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cPanel, DirectAdmin or Plesk: what actually differs between control panels

Comparisons and alternatives

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cPanel, DirectAdmin or Plesk: what actually differs between control panels

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They do the same job with different menus. All three are hosting control panels: a web page where you create e-mail accounts, databases, domains, DNS records and backups without typing commands. On our hosting accounts the panel is **cPanel**. What changes between panels is the naming, where things sit and the operating system they run on, not what you can do with your site.

What is the same in every panel

A panel is the layer between you and the server. Whatever it is called, you will always find the same areas: a file manager, e-mail accounts, databases, a DNS zone editor, SSL certificates, backups and a list of the domains on the account. Anyone who learned one panel recognises the others within ten minutes, because they look for the same words.

What changes from one panel to another

Aspect	What varies
Operating system	cPanel runs on Linux. Plesk runs on Linux and on Windows, which is why it is the one usually found on Windows servers. DirectAdmin is also a Linux panel.
User levels	With cPanel the end customer has cPanel, and whoever runs the server (or resells) has WHM, which is a separate panel. The other two organise their levels in their own way. For an ordinary customer, only the panel of their own account matters.
Names and menus	The same function has another name and another place. What cPanel calls “Zone Editor” is “DNS” or “DNS records” elsewhere. Search for the function, not for a memorised name.
Installers and extras	Each panel has its own tools around it (application installer, WordPress manager, backups). What exists on your account depends on what the provider has switched on.
Help available	The more widely a panel is used, the more tutorials and answers exist. That matters more than it seems when something goes wrong at eleven at night.

Do not confuse the panel with your client area

My Interweb is your account with us: invoices, services, domains and support tickets. cPanel is the technical panel of the hosting service. They are two things with two passwords, and changing one does not change the other. See **what you can do in cPanel** and **your first thirty minutes in cPanel**.

When the choice of panel is yours

1. **On a shared hosting account** you do not choose: the panel comes with the service and it is cPanel. The decision that is yours is the plan, not the panel. See the **hosting plans**.

2. **If you are coming from another provider** with another panel, your site moves without trouble: files, database and e-mail pass from one panel to the other. What does not come along is the panel itself. See **how to migrate without downtime**.

3. **On a VPS or dedicated server** no panel comes by default. Installing a third-party panel (which normally needs its own licence) is your decision, and the installation, the updates and the security become yours. See **managed or unmanaged VPS**.

Changing panel is not just changing menus.
One panel’s backups almost never restore straight into another. What you take with you is the content (files, database, mailboxes), and the settings are redone by hand in the new panel. Note the important ones (PHP version, scheduled tasks, redirects) before you leave.

When you change panel, carry a list of functions, not of clicks.
Write “create e-mail, point the domain, install SSL, take a backup” and look for each one in the new panel. It is quicker than memorising where each button used to be in the old one.

NEED A HAND?

Coming from another panel and wondering what carries over to cPanel? Tell us what you have and we will go through it with you.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

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