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How to publish a website on Windows Server with IIS

VPS & Servers

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How to publish a website on Windows Server with IIS

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On Windows Server the web server is **IIS** (Internet Information Services). You install it as a server role, create a *site* pointing at a folder with your files, bind a name (the domain) and a port to it, and open port 80 in the Windows firewall. This article is for a Windows Server VPS where you have the administrator access (**connecting to a Windows VPS with Remote Desktop**); what runs inside is yours, and our support does not install or repair IIS (**how far our support goes**).

➞ Step by step

- 1 Install the role.** In Server Manager, *Manage, Add Roles and Features*, and tick *Web Server (IIS)*. Or, in a PowerShell window as administrator: `Install-WindowsFeature -Name Web-Server -IncludeManagementTools`. Afterwards the server's address in a browser, from inside the server, should show IIS's welcome page.
- 2 Put the site in a folder.** For example `C:\sites\yourdomain.tld` with a test `index.html`. Avoid `C:\inetpub\wwwroot` for real sites.
- 3 Open IIS Manager** (*Internet Information Services (IIS) Manager*, or `inetmgr` in the Run box). Under *Sites*, right-click, *Add Website*.
- 4 Fill in the site:** the *Site name*, the *Physical path* (the folder), and the *Binding*: type `http`, the IP (or "All Unassigned"), port `80` and the *Host name* with your domain. The name is what allows several sites on one IP.
- 5 Settle the clash with the default site.** *Default Web Site* also listens on 80 with no name. Stop it (right-click, *Manage Website, Stop*) or give it another name or port, so it does not answer in place of yours.

6 Give read access to the site's identity. Each site runs in an *application pool* whose identity is `IIS AppPool\PoolName`. The folder must let it read; for example, from an administrator command line: `icacls "C:\sites\yourdomain.tld" /grant "IIS AppPool\yourdomain.tld:(OI)(CI)RX"`.

7 Open the port in the Windows firewall. In *Windows Defender Firewall with Advanced Security*, check that the inbound rules for web traffic (HTTP, port 80, and HTTPS, port 443) are enabled. Then point the domain at the VPS IP (**pointing a domain at your own VPS**).

? HTTPS on IIS

Import the certificate into Windows, and on the site go to *Bindings, Add*, type *https*, port 443, pick the certificate and tick *Require Server Name Indication* if you have more than one site on the IP. For free certificates there are ACME clients for Windows, third-party and open source; they are yours, and so is the renewal. Typical failures: **no padlock on your site**.

? The errors you will meet

What shows	Usual cause
403.14 Forbidden	The folder has no default page (for example <code>index.html</code>) and directory browsing is off. Create the file, or add it under <i>Default Document</i> .
401 / 403.3 (permissions)	The pool's identity cannot read the folder. Go back to the permissions step.
500.19	A configuration error: a <code>web.config</code> with bad syntax, or a rule that needs a module that is not installed (for example URL Rewrite).
503 Service Unavailable	The <i>application pool</i> is stopped or fails to start. Look under <i>Application Pools</i> and start it; Event Viewer says why.
The site opens inside the server but not from outside	The Windows firewall, the domain's address or the <i>Binding</i> . See ports and firewall .

! A Windows Server exposed to the internet is attacked every day. Keep Windows Update on, use a strong administrator password and restrict remote access: **making Remote Desktop safer**. If your site needs PHP, databases or other technologies, check that Windows is really what you want: **Linux or Windows**.

💡 IIS logs go, by default, to `C:\inetpub\logs\LogFiles`, and system errors to Event Viewer. When something fails, the reason is there. A VPS's backups are not included by default: **backing up a VPS**.

NEED A HAND?

Lost access to the Windows server? The panel console gets in without the network: tell us the service name.

[Open a support ticket →](#)**SEE ALSO**[Connecting to a Windows VPS with Remote Desktop](#)[Making Remote Desktop on a Windows VPS safer](#)[Linux or Windows hosting: which does your site need](#)[VPS server plans](#)**mozout****MozOut Mozambique**

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