Understanding cPanel

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When you want to share website-level (WordPress/Drupal/etc.) control with a collaborator
When you want to share server-level (cPanel account and/or shell access) control with a collaborator

About cPanel

cPanel is the control system that lets you manage websites and databases hosted on the web.illinois.edu platform.

cPanel offers a wide range of web hosting options to students, faculty, and staff, as well as offering easy collaboration with non-University partners through Google authentication. (However, the owner of a site must always be a person affiliated with the University.)

The biggest difference between publish.illinois.edu and web.illinois.edu is flexibility and scope. While publish.illinois.edu offers a fairly simple WordPress site, web.illinois.edu gives you a broad range of platforms, databases, and programming languages to choose from. If you’re comfortable on the command line, you can also install your own choice of options.

Comparing publish.illinois.edu and web.illinois.edu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>publish.illinois.edu (PIE)</th>
<th>web.illinois.edu (cPanel)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content creation</td>
<td>WordPress only</td>
<td>Your choice of plain HTML, WordPress, Drupal, other content management systems, database-driven sites, and/or programming-driven sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Templates and themes</td>
<td>Only specific pre-created templates and themes can be used</td>
<td>Your choice of either pre-created or custom-built templates and themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for security patching and maintenance</td>
<td>Largely centrally managed.</td>
<td>Many offerings allow automatic patching, but some systems may need your manual patch attention. If you use custom code on cPanel, you will need to take responsibility for your custom code’s security as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group site ownership</td>
<td>One option: Shared ownership of a WordPress site</td>
<td>Multiple options: Site ownership can be shared either at the cPanel level or at the individual website level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple websites per domain</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>If your group needs (for example) a WordPress-based news site, a Drupal-based research data-driven site, a GitLab-based code repository, and a PHP-based community forum all within the umbrella of yourgroup.web.illinois.edu, cPanel makes it possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quick Starts and cPanel documentation

Our Quick Starts introduce how to get going with WordPress, Drupal, Dreamweaver, and more.

The makers of cPanel also offer an extensive collection of cPanel User Documentation.

Common terms and how we’re using them

- cPanel account: A space on the web hosting server for hosting websites, databases, applications, and more. Accounts come in two types:
  - Personal Account: an account with your NetID as the domain name, owned by you. You can give others access to your personal account but it will always be your responsibility to manage and maintain.
- **Shared Account**: an account with the name of a project, organizational group or unit. Shared accounts have multiple people who own and are responsible for them.

- **Domains and subdomains**: Segments of URLs used to identify specific locations. Illinois.edu is the primary domain for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and web.illinois.edu is the subdomain used by cPanel hosting. Your account name will be a unique subdomain – for example, yournetid.web.illinois.edu or yourproject.web.illinois.edu.

- **Website**: A location where you host content such as pages, images, blog posts, etc. Your site can contain static content (HTML, Dreamweaver, Site Publisher, etc) or dynamic content managed through a content management system or other application (WordPress, Drupal, etc).
  - An account can host multiple websites and each website can have zero, one, or more applications, each in their own directory.
  - For example:
    - youraccountname: Your cPanel account
    - youraccountname.web.illinois.edu: The primary web content in your account, stored in the public_html folder
    - youraccountname.web.illinois.edu/somethingelse: Additional web content in your account, stored in public_html/somethingelse.

- **Site-level permissions** refer to the permissions needed at the website and application level – for example, WordPress or Drupal administrative permissions.

- **cPanel permissions** refer to access to the cPanel account, including the dashboard and installation permissions.

- **Shell access** refers to the ability to use SSH or SFTP to make a command-line connection to the cPanel server.

- **Application**: Software that is installed on (in this case) your cPanel server to perform particular functions. Broadly speaking, content management systems like WordPress and Drupal, databases like MySQL, and developer packages like jQuery and Ruby are all considered applications you can install on cPanel.

- **Content management system**: A particular type of application used for managing content like blogs, web pages, image galleries, and the like. WordPress and Drupal are two popular examples.

- **Reseller**: This is cPanel's term for people who can manage groups of accounts. The Illinois cPanel system is free, so there is no literal "reselling" involved; however, departmental IT pros who coordinate multiple websites may need to know the word “reseller” when navigating cPanel’s interface and documentation.

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### Understanding the difference between cPanel access and website access

By default, a new website created on the web.illinois.edu cPanel server will be world-readable, but only editable by the person associated with the account who created it. In order to allow other people to contribute to your site, you’ll need to choose how to share access.

When you're considering sharing access to your cPanel site with other people, the type of sharing you'll want to use depends on what level of control you want to offer. There are several ways to share writer, editor, and/or administrator levels of control. All of them are available to University users; some of them can be shared with external partners like collaborators from other universities and web development teams.

All cPanel sites have both a cPanel account and at least one website. The first decision to make is whether you want to share web server-level control (cPanel account type) or just web site-level control (WordPress/Drupal/etc.) with your collaborator.

#### When you want to share website-level (WordPress/Drupal/etc.) control with a collaborator

- Most of the time, this is the access level you’ll want to give people.
- For collaborators who need to add content and images, but not code
- Most likely for personal sites, semester-length student projects, etc.
- Most likely if you’re collaborating with faculty/staff/students on content

#### When you want to share server-level (cPanel account and/or shell access) control with a collaborator

- This is a more powerful access level and you won’t want to give it out often.
- Unlikely for a personal account. (A collaborator at this level would have full access to your sites.)
- For collaborators who need command line access
- Most likely for complex sites with custom development work
- Most likely for long-term sites with the potential for administrative staff turnover (RSOs, labs)
- If your collaborators need the ability to install software or databases or programming environments outside the site's content management system
- Most likely if you're collaborating with a paid external developer

For more information about appropriate permissions

See [Getting access and setting permissions](#) for more information about cPanel and website-specific permissions.