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Automatic backups of your own application: cron and mysqldump

Making Backups

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Automatic backups of your own application: cron and mysqldump

Making Backups Created on **October 10, 2026** 3 min read



The account already has a daily copy made by us, before dawn. A copy of **your application**, made by you, serves two cases: having the database and the files to hand without waiting for a restore, and having a copy **outside the account**. The trick is a small script that does the `mysqldump` and archives the files, and a scheduled task that calls it.

Putting it together

1. **Keep the database password in a separate file**, not in the script or on the command line. Create `/home/YOURACCOUNT/.backup.cnf` with the content below and give it permission 600.

```
[client]
user=account_user
password=the-password
host=localhost
```

2. **Create the script** `/home/YOURACCOUNT/scripts/backup.sh`. The database and user names carry the account name in front. The last line deletes copies older than 7 days (an example: swap the number for the days you want to keep), and the backups folder sits **outside public_html**.

```
#!/bin/bash
DEST=/home/YOURACCOUNT/backups
DAY=$(date +%F)
mkdir -p "$DEST"
mysqldump    --defaults-extra-file=/home/YOURACCOUNT/.backup.cnf    --single-transaction
account_database | gzip > "$DEST/db-$DAY.sql.gz"
tar -czf "$DEST/files-$DAY.tar.gz" -C /home/YOURACCOUNT public_html
find "$DEST" -type f -mtime +7 -delete
```

3 **Test it by hand** in the Terminal: `bash /home/YOURACCOUNT/scripts/backup.sh`. Check that both files appeared and the sizes make sense.

4 **Schedule it** under **Cron Jobs**, at a quiet hour: `/bin/bash /home/YOURACCOUNT/scripts/backup.sh >> /home/YOURACCOUNT/scripts/backup.log 2>&1`. The time is the server's. See **cron jobs**.

5 **Take it out of the account.** Download the files over SFTP, or let your own computer fetch them at whatever time you like. See **making and keeping your own backup**.

6 **Test restoring.** For the database: `gunzip < db-DAY.sql.gz | mysql -u user -p database_name`. More in **backing up and restoring with mysqldump**.

Watch out for	Why
Outside public_html	A copy in there can be downloaded by anyone who guesses the name.
Password in the .cnf file	It stays out of the command history and the script, and with permission 600 only your account reads it.
Few local copies	They count against the account's space and its number of files. See **the limits**.
A quiet hour	A large backup uses the account's processor and disk while it runs.

A copy that sits in the same account does not protect you from losing the account.
It is for speed; to be safe, there has to be a copy somewhere else. And a copy that was never restored can be empty without anyone noticing.

Mind the % in cron.
In a cron command, the `%` character must be written `\%`. That is why the date stays inside the script, not on the cron line.

Using PostgreSQL?
`Pg_dump` plays mysqldump's part. It is explained in **backing up with mysqldump and pg_dump**. And what JetBackup keeps, and for how long, is in **how long we keep backups**.

NEED A HAND?

The job runs, but the log shows an error you cannot make sense of? Send us the cron line and the text of the log.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **Backing up with mysqldump and pg_dump, and restoring the copy** →
- **Cron jobs: what they are for and how to create one** →
- **Making and keeping your own backup, and testing that it works** →
- **How long we keep backups, and how to restore one** →

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