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Agents & AI on a VPS

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Agents & AI on a VPS | Created on **October 10, 2026** | Updated on **October 18, 2026** | 4 min read



Installing OpenClaw on a VPS comes down to four things: **a server with enough memory, a Node.js version that is up to it, a user of its own, and the install procedure from the official documentation**. This article covers everything except the install command itself, on purpose: the command and the current versions change, and only the **project's official documentation** keeps them right.

OpenClaw is third-party software. Installing and maintaining it is up to you, as with any unmanaged VPS (see **how far our support goes**). What we do is hand you the server.

Step by step

1. **Pick a server that is big enough.** The documentation gives 2 vCPU and 4 GB of RAM as a starting point for testing. A 1 GB VPS fails during installation for lack of memory. Our plan specifications are on the **VPS** and **Cloud** pages.

2. **Pick the operating system.** Ubuntu 22.04 LTS is the one with the most documentation around it. If the server already exists, see **reinstalling or changing your VPS operating system**.

3. **Log in over SSH and create a user of its own.** Use root only to prepare the machine. Create a normal user to run OpenClaw (on Ubuntu the command is `adduser`). The first steps are in **first steps with your VPS**.

4. **Check the Node.js version.** Run `node --version`. The documentation asks for 22.14 at minimum and recommends 24. Many VPS images ship 18 or 20, and then you have to upgrade. The project's install procedure may handle this for you: confirm it in the documentation.

5. **Follow the official install procedure.** Open the OpenClaw documentation, copy the command and options for the current version from there, and run them as the user you created. Do not use commands from a forum or an old video.

6 **Set up the API key.** Create the key at the model provider and store it the way the project describes, never in a file you publish. See **getting an API key and keeping it safe**.

7 **Test with a harmless task.** Ask for something that touches nothing important. Only then connect a messaging channel, as in **connecting OpenClaw to a messaging channel**.

When the installation fails

Symptom	Likely cause	What to do
The install dies halfway with no clear error	Out of memory	Check `free -h`. On a 1 GB VPS, move to a bigger plan or at the very least add swap and try again.
An error saying the Node version is too old	The image shipped Node 18 or 20	Upgrade Node to the version the documentation asks for and repeat.
The download fails	No internet access, or the server's DNS	Test with `ping` and `curl` to a well-known address. See **common VPS and Cloud errors**.
Works in SSH, stops when you close the session	The process is tied to the terminal	Run it as a service, the way the documentation describes. The general idea is in **keeping a Node.js app running**.

! **Do not install as permanent root**
just because it is easier. OpenClaw runs commands and reads files: as root, a mistake of its own becomes a mistake of the whole machine. Read **OpenClaw security**.

Before installing, take a
snapshot or save the files
of the server. If something goes wrong you are back in minutes. See **backing up a VPS**.

NEED A HAND?

A problem with the server itself (access, network, system)? Open a ticket and we will tell you what we see on our side.

Open a support ticket →

In our plans

On our side, the plan has to give you at least 2 vCPU and 4 GB of RAM for a test. VPS1 and Cloud1 (2 GB of RAM) are below that, so pick a step above them; every step is listed on the VPS and Cloud pages, up to 32 vCPU and 64 GB. The operating systems on offer are shown when you order, so choose there; Ubuntu is the one the article suggests. Once you are logged in over SSH, you can see what the server runs with `cat /etc/os-release`, which tells you whether it is Ubuntu 22.04 LTS or another version before you install anything. If the image is not the one you want, the article on reinstalling or changing the system of your VPS explains the way.

SEE ALSO

- What OpenClaw is, and what you need to run it
- Which operating system to choose for your VPS or server
- Running OpenClaw day to day: updates, logs and backups
- Support Policy

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