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Rebuilding the wp-config.php connection

Frameworks, Composer & Git

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Rebuilding the wp-config.php connection

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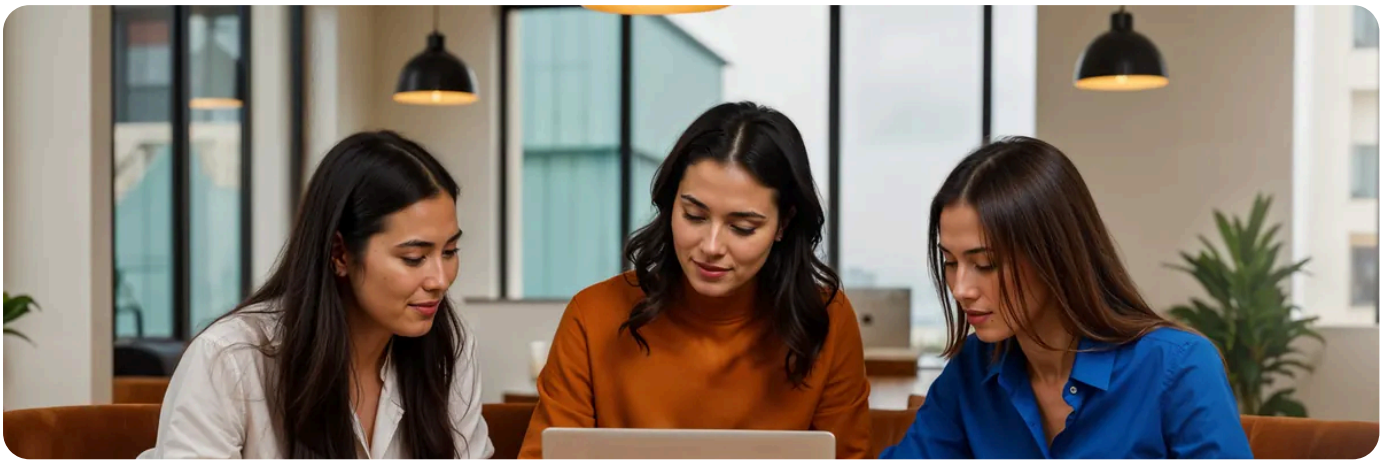

`wp-config.php` is the file that tells WordPress which database to connect to, and with what password. Without it, WordPress shows the installation screen, as though the site had never existed. Rebuilding it is a ten-minute job, as long as you do things in this order.

You need this when the file was deleted, got damaged (one bad edit is enough), or came from another server carrying details that mean nothing here.

> **Do not start without the database name.**
> If you still have the old file, even broken, open it and note `DB_NAME`, `DB_USER` and above all `$table_prefix`. If it is gone, start with **finding out which database this WordPress uses**.

What the file has to contain

Line	What it is
`DB_NAME`	The database name, with the account prefix in front.
`DB_USER`	The MySQL user, also prefixed.
`DB_PASSWORD`	That user's password. If you do not know it, set a new one in cPanel and use that.
`DB_HOST`	Here it is `localhost`.
`$table_prefix`	**This is the one most people get wrong.** It has to be exactly the prefix of the tables sitting in the database. If the tables are called `xyz_posts`, the prefix is `xyz_` and not `wp_`.
The security keys	Eight long lines of random text that encrypt the session cookies. They do not have to be the old ones.

Step by step

1. **Keep what is there.** If a `wp-config.php` still exists, download it to your computer before touching anything. Do not rename it to `.bak` or `.txt` inside `public_html`: files like that are served as plain text and the password goes public.

2. **Confirm the prefix.** Open phpMyAdmin, go into the site's database and look at the table names. Whatever comes before `posts` and `options` is the prefix.

3. **Start from the template.** There is a `wp-config-sample.php` in the site folder. Copy it (right click, *Copy*) to `wp-config.php` and edit the copy. Never edit the template.

4. **Fill in the five lines** from the table above, with single quotes and a semicolon at the end of each, exactly as the template has them.

5. **Replace the security keys.** In the template they are a block with *put your unique phrase here* repeated. Replace each one with a long, different phrase. If you would rather not invent them: **password generator**.

6. **Save and open the site.** If it opens, you are done.

! **Changing the keys signs everybody out.**
You included. Open sessions drop and you have to sign in again. It is not a defect, and it is in fact the fastest way to eject anyone who should not be there. But know it is coming.

The symptoms, and what each one means

After saving you see	What is wrong
The WordPress installation screen	The connection works, but WordPress cannot find its tables. Nearly always the wrong `$table_prefix`. Second possibility: you connected to the wrong database, which is empty.
«Error establishing a database connection»	Name, user, password or the link between them: **the causes, in order**.
A blank page	A syntax error in the file: a missing quote, a forgotten semicolon, or spaces after the closing `?>`. See **common WordPress errors**.
The site opens but images and menus do not	The database is right and the address stored in it is not. That is fixed in `wp_options`: **cannot get into the dashboard**.

Two lines worth adding

Since the file is open anyway, there are two lines that save work later. They go above the line saying *That's all, stop editing*.

Line	What for
`define( 'WP_HOME', 'https://asuaempresa.ao' );` and `define( 'WP_SITEURL', 'https://asuaempresa.ao' );`	They force the site address, overriding whatever is in the database. It is the remedy for redirect loops after changing domain.
`define( 'DISALLOW_FILE_EDIT', true );`	Switches off the theme and *plugin* editor in the dashboard, which is the first tool anyone who gets in uninvited reaches for.

Set the permissions at the end.
In File Manager, right-click wp-config.php, **Permissions**, and set **600**. It is the file with the database password: only the account needs to read it. If the site stops opening at 600, use 640.

If the file will not work again

A `wp-config.php` from a day the site worked is in the backups, and it comes back on its own without restoring the whole site: **how to restore your data**. It is the short route once you have tried twice.

NEED A HAND?

Lost the file and not sure which database belongs to the site?

Ask before deleting →

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- **Password generator** →
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