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# Error 500 Internal Server Error: finding the cause, step by step

cPanel & WHM

CODE

**RLX-INT-KB-5652**

VERSION

**v2026.10.15**

COUNTRY · LANGUAGE

**International · English**

## MozOut International

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**The short answer:** error 500 means “something went wrong on the server and I cannot say what”. The cause is almost always **in the error log**, and almost always one of these four: an error in the PHP code, an invalid rule in **.htaccess**, wrong permissions, or a PHP version that does not suit. The log tells you which.

## 1. Read what the server recorded

In cPanel, the **Errors** page shows the site’s latest errors; and, in the site’s folder, there may be a file called `error_log`. Look for the line from the time the error appeared. See **Reading the Errors and Raw Access pages in cPanel**.

| What the log says                                            | The cause                                                                     | What to do                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>PHP Parse error / Fatal error, with a file and a line</b> | An error in the code, after an edit or an update.                             | Fix the line shown, or put the earlier file back. In WordPress, see <b>Common WordPress errors</b> .                                         |
| <b>Allowed memory size exhausted</b>                         | The program needed more memory than the limit.                                | <b>Fixing “Allowed memory size exhausted”</b> .                                                                                              |
| <b>Invalid command or .htaccess: ...</b>                     | A rule in the .htaccess file that the server does not recognise.              | Rename the .htaccess (for example, to <code>.htaccess-test</code> ) and see whether the error goes away: <b>.htaccess for PHP projects</b> . |
| <b>Premature end of script headers</b>                       | A script that did not return the right header, or has the wrong permissions.  | See <b>File permissions</b> . For Perl/CGI, see <b>Perl and CGI scripts</b> .                                                                |
| <b>Call to undefined function or missing classes</b>         | PHP lacks an extension, or the version is too old (or too new).               | Change the PHP version and check the extensions: <b>How to change your PHP version</b> .                                                     |
| <b>The log is empty</b>                                      | The error comes from before PHP (the .htaccess) or has not been recorded yet. | Try the .htaccess test, and repeat the error so the log updates.                                                                             |

## 2. If the log does not help

1

**Switch off the extras:** in WordPress, deactivate the plugins and the theme, even without getting into the dashboard: **Disabling plugins, even when you cannot get in**.

2

**Put back the last version that worked,** from the backup, into a test folder: **Your own backup**.

**3**

**Check the permissions:** folders 755 and files 644. A PHP file with 777 can give a 500 on many servers.

**4**

**See whether it was the resource limit: Entry processes.** That one usually gives a different error (508), but sometimes appears as a 500.

**Do not delete the .htaccess** to “see if it fixes it”: rename it and keep a copy. In WordPress, the page links depend on it. For the other errors in the same group, see **Website errors explained** and **Error 503 and the 5xx family**.

Did this and error 500 persists? Open a ticket with the address, the time of the error and the log line.

[Open a support ticket](#)

#### SEE ALSO

**Website errors explained: 500, 403, 404, 508 and what to do**

**Reading the Errors and Raw Access pages in cPanel when a page fails**

**Error 403 Forbidden: permissions, .htaccess and blocked IPs**

**Your site is down: what to check first**



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