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# Installing n8n with Docker Compose on a VPS

Automation & n8n

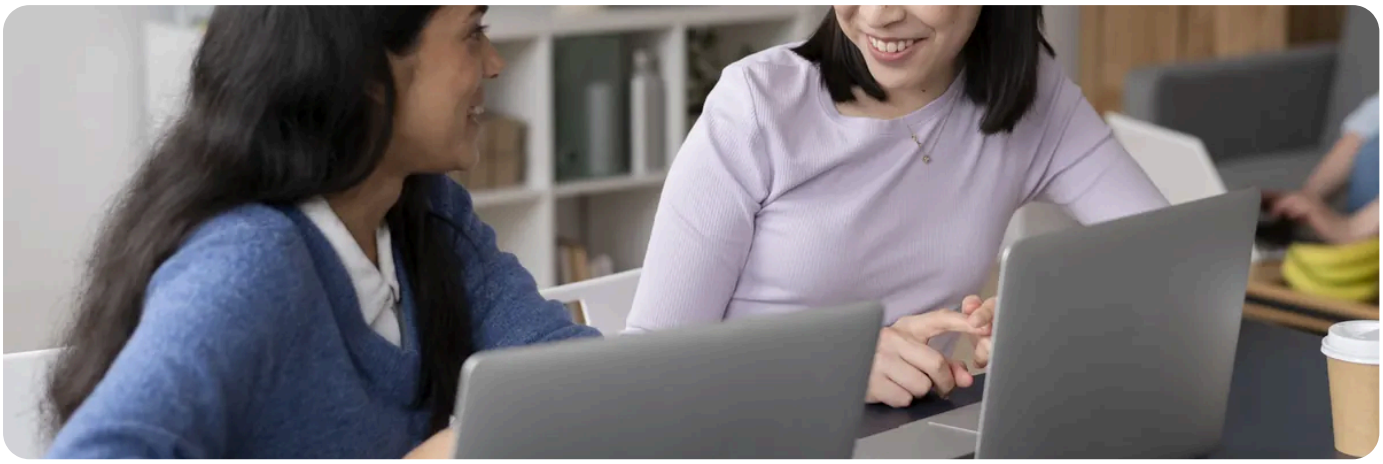
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| RLX-MZ-KB-910 | v2026.10.10 | Mozambique · English |

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# Installing n8n with Docker Compose on a VPS

Automation & n8n  Created on **October 10, 2026**  3 min read



n8n is installed on a VPS with **Docker Compose**: one file describes the container, one command starts it, and the interface appears on port **5678**. This article shows what the file needs and why. The details that change between versions are in the official n8n documentation, which you should check for the current version.

> **n8n is third-party software.**
> Installing and maintaining it is your side, on an unmanaged VPS. We do not sell n8n and our support does not install or repair it. See **how far our support goes**.

## Before you start

1. **A VPS with root access over SSH** and Docker with Docker Compose installed. If you do not have them yet, follow **installing Docker and Docker Compose on a VPS**.
2. **A domain name**, if you want to use n8n properly with HTTPS (the next article in the series, **n8n behind HTTPS on your own domain**). For a first trial, the IP address will do.
3. **An encryption key** generated by you. A common way is `openssl rand -hex 32`, which prints a random string. Keep it in a password manager, **off the server**.

## What the compose file needs

In a folder of its own (for example `/opt/n8n`) create a `compose.yaml` file with a single service. These are the points that matter:

| Field | What to put | Why |
|---|---|---|
| **image** | The official n8n image, with a pinned version. | A pinned version prevents surprise jumps. The exact image name and versions are in the official documentation. |
| **ports** | `127.0.0.1:5678:5678` | The interface is reachable only from the server itself. The HTTPS proxy gets in, not the internet. |
| **environment** | `N8N_ENCRYPTION_KEY`, `WEBHOOK_URL`, `GENERIC_TIMEZONE` | The key protects the credentials; the public address tells n8n which URL to show for webhooks; the time zone puts schedules at the right hour. |
| **volumes** | A persistent volume mounted on the n8n data folder. | Without it, workflows and credentials vanish when the container is recreated. |
| **restart** | Restart always, unless stopped by hand. | n8n comes back by itself after the server reboots. |

## Start it and check

1. In the folder of the file, run `docker compose up -d`. Docker downloads the image and starts the service in the background.
2. Confirm with `docker compose ps` that the service is running, and with `docker compose logs` that startup shows no errors.
3. While there is no HTTPS yet, come in through an SSH tunnel rather than opening the port to the world: `ssh -L 5678:localhost:5678 user@server-address`, then open `http://localhost:5678` on your computer.
4. On the first visit n8n asks you to create the **owner account**. Pick a strong, unique password.

**Do not lose or change the encryption key.**
With a different key n8n can no longer read the stored credentials. And **do not expose port 5678 straight to the internet** without HTTPS: the owner login and the credentials would travel in the clear. See **ports and firewall on a VPS**.

**Back up the compose folder from day one**
, with the data volume. See **backing up n8n**.

NEED A HAND?

The VPS does not answer, or the address does not reach the machine? Open a ticket and we will check the server.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- VPS servers →
- n8n behind HTTPS on your own domain →
- Docker Compose: an application with its database →
- Backing up n8n →

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