

How to Use Hotlink Protection in cPanel

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Introduction

Many websites face an issue known as “bandwidth theft,” which occurs when other websites link directly to your files—especially images and videos—without permission. This unauthorized access can increase your bandwidth usage and slow down your site. The **Hotlink Protection** tool in cPanel offers an effective way to prevent this problem.

What is Hotlink Protection?

Hotlink Protection is a built-in feature in cPanel that allows website owners to block other sites from directly accessing their multimedia files. Once enabled, only authorized domains can load your site’s content.

Why Use Hotlink Protection?

- **Preserve bandwidth:** Prevent unauthorized sites from using your server’s resources
- **Enhance security:** Protect your exclusive content
- **Improve performance:** Reduce unnecessary file loads by external sites
- **Protect copyright:** Prevent content from being used without your consent

Steps to Enable Hotlink Protection in cPanel

Follow these steps to activate this feature:

1. Log in to cPanel

Access your cPanel account via `yourdomain.com/cpanel`.

2. Locate Hotlink Protection

In the **Security** section, click on **Hotlink Protection**.

3. Enable the Feature

Click the **Enable** button to activate Hotlink Protection.

4. Define Allowed Domains

In the **URLs to allow access** field, enter the domains you want to whitelist. For example:

`http://example.com`
`http://www.example.com`

5. Specify Protected File Types

Under **Block direct access for the following extensions**, list the file types you wish to protect:

`.jpg`
`.png`
`.gif`
`.mp4`

6. Disable Direct Requests

Uncheck the option **Allow direct requests** to fully block unauthorized access.

7. Save Settings

Click **Submit** to save and apply the changes.

Testing Hotlink Protection

To verify the feature is working:

- Embed an image from your site into another domain
- Check if the image displays
- If it doesn't load, the feature is working as expected

How to Disable Hotlink Protection

If you need to turn off this feature:

- Go back to **Hotlink Protection** in cPanel
- Click the **Disable** button

Tips for Using Hotlink Protection

- Always add your own domains to the allowed list
- Avoid excluding essential file types by mistake
- Use online tools to test file accessibility from other domains

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Does Hotlink Protection affect SEO?

No. In fact, reducing bandwidth abuse can improve site speed, which benefits SEO.

2. Can I allow specific files to bypass Hotlink Protection?

Yes, you can configure exceptions through cPanel settings.

3. What if my site stops working correctly?

Double-check your domain whitelist and file extension settings to ensure correct configuration.

4. Does this apply to video files too?

Yes, Hotlink Protection can be applied to all multimedia file types, including videos.

Conclusion

Hotlink Protection in cPanel is a powerful tool for securing your website's content and saving bandwidth. With proper setup, you can block unauthorized use of your resources and enhance overall site performance.