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Where each application keeps its database connection details

Databases

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Where each application keeps its database connection details

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Every website that stores anything has, somewhere in its files, four lines holding the database name, the user, the password and the host. It is the only place those things are written down, which makes it the file you open when the site stops connecting, when you move servers, or when you change a password.

The catch is that every program hides it somewhere different. Here is the list, so you do not have to hunt.

The list, by program

Program	The file, and what is in it
WordPress	`wp-config.php`, in the site root. Look for `DB_NAME`, `DB_USER`, `DB_PASSWORD` and `DB_HOST`. Just below sits `$table_prefix`, which also has to match the database.
Joomla	`configuration.php`, in the root. The lines are `$db`, `$user`, `$password`, `$host` and `$dbprefix`.
Drupal	`sites/default/settings.php`. It all sits inside a `$databases` block. That folder is usually write protected: you have to unprotect it to save, and protect it again afterwards.
Laravel and bespoke projects	`.env`, in the project root, with `DB_DATABASE`, `DB_USERNAME` and `DB_PASSWORD`. It is a hidden file: the file manager only shows it if you ask.
Magento	`app/etc/env.php`, in the `db` section.
PrestaShop	`app/config/parameters.php` on recent versions, or `config/settings.inc.php` on older ones.
OpenCart	**TWO files**: `config.php` in the root and `admin/config.php`. Change only one and half the site works while the other half goes blank, which costs the unwary an afternoon.

Program	The file, and what is in it
Moodle	`config.php`, in the root, in the `$CFG->dbname` block.
WHMCS	`configuration.php`. Here the password may be encrypted: do not rewrite it in plain text unless you know what you are doing.
phpBB	`config.php`, in the root.

Not sure which program it is?
In the cPanel file manager, open the site folder and sort by name. If you see `wp-admin` it is WordPress; `administrator` is Joomla; `artisan` is Laravel. The folder names tell you more than any guess.

How to open it and change it without breaking anything

1. **Copy the file before you touch it.** In the file manager, right click and choose *Copy*. Five seconds, and it has saved a lot of people.

2. **Edit it in the panel itself**, with *Edit* in the cPanel file manager, or over FTP with FileZilla's *View/Edit*. See **FTP accounts and connecting with FileZilla**.

3. **Change only what is between the quotes.** Do not delete the quotes, and do not delete the semicolon at the end of the line. One missing semicolon leaves the site blank and does not say why.

4. **Save, then open the site straight away.** If it went blank, put the copy back. That is what it is for.

Careful with the editor on your own computer.
A text editor that saves in a different encoding, or adds an invisible mark at the start of the file, makes the site return a blank page or a *headers already sent* warning. Edit in the panel, or use a proper code editor set to UTF-8 without BOM.

What this file is, from a security point of view

It is the key to your database written in plain text. Anyone who reads it reads everything the site stores. Three habits worth having:

1. **Never leave renamed copies in the public folder.** A `wp-config.php.bak` or a `config.old.php` stops being run by PHP and starts being served as text to anyone who guesses the name. If you need a copy, keep it outside the site folder or on your own computer.

2 **Never put it in a code repository.** It is the most common leak there is, and it is permanent: deleting it later does not delete the history.

3 **If you suspect it was seen, change the password.** In cPanel, under **MySQL Databases**, set a new one for that user and write it into the file in the same minute. Between the two the site is down, so do them back to back.

If the site stopped after you edited here, the list of causes is in **when the site cannot connect to the database**. And if what you need is to create the database and user in the first place, that is **creating databases and using phpMyAdmin**.

NEED A HAND?

Cannot find the file, or afraid to touch it? Send us the site address and we will point at it.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **Hosting plans and what each one includes** →
- **Password generator** →

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