interweb

Generated on 15/11/2026 01:42

KNOWLEDGE BASE · PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Your first container, and what to look at when it will not start

Docker & Containers

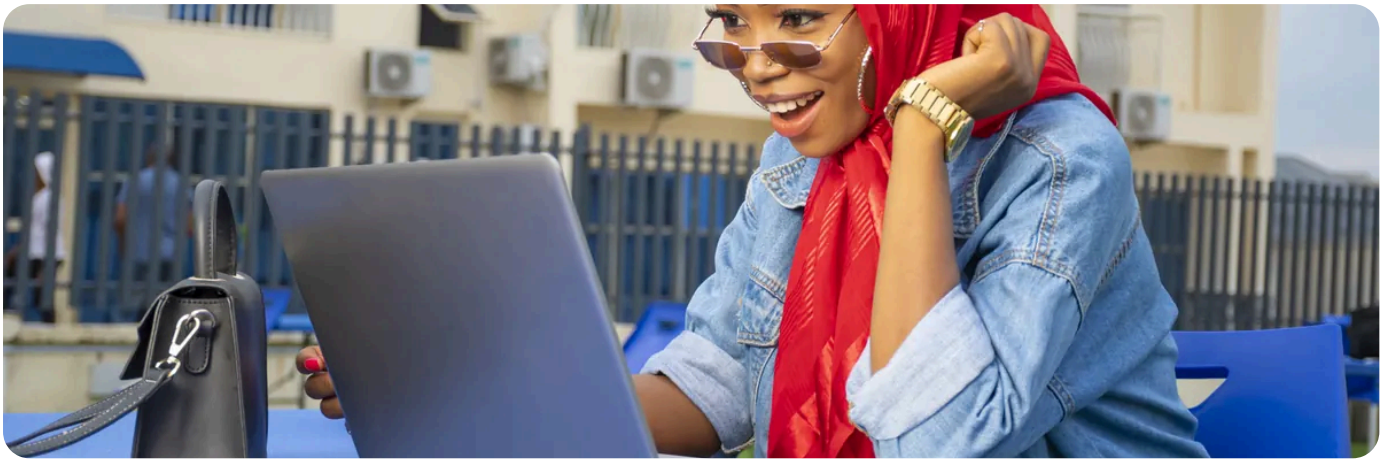
CODE	VERSION	COUNTRY · LANGUAGE
RLX-MZ-KB-880	v2026.10.10	Mozambique · English

Interweb Mozambique
RLX Holdings, S.A. · Group RLX Holdings
Tax ID (NUIT) 401 191 607 · Legal entity no. (NUEL) 105 045 974 · Economic activity code (CAE) 62022

https://www.meu.interweb.co.mz/knowledgebase/880

Your first container, and what to look at when it will not start

Docker & Containers Created on **October 10, 2026** 3 min read



A **container** is a program running in a space of its own, with everything it needs already packed in an **image**. It lives as long as its main process lives: if the program ends or fails, the container stops. Almost everything that goes wrong at first is settled with two commands, `docker ps -a` and `docker logs`. This article assumes Docker is installed on a VPS: **here is how to install it**.

Starting a test web server

1. **Start the container:**

   ```
   docker run -d --name test -p 8080:80 nginx
   ```

   The `-d` keeps it in the background, `--name` gives it a name, and `-p 8080:80` connects the server's port 8080 to the container's port 80. The `nginx` image is downloaded the first time.

2. **See whether it is up:**

   ```
   docker ps
   ```

   It shows only those running. With `docker ps -a` it shows the stopped ones too.

3. **Ask for the page,** on the server itself: `curl http://localhost:8080`. You get nginx's welcome HTML.

4. **Read the logs:** `docker logs test`, or add `-f` to follow live, and `--tail 100` for just the last lines.

5 **Stop and delete:**

```
docker stop test
docker rm test
```

Stopping does not delete. While the container exists, the name `test` stays taken.

When it will not start: what the symptom means

What you see	What it usually is	What to do
Status “Exited (0)”	The program ended normally. A container with nothing to do ends at once.	If you expected a service, the image or command is not a service. Read the image’s page.
Status “Exited (1)”	The program failed on start: a missing file, an unset variable, a configuration error.	`docker logs name` : the last line usually says why.
Status “Exited (137)”	The container was killed. Often it is the server running out of memory.	`free -h` , and see whether the VPS has free memory.
“Restarting”	It fails and starts again, in a loop, because of the restart policy.	The logs, as with Exited (1). Stop it first: `docker stop name` .
“port is already allocated”	The port you asked for is already used by something else.	`sudo ss -tlnp` shows who has it. Pick another port on the left-hand side.
“pull access denied” or “not found”	A misspelt image name, or a private image with no login.	Check the name at hub.docker.com.
“permission denied” on `docker.sock`	Your user is not in the docker group.	Use `sudo` , or see the end of the installation article.

To look inside a container that is running:

```
docker exec -it test sh
```

It opens a command line in there. Leave with `exit` . To see the full configuration (ports, volumes, variables): `docker inspect test` .

What is inside a container disappears with it.
If you delete the container, the files the program created in there go too, unless you connected a folder or a *volume*. Before putting important data in a container, read **Docker Compose: an application with its database**.

Publishing a port opens it to the world.

With `-p 8080:80` anyone can reach it, and Docker steps around the `ufw` rules. For tests on the server only, use `-p 127.0.0.1:8080:80`. See **ports and firewall on a VPS**.

NEED A HAND?

Server not answering, or SSH no longer getting in? That is ours: tell us what you see and when it began. The application inside the container is yours, and the guide above helps you find what makes it fail.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **Installing Docker and Docker Compose on a VPS** →
- **Docker Compose: an application with its database** →
- **Common VPS and Cloud errors: SSH, memory, disk and reboots** →

interweb

Interweb Mozambique

RLX Holdings, S.A. · Group RLX Holdings

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

Online version of this document

RLX-MZ-KB-880 · v2026.10.10 · Generated on 15/11/2026 01:42