written by Schkn



As a system administrator, you are probably already familiar with the LDAP protocol. If you are working in a medium to large company, you can be sure that your company already owns a LDAP server, whether it is on Linux or Windows.

Invented in the early 80s, the LDAP protocol (for Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) was created in order to store data that should be accessed over a network.

The LDAP protocol was defined as part of the RFC 4511 specification and it was implemented by many different vendors.

In this tutorial, we are taking a look at one of the implementations of the LDAP protocol: OpenLDAP. OpenLDAP is a free and open-source implementation of LDAP that provides a server (called slapd) as well as utilities and libraries for developers.

Using this tutorial, you will be able to setup a complete OpenLDAP server and

That's quite a long article so without further ado, let's start by install a simple OpenLDAP server on Debian 10.

Install OpenLDAP server on Debian 10

Before starting, you should make sure that you have administrator rights on your system: you will need them to install new packages.

To check if you have sudo rights, execute the "sudo" command with the "-v" option.

```
$ sudo -v
```

If you are not sure on how to provide sudo rights for users on Debian 10 or CentOS 8, make sure to read our dedicated guides about it.

Also, make sure that your packages are correctly updated in order to get the latest package version from the repositories.

```
$ sudo apt-get update
```

On Linux, the OpenLDAP server is called "slapd".

It is a simple and configurable stand-alone server that is used in order to read, modify and delete from a LDAP directory.

The slapd daemon also comes with many different utilities that can be used in order to create new entries easily, or to modify entries easily: slapadd or slappasswd just to name a few.

```
$ sudo apt-get install slapd
```

When installing this new package, you will be ask to configure the slapd daemon at the end of the installation.

Configuring slapd on Debian 10

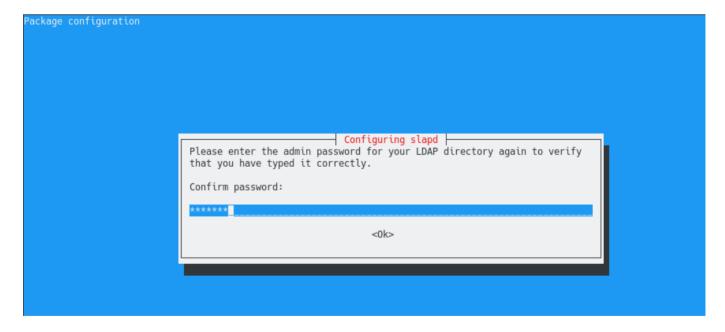
The slapd configuration comes as text-based interfaces that you need to fill in order to setup the server properly.

First, you are asked to provide an administrator password for the LDAP server.



Choose a secured password because the administrator entry in the LDAP directory has all the rights on the entire tree: add, delete and modify all the entries as well as reading all the LDAP attributes.

On the next screen, you are asked to confirm the password : simply type what you typed in the previous screen.



From there, your LDAP server should be initialized. When installing the slapd server, the installation also:

- Created a user named "openIdap" on your server;
- Created an initial configuration that is available at /etc/ldap

• Created an initial and empty database that is ready to accept new entries.

```
debian-ldap@debian-ldap:~$ ls -l /etc/ldap/
total 16
-rw-r--r-- 1 root root 332 Feb 2 2019 ldap.conf
drwxr-xr-x 2 root root 4096 Aug 10 14:58 sasl2
drwxr-xr-x 2 root root 4096 Jan 18 09:48 schema
drwxr-xr-x 3 openldap openldap 4096 Jan 18 09:48 slapd.d
debian-ldap@debian-ldap:~$
■
```

By default, the OpenLDAP server will create a first database entry that reflects your current domain name.

However, if you did not configure your domain name properly (during the installation for example), there is a chance that your OpenLDAP server is badly configured.

To take a first look at the initial configuration of your OpenLDAP server, use the "slapcat" command and watch for the distinguished names created by slapd.

```
$ sudo slapcat
$ sudo slapcat | grep dn
```

```
debian-ldap@debian-ldap:~$ sudo slapcat | grep dn
dn: dc=nodomain
dn: cn=admin,dc=nodomain
debian-ldap@debian-ldap:~$
```

Usually, your OpenLDAP top DNs should match the DNS names of your domain.

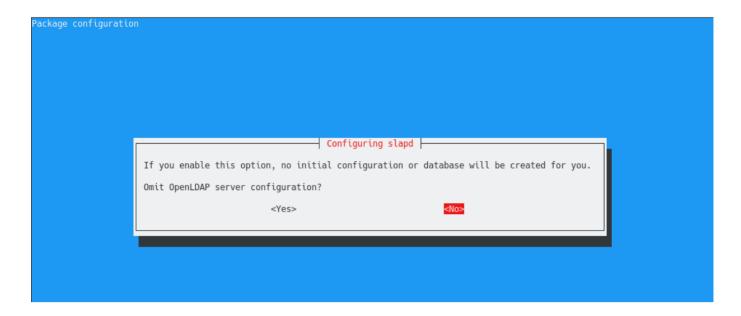
It means that if you are currently working in the "devconnected.com" domain, your OpenLDAP server should have the "dc=devconnected,dc=com" top distinguished names.

As you can see, this is not the case for now but luckily for us there is a way to reconfigure the slapd daemon.

Reconfiguring slapd using dpkg-reconfigure

In order to reconfigure the slapd daemon, execute the "dpkg-reconfigure" command on the "slapd" daemon. Again, you need sudo privileges to reconfigure slapd.

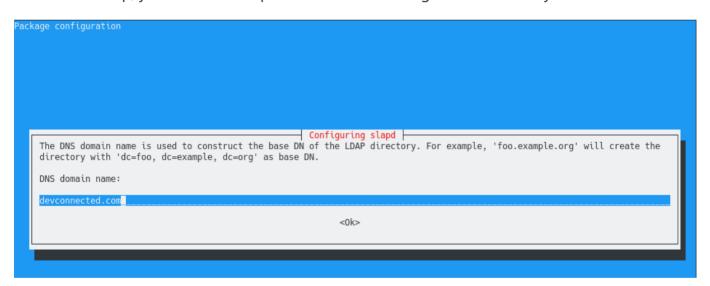
```
$ sudo dpkg-reconfigure slapd
```



First, you are asked if you want to omit the OpenLDAP server configuration.

We obviously want to press "No" on this option because we want the initial configuration of the database to be created for us.

On the next step, you are asked to provide the base distinguished name of your LDAP server.



As you can see, the slapd daemon describes that the DNS domain name is used to build the base DN of your OpenLDAP directory.

In this case, we are choosing to have "dc=devconnected,dc=com": note that you have to modify this entry to match your current DNS settings.

If you are not sure about the domain that you belong to, simply use the "domainname" command in your terminal.

\$ domainname devconnected.com

Next, you are asked to provide the name of your organization. This is exactly the same step as the one done before, simply type your organization name and hit "Ok".



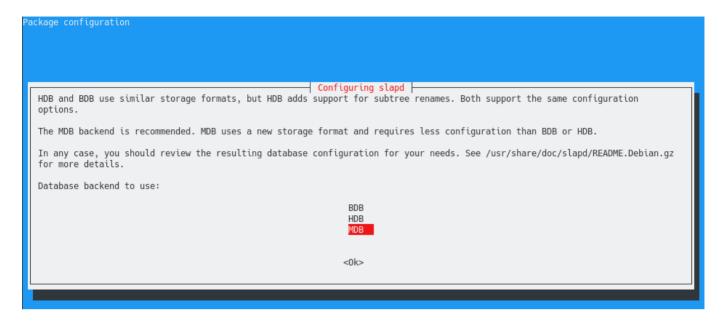
Finally, similarly to the first slapd configuration, you are asked to provide admin credentials for your LDAP server.

Again, choose a strong password as it can be used in order to read and modify every single entry in the LDAP directory.



On the next screen, you are asked to provide the back-end to be used by LDAP.

For this step, you want to keep the default values (meaning a MDB for MariaDB back - end) unless you have a reason to choose another storage backend.



Next, you are asked if you want the database to be removed when slapd is purged.

In this case, we will choose "No": there are many situations where you simply want to update your slapd package or switch to a different LDAP server.

If you choose yes, your database will be removed which can be a real problem if you don't have any backups of your LDAP directory.



Finally, you are prompted with a warning: there are already some files sitting in the "/var/lib" directory of your server.

In this directory, you currently have your old database stored. As you are trying to reconfigure your OpenLDAP server, you will overwrite the content of this folder.

By choosing "Yes", the slapd utility will backup the content of your existing database to the "/var/backups" folder.



Done!

Your slapd server is now configured properly to match your current DNS settings.

To have a first look at the content of your LDAP database, simply execute the "slapcat" (with sudo privileges if you are not currently logged as root)

\$ sudo slapcat

```
debian-ldap@debian-ldap:~$ sudo slapcat
[sudo] password for debian-ldap:
dn: dc=devconnected.dc=com
objectClass: top
objectClass: dcObject
objectClass: organization
o: devconnected
dc: devconnected
structuralObjectClass: organization
entryUUID: 6336fd4a-ce52-1039-80e5-ffdbb5f0ddef
creatorsName: cn=admin,dc=devconnected,dc=com
createTimestamp: 20200118152439Z
entryCSN: 20200118152439.469541Z#000000#000#000000
modifiersName: cn=admin,dc=devconnected,dc=com
modifyTimestamp: 20200118152439Z
dn: cn=admin,dc=devconnected,dc=com
objectClass: simpleSecurityObject
objectClass: organizationalRole
cn: admin
description: LDAP administrator
userPassword:: e1NTSEF9TTlpUEVEdzNKSUlCS29oY2I2dTdZVGE3MmcvQlZ1Tk0=
structuralObjectClass: organizationalRole
entryUUID: 63377e96-ce52-1039-80e6-ffdbb5f0ddef
creatorsName: cn=admin,dc=devconnected,dc=com
createTimestamp: 20200118152439Z
entryCSN: 20200118152439.472875Z#000000#000#000000
modifiersName: cn=admin,dc=devconnected,dc=com
modifyTimestamp: 20200118152439Z
```

With this initial setup:

- Your configuration files are stored in "/etc/ldap": they are storing the ldap configuration
 file, the schemas that you can add to slapd, as well as the slapd.d directory used for server
 customization;
- Your database is stored at "/var/lib/ldap" under the "data.mdb" database : you should probably setup backups of this file in order to make sure that you won't lose everything.

Configuring firewall rules for LDAP

If you are using a firewall, it is very likely that you will need to accept inbound requests to your LDAP server.

As a quick reminder, OpenLDAP runs on port 389.

To make sure that it is running correctly, run the "systemctl status" command on the "slapd" server.

\$ sudo systemctl status slapd

If you are using recent distributions of Debian, you are probably using UFW as the default firewall.

To enable OpenLDAP on UFW, execute the "ufw allow" command on the port 389 of your server. You can accept TCP and UDP connections all together.

```
$ sudo ufw allow 389

Rule added
Rule added (v6)
```

You can then verify that the rule was correctly created using the status command.

```
debian-ldap@debian-ldap:/$ sudo ufw status
Status: active

To Action From
--- -----
389 ALLOW Anywhere
389 (v6) ALLOW Anywhere (v6)
```

In the next section, we are going to see how you can easily add new entries to your LDAP server using LDIF files.

Add OpenLDAP entries using LDIF files

When adding new entries to your OpenLDAP server, you could use the "slapadd" utility in order to add a new LDIF file.

However, this is not the utility that we are going to use, instead we are going to use "Idapadd".

Difference between slapadd and Idapadd

Before adding new entries, it is important for you to know the difference between slap utilities and Idap utilities.

Both utilities take LDIF formatted files as an argument and they had the content to the database.

However, when using slapadd, you will have to restart your LDAP server for the changes to be applied.

This is not the case when using Idap utilities such as "Idapadd": modifications are directly performed on the directory tree.

In order to be able to use "Idapadd", "Idapsearch" and other LDAP utilities, you need to install the "Idap-utils" package on your system.

```
$ sudo apt-get install ldap-utils
```

Creating your first LDIF file

As explained earlier, if you are using the console line, you will need to create LDIF files and add them to your current LDAP configuration or database.

The LDIF format is a format used in order to add or modify existing entries in a LDAP directory.

Using LDIF, you specify the distinguished name of the node that you want to modify and you describe the modifications to be performed.

As an example, let's say that you want to create a new node in your LDAP directory named "users".

Adding a users group

To achieve that, create a new LDIF file named "users.ldif" and add the following content in it.

```
$ sudo touch /etc/ldap/users.ldif

# Content of the users file
dn: ou=People,dc=devconnected,dc=com objectClass: organizationalUnit
ou: People
```

As you can see, we are provided the complete DN of the node to be added, we specify the object class and the name of the node to be created.

In order to add this entry to your LDAP directory, you have to use the "ldapadd" command and specify the LDIF file to be used.

```
$ sudo ldapadd -D "cn=admin,dc=devconnected,dc=com" -W -H ldapi:/// -f users.ldif
Enter LDAP Password:
added new entry "ou=People,dc=devconnected,dc=com"
```

If you are not familiar with Idap utility options, here is a description of the options provided:

- -D: used to specify a node to bind to. When adding new entries to a LDAP server, you can choose your authentication mechanism but you usually want to bind to the admin node in order to gain all privileges on the tree;
- -W: used in order to specify that we want the password to be prompted when connecting;
- -H: used in order to specify the LDAP server to connect to. In this case, we are connecting to a LDAP server available at localhost;
- -f: to specify the LDIF file to be added to the LDAP server.

Note that you can not use an external authentication in order to add new entries to LDAP by default: ACL are not configured to do that.

Now that your node is added to your tree, you can try to find it using the "Idapsearch" command.

```
$ sudo ldapsearch -x -b "dc=devconnected,dc=com" ou
```

```
debian-ldap@debian-ldap:/etc/ldap$ ldapsearch -x -b "dc=devconnected,dc=com"
# extended LDIF
# LDAPv3
# base <dc=devconnected,dc=com> with scope subtree
 filter: (objectclass=*)
 requesting: ou
# devconnected.com
dn: dc=devconnected,dc=com
# admin, devconnected.com
dn: cn=admin,dc=devconnected,dc=com
# People, devconnected.com
dn: ou=People,dc=devconnected,dc=com
ou: People
# search result
search: 2
result: 0 Success
# numResponses: 4
 numEntries: 3
```

Great!

Now that the "People" organizational unit was added, let's add some users to your LDAP tree.

Adding new users to LDAP

In order to add new users, we are going to follow the same logic: creating a LDIF file containing individual entries for users.

As described before, OpenLDAP uses schemas in order to define "objects" that can be added to the directory.

In this case, we are going to use the "posixAccount" schema which is already added to your database configuration by default.

The "posixAccount" object has several fields that can be used to describe a Linux user account such as the username, the surname but most importantly the user password. Create a new LDIF file and add the following content in it:

```
$ sudo touch /etc/ldap/new\_users.ldif

- Content of new\_users LDIF file

dn: cn=john,ou=People,dc=devconnected,dc=com
   objectClass: top
   objectClass: inetOrgPerson
   objectClass: posixAccount
   objectClass: person
   cn: john
   uid: john
   uid: john
   uidNumber: 10001
   gidNumber: 10001
   homeDirectory: /home/john
   userPassword: <password>
   loginShell: /bin/bash
```

When you are done, save your file and use the ldapadd command in order to add your entry to the LDAP directory tree.

```
$ sudo ldapadd -D "cn=admin,dc=devconnected,dc=com" -W -H ldapi:/// -f new\_us
ers.ldif

Enter LDAP Password:
added new entry "cn=john,ou=People,dc=devconnected,dc=com"
```

Congratulations, you now have your first user stored in OpenLDAP.

You can read the user information by issuing a LDAP search command. Note that you won't be able to read the user password as you are restricted by ACLs.

```
$ sudo ldapsearch -x -b "ou=People,dc=devconnected,dc=com"
```

```
# People, devconnected.com
dn: ou=People,dc=devconnected,dc=com
objectClass: organizationalUnit
ou: People
# john, People, devconnected.com
dn: cn=john,ou=People,dc=devconnected,dc=com
objectClass: top
objectClass: account
objectClass: posixAccount
objectClass: shadowAccount
cn: john
uid: john
uidNumber: 10001
gidNumber: 10001
homeDirectory: /home/john
loginShell: /bin/bash
```

Awesome, now that your LDAP server is configured, let's configure a client in order to configure central authentication

Configuring LDAP clients for centralized authentication

In the last section of this OpenLDAP server setup, we are going to see how you can configure LDAP clients (i.e your host machines) in order for them to connect using LDAP information.

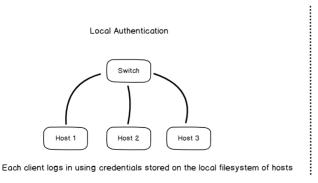
How LDAP client authentication works

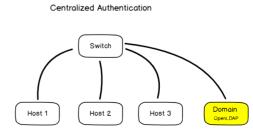
Before issuing any commands, it is important for you to have a global understanding of what we are actually building.

Before LDAP (and NIS), if you wanted to configure users and group permissions over multiple computers of a network, you would have to connect to them one by one and change their settings.

LDAP comes as a great solution for this: LDAP will centralize user information in one single place on your network.

Client Authentication over Networks





 ${\sf Each \; client \; logs \; in \; contacting \; the \; remote \; OpenLDAP \; server \; and \; verifying \; credentials}$

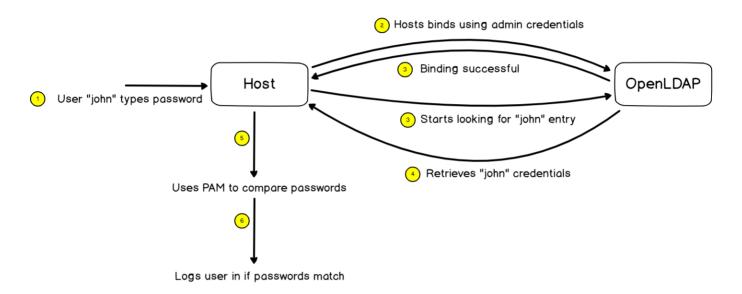
When a client connects to any machine of your domain, the host will first contact the LDAP server and verify that the user password provided is correct.

The client library will bind (or authenticate) to the remote LDAP server using the admin account and retrieve the information associated with the user trying to connect.

Next, it will retrieve the password associated with the account and compare it with the password you typed when you logged in.

If the passwords match, you will be logged in your account, otherwise you will be denied.

How clients connect using OpenLDAP



Setup Client LDAP authentication on Debian

In order to setup client LDAP authentication, you will need to install the "libnss-ldap" package on your client.

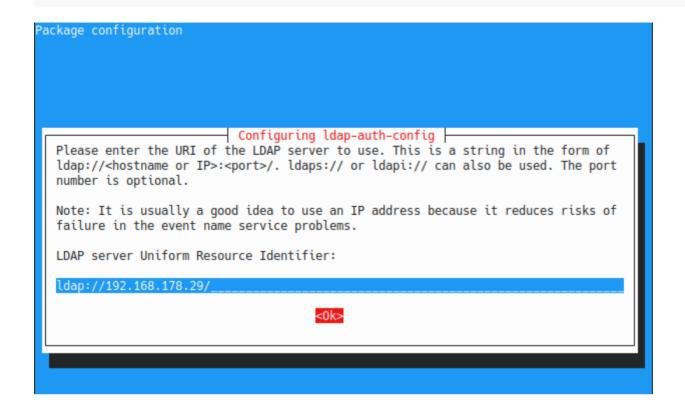
```
$ sudo apt-get install libnss-ldap
```

When installing this package, you will be prompted with many different questions in order to configure client centralized authentication.

First, you are asked to provide the URL of your LDAP server: it is recommended to setup an IP address (configured as static obviously) in order to avoid problems in DNS resolutions.

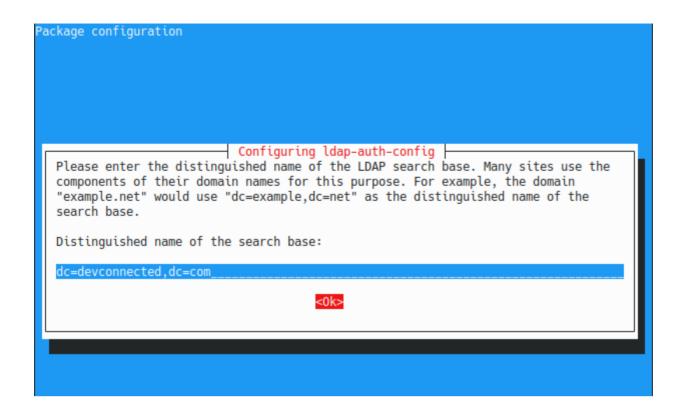
On the server, identify your IP address with the ip command and fill the corresponding field on the client.

- On the server
- \$ ip a

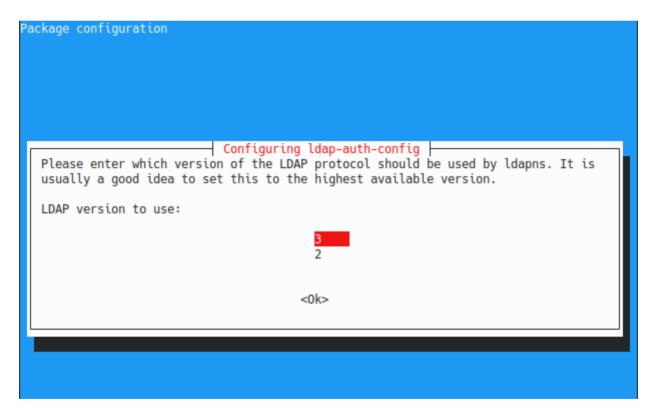


Note: make sure that you are using the LDAP protocol and not the LDAPI protocol. For some reason, your server won't be reachable if you use the LDAPI protocol.

Next, you are asked to provide the root distinguished name of your LDAP server. If you are not sure, you should run a ldapsearch command on the server to get this information.



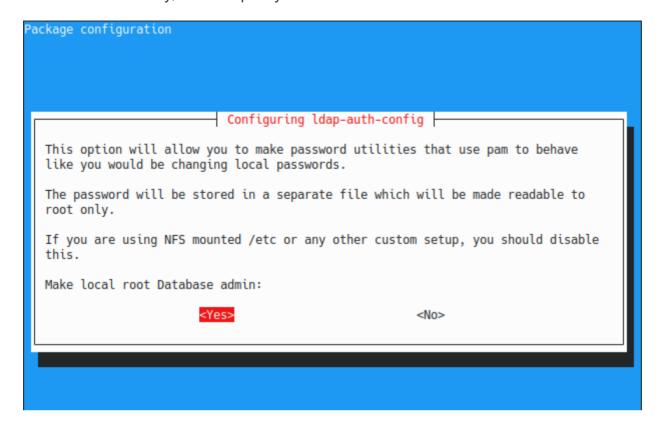
On the next screen, you are asked the LDAP version that you want to use: choose the LDAP version 3 for now.



Next, you are asked if you want to make the local root the database admin.

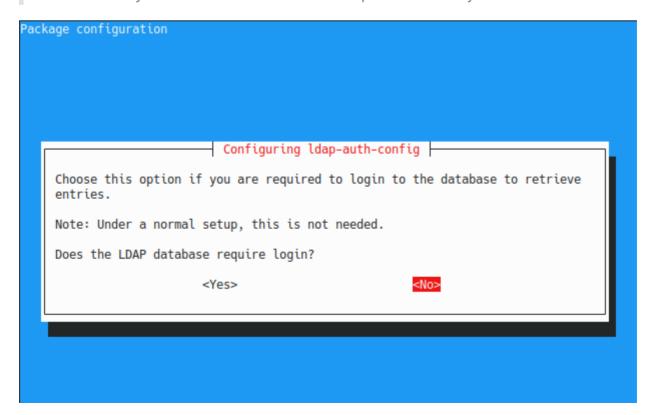
You want to type "Yes" to this option as you want to change the user password directly from the host machine.

With this option, you will be able to run the "passwd" and have the password modified directly in the LDAP directory, which is pretty useful.



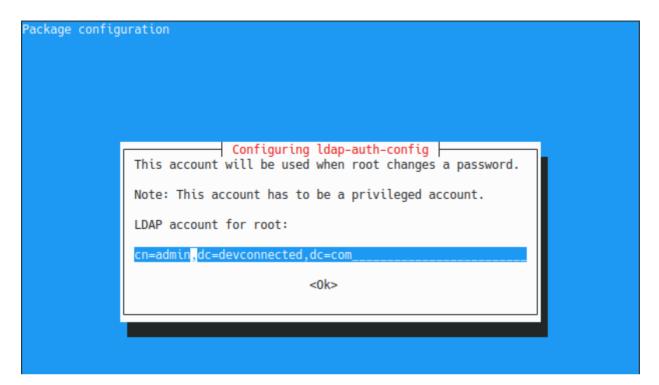
By default, the LDAP database does not require a login, so you can type "No" on this option.

Note: the LDAP database has no login but you have an admin account at the top of your LDAP directory. Those are two different concepts that are very different one from another.

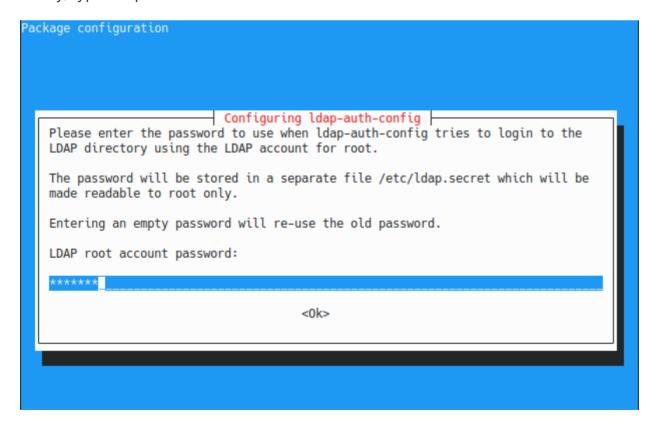


Next, type the LDAP administrator account to be used for bindinds.

As a reminder, this is the account that will be used in order to get the user password information from the server.



Finally, type the password associated with the admin account on the LDAP server.



Done, you should now be able to query your LDAP server.

Linking client information to LDAP

In order to link your client information (such as username and password) to the LDAP directory, you need to modify the nsswitch file.

As a reminder, the nsswitch file is used in order to link some information on your system (such as users, groups or hosts) to various different sources (local, LDAP, NIS or others).

Edit the /etc/nsswitch.conf file and add a "ldap" entry to the first four sections : passwd, group, shadow, gshadow.

```
$ sudo nano /etc/nsswitch.conf
```

```
GNU nano 4.3 /etc/nsswitch.conf

//etc/nsswitch.conf

# Example configuration of GNU Name Service Switch functionality.

# If you have the `glibc-doc-reference' and `info' packages installed, try:

# `info libc "Name Service Switch"' for information about this file.

passwd: files systemd ldap

group: files systemd ldap

shadow: files ldap

gshadow: files ldap
```

Save your file and you should now be able to list users from the LDAP server. \$ getent passwd

Note: if you are not familiar with the getent command, here are all the commands used to list users on Linux.

```
kubuntu:x:999:999:Live session user,,,:/home/kubuntu:/bin/bash
systemd-coredump:x:998:998:systemd Core Dumper:/:/usr/sbin/nologin
john:x:10001:10001:john:/home/john:/bin/bash
```

Awesome!

Now that your user can be retrieved via LDAP, you will be able to log to this account by using the user password you have specified in the LDAP directory.

```
$ su - john

<Type password specified in LDAP>
john@client:/home/john
```

To generate the home directory automatically, follow the next steps:

```
Install libpam-ldap
```

```
apt install libpam-ldap
```

Add the following line to the file /etc/pam.d/common-session

```
session optional pam_mkhomedir.so skel=/etc/skell umask=077
```

To log-in into the desktop environment we need one more steep, install nslcd and the configuration should be done

apt install nslcd

Example config file

Config file of aragon.local

Grupos	Nombres de usuario
Competidores	competidor01 competidor39
tutores	tutor01 tutor39
gestores	gestor01 gestor39

```
# Organizational Units
dn: ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
objectClass: organizationalUnit
ou: People
dn: ou=Groups,dc=aragon,dc=local
objectClass: organizationalUnit
ou: Groups
# Groups
dn: cn=competidores,ou=Groups,dc=aragon,dc=local
objectClass: top
objectClass: posixGroup
gidNumber: 2000
cn: competidores
dn: cn=tutores,ou=Groups,dc=aragon,dc=local
objectClass: top
objectClass: posixGroup
gidNumber: 3000
cn: tutores
dn: cn=gestion,ou=Groups,dc=aragon,dc=local
objectClass: top
objectClass: posixGroup
gidNumber: 4000
cn: gestion
# Users
dn: uid=competidor01,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
objectClass: top
objectClass: inetOrgPerson
objectClass: posixAccount
objectClass: person
uid: competidor01
cn: competidor01
sn: competidor01
uidNumber: 10001
gidNumber: 2000
homeDirectory: /home/competidor39
userPassword: IVSZ2e12
loginShell: /bin/bash
dn: uid=competidor39,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
objectClass: top
objectClass: inetOrgPerson
objectClass: posixAccount
```

```
objectClass: person
uid: competidor39
cn: competidor39
sn: competidor39
uidNumber: 10039
gidNumber: 2000
homeDirectory: /home/competidor39
userPassword: IVSZ2e12
loginShell: /bin/bash
dn: uid=tutor01,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
objectClass: top
objectClass: inetOrgPerson
objectClass: posixAccount
objectClass: person
uid: tutor01
cn: tutor01
sn: tutor01
uidNumber: 20001
gidNumber: 3000
homeDirectory: /home/tutor01
userPassword: IVSZ2e12
loginShell: /bin/bash
dn: uid=tutor39,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
objectClass: top
objectClass: inetOrgPerson
objectClass: posixAccount
objectClass: person
uid: tutor39
cn: tutor39
sn: tutor39
uidNumber: 20039
gidNumber: 3000
homeDirectory: /home/tutor39
userPassword: IVSZ2e12
loginShell: /bin/bash
dn: uid=gestor01,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
objectClass: top
objectClass: inetOrgPerson
objectClass: posixAccount
objectClass: person
uid: gestor01
cn: gestor01
sn: gestor01
uidNumber: 30001
gidNumber: 4000
homeDirectory: /home/gestor01
userPassword: IVSZ2e12
```

loginShell: /bin/bash

```
dn: uid=gestor39,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
objectClass: top
objectClass: inetOrgPerson
objectClass: posixAccount
objectClass: person
uid: gestor39
cn: gestor39
sn: gestor39
uidNumber: 30039
gidNumber: 4000
homeDirectory: /home/gestor39
userPassword: IVSZ2e12
loginShell: /bin/bash
```

Script to remove all structure aragon.local

```
ldapdelete -x -D cn=admin,dc=aragon,dc=local -W
uid=competidor01,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
ldapdelete -x -D cn=admin,dc=aragon,dc=local -W
uid=competidor39,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
ldapdelete -x -D cn=admin,dc=aragon,dc=local -W
uid=tutor01,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
ldapdelete -x -D cn=admin,dc=aragon,dc=local -W
uid=tutor39,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
ldapdelete -x -D cn=admin,dc=aragon,dc=local -W
uid=gestor01,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
ldapdelete -x -D cn=admin,dc=aragon,dc=local -W
uid=gestor39,ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
ldapdelete -x -D cn=admin,dc=aragon,dc=local -W
cn=competidores,ou=Groups,dc=aragon,dc=local
ldapdelete -x -D cn=admin,dc=aragon,dc=local -W
cn=tutores,ou=Groups,dc=aragon,dc=local
ldapdelete -x -D cn=admin,dc=aragon,dc=local -W
cn=gestion,ou=Groups,dc=aragon,dc=local
ldapdelete -x -D cn=admin,dc=aragon,dc=local -W ou=People,dc=aragon,dc=local
ldapdelete -x -D cn=admin,dc=aragon,dc=local -W ou=Groups,dc=aragon,dc=local
```

Config sshd LDAP auth

First we have to config LDAP Auth on the machine we want to access over ssh with LDAP users

Modifi the /etc/ssh/sshd config file and edit the following line

PAMAuthenticationViaKbdInt yes

Restart the service and done

systemctl restart sshd