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Hosting an AI agent: why it needs a VPS and not shared hosting

Agents & AI on a VPS

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Hosting an AI agent: why it needs a VPS and not shared hosting

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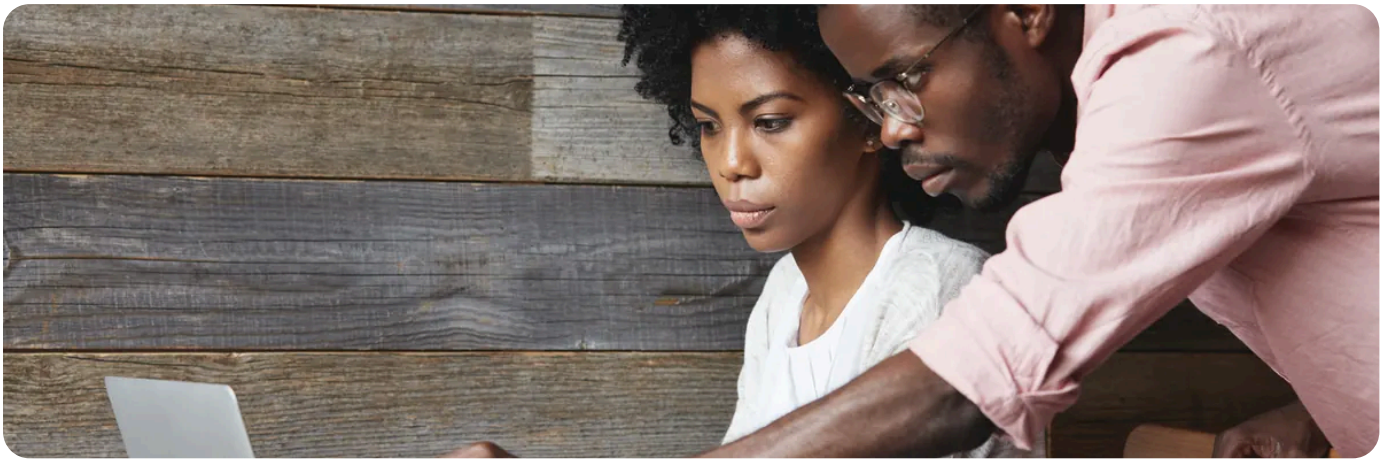

An AI agent that runs on your own server (such as OpenClaw) is a program that has to **stay running all the time, have root access and be reachable on a public IP**. Shared hosting gives you a space within limits, with no root and no way to install system software. So the right place is a VPS, a Cloud server or a dedicated server. It is not a question of power, it is one of **permissions and kind of work**.

What the agent asks for and what shared hosting gives

The agent asks for	Shared hosting	VPS
Root and SSH to install and configure	No root. SSH exists on many accounts, but only inside the account.	Yes, root access over SSH
A process running all the time, in the background	Long-running processes are limited by the server	Yes, as a system service
Recent Node.js (22.14 at minimum, in OpenClaw's case)	cPanel has "Setup Node.js App" with several versions, aimed at web applications	Install whatever version you like
Memory sized for the agent	Shared and limited per account. See **the limits nobody advertises**.	The plan's own, yours alone
Choosing and opening ports	Server ports are not changed	Yes, with the firewall you choose
Installing system software (Docker, a headless browser)	No	Yes. See **installing Docker on a VPS**.

The row in the table that misleads most is Node.js. It is true that cPanel has **Setup Node.js App**, with many versions, but it is designed for web applications that answer visitors' requests, managed by the server within the account's limits. An agent is something else: an autonomous process that decides what to do, runs commands and talks to

outside services.

What can stay on shared hosting

1. **The website that shows the assistant.** The model provider does the thinking. The site makes a call outward. See **the options for an assistant on your site**.
2. **WordPress AI plugins,** which write texts or answer visitors through a model API.
3. **Small scheduled scripts** (a PHP in cron) that call a model, as long as they fit the account's limits.

What needs a VPS

1. **Agents such as OpenClaw,** which run commands and stay connected to messaging channels. See **what you need**.
2. **Automation tools such as n8n,** which receive webhooks all day.
3. **Remote MCP servers** and any application with permanent connections.
4. **Local models** with Ollama, which need real memory.

Moving from shared hosting to a VPS is not automatic.
It is another server, with another IP address and no cPanel handling everything. Installing and maintaining whatever you put there is up to you. See **managed or unmanaged VPS**.

If you are torn between the options, see the full comparison in **shared hosting or VPS**. Plan specifications are on the **VPS**, **Cloud** and **Dedicated** pages.

NEED A HAND?

Not sure whether your project fits shared hosting or needs a VPS? Describe it and we will tell you what we see.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- What OpenClaw is, and what you need to run it
- Shared hosting vs VPS: which one does your project need?
- The limits nobody advertises: inodes, processes and memory
- VPS plans

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

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