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Remote Access & Code

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Connecting to your MySQL database with MySQL Workbench

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MySQL Workbench is a program you install on your own computer to work on a database the way you would work in a spreadsheet: browse tables, run queries, export, import. It is far more comfortable than phpMyAdmin if you spend hours in there, and it is the tool a developer will ask you for.

The part that usually goes wrong is not the program. It is **the route to the server**. That is what this article is about, and it starts by saving you an afternoon.

> **A direct connection to the database port does not normally open from outside.**
> The MySQL port is not exposed to the internet by default, and that is a security decision rather than a fault. If you typed the server name into Workbench and it sits there thinking until it gives up, your password is not the problem. The route that works is an **SSH tunnel**, described below.

The three things you need

Detail	Where to get it
The database	In cPanel, under **MySQL Databases**. The full name carries your account prefix in front of it, and the full name is what you type.
The database user	Also under **MySQL Databases**. **It is not your cPanel user.** It is a separate account made for the database, and it has to be attached to that database with all privileges.
An SSH login	That is your cPanel user and password. Every shared hosting plan has SSH access, so the same login works.

If you have not created the database and the user yet, the walkthrough is in **creating databases and using phpMyAdmin**.

The SSH tunnel connection, field by field

In Workbench, instead of a plain connection, pick the type **Standard TCP/IP over SSH**. You now get two blocks of fields: the SSH ones, which are the route to the machine, and the MySQL ones, which are what happens once you are inside it.

Field	What to put in it
SSH Hostname	The server name, then a colon, then `2299`. The SSH port here is **not 22**, and forgetting that is the number one cause of «it will not connect».
SSH Username	Your cPanel user.
SSH Password	Your cPanel password, or a key file if you prefer keys.
MySQL Hostname	`127.0.0.1`. This trips everybody up: by this point you are already inside the server, so the address is the server as seen from within itself.
MySQL Server Port	`3306`.
Username	The DATABASE user, prefix included.
Password	That user's password. If you do not have it, set it again in cPanel: it is never shown again after it is created.

Test before you save.
Workbench has a *Test Connection* button that runs the whole chain and tells you which step failed. Fail at the SSH stage and it is the login or the port; fail at the MySQL stage and it is the database user. Two different problems, two different cures.

What about a direct connection, with no tunnel?

It exists, and there are cases for it: a desktop application that always connects from the same office, for instance. But two things have to be true at once, and one is not enough.

1. **Your IP address has to be allowed**, in cPanel, under **Remote MySQL**. Without that the server refuses the connection even with the right password.

2. **The port has to be open to the outside**, and by default it is not. That part is not in cPanel: talk to us, and we will tell you whether it fits your case and what it means.

3. **Your IP has to be fixed.** If it changes from one day to the next, as most home connections do, you will spend your life adding it back to the list. To find yours, see **how to find your public IP address**.

Side by side, the tunnel wins nearly every time: it works from any network, it exposes the database to nobody, and it needs no permission from us.

What usually goes wrong

What you see	What it is
It hangs and gives up	Almost certainly a direct connection instead of a tunnel, or port 22 typed into the SSH box instead of 2299.
Access denied for user	The database user is right but was never attached to the database, or was attached without full privileges. Go back to **Add User To Database** in cPanel.
Unknown database	The account prefix is missing from the name. The full name is the one listed in cPanel, not the one you typed when you created it.
A warning about the server version	The server runs MariaDB, which Workbench talks to happily but does not always recognise by number. The warning is harmless: carry on.
It connected yesterday, not today	If you were on a direct connection, your IP changed. If you were on a tunnel and it stopped, the firewall may have blocked your IP after failed attempts: see **why the firewall blocks your IP**.

Do not edit real data without a copy to hand.
Workbench runs what you tell it, with no second question. An `UPDATE` with no `WHERE` wipes the whole column in under a second. Take the copy first: **making and keeping your own backup**.

NEED A HAND?

Cannot find Terminal or SSH Access in your cPanel? Ask us and we will check.

Open a support ticket →

In our plans

Every shared hosting plan includes SSH access, so the tunnel described in this article is open to you whichever plan you are on. Your SSH login is your cPanel user and password. Every plan also has PostgreSQL as well as MySQL, and the number of databases is unlimited, so you can keep one database per project. To confirm on your own account, open cPanel and look for Terminal or SSH Access: if either is there, SSH is on. If neither appears, or the login is refused, open a ticket and we will check the account.

SEE ALSO

- **Hosting plans and what each one includes**
- **Support Policy: how far our help goes**

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