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Setting up FileZilla from scratch: the Site Manager, field by field

Files & FTP

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Setting up FileZilla from scratch: the Site Manager, field by field

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Creating the FTP account in cPanel and connecting for the first time is already written down in **FTP accounts and connecting with FileZilla**. This article is the step before and the step after: installing FileZilla without picking up passengers, understanding what those four windows are, and leaving the program configured so it never bothers you again.

Downloading it without the junk

FileZilla is free software, which is exactly why dozens of sites redistribute it with other programs glued underneath. One rule: **get it from the official FileZilla project site**, and nowhere else.

1. **Pick the *Client*, not the *Server*.** The *Server* turns your computer into an FTP server, which is not what you want.

2. **Read the installer screens.** If one offers you a toolbar, an antivirus or a search engine, decline it. FileZilla works perfectly without any of that.

3. **Open it and check the version** in the help menu. If the program will not tell you which one it is, uninstall it and go back to the official site.

The four windows, and what each is for

The first time you open FileZilla it looks like a cockpit. It is not: it is four boxes, and once you know the name of each you never get lost again.

Window	What it shows
The strip of text at the top	The conversation with the server. It is ugly and it is the single most useful thing in the program: when something fails, the reason is written there, with a number attached.

Window	What it shows
Left-hand side	Your computer. Folder tree on top, files of the chosen folder below.
Right-hand side	The server. Same layout. Empty means you are not connected yet.
The queue, at the bottom	What is waiting to transfer, what failed, and what finished, in three tabs. The failed tab is the one people forget and the one that matters.

Save the site instead of retyping everything

There is a *quickconnect* bar at the top where you can type a host and a password and hit connect. **Do not get into that habit.** Quickconnect does not remember the encryption setting or passive mode, which is why half of all FTP trouble starts there. Use the **Site Manager**, under the *File* menu.

Field, on the general tab	What to put in it
Host	`ftp.` followed by your domain, or the server name we gave you.
Port	`21`.
Protocol	**FTP**. SFTP is a different thing and has its own article: **SFTP instead of FTP**.
Encryption	**Require explicit FTP over TLS**. Do not pick the option that allows plain FTP: that one sends your password readable across the network.
Logon type	*Normal* if you want the password saved, *Ask for password* if you would rather type it each time. Read the warning below before deciding.
User	The full FTP account including the domain, exactly as cPanel shows it.

On the *Advanced* tab it is worth filling in the **default remote directory** as `/public_html`. From then on the program opens inside the website, and the risk of uploading outside it disappears. The same page lets you pin the local folder, if you always work from the same place.

On the *Transfer Settings* tab, choose **Passive** and limit simultaneous connections to two or three. That is not just to follow the rules: with fewer connections, uploads almost always finish sooner, and you avoid the too-many-connections error explained in **common FTP errors**.

> **FileZilla stores passwords in plain text**
> , in a file on your computer, unless you tell it otherwise. If the computer is shared, or travels with you, go into settings, the interface section, and choose to **protect saved passwords with a master password**. You then have one to remember, and the rest stop being readable.

Two settings that save you grief

1. **The timeout.** In settings, under connection, there is a timeout in seconds. On a slow or unstable line, raising it fixes half of all uploads that die partway.

2. **Keep alive.** On the same page, the option that sends keep-alive signals stops the server hanging up while you are lining up the next transfer.

3. **The certificate, on the first connection.** A window appears showing the server certificate. Check the name matches, accept it, and tick the option to trust it in future. It will not ask again.

Save one site entry per website, not one for everything.
If you look after several sites, each with its own FTP account limited to its own folder, you can never absent-mindedly upload to the wrong one. It is the most expensive mistake and the easiest to design away.

With the site saved and tested, what comes next is getting the website in there: **uploading your website to the hosting**.

NEED A HAND?

Set it all up and it still will not connect? Copy the log strip at the top and send it to us: it says why.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

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