php.ini Settings and Protecting Them: Safe Values, and Where to Edit Them in cPanel, WHM and Panel-less Servers

Servers Without a Control Panel · https://www.hyyat.com/en/knowledgebase/secure-php-ini-settings/

Safe settings For a live site: `display_errors = Off`, `expose_php = Off`, `allow_url_include = Off`, with `memory_limit`, `upload_max_filesize` and `post_max_size` set to what you need. On cPanel hosting, change them in **Select PHP Version** or **MultiPHP INI Editor** without touching files; on a server without a panel, in the php.ini for the PHP version in use.

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

The idea: php.ini is PHP’s control panel: how much memory a script gets, the largest upload, whether errors are shown to visitors, and which functions are allowed. Getting it right protects the site and prevents many faults.

The settings that matter

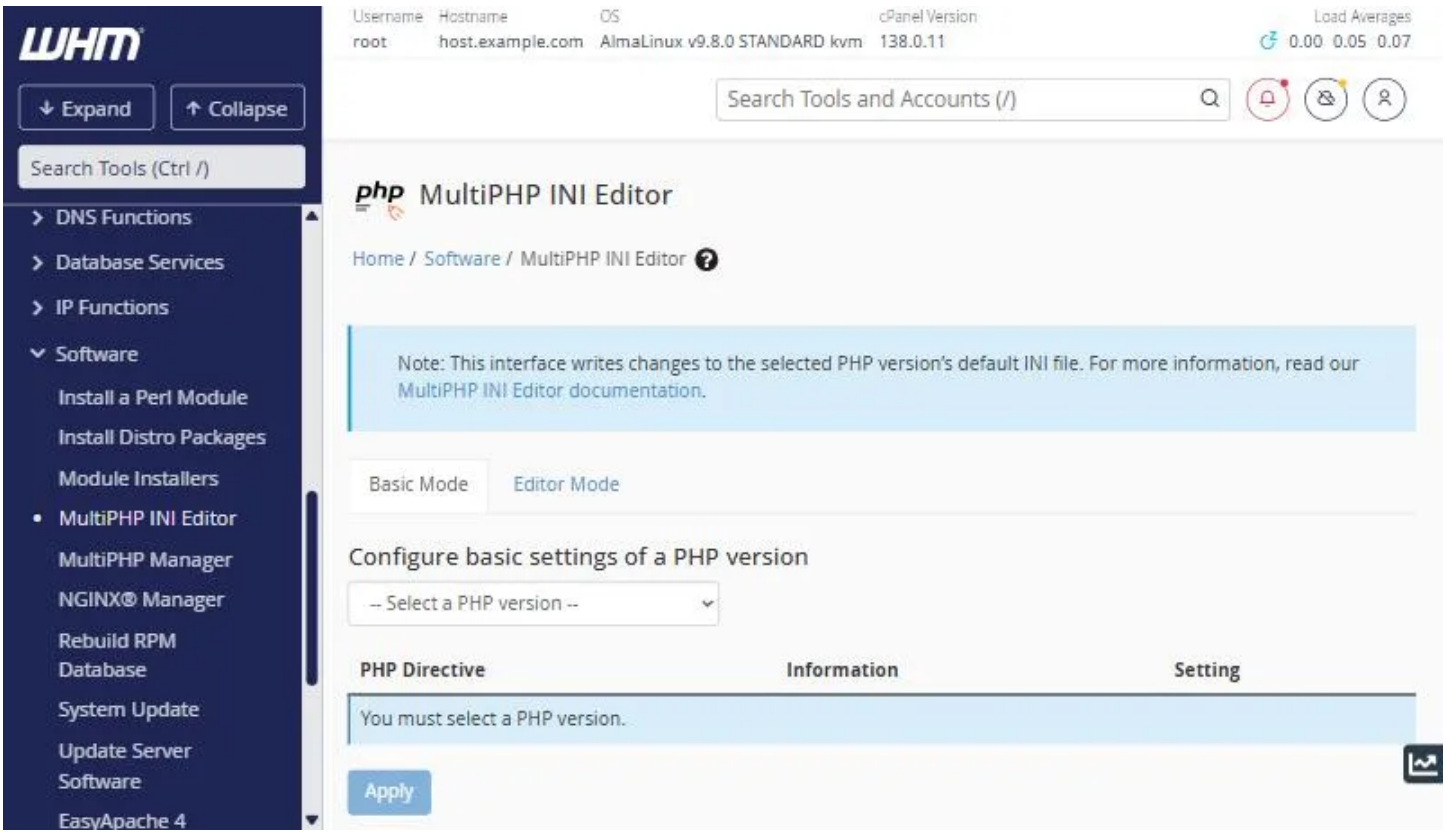
Setting	Suggested value	Why
`display_errors`	Off on a live site	Error messages reveal file paths and database names
`log_errors`	On	Errors go to an error_log file instead of the screen
`expose_php`	Off	The PHP version is not advertised in response headers
`allow_url_include`	Off	Blocks including files from remote URLs, an old attack technique
`allow_url_fopen`	Usually On	Many plugins need it; only close it if you are sure
`memory_limit`	Per site	WordPress with heavy plugins needs more than small values

Setting	Suggested value	Why
`upload_max_filesize` and `post_max_size`	post larger than upload	Otherwise uploads fail without a clear message
`max_execution_time`	Moderate	A huge value lets stuck scripts eat resources
`disable_functions`	Per server policy	Disabling functions such as exec and shell_exec makes running commands harder for an attacker

Settings such as safe_mode, register_globals and magic_quotes_gpc were removed from PHP years ago; ignore them if an old guide mentions them.

Where to edit them

Environment	Tool
Hyyat Host hosting (CloudLinux)	cPanel, then **Select PHP Version**, then Options
cPanel without CloudLinux	cPanel, then **MultiPHP INI Editor**
A cPanel server admin, per PHP version	WHM, then Software, then **MultiPHP INI Editor**
A server without a panel	The php.ini for the PHP version in use; find it with `php --ini`



After editing the file by hand, restart PHP-FPM or the web server so it reads the new values. In cPanel the tools apply the change themselves.

How to check the value actually in use

Create a temporary file containing `<?php phpinfo();` in the site folder, open it, find the setting, then **delete the file immediately**, as it reveals a lot about the server. From the command line: `php -i | grep memory_limit`, bearing in mind command-line settings may differ from the site's.

Protecting php.ini itself

- Do not put php.ini or .user.ini in a public folder with permissions that let a browser read it.
- 644 is enough; no one but the owner needs write access.
- On shared hosting, never upload a full php.ini from an unknown source; it may override the server's security settings.

php.ini questions

I edited php.ini and nothing changed

The site may run a different PHP version or a different config file. Check the loaded file path with phpinfo.

Should I turn on display_errors to fix a problem?
Only briefly while you work; better to read error_log instead.

What is the difference between php.ini and .user.ini?
.user.ini changes some settings for one folder only, and works with PHP-FPM and similar handlers.

Can I see current PHP settings in WHM?
Yes. MultiPHP INI Editor shows each version’s current values in Basic Mode.

Related guides

- Raising the phpMyAdmin Database Import Size on a cPanel Server: The Right Setting in WHM
- Tuning Apache on a cPanel Server: Global Configuration, MPM, PHP-FPM, Compression and Caching
- Change Your PHP Version in cPanel and Turn On Extensions: MultiPHP and Select PHP Version
- Securing a cPanel Server: A Practical 10-Step Checklist in Order, from Updates to Backups

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