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SSH shortcuts: the config file, and copying files with scp

VPS & Servers

CODE

RLX-MZ-KB-1724

VERSION

v2026.10.15

COUNTRY · LANGUAGE

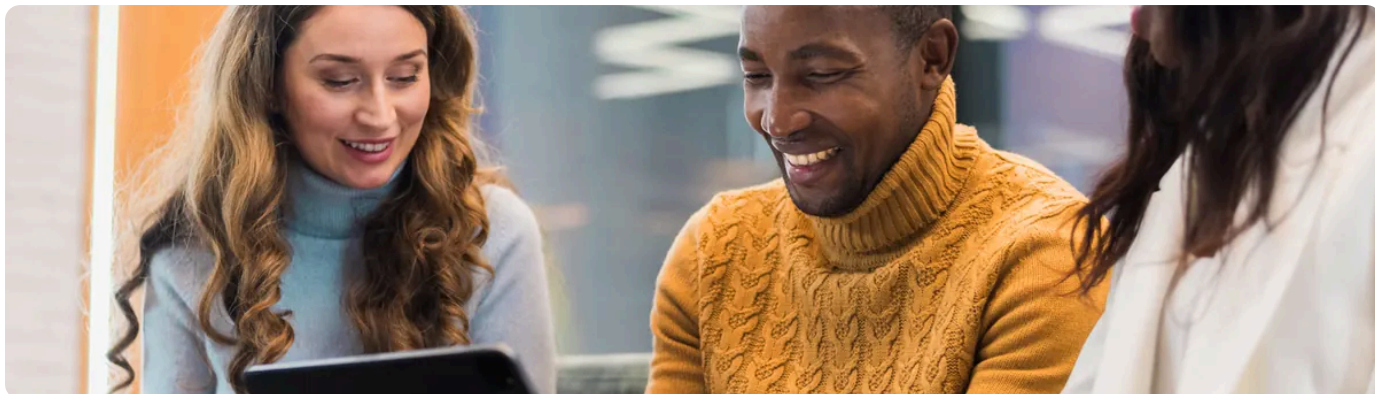
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The short answer: instead of always typing `ssh -p 2222 -i ~/.ssh/key user@203.0.113.10`, you can give the server a name in a file and type just `ssh my-vps`. The same name works for **scp**, which copies files between your computer and the server.

The config file

1

Open (or create) the file `~/.ssh/config` on your computer. On Windows 10 and 11, with the OpenSSH client that comes with the system, it is `C:\Users\YOUR-NAME\.ssh\config`.

2

Add an entry per server:

```
Host my-vps
HostName 203.0.113.10
User username
Port 22
IdentityFile ~/.ssh/id_ed25519
ServerAliveInterval 60
```

3

Connect with `ssh my-vps`. The `HostName` is the server's address, the `Port` is the port (if you changed it, see **How to change the SSH port without locking yourself out**) and the `IdentityFile` is the key. To create a key, see **How to create an SSH key**.

4

On Linux and Mac, protect the file: `chmod 600 ~/.ssh/config`. SSH refuses configuration files that other users could change.

The `ServerAliveInterval 60` sends a signal every minute, so an idle connection is not cut for inactivity. If your connection drops often, see also **Keeping a command running after you close SSH**.

Copying with scp

To	Command
Send a file to the server	<code>scp site.zip my-vps:/home/username/</code>
Bring a file from the server	<code>scp my-vps:/var/log/app.log .</code>
Copy a whole folder	<code>scp -r folder my-vps:/home/username/</code>
Use a different port, without the config	<code>scp -P 2222 file username@203.0.113.10:/path/</code>

The port letter changes: ssh uses a lowercase `-p`, and scp uses an uppercase `-P`. It is the most common mistake. With the config file, you need neither.

For big copies, which may be interrupted, or to synchronise a folder, **rsync** resumes where it stopped and sends only what changed: see **Copying files to another server with rsync**. If you lost access, see **I have lost SSH access to my server**.

Cannot connect to the server however many shortcuts you make? Open a ticket with the SSH error message.

[Open a support ticket](#)

SEE ALSO

[How to create an SSH key and log in to your VPS without a password](#)

[How to change the SSH port without locking yourself out](#)

[Copying files to another server with rsync, safely](#)

[SFTP instead of FTP: when you can, and why it is better](#)



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