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Installing a ready-made platform: what the installer does for you

cPanel & WHM

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Installing a ready-made platform: what the installer does for you

cPanel & WHM Created on **September 27, 2026** 5 min read



Your cPanel carries the **Softaculous Apps Installer**, under **Software**. It is the same tool for everything: Joomla, Drupal, Magento, PrestaShop, OpenCart, Moodle, Flarum, Mautic, Laravel and a few hundred more. On the day this article was written it offered **485 applications**.

This article covers what every installation has in common. Each platform then has its own article for what makes it different.

What the installer does for you, in seconds

1. **Creates the database and its user**, with a password you never need to see. If you want to understand what is happening underneath, read **creating databases and using phpMyAdmin**.
2. **Downloads and unpacks the files** for the version you picked, straight onto the server. Nothing goes through your computer or your FTP client.
3. **Writes the application configuration file** with the database details, the site address and the security keys.
4. **Runs the installation** and creates your administrator account.
5. **Records the installation in its list.** From then on Softaculous knows where it lives and can back it up, clone it, upgrade it or remove it.

Three questions before you press Install

Question	What to decide
At which address?	The form asks for the **protocol** (always pick **https**), the **domain** and the **directory**. Leaving the directory **empty** installs at the root of the site. Typing *shop* installs at */shop*. If you are installing on an addon domain or a subdomain, create it first: see **adding another domain or a subdomain**.
Which PHP version?	Every application demands a minimum version, and the installer refuses to go on if yours is older. You change it in **Select PHP Version**: see **changing your PHP version without breaking the site**.
Any missing PHP extensions?	Some platforms need extensions that arrive **switched off** on a new account. You turn them on in the same **Select PHP Version** screen, on the extensions tab. The table below says which.

What each platform demands, measured on our servers

These values were read from the installer itself on the day this article was written. They change when a new release lands: the screen in front of you is always the authority, and it spells out in red exactly what is missing.

Platform	Minimum PHP	Extensions you must switch on yourself
Joomla 5	8.1	None. Everything it needs is already on.
Drupal 10	8.1	None.
Drupal CMS	8.3	None.
OpenCart 4	8.1	None.
Flarum	8.2	None.
Laravel	8.2	None.
PrestaShop 8	7.2	**intl** and **fileinfo**.
Mautic	8.2	**intl**.
Magento 2.4	8.2	**intl**, **soap**, **sodium** and **fileinfo**.
Moodle 5	8.2	**intl**, **soap**, **sodium** and **fileinfo**.

Switching an extension on is one click and breaks nothing.
Open **Select PHP Version**, pick your version, go to **Extensions**, tick the box and close. The installer will then let you through. If you cannot find the option, tell us and we will switch it on.

Some versions in the list will not install, and that is the installer doing its job.
The newest Magento release asks for a database engine newer than the one our shared servers run. The installer says so and stops. Pick the previous release, which passes, or talk to us about a server of your own.

Before you install on top of something

The installer writes into the directory you give it, and anything there with the same name is overwritten.
Never point a fresh installation at the directory of a live site without taking a copy first. See **making and keeping your own backup**.

What you get afterwards

In the Softaculous installations list, each row carries a set of buttons. Not all of them exist for every platform, and this is what we measured:

Button	What it does, and where it exists
Backup	Stores files and database in a Softaculous backup that you restore from the same screen. Works for any installation.
Upgrade	Moves the installation to a newer release. Present for **Joomla**, **Drupal**, **Moodle** and WordPress.
Clone	Makes a working copy in another directory or on another domain. Present for Joomla, Drupal, Magento, PrestaShop, OpenCart, Moodle, Flarum and WordPress.
Change admin password	Present for Joomla, Drupal, PrestaShop, OpenCart, Moodle, Flarum, Mautic and WordPress. **Not present for Magento**: for that one, see **recovering the Magento administrator password**.
Import	Pulls an installation you did by hand into the list, so it gets backups and upgrades from here on. Works for all of them.

Turn on automatic upgrades and automatic backups, in that order.
Both options sit in the same installation form, under **Advanced Options**. One without the other is what produces the bad mornings.

The ones that are not in the installer

Softaculous installs PHP applications. **Django** and **Ruby on Rails** are not there, and nothing is broken: they run in another language and have their own cPanel tools, **Setup Python App** and **Setup Ruby App**. See **getting Django running** and **getting Rails running**.

Whichever platform you pick, every installation spends space and thousands of your account files. Before you fill a plan with experiments, read **the limits of your account**.

NEED A HAND?

Installer stopped with a warning you cannot decode? Copy the message and send it to us. It is nearly always one extension away.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **Hosting plans and what each one includes** →
- **Hosting migration** →
- **Support Policy** →

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