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Free or paid control panel on your VPS: what the licence buys you

VPS & Servers

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Free or paid control panel on your VPS: what the licence buys you

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The short answer: paid panels (**cPanel and WHM, Plesk, Webuzo**) come with a vendor behind them, updates that arrive on their own, reselling and tools to bring accounts over from other servers. Free panels (**HestiaCP, CloudPanel**) do the essentials with no licence, but when something breaks the help is the documentation and the community, and the work is yours. **Paying is worth it** when you sell hosting to clients, have many accounts or are coming from another panel; for a few sites of your own, run by someone at ease with SSH, free is enough.

🔍 The two families side by side

Area	Paid: cPanel and WHM, Plesk, Webuzo	Free: HestiaCP, CloudPanel
Licence	Paid, per server. We sell them as a server option: cPanel Solo Cloud (1 account), Admin Cloud (5), Pro Cloud (30) and Premier Cloud (100); Plesk Web Admin, Web Pro and Web Host, when you order or through a support ticket; Webuzo only through a support ticket.	No licence.
How many sites or accounts	Depends on the licence: with cPanel, the number of accounts; with Plesk, up to 10 domains on Web Admin, 30 on Web Pro and unlimited on Web Host.	No licence limit: the limit is the server.
Vendor support	There is a vendor team behind the product. With a licence bought from us, first-line help is ours, through a support ticket, and we escalate to the vendor.	No paid support in the documentation: HestiaCP has its forum; CloudPanel, Discord and GitHub.
Updates	On cPanel and Plesk they arrive on their own by default (automatic updates on).	By your command: on HestiaCP, <code>apt update && apt upgrade</code> ; on CloudPanel, <code>clp-update</code> , with a server image taken first.

Area	Paid: cPanel and WHM, Plesk, Webuzo	Free: HestiaCP, CloudPanel
Features	Built for people who sell hosting: e-mail, DNS, accounts with packages, WordPress tools (on Plesk, WP Toolkit is limited on Web Admin).	Narrower, each in its own way: HestiaCP brings e-mail and DNS; CloudPanel brings neither, but has site types for Node.js and Python.
Reselling	WHM gives an account reseller status, with its own privileges and nameservers. Webuzo has resellers with privileges and plans; Plesk has resellers on the Web Host edition only.	Neither describes reselling: HestiaCP has users with packages of limits; CloudPanel has roles (Admin, Site Manager, User).
Moving between servers	With a tool: WHM's Transfer Tool copies accounts, packages and configuration from another cPanel, and from Plesk too; Plesk Migrator brings them from Plesk, cPanel and DirectAdmin; Webuzo imports from cPanel, DirectAdmin and Plesk.	More by hand: HestiaCP only restores HestiaCP or VestaCP backups; on CloudPanel you move site by site (files and database).
Security	Fixes pushed by the vendor, without waiting for you.	Good foundations (HestiaCP installs a firewall and Fail2Ban; CloudPanel ships a firewall with rules and Basic Auth), but fixes only go in when you update.
Who fixes it when it breaks	The panel has a vendor that fixes it. The server and the system are still yours: the VPS is unmanaged.	You, with the documentation and the community.

➔ When paying is worth it

1 You sell hosting to clients or resell accounts. You need packages, resellers and a panel your clients already know. **Installing cPanel and WHM.**

2 You are coming from another server with cPanel, Plesk or DirectAdmin. The paid panels' migration tools bring the accounts over in one go; with the free ones, it is site by site.

3 You run many WordPress sites and want dedicated tools to manage them: **installing Plesk** or **installing Webuzo.**



When free is enough:

You have a few sites of your own and are at ease with SSH. If you want e-mail and DNS on the server, **HestiaCP** gives you both with no licence; if you only run PHP, Node.js or Python apps and e-mail lives elsewhere, **CloudPanel** is simpler. The two are compared in **HestiaCP or CloudPanel.**

**Free does not mean safe on its own.**

There are free panels we do not recommend: aaPanel and CyberPanel have had serious security flaws, used in mass attacks on servers. And **switching families later costs you**: none of the paid panels' migration tools lists HestiaCP or CloudPanel as a source, so moving from a free panel to a paid one is done by hand, site by site and mailbox by mailbox. Webuzo, HestiaCP and CloudPanel need a freshly installed system: a system reinstall is requested in a support ticket.

 NEED A HAND?

Want to move to a paid panel on the server you already have, or not sure which licence fits? Tell us how many sites and accounts you will run.

[📄 Open a support ticket →](#) **SEE ALSO**[Which control panel to install on your VPS: cPanel, Plesk, Webuzo, HestiaCP or CloudPanel](#)[Installing cPanel and WHM on your VPS, step by step](#)[Installing HestiaCP on your VPS, step by step: a free panel with e-mail](#)[Installing CloudPanel on your VPS, step by step: a free panel for PHP, Node and Python apps](#)[Managed or unmanaged VPS: which to choose and who does what](#)

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TAX ID (NUIT)	401 191 607
LEGAL ENTITY NO. (NUEL)	105 045 974
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY CODE (CAE)	62022
REGISTERED OFFICE	Bairro 7 de Setembro Vilankulo 1304 · CEP 0411-02, Inhambane, Mozambique
CONTACT	info@interweb.co.mz · +258 84 635 1111 · +258 86 635 1111 · www.interweb.co.mz
OPENING HOURS	Monday to Friday - 08 AM to 04 PM Saturday & Sunday - Closed

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