

Contabo VPS + OpenClaw Setup Guide

Audience: non-technical PC users. Goal: buy a cheap VPS, secure it, install OpenClaw, and connect it to Telegram and Claude (subscription).

This guide is written for **Contabo VPS 10 (8 GB RAM)** on **Ubuntu 24.04**.

What you will achieve

- A private server (VPS) running Ubuntu 24.04.
 - Secure access using **Tailscale** (no public admin ports).
 - OpenClaw installed and running as a background service.
 - Telegram bot connected.
 - Claude connected via your subscription.
 - Browser automation working on the VPS.
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Preparation (do this first, on your own PC)

Complete these steps before buying the VPS. This way you can paste tokens directly during setup without switching context.

1. Create a Telegram bot and save the token

1. Open Telegram and find `@BotFather`.
2. Send `/newbot`.
3. Choose a name and a username.
4. BotFather will give you a **Bot Token** (looks like `123456:ABC...`).

Save the Bot Token somewhere safe.

2. Install Tailscale on your PC

Linux/macOS: Run in terminal:

```
curl -fsSL https://tailscale.com/install.sh | sh
```

Windows: Go to tailscale.com and download the app.

Then sign in and confirm Tailscale is running (you'll see its icon in your system tray/menu bar).

3. Ensure you have a Claude subscription

You need an active Claude subscription at claude.ai.

Part 1: Buy and Access VPS

Step 1. Buy the VPS on Contabo

1. [Go to Contabo](#) and choose **VPS 10 (8 GB RAM)**.
2. Choose:
3. **Operating system:** Ubuntu **24.04 LTS**
4. **Server location:** pick the closest region
5. Set the **root password** option.
6. Finish checkout.
7. After the VPS is ready, find **Server IP address** (looks like `123.45.67.89`) in your email.

Write it down.

Step 2. Connect to the server

1. Open Terminal (macOS/Linux) or Windows Terminal (Windows).
2. Type this command, replacing YOUR_SERVER_IP with your actual IP:

```
ssh root@YOUR_SERVER_IP
```

1. Type `yes` when asked about unknown host.
2. Paste the root password and press Enter.

If you see a prompt like `root@...`, you're connected.

Part 2: Secure the Server

Step 3. Update and create a user

Copy and paste each block. Wait for each to finish before running the next.

Update system and create user "remote":

```
apt update && apt upgrade -y  
adduser remote  
usermod -aG sudo remote
```

It will ask you to create a password. Save it. Then allow this user to login:

```
mkdir -p /home/remote/.ssh && cp -r /root/.ssh/* /home/remote/.ssh/ 2>/dev/null
```

Now disconnect and reconnect as the new user:

```
exit
```

Then:

```
ssh remote@YOUR_SERVER_IP
```

Step 4. Install Tailscale on the server

Tailscale creates a private network between your PC and the server.

```
curl -fsSL https://tailscale.com/install.sh | sh  
sudo tailscale up
```

After running, it shows a login link. Copy it, open in your browser, and approve the server. Then get your server's Tailscale IP:

```
tailscale ip -4
```

It returns something like `100.x.y.z`. Write this down as **TS_IP**.

Step 5. Lock down the server

After this step, you'll only access the server through Tailscale (more secure).

First, test that Tailscale works. On your PC, open a new terminal and run:

```
ssh remote@TS_IP
```

(Replace TS_IP with the 100.x.y.z address from Step 4.)

If this works, continue. If not, check that Tailscale is running on both your PC and server.

Enable the firewall:

```
sudo apt install -y ufw && sudo ufw default deny incoming && sudo ufw default a
```

Type `y` when asked.

Disable root login:

```
sudo sed -i 's/^#*PermitRootLogin.*/PermitRootLogin no/' /etc/ssh/sshd_config
```

From now on, always connect using `ssh remote@TS_IP`.

Part 3: Install OpenClaw

Step 6. Install Claude Code CLI

```
curl -fsSL https://claude.ai/install.sh | bash  
echo 'export PATH="$HOME/.local/bin:$PATH"' >> ~/.bashrc && source ~/.bashrc  
claude setup-token
```

It shows a URL. Copy it and open it in your PC's browser. Log in to Claude and approve. You'll get a short code.

Go back to the server terminal and paste the code. Press Enter.

You'll see a token like `sk-ant-xxxxxxxx`. This is saved automatically.

Step 7. Install OpenClaw

Install Node.js 22 and pnpm:

```
curl -fsSL https://deb.nodesource.com/setup_22.x | sudo -E bash -  
sudo apt install -y nodejs  
curl -fsSL https://get.pnpm.io/install.sh | sh - && source ~/.bashrc
```

Install Homebrew (interactive, follow the prompts):

```
/bin/bash -c "$(curl -fsSL https://raw.githubusercontent.com/Homebrew/install/
```

Configure shell and install OpenClaw:

```
echo 'eval "$(./home/linuxbrew/.linuxbrew/bin/brew shellenv)"' >> ~/.bashrc && eval $(./home/linuxbrew/.linuxbrew/bin/brew shellenv)
pnpm i -g openclaw
pnpm approve-builds -g
```

Press `a` (select all), then Enter, then `y` to confirm.

Step 8. Onboarding

Run the interactive setup wizard:

```
openclaw onboard --install-daemon
```

The wizard guides you through configuration. Follow each screen:

Screen	What to select
Security confirmation	Yes
Gateway configuration	Local (unless you need remote access)
Model / auth provider	Anthropic
Authentication	Paste your <code>sk-ant-...</code> token from Step 6
Channel selection	Telegram → paste your Telegram bot token
Daemon installation	Yes (runs as background service)
Security defaults	Enable pairing approvals

After onboarding, OpenClaw starts running automatically as a background service.

Step 9. Install browser support

This lets the bot browse websites.

```
sudo apt update && sudo apt install -y chromium xvfb fonts-liberation libnss3 l
```

Restart OpenClaw:

```
systemctl --user restart openclaw-gateway.service
```

Part 4: Connect and Verify

Step 10. Pair your Telegram account

1. Open your bot in Telegram.
2. Send `/start`.
3. The bot replies with a pairing code.
4. On the server, run (replace CODE with your actual code):

```
openclaw pairing approve telegram CODE
```

Note: Pairing codes expire after 1 hour. If the code doesn't work, send `/start` again to get a new one.

Step 11. Open the Dashboard

The dashboard lets you manage OpenClaw from your browser.

On your PC, open Terminal/Windows Terminal and run:

```
ssh -L 18789:127.0.0.1:18789 remote@TS_IP
```

Keep this window open.

On the server, run:

```
openclaw dashboard --no-open
```

It prints a link like `http://127.0.0.1:18789/?token=...`

Copy the full link and open it in your PC's browser.

Step 12. Test the bot

1. Open your bot in Telegram.
2. Send `hi`.
3. You should get a response.

Verify everything is healthy:

```
openclaw status
```

This shows if all services are running correctly.

Done! Your OpenClaw is running.

Troubleshooting

Bot doesn't respond

Check if OpenClaw is running:

```
systemctl --user status openclaw-gateway.service
```

View logs:

```
journalctl --user -u openclaw-gateway.service -n 100 --no-pager
```

Restart it:

```
systemctl --user restart openclaw-gateway.service
```

Can't open dashboard

Make sure the SSH tunnel command is still running on your PC.

Browser tool fails

Run the browser install command from Step 9 again, then restart OpenClaw.

Security notes

- Keep your tokens in a password manager.
- Always use Tailscale to connect to your server.
- Don't share your dashboard link.
- Keep secrets out of the bot's reachable filesystem.

Run security audits regularly:

```
openclaw security audit --deep  
openclaw security audit --fix
```

Read more: <https://docs.openclaw.ai/gateway/security>

Appendix A: WhatsApp setup

In the Dashboard:

1. Go to Channels
 2. Add WhatsApp
 3. Scan the QR code with your phone (WhatsApp → Settings → Linked Devices)
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Appendix B: Skills and Gemini API

After the bot works, you can add extra features:

```
openclaw configure
```

Some skills need a Gemini API key. Get one at <https://aistudio.google.com/app/api-keys>, then:

```
echo 'export GEMINI_API_KEY="YOUR_KEY"' >> ~/.bashrc && source ~/.bashrc
```

Appendix C: Useful commands

```
# Check if OpenClaw is running
systemctl --user status openclaw-gateway.service

# Restart OpenClaw
systemctl --user restart openclaw-gateway.service

# View logs
journalctl --user -u openclaw-gateway.service -n 100 --no-pager

# Check Tailscale
tailscale status

# Reconfigure OpenClaw
openclaw configure
```

Get a VPS

[Buy a VPS at Contabo](#)