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Keeping a command running after you close SSH: tmux and screen

Command Line Basics

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Keeping a command running after you close SSH: tmux and screen

Command Line Basics Created on **October 15, 2026** 2 min read



The short answer: when you close the SSH window, or the connection drops, the system ends the programs that were running in it. **tmux** (and **screen**) solve that: they open a session that **keeps running on the server** even without you, and that you return to whenever you like.

tmux, the essentials

1. **Install it,** if it is not there: `sudo apt install tmux` (Ubuntu and Debian).
2. **Open a named session:** `tmux new -s work`. Run the slow command in it (a big copy, a migration, an `rsync`).
3. **Leave without closing it:** press `Ctrl+b`, release, then `d`. You are back at the normal command line and the session keeps running.
4. **See the sessions that exist:** `tmux ls`.
5. **Go back to it,** even after closing SSH and logging in again: `tmux attach -t work`.
6. **End it** when done: type `exit` inside it, or `tmux kill-session -t work` from outside.

The same with screen

To	screen
Open a session	`screen -S work`

To	screen
Leave without closing	`Ctrl+a`, release, and `d`
See the sessions	`screen -ls`
Go back to one	`screen -r work`

What about nohup?

For a single command you do not need to watch afterwards, `nohup` is enough: `nohup ./my-script.sh &`. The output goes to the file `nohup.out`. But you cannot "walk back into" it. To watch it live, use tmux.

A tmux session does not survive a server restart.
For an application that must always be running, and come back by itself after a restart, do not use tmux: use a system service (systemd). See **FastAPI on a VPS**, which shows an example.

If your SSH connection drops often, see **Common VPS and Cloud errors**. And for tasks that run at set times, do not use sessions: see **Cron jobs**.

NEED A HAND?

Have a long task on a VPS and not sure how to leave it running safely? Open a ticket describing what you want to do.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **Cron jobs: what they are for and how to create one**
- **FastAPI on a VPS: uvicorn workers, proxy headers and a service that restarts**
- **How to see what is using CPU, memory and disk on your VPS**
- **Common VPS and Cloud errors: SSH, memory, disk and reboots**

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