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Where console.log and print output goes, and how to read your app logs

Node.js, Python & Docker

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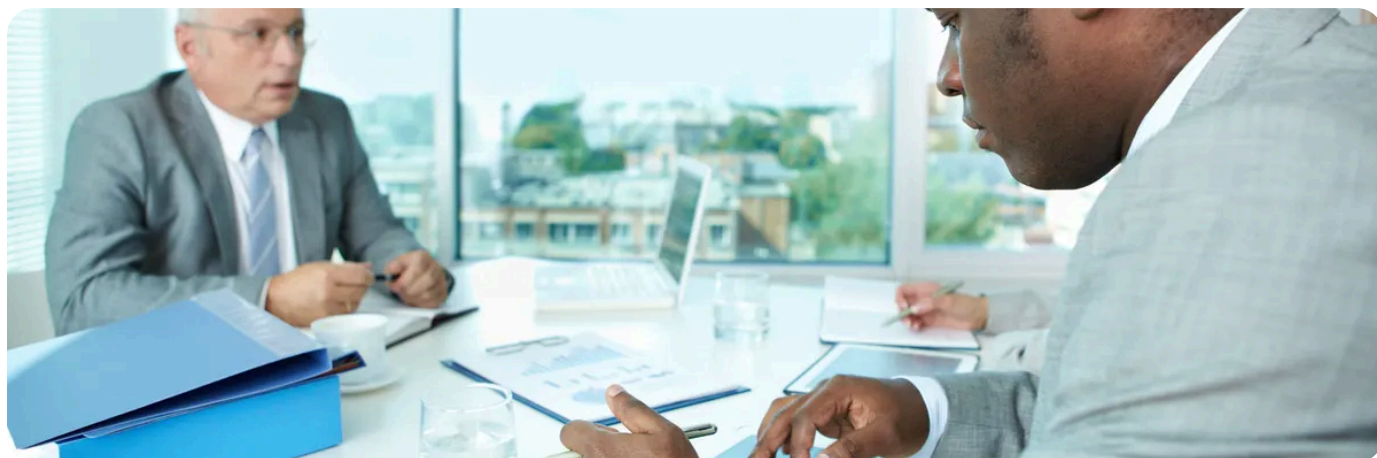
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Where console.log and print output goes, and how to read your app logs

📁 Node.js, Python & Docker

📅 Created on **October 10, 2026**

🕒 3 min read



On your computer, `console.log` (Node.js) and `print` (Python) show up on screen. A server has no screen, and the question is where they went. **The short answer:** on shared hosting, what the application writes goes to the **Passenger log**, the file you name in the *Passenger log file* field on the application screen; on a VPS it depends on what starts the application (PM2, systemd or Docker). Without that log, debugging an application is guesswork.

🔍 Where the log is, in each case

Where it runs	Where to look	Command or place
Node.js or Python in cPanel	In the file named in the <i>Passenger log file</i> field (on the “Setup Node.js App” or “Setup Python App” screen).	Name a file inside the application folder, save, restart and repeat the request. Open it in File Manager, or in Terminal with <code>tail -n 100 file.log</code> .
VPS with PM2	In PM2’s logs.	<code>pm2 logs name</code> or <code>pm2 logs --lines 100</code>
VPS with systemd	In the system journal.	<code>journalctl -u name -n 100</code> , and <code>-f</code> to follow live
Docker	In the container’s logs.	<code>docker logs name</code> or <code>docker compose logs -f service</code>

The site’s general error log is something else: it catches web server errors, not what your application writes. For that one, see **errors 500, 403, 404 and 508**.

🔄 Making it write logs you can read

1

Set the log file on the application screen (in cPanel), or use PM2’s, systemd’s or Docker’s (on a VPS).

2 Write with meaning. Instead of `console.log("here")`, say what and with which value: the request's method and path, the id of the record that was read, the whole error. Never write passwords, keys or personal data.

3 In Python, avoid the delay. When output goes to a file, `print` may be held in memory and only appear later. Use `print("text", flush=True)`, or the `logging` module, which writes at once. The environment variable `PYTHONUNBUFFERED=1` has the same effect for the whole application.

4 Restart and repeat. Make the request that fails and read the last lines: the cause is usually there. If the application will not even start, see **the causes of the 503 error**.

! A log with no limit ends up filling the disk.
On a shared account, a file that grows every day uses space, and space is limited. Delete or archive now and then, or cap the size (in Python, the `logging` module's `RotatingFileHandler` does that). On a VPS, the system journal and Docker's logs grow too: see **Docker filling the disk**.

💡 Live, in Terminal.
If the account has a terminal (**the cPanel Terminal**), `tail -f file.log` shows lines as they arrive: open the site in another tab and watch what appears. To leave, Ctrl+C.

🔊 NEED A HAND?

Have the log in front of you and cannot make sense of the last line? Send us the domain, the time of the error and that line.

 [Open a support ticket →](#)

🔗 SEE ALSO

[Node.js app in cPanel returns 503: the usual causes](#)



[Website errors explained: 500, 403, 404, 508 and what to do](#)



[The cPanel Terminal: a command line with nothing to install](#)





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