switches one on, and we are not Cloudflare resellers. The account is yours, opened on their site, and their free plan is what makes this possible for most sites. We write about it because our customers use it, and because when it goes wrong the call comes to us.

The article covering when it helps, the four steps to switch it on, and the cache that fools you is **Cloudflare: when it helps, how to switch it on, and the cache that fools you**. This one is the map: what becomes different, and what stays exactly as it was.

What changes

What	How it ends up
Who answers for DNS	No longer us, now Cloudflare. Our nameservers come out at the registrar and their two go in.
Where DNS records are edited	**In their dashboard.** The cPanel Zone Editor still opens and still saves, but nobody reads it any more. This is trap number one: people change the record here, wait, and nothing happens.
Who visitors connect to	Cloudflare. Our server address stops being visible.
cPanel statistics	They count fewer visits, because some never arrive here. The true counts move to their dashboard.

What	How it ends up
What you see after editing the site	Possibly still the old version, until you clear their cache.
Who supports the service	Cloudflare answers for what is theirs. We answer for what is here.

What stays exactly the same

This is usually the list that puts people at ease, and all of it is true.

What	Why it does not change
Your files and your database	Still in your account, on our server. Cloudflare does not hold the site, it holds temporary copies.
E-mail	It does not go through Cloudflare and it should not. Mailboxes, webmail and connection ports are unchanged.
cPanel, FTP and databases	Reached as always. Only website traffic can be proxied.
The server certificate	Still issued and renewed automatically, and it has to stay. See **what an SSL certificate is**.
Backups	Still ours and yours. See **restoring a backup yourself**.
The domain and the invoice	The domain stays registered in your name and renewing where it was. The invoice does not change a line.
Our hosting support	Unchanged. See the **Support Policy**.

The confusion that reaches us most

"I changed the record in cPanel and nothing happened."
Once the domain is on Cloudflare, the cPanel Zone Editor is a notebook nobody reads. The change that counts is made in their dashboard. If you are unsure who answers for your domain today, check before editing: **how to check a domain DNS**.

When you write to us, say up front that you use Cloudflare.
And say whether the record in question is proxied or not. Without that, we see one thing, you see another, and half an hour goes by before somebody says the word.

Where to start

1. **Decide whether it is worth it** for your case: **what a CDN is and when it makes a difference**.
2. **Prepare the change** before touching nameservers: **putting a CDN in front of your site, step by step**.
3. **Do the setup** in their dashboard: **putting a domain on Cloudflare**.
4. **Settle SSL** before any other option: **switching on SSL without breaking the site**.
5. **Only then** touch the options: **the options worth having and the ones that cause trouble**.

NEED A HAND?

Thinking of putting your domain on Cloudflare and want a second opinion? Tell us the domain.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- Hosting plans →
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