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# A scheduled report by e-mail: a script, a cron job and an SMTP account

Automation & n8n

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# A scheduled report by e-mail: a script, a cron job and an SMTP account

Automation & n8n Created on **October 10, 2026** 3 min read



To get a summary of the site in your e-mail every morning (the day's orders, enquiries received, new sign-ups) you need **three pieces**: a PHP script that fetches the figures from the database, an e-mail account the message goes out through, and a cron job that runs the script at the set time. All of it fits on a shared hosting plan.

## The three pieces

| Piece | What it does | Watch out for |
|---|---|---|
| **PHP script** | Runs the query, writes the text and sends it. | Keep it outside `public_html`. Credentials go in a separate file. |
| **SMTP account** | It is how the e-mail goes out. | Use a mailbox on your domain, with the connection details cPanel shows for that account. |
| **Cron job** | Runs the script at the right time. | The time is the server's. |

## Step by step

1. **Decide which figures.** Three or four are enough: how many orders, how many enquiries, how many new sign-ups. A report nobody reads to the end stops being opened.

2. **Create a read-only database user.** In cPanel, under MySQL Databases, create a user and give it only the query permission (SELECT). If the report is stolen, nobody can change anything.

3. **Write the script.** It connects with that user, runs the queries and builds plain text with the date in the subject. To send, use PHPMailer with SMTP: see **sending e-mail from your own code with PHPMailer**.

4 **Run it by hand once** and confirm the e-mail arrives, and arrives in the inbox.

5 **Schedule it.** Once a day, at an hour when the server is quiet, such as the small hours or before you reach work. The line has the full path to PHP and to the script: see **running a PHP script from a cron job**.

6 **Keep a log.** Add `>> /home/ACCOUNT/report.log 2>&1` to the line, so you know what happened if one day the e-mail does not come.

**Design the report to be read in ten seconds.** The most important figure in the e-mail subject, the rest in a few lines, always in the same order. Compare with yesterday or last week: a figure on its own says little, a change says a lot. If you want more detail, add a link rather than a huge table.

! **Do not put too much personal data in the e-mail.**
A report with full names, phone numbers and amounts stays in mailboxes, copies and phones. Send totals and counts, and a link to the panel where the detail is protected.

If the report lands in the junk folder, the problem is the domain and not the script: see **SPF, DKIM and DMARC: why your e-mail lands in spam**. If the database user or password changes, the script fails silently and the e-mail simply stops arriving. That is one more reason to notice when it is missing.

**Make the script report when there is nothing**
: “today, zero orders”. If a day’s e-mail goes missing, you know at once the problem is the job and not the business.

RECOMMENDED
Need a plan with cPanel, cron and mailboxes? See the hosting plans.
See the plans →

SEE ALSO

- Sending e-mail from your own code with PHPMailer →
- Running a PHP script from a cron job →
- Cron jobs: what they are for and how to create one →

**Hosting plans** →

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## Interweb Mozambique

**RLX Holdings, S.A. · Group RLX Holdings**

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