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OPENAI_API_BASE and OPENAI_API_KEY: other programs on your computer will use them too

Aider

CODE
RLX-MZ-KB-3230

VERSION
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COUNTRY · LANGUAGE
Mozambique · English

Interweb Mozambique
RLX Holdings, S.A. · Group RLX Holdings
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https://www.meu.interweb.co.mz/knowledgebase/3230

OPENAI_API_BASE and OPENAI_API_KEY: other programs on your computer will use them too

Aider · Created on **November 28, 2026** · 2 min read



Aider reads the address and the key from `OPENAI_API_BASE` and `OPENAI_API_KEY`. These are the names OpenAI uses, and they do not belong to Aider alone. Any program on the computer that reads them starts talking to the Interweb API, with your key.

What can happen

1. Another program that uses these names sends its requests to our API and spends your AI credits or your Coding Plan points.
2. If that program asks for a model that is not in the catalogue, it gets `404 model_not_found` and looks broken.
3. Windows `setx` and `export` replace whatever value was there. If you had another service's key under these names, it is gone.

Names that belong to Aider

Aider has its own names for the same two things: `AIDER_OPENAI_API_BASE` and `AIDER_OPENAI_API_KEY`. They match the `--openai-api-base` and `--openai-api-key` options, as the **Aider options list** shows. On Linux and macOS:

```
export AIDER_OPENAI_API_BASE=https://api.interweb.co.mz/v1
export AIDER_OPENAI_API_KEY="prod_..."
```

On Windows:

```
setx AIDER_OPENAI_API_BASE https://api.interweb.co.mz/v1
setx AIDER_OPENAI_API_KEY "prod_..."
```

Close the terminal and open a new one. Nothing else changes: `aider --model openai/moonshotai/kimi-k2.7-code`.

Or in the config file

The address is not a secret and can go in the `.aider.conf.yml` in your home folder:

```
openai-api-base: https://api.interweb.co.mz/v1
```

The Aider documentation also accepts `openai-api-key:` in that file, but then the key is written in a file. If you do it, only use the one in your home folder, never the one at the repository root, which can end up in Git.

Removing the old variables

On Linux and macOS, delete the two lines from `~/.bashrc` or `~/.zshrc` and, in the open terminal:

```
unset OPENAI_API_BASE OPENAI_API_KEY
```

In Windows PowerShell:

```
[Environment]::SetEnvironmentVariable("OPENAI_API_BASE", $null, "User")
[Environment]::SetEnvironmentVariable("OPENAI_API_KEY", $null, "User")
```

Then close the terminal and open a new one.

> **!** If the key ended up in a file that went into Git, or somewhere other people can see, revoke it and create another: **what to do, in the right order**.

RECOMMENDED

Want our models in Aider without touching your other programs? Visit the Coding with AI page.

See Coding with AI →

SEE ALSO

- **Installing Aider and opening it in your project with an All in One AI model** →
- **Where Aider looks for .aider.model.metadata.json: home folder, repository and start folder** →
- **Aider with All in One AI: the two variables, the openai/ prefix and the context window** →
- **An API key or token has leaked: what to do** →

Coding with AI in All in One AI →

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