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Encrypted backups of a VPS with restic: a first repository, a schedule, a test restore

Backups & Migration

CODE

RLX-INT-KB-5262

VERSION

v2026.10.15

COUNTRY · LANGUAGE

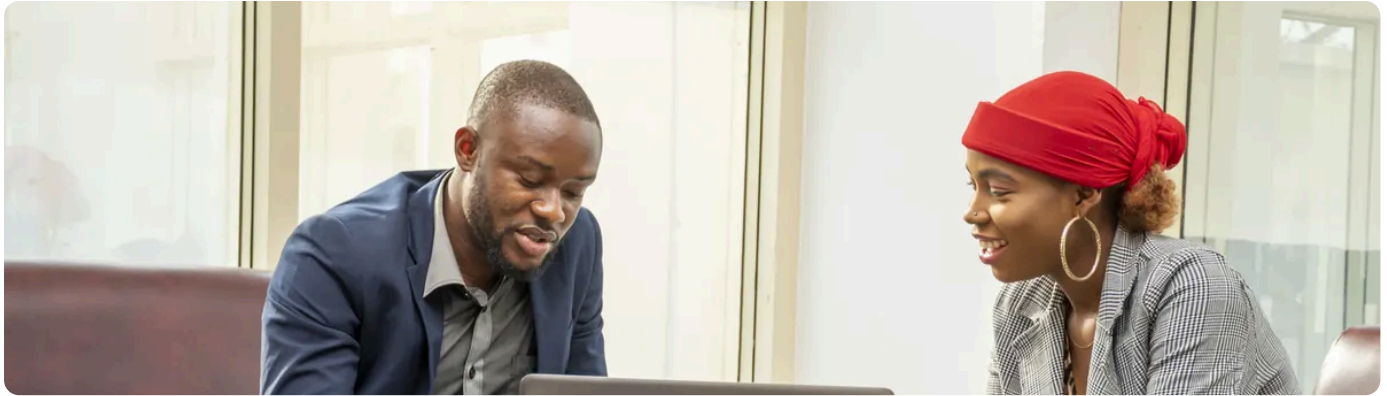
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The short answer: restic is a backup program that **encrypts** everything, stores only what changed since last time and lets you go back to any earlier day. It is for copying a VPS's folders to another disk, another server or cloud storage. A backup is only worth something once you have seen a file **restored** from it.

Before you start

Decision	In a few words
Where to keep it	Off the VPS. A copy on the same disk is lost with it. See Off-site backups .
What to copy	The site files, the settings in <code>/etc</code> and a database export , made beforehand. See Backing up with mysqldump and pg_dump .
The password	It encrypts the backup. If you lose it, you lose the backups. Keep it in a password manager and somewhere else off the server.

Step by step

1 **Install it:** `sudo apt install restic` (Ubuntu and Debian). Confirm with `restic version`.

2 **Keep the password** in a file of its own: `echo "A-LONG-PHRASE" | sudo tee /root/.restic-pass` and then `sudo chmod 600 /root/.restic-pass`. Point to it with `export RESTIC_PASSWORD_FILE=/root/.restic-pass`.

3

Create the repository (once only). On a mounted disk or folder: `restic init --repo /mnt/backups/restic` . On another server over SFTP: `restic init --repo sftp:user@server:/backups/restic` . For an S3 bucket, restic has its own way of passing the credentials: see its documentation.

4

Make the first backup: `restic -r /mnt/backups/restic backup /var/www /etc /root/exports` . The following ones are much faster: only what changed goes.

5

See what exists: `restic -r /mnt/backups/restic snapshots` . Each line is a point in time you can return to.

6

Test the restore, into a test folder, never over what is in use: `restic -r /mnt/backups/restic restore latest --target /tmp/restore` . Open a file from there and confirm it is fine. See **Testing a backup**.

Making it run by itself

1

Write a small script with the database export, the `restic backup` line and the cleanup of old copies: `restic -r /mnt/backups/restic forget --keep-daily 7 --keep-weekly 4 --keep-monthly 6 --prune` . The numbers say how many daily, weekly and monthly copies to keep; choose your own. See **How many backups to keep**.

2

Schedule it with cron, at a quiet hour. See **Cron jobs**.

3

From time to time, run `restic -r /mnt/backups/restic check` for restic to verify the repository is intact.

Without a test restore you do not have a backup, you have a hope. And a copy on the same server does not protect you from losing it, from an attack or from a mistake. To decide between file copies and disk images, see **Backing up a VPS: snapshots or files**.

Want help deciding what to back up on your VPS and where to? Open a ticket describing what runs there.

[Open a support ticket](#)

SEE ALSO

Backing up a VPS: snapshots or files

Incremental backups: what they are and when a full copy is still needed

Off-site backups: sending a copy to cloud storage, an S3 bucket or Google Drive

Testing a backup: a restore drill on a test subdomain, step by step



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