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CyberPanel, aaPanel and CloudPanel on a VPS: free panels and the questions to ask first

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:** several panels with free editions install on a VPS with a single script. The most asked about are **CyberPanel**, **aaPanel** and **CloudPanel**. Each has its own character: one is built around OpenLiteSpeed, one is an app store, one leaves out e-mail on purpose. Before installing any of them, ask the same questions: **who maintains it, which systems it runs on, what it does about e-mail and how you get out of it**.

What each one is like

Panel	What sets it apart and what to check
CyberPanel	Built around **OpenLiteSpeed** (free) or LiteSpeed Enterprise (licensed), with LSCache for WordPress, mail, DNS and backups. Check that your `.htaccess` rules work: OpenLiteSpeed does not read `.htaccess` the way Apache does. See **LiteSpeed or Apache**.
aaPanel	The international edition of an existing hosting panel. It installs the stack (Nginx or Apache, PHP, MySQL) from an app store, with free and paid extensions. Check what each extension does and what it talks to before switching it on.
CloudPanel	Focused on PHP, Node.js, Python and static sites, with Nginx. **It has no mail server:** e-mail lives with another service. Good when you only want sites, bad if you need mailboxes on the server.
Others (ISPConfig, Froxlor, Webuzo...)	There are more, free and paid. The same questions work for all of them: project activity, supported systems, history of security flaws.

The questions to ask before installing

1. **Is the project alive?** Look at the dates of the latest releases and security notes on the official page or the repository. A stalled panel is the VestaCP story again: **HestiaCP and VestaCP**.

2. **Does it run on your system?** Each panel has its own list of systems and releases. Check before you order or reinstall: **which operating system to choose**.

3. **What about e-mail?** Decide whether mail stays on the VPS or elsewhere. If it stays, plan for reverse DNS, SPF, DKIM and IP reputation: **your server IP on a blocklist**.

4. **How do you get out?** Prefer panels whose backups are ordinary files and databases. Changing panels always means changing servers, and what travels is the content: **moving to cPanel from another panel**.

5. **Which ports does it open?** After installing, see what is listening and close in the firewall anything that does not need to be open to the world:
   `sudo ss -tlnp`
   `sudo ufw status verbose`

6. **Who answers when it breaks?** For free editions, the project's documentation and forum. Know where they are before you need them.

“Installs with one command” does not mean “looks after itself”. These panels run with root privileges and have their own admin port. A forgotten panel without updates is one of the most common ways a VPS gets taken over. If you will not have time to update it, a VPS without a panel may be safer.

Try it first on a test VPS, or take a snapshot before installing. Uninstalling a panel rarely leaves the system as it was: the clean way back is to restore or reinstall.

Choosing between these panels for your VPS? Tell us the sites, the operating system and whether you need e-mail on the server.

Open a support ticket

SEE ALSO

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

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

LiteSpeed or Apache: what the web server changes for your site, and what it does not

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

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