# 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.

## 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*

1. Go to tailscale.com and download the app for your computer.
2. Install it and sign in.
3. 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:

• **Operating system:** Ubuntu **24.04 LTS**

• **Server location:** pick the closest region

3. Set the **root password** option.
4. Finish checkout.
5. 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
```

3. Type `yes` when asked about unknown host.
4. 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 the system:**

```
apt update && apt upgrade -y
```

**Create a user named "remote":**

```
adduser remote
usermod -aG sudo remote
```

It will ask you to create a password. Save it.

**Allow this user to login:**

```
mkdir -p /home/remote/.ssh && cp -r /root/.ssh/* /home/remote/.ssh/ 2>/dev/null || true && chown -R remote:r
```

**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 allow outgoing && sudo ufw all
```

Type `y` when asked.

**Disable root login:**

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

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
```

**Generate a token:**

```
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*

These commands install prerequisites and OpenClaw. Run them one at a time.

**Install Node.js 22:**

```
curl -fsSL https://deb.nodesource.com/setup_22.x | sudo -E bash -
sudo apt install -y nodejs
```

**Install Homebrew:**

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

echo 'eval "$(/home/linuxbrew/.linuxbrew/bin/brew shellenv)"' >> ~/.bashrc && eval "$(/home/linuxbrew/.linux
```

**Install pnpm:**

```
curl -fsSL https://get.pnpm.io/install.sh | sh - && source ~/.bashrc
```

**Install OpenClaw:**

```
curl -fsSL https://openclaw.ai/install.sh | bash
```

This installs OpenClaw and its dependencies. Wait for it to finish.

### *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 `sk-ant-...` 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 libatk-bridge2.0-0t64 libgtk-3
```

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.

## 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)

## 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