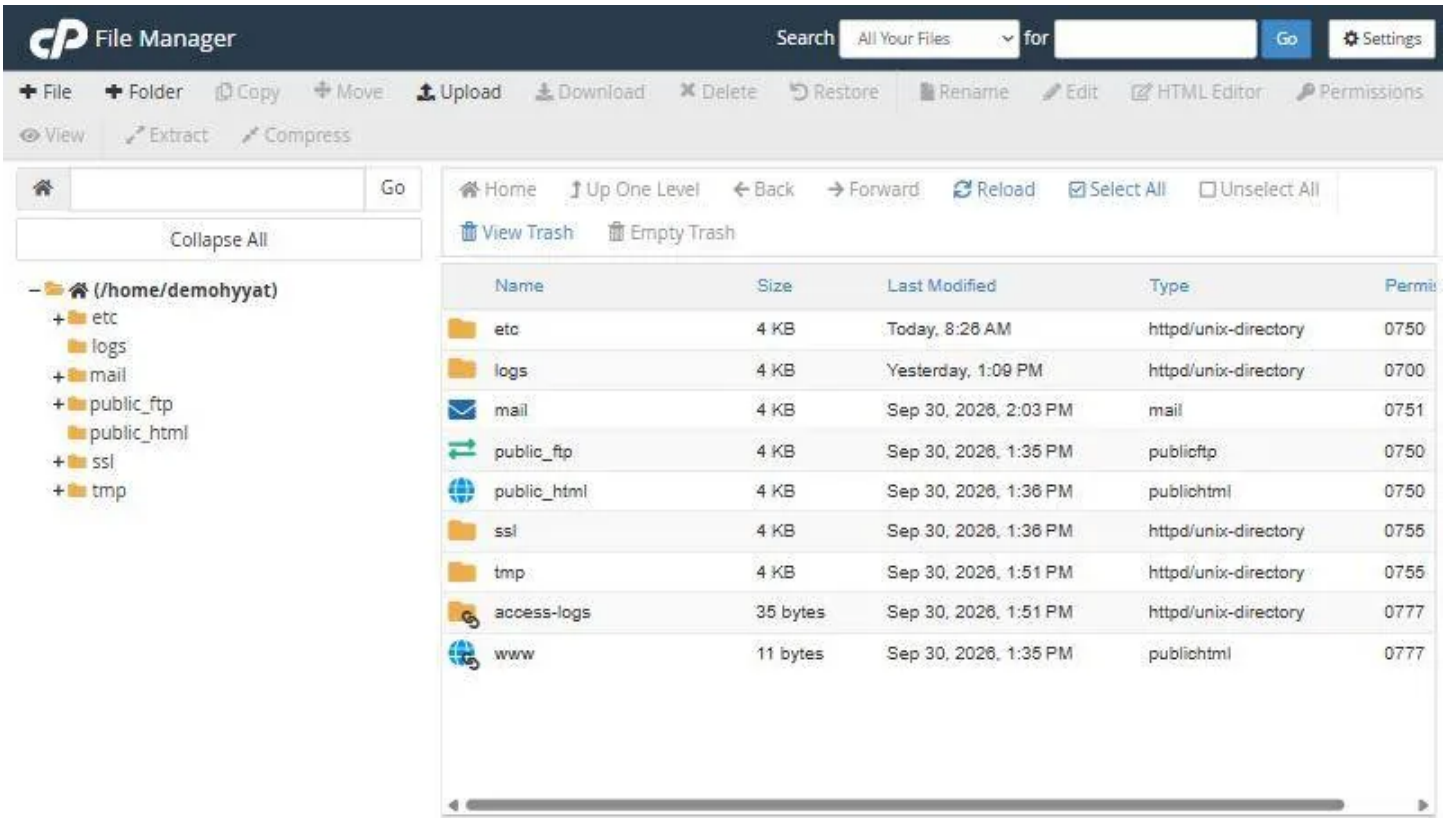
cPanel Folders Explained: public_html, mail, etc, logs and What Is Safe to Delete

cPanel Guides · https://www.hyyat.com/en/knowledgebase/cpanel-home-directory-folders/

Quick reference Your website lives only in **public_html**, and **www** is a shortcut to it. Email is in **mail** , its settings in **etc** and certificates in **ssl**. Never delete those; old content in **tmp** and **logs** can be cleaned.

Embedded media: https://www.hyyat.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/hyyat-cpanel-folders-en.mp4?_=1

The first time you open File Manager you see folders you never created. Each has a job, and deleting some of them stops your email or website. Keep this table as a reference before any clean-up.



The visible folders

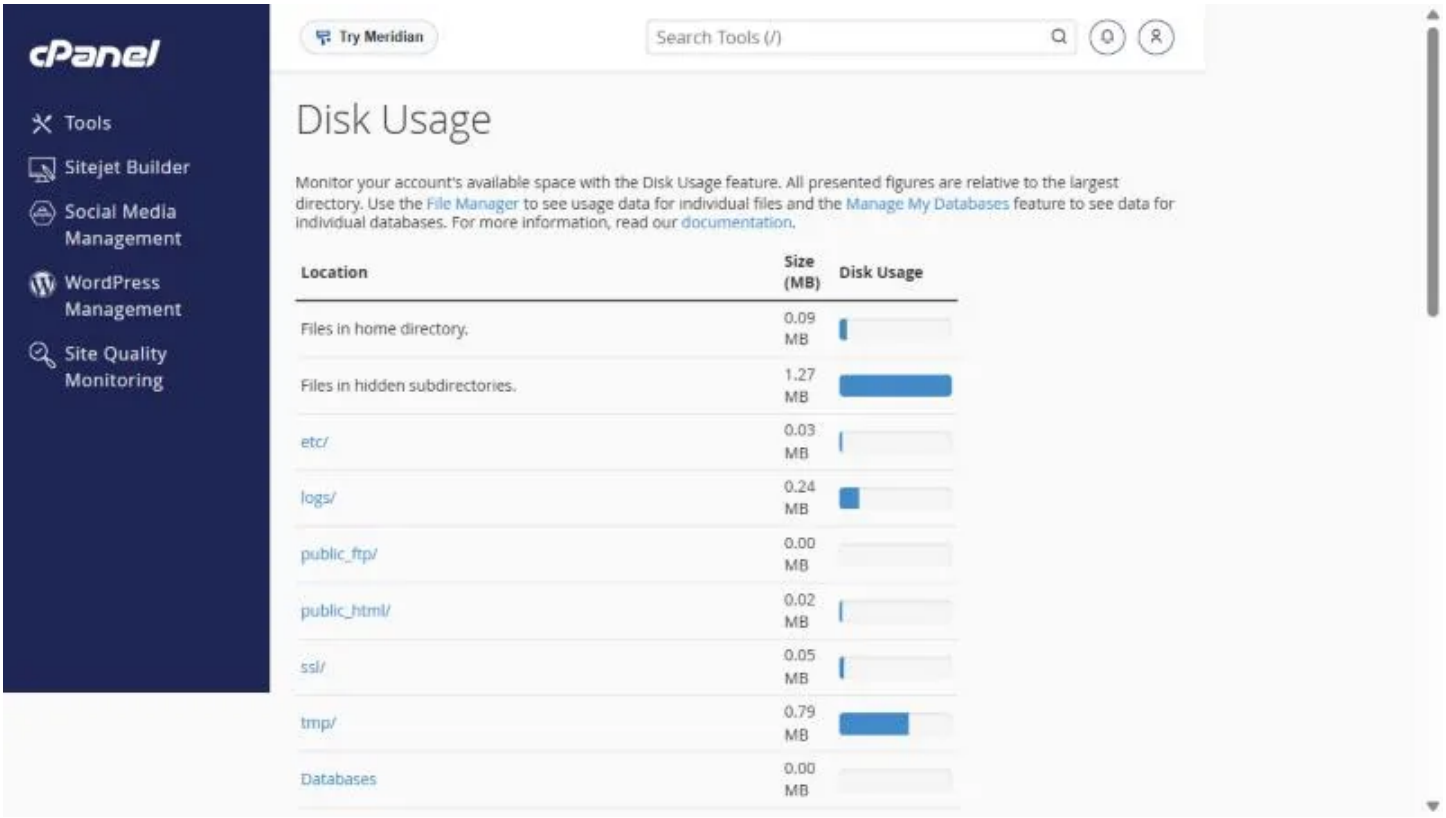
Folder	What it does	Delete it?

public_html	Your main website files; anything here appears on your domain	No. Delete unused files inside it only
www	A shortcut to public_html, not a second copy	No
mail	Messages and folders for every mailbox	No. Clean messages from Webmail or Email Disk Usage
etc	Email settings and encrypted email passwords	No
ssl	SSL certificates and keys	No
logs	Archived logs of visits to your site	Old archives can go after you download them
access-logs	A shortcut to the current logs	No
tmp	Temporary files and statistics reports	Cleaning its contents is usually safe
public_ftp	The anonymous FTP folder, disabled on most hosting	Leave it

The hidden folders

They appear after you turn on Show Hidden Files in File Manager settings. The common ones:

Folder	What it does
.trash	The File Manager trash; it uses space until emptied
.htpasswds	Passwords for folders protected with Directory Privacy
.cpanel	cPanel settings for your account
.ssh	Secure login keys, if enabled



What about addon domains?

When you add a domain, cPanel asks for a folder for its files. In recent versions it sits outside `public_html`, named after the domain, such as `shop.com`; older accounts may have it inside. Check the Document Root column on the Domains page.

Found a folder inside `public_html` that you did not put there, with a random name or unfamiliar PHP files? It may be a sign of a hack. Do not delete it before contacting support so it can be examined.

Frequently asked questions

What is the difference between public_html and www?

None; www is a shortcut to public_html itself.

Should I delete public_ftp?

There is no need; leave it as it is.

Where are the files for an addon domain?

In the folder chosen as its document root, shown on the Domains page.

Does clearing tmp harm my site?

Do not delete the folder itself. Its temporary contents can usually be cleared safely.

Related guides

- cPanel File Manager: Open It, Show Hidden Files, Change Permissions and More
- Disk Usage in cPanel: See What Fills Your Hosting Space and How to Free It
- How to Add Multiple Domains to One Hosting Account
- Password Protect a Folder in cPanel (Directory Privacy): Steps, and What It Does and Does Not Protect
- The Files and Databases Sections in cPanel: File Manager, FTP and Creating a Database

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