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HestiaCP and VestaCP on a VPS: what the panel gives you and what stays your job

VPS & Servers

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This article is for people with a VPS or a dedicated server with root access. On shared plans the panel is cPanel, and you neither choose nor install another one. **The short answer: HestiaCP** is a free, open-source panel that grew out of **VestaCP**. On a Debian or Ubuntu server it installs everything a site needs: web server, PHP, databases, mail, DNS and certificates. VestaCP stopped being maintained a long time ago and should not go on a new server. HestiaCP saves you configuration work, but **it does not make the server administrator unnecessary**: updates, backups and security remain yours.

What the panel does and what stays with you

Area	With HestiaCP
Sites and PHP	Creates the domain, the folder and the Nginx configuration (alone or in front of Apache), with PHP-FPM and a choice of PHP version per domain.
Databases	Creates MariaDB or MySQL databases (and PostgreSQL, if you install it) and gives access to phpMyAdmin.
Mail	Installs Exim and Dovecot, with webmail, and generates DKIM keys. Landing in other people's inboxes still depends on you: reverse DNS, SPF, IP reputation.
DNS and certificates	Can serve DNS zones and issues Let's Encrypt certificates per domain, as long as the domain already points to the server.
Backups	Makes per-user backups and can send them to another server. A backup kept on the same disk is not a backup: set up the off-server copy and test a restore.
Updates and security	The panel updates through the system's package manager, but someone has to run it or switch on automatic updates. The panel port, SSH and the firewall are yours.
VestaCP	A stalled project, with no security fixes, and a serious incident in its own installer in the past. If you still run one, plan the move to a new server.

From an empty server to the first site

1

Check the system: HestiaCP supports Debian and Ubuntu only, and only the releases listed in its official documentation (hestiacp.com). See yours with `cat /etc/os-release`

2

Start on a freshly installed system, with no web server or database. If the VPS already has things on it, see **reinstalling your VPS system**.

3

Follow the official HestiaCP installation guide: you download a script, run it as root and choose the components (for example, no mail server if e-mail will live elsewhere). At the end, the installer shows the address, the port and the administrator details: keep them.

4

Do not use the admin account for sites. Create one user per client or project and put the domains there. That way a compromised site does not reach the others as easily.

5

Point the domain to the VPS IP and only then request the certificate in the panel: **pointing a domain at your own VPS**.

6

Keep it current: system and panel updates come through the package manager. The panel's command-line tools live in

```
/usr/local/hestia/bin and start with v- , for example: sudo apt
update && sudo apt upgrade
sudo /usr/local/hestia/bin/v-list-users
```

Do not install HestiaCP on top of VestaCP, another panel or an already configured server. The installer is made for an empty system. To leave VestaCP, prepare a new VPS with HestiaCP and move the sites, databases and mailboxes there; check the HestiaCP documentation on whether VestaCP backups restore directly or the content has to be moved by hand.

Restrict the panel port. If you only administer from one or two places, leave the panel port open to those addresses only in the firewall: **ports and firewall on a VPS**.

Considering HestiaCP for your VPS and want to know whether your system fits? Tell us the server and what will run on it.

[Open a support ticket](#)

SEE ALSO

Choosing a control panel for your VPS: what to decide before you install one

Managed or unmanaged VPS: which to choose and who does what

Keeping your VPS or dedicated server secure: the six that matter

Pointing a domain at your own VPS: nameservers and glue records

Running a mail server on your VPS with Postfix: why it is hard, and the alternative

Backing up a VPS: snapshots or files



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