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Running a Python script on a schedule in cPanel

Cron Jobs

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Running a Python script on a schedule in cPanel

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To run a Python script every day or every hour in cPanel, the recipe is: create a **Python application** (just to get the virtual environment with your libraries) and make the **cron job call that environment's Python**, with the script's full path. The commonest mistake is calling the system's Python, which does not have the libraries you installed.

Step by step

1. **Create the application in "Setup Python App".** Choose the Python version and a folder for the application. It does not have to be a website: the application serves as the environment. See **Python in cPanel: virtual environments and pip**.

2. **Install the libraries inside that environment**, with the application's own pip and a `requirements.txt` file. Outside the environment, the libraries do not end up where the script will look for them.

3. **Put the script in a folder outside** `public_html`, and use full paths in it for every file it reads or writes. Cron does not start in your folder.

4. **Find the environment's Python.** The application screen shows the command that activates it, with a path ending in `bin/activate`. Copy that path and swap `activate` for `python`: that is the environment's Python.

5. **Write the cron line:** the environment's Python path, a space, the script path, and `>> /home/ACCOUNT/job.log 2>&1` at the end. For the schedule, see **cron schedule examples**.

6. **Test the same line by hand** in the Terminal, if your account has one, before you schedule it.

What usually goes wrong

Symptom	Cause	What to do
`ModuleNotFoundError` only in cron	Cron used the system's Python.	Use the virtual environment's Python path.
It cannot find a config file	A relative path.	Full paths, or work out the folder from the script itself.
The log stays empty or only fills at the end	Output is held in memory and only comes out when the program ends.	Run with `python -u` or write `flush=True` in your `print` calls.
Two runs at the same time	The first has not finished when the second starts.	Lengthen the interval, or use a lock file.
The application's variables do not exist in cron	Variables set on the application screen belong to the application, not to cron.	Read the configuration from a file outside `public_html`.

Long, heavy scripts do not belong on a shared plan.
There are limits on CPU, memory and processes, and a script that exceeds them is stopped. Split the work into short parts, or use a VPS. See **the limits nobody advertises**.

Write an end line to the log
, with the date and the result. A log that finishes is proof the script reached the end and was not cut off halfway.

RECOMMENDED
Want a plan with Python and cron in cPanel? See the hosting plans.
See the plans →

Where to see it in your account

The Python versions you can use are the ones your cPanel offers, so read them there: open **Setup Python App** and start creating an application, and the available versions appear in the version field. If the Setup Python App icon is not in your cPanel, ask us whether your plan can have it, because the recipe above depends on it. To find out whether your account also has a command line, look for **Terminal** or **SSH Access** in cPanel: if either appears, the account has SSH. If you need a specific Python version or full control of the environment, a VPS gives you full SSH access and lets you install what you need.

SEE ALSO

- **Python in cPanel: virtual environments and pip**
- **Cron jobs: what they are for and how to create one**
- **A cron job that does not run or sends no output: a checklist**

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