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Orange cloud or grey cloud at Cloudflare: which records to proxy and which to leave DNS only

Speed, Cache & CDN

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The short answer: every record in Cloudflare's DNS has a cloud beside it. **Orange** (Proxied) means visitors talk to Cloudflare and Cloudflare fetches what it needs from the server. **Grey** (DNS only) means Cloudflare just answers the DNS question and the traffic goes straight to the server. The website goes orange; anything that is not a web page (mail, FTP, SSH) and the admin logins stay grey. Getting this wrong in a hurry is the most common reason mail stops after the move. Cloudflare is a third-party service: the account is yours, opened on their site, and we do not sell it.

Record by record

Record	Cloud	Why
The domain (@) and www	Orange	This is the website: it gains caching, filtering and the certificate at the door.
MX	None	An MX is never proxied: it points at a name, and that name is what matters. Cloudflare does not even show the switch.
The name the MX points to (usually mail)	Grey	Mail uses ports and protocols the proxy does not carry. Orange, mail stops arriving and mail apps stop connecting.
cpanel, webmail, ftp and the e-mail setup names (autodiscover, autoconfig)	Grey	Admin and setup access: they should reach the server as they are, with no caching or challenges in the way.
TXT (SPF, DKIM, DMARC, verifications), CAA, SRV	None	They are information, not traffic. Copy them exactly: moving the whole zone without losing records.
A subdomain for a service on other ports (a streaming server, an app on a VPS)	Grey	The proxy only carries web traffic: ports 80 and 443 plus a short list of others Cloudflare publishes. Nothing else gets through.
A subdomain that is another site, or a web API	Orange, if you like	It behaves like the main site. Test first, especially if it receives automated calls from other systems.

Reviewing the clouds without breaking anything

1

Open the list: in the Cloudflare dashboard, pick the domain and the **DNS** section. The proxy status column says Proxied or DNS only on each line.

2

Start with mail: see which name the MX points to (almost always mail) and make sure that name is grey. If it is orange, change it now: it is mistake number one.

3

Turn the admin names grey: cpanel, webmail, ftp and the e-mail setup names, if they exist.

4

Leave orange only the domain, www and the subdomains that are websites.

5

Check from outside with the commands below (on Windows, `nslookup` does the same). A grey name returns the server's address, the same one you see in cPanel (**your hosting IP address**). An orange name returns Cloudflare addresses.

6

Test after every change: send and receive an e-mail, log in to cPanel and open the site in a private window.

```
dig +short www.yourdomain
```

```
dig +short mail.yourdomain
```

A grey cloud shows the server's address, and for mail there is no way round that. Anyone who looks up mail.yourdomain sees it. Turning mail orange to "hide the IP" hides nothing: it just takes mail offline. Cloudflare's protection is for the website, not for the whole server.

Changed a cloud and nothing seems to happen? Orange records get Cloudflare's automatic TTL; grey ones use whatever you choose. Anyone who already stored the old answer keeps it until the TTL runs out: **TTL and the four places to check**.

Mail stopped after putting the domain on Cloudflare? Tell us the domain and send a screenshot of the DNS record list there.

[Open a support ticket](#)

SEE ALSO

[Cloudflare: when it helps, how to switch it on, and the cache that fools you](#)

[Taking the whole DNS zone to Cloudflare without losing records](#)

[Putting a domain on Cloudflare](#)

[DNS records explained: A, CNAME, MX, TXT and TTL](#)

[What your hosting IP address is and where to find it](#)

[Creating a subdomain on Cloudflare](#)



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