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cPanel or HestiaCP on your VPS: the differences that matter

VPS & Servers

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cPanel or HestiaCP on your VPS: the differences that matter

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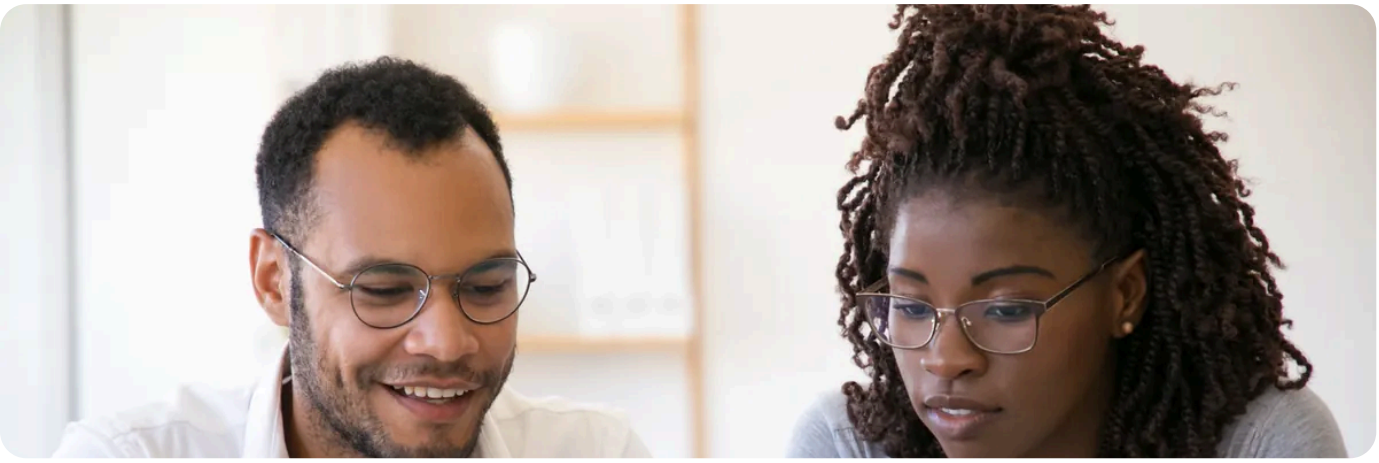

The short answer: HestiaCP is free and light, and gives you sites, e-mail and DNS on a Debian or Ubuntu VPS; **cPanel is paid** and adds resellers, WP Toolkit and the Node.js and Python app manager. Choose HestiaCP for your own sites on a tight budget; choose cPanel to sell hosting or to have the same panel as our shared hosting. And choose the system after the panel: of the systems offered at order time, there is none that runs both.

Side by side

What to compare	cPanel and WHM	HestiaCP
Licence	**Paid.** Solo Cloud (1 account), Admin Cloud (5), Pro Cloud (30) or Premier Cloud (100), when you order.	**Free** (open source, GPLv3). There is no licence.
Systems you can order	**AlmaLinux 8 and 9** (9 recommended) and **CloudLinux 8**. Ubuntu only as 24.04, through a support ticket. Rocky Linux is no longer supported.	**Debian 12 and Ubuntu 22.04.** Ubuntu 24.04 and Debian 13 through a support ticket. LTS releases only; no AlmaLinux, Rocky or CloudLinux.
Web server	Apache; NGINX can sit in front of Apache; LiteSpeed with a separate licence.	Nginx with PHP-FPM, or Nginx in front of Apache; several PHP versions.
E-mail included	Yes: Exim and Dovecot, with webmail.	Yes: Exim and Dovecot, Roundcube webmail; SpamAssassin and ClamAV optional.
DNS	Yes: its own nameserver (PowerDNS by default, or BIND; on Ubuntu, PowerDNS only).	Yes: BIND, your own nameservers, DNS cluster and DNSSEC.

What to compare	cPanel and WHM	HestiaCP
Several accounts and reselling	Yes: WHM creates cPanel accounts and resellers. The Solo licence serves 1 account, with no reselling.	Users with limit packages. The documentation has no resellers.
WordPress	WP Toolkit.	Quick install of WordPress and other applications.
Node.js and Python apps	Application Manager: Node.js, Python and Ruby, through Phusion Passenger.	No app manager in the documentation: a Node.js app sits behind an Nginx proxy template, set up by hand.
Backups	In WHM: daily, weekly or monthly, compressed or incremental; on the server, over FTP, SFTP or Rsync, or on S3 and Google Drive.	Automatic, on the server or to FTP, SFTP and Rclone; incremental with restic.
Minimum memory and disk	2 GB (4 GB recommended; 3 GB with ClamAV). Disk: 20 GB (40 GB recommended).	1 GB without SpamAssassin and ClamAV (4 GB recommended). Disk: 10 GB (40 GB recommended).
Learning curve	Two interfaces: WHM for the server, cPanel for each account (the same as on our shared hosting).	A simple panel; what it does not show is done with the v- commands on the command line.
First login	WHM at https://IP:2087, cPanel at :2083, webmail at :2096.	https://IP:8083

Choose cPanel if...

1. **You will sell hosting** or give accounts to clients: WHM creates resellers and cPanel accounts; the HestiaCP documentation has no resellers.
2. **You will run Node.js, Python or Ruby apps** next to the sites: cPanel's Application Manager handles them; on HestiaCP they are yours to run.
3. **You want what you already know** from shared hosting, with WP Toolkit. How to install: **installing cPanel and WHM**.

Choose HestiaCP if...

1. **You do not want to pay for a licence.** HestiaCP is open source (GPLv3); you pay only for the server.

2 **The server is small**: it starts with 1 GB if you leave out SpamAssassin and ClamAV, and runs Nginx with PHP-FPM. With everything on, the vendor recommends 4 GB.

3 **You prefer Debian 12 or Ubuntu 22.04** and do not mind doing part of the work with the `v-` commands. How to install: **installing HestiaCP**.

Switching from one to the other means switching system

: cPanel wants AlmaLinux or CloudLinux, HestiaCP wants Debian or Ubuntu, and both install only on a freshly installed system. It is always done with a second server (or a reinstall, requested through a support ticket, after taking the backups). From cPanel to HestiaCP there is the `v-import-cpanel` command, which imports a cPanel account backup into a new user; from HestiaCP to cPanel, the cPanel documentation has no tool: expect to rebuild the accounts. Check sites and mail before you move the domain: **pointing the domain at your VPS**.

We sell the cPanel licence as a server option

, at order time (Solo, Admin, Pro or Premier Cloud); if you already have the server, ask for it through a support ticket. For a licence bought from us, first-line help is ours, through a support ticket, and we escalate to the vendor. HestiaCP has no licence, but you still run the server yourself: **what HestiaCP gives you and what stays your job**. The rest in **free or paid panel** and **which panel to install**.

NEED A HAND?

Still torn between cPanel and HestiaCP? Tell us what the server will run and we will help you choose.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- Installing cPanel and WHM on your VPS, step by step
- Installing HestiaCP on your VPS, step by step: a free panel with e-mail
- Which control panel to install on your VPS: cPanel, Plesk, Webuzo, HestiaCP or CloudPanel
- Free or paid control panel on your VPS: what the licence buys you
- HestiaCP and VestaCP on a VPS: what the panel gives you and what stays your job

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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@mozout.co.mz · +258 84 635 1111 · +258 86 635 1111 · www.mozout.co.mz
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