Tutorial: How to Configure the Development Environment on Google Cloud Platform

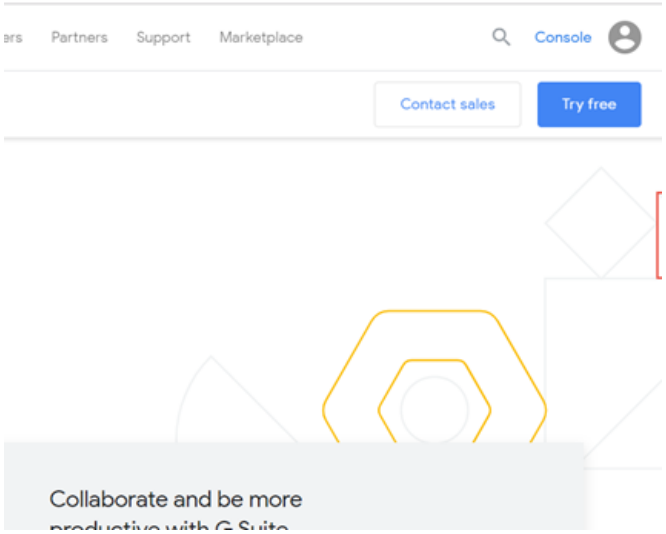
This tutorial is to teach how to configure a development environment for the GPU training of Keras neural networks with MXNet as backend on Google Cloud Platform.

Contents

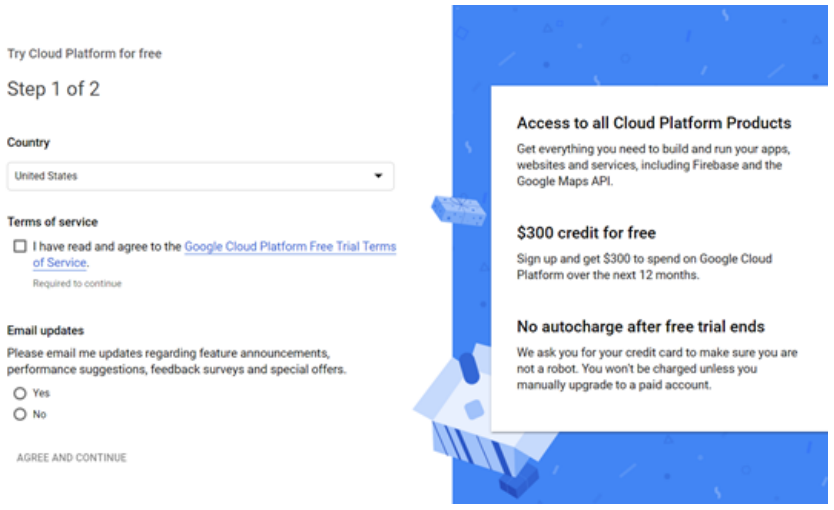
Start an Instance on Google Cloud Platform

Create a Google Cloud account

Enter https://cloud.google.com/ Click "Try free"



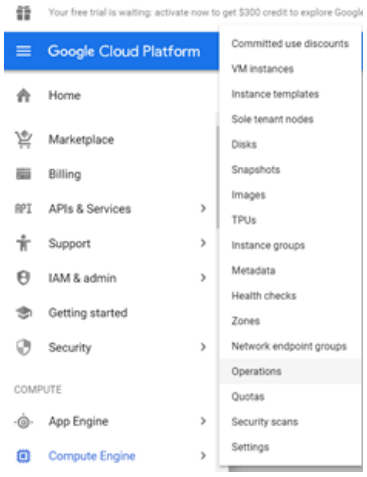
Fill in billing information, Google Cloud will provide $300 credit for free



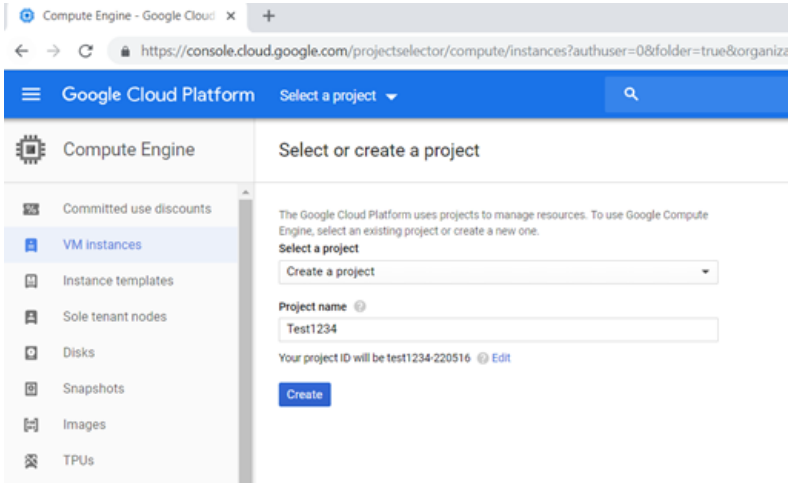
Then we can enter console

Create a new VM instance

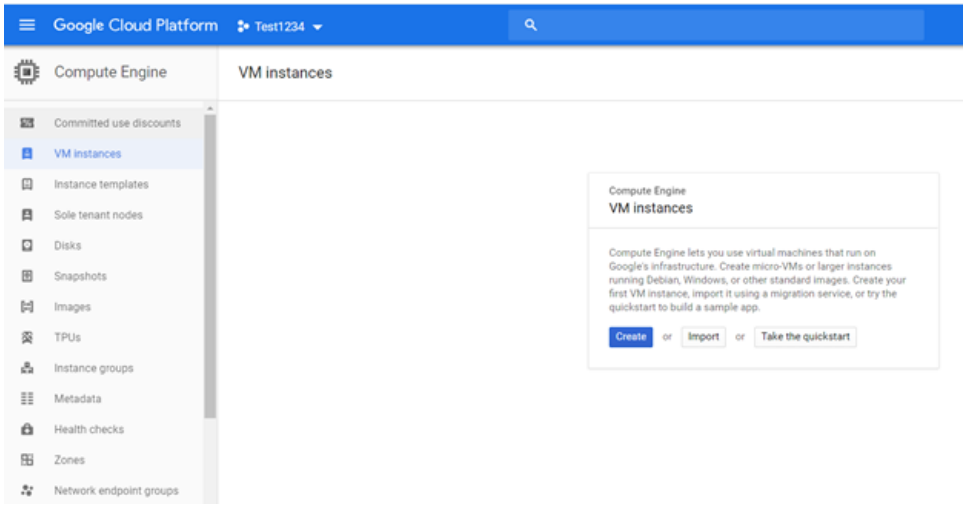
Click Compute Engine on the left tab



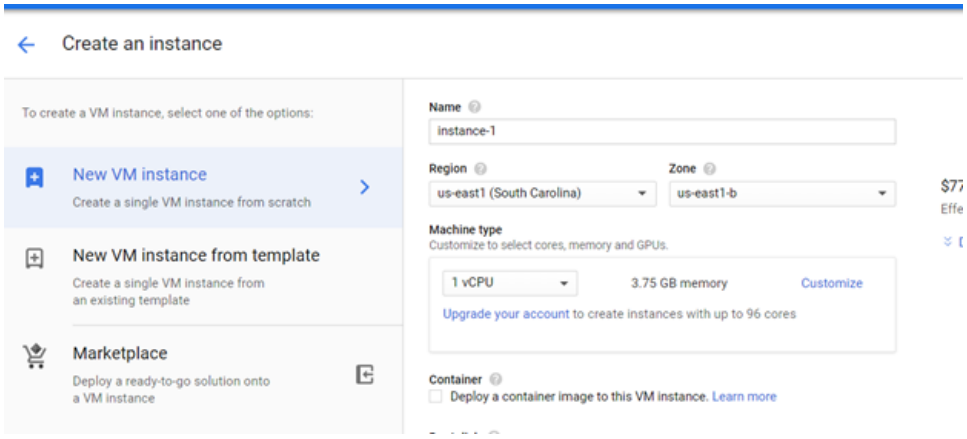
Create a new project, Google Cloud will automatically generate a project ID for us



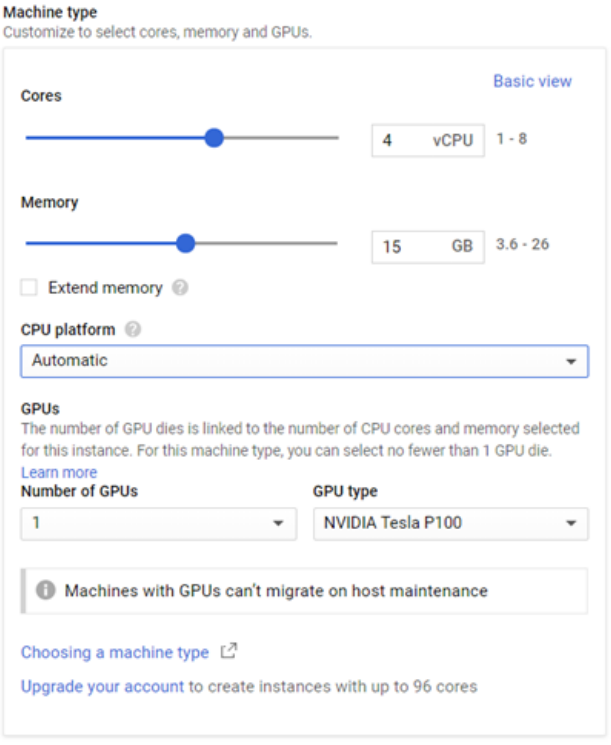
Then create a new VM instance



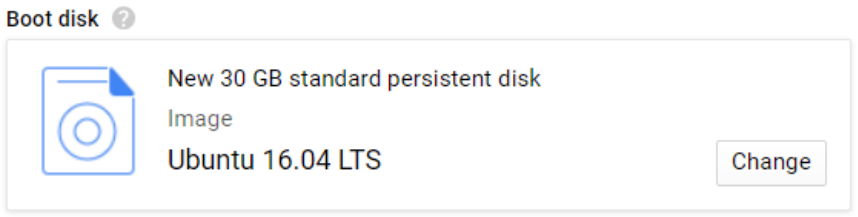
We need change some options here. First, select a proper Region and Zone

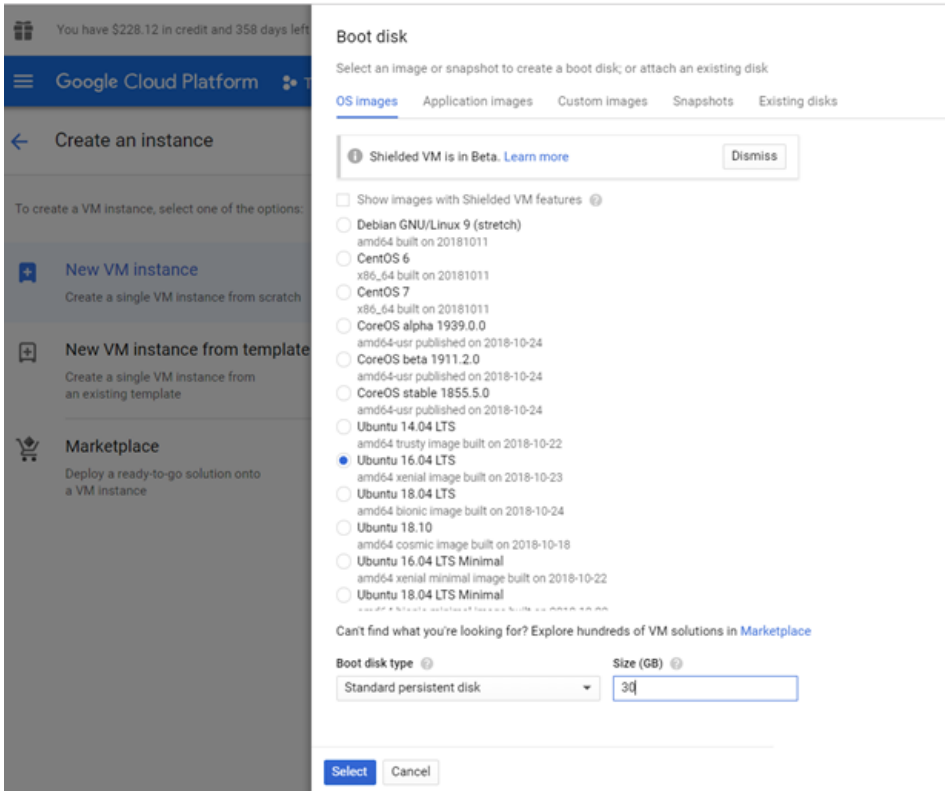


We can customize the machine type, here we choose 4 vCPU and 1 NVIDA Tesla P100 GPU

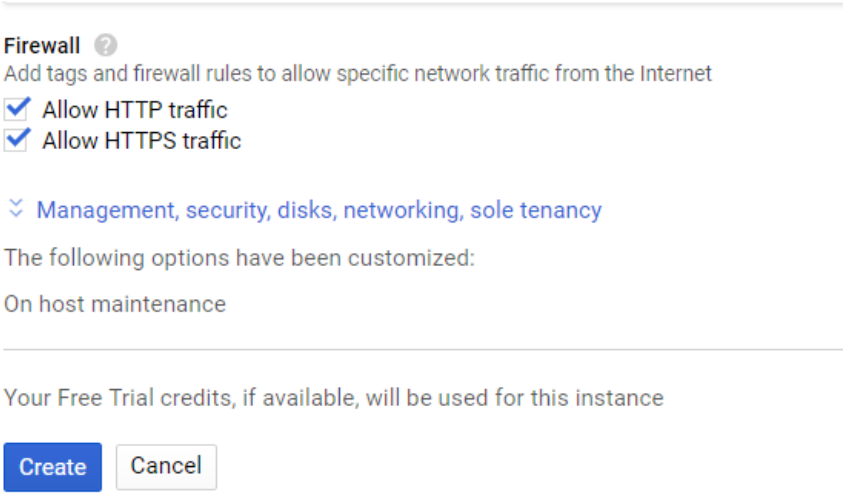


We can select boot disk. Since we need install several large package later, here we'd like to have a large disk. Here we choose Ubuntu 16.04 LTS, 30GB

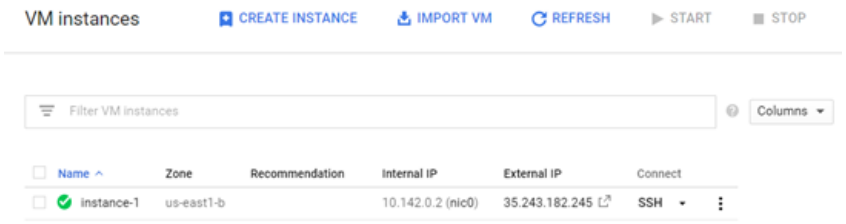


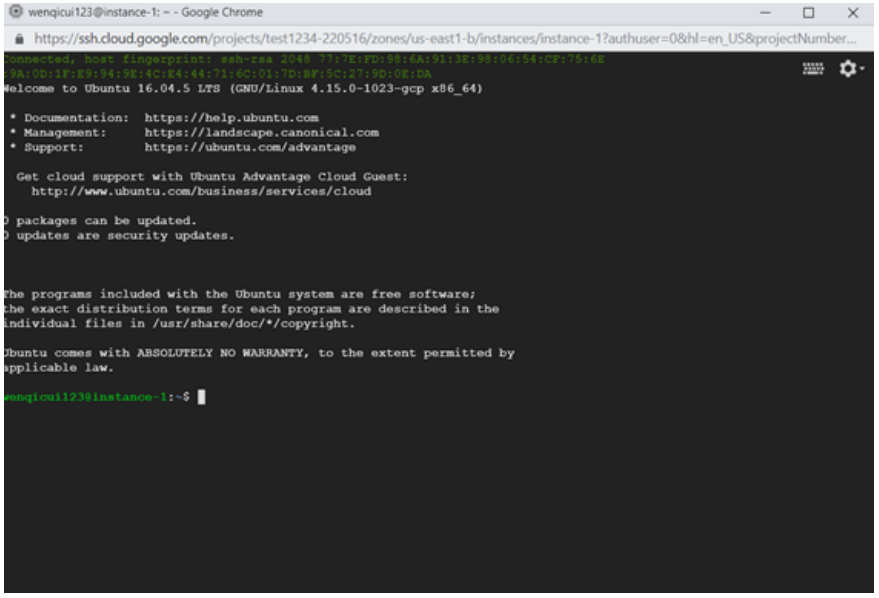


Select "Allow HTTP traffic" and "Allow HTTPS traffic" check box in Firewall session, click "Create", wait a few minute for create



Here we got our new VM instance, we can directly click the "SSH" to connect to the instance. Don't forget to stop the instance after finish the task, or Google Cloud will charge you continuously





Configure Python-related Environment and File Transfer

Install Anaconda

> Why do we need Anaconda? Anaconda contains python core, jupyter notebook(as IDE), and several useful packages. It is easy for us not only to install but also to manage the development environment.

Go to the Anaconda Downloads page(here), choose the linux version and **copy** the download link address, for now(Oct 2018) the link is `https://repo.anaconda.com/archive/Anaconda3-5.3.0-Linux-x86_64.sh`

Open the SSH of your VM instance, find a path where you want anaconda installed to, use `curl` to download the link we just copied.

```
$ curl -O https://repo.anaconda.com/archive/Anaconda3-5.2.0-Linux-x86_64.sh
```

Run what the `.sh` file when it's downloaded.

```
$ bash Anaconda3-5.2.0-Linux-x86_64.sh
```

Follow the instructions to install anaconda.

Once installed, you can activate the installation with the following command:

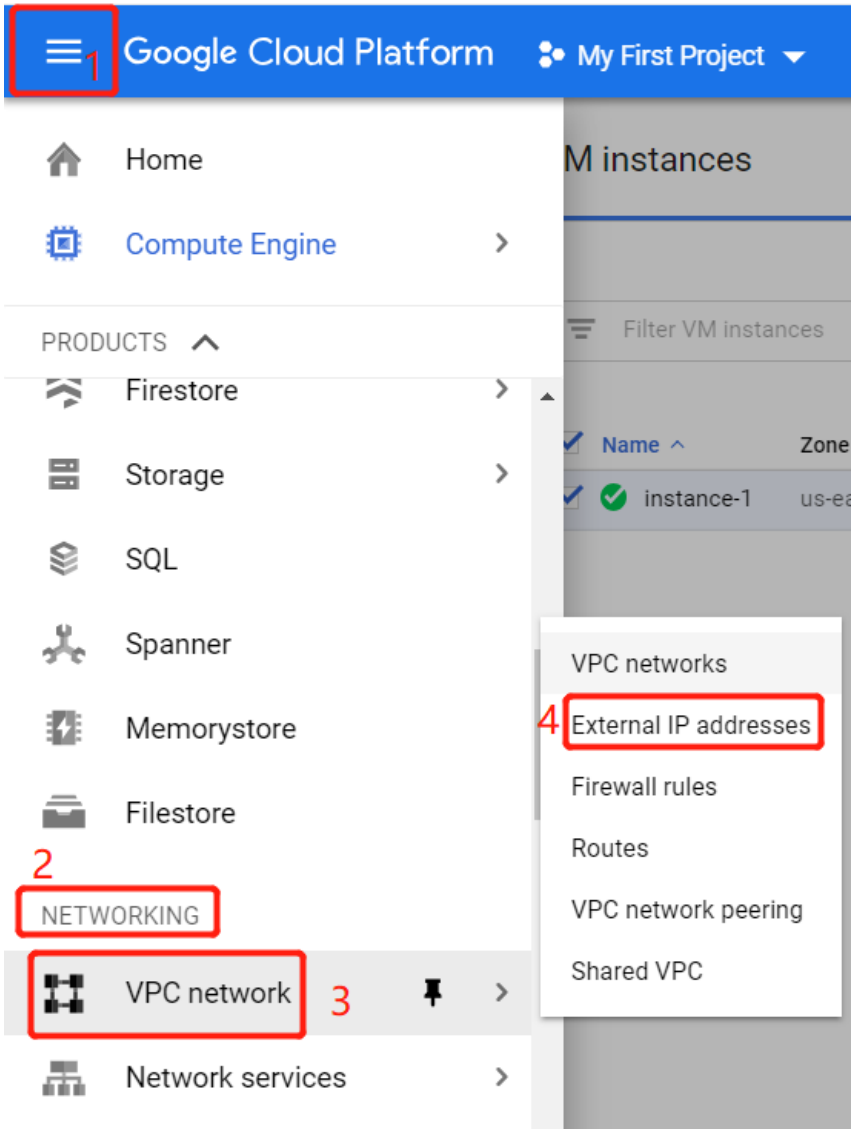
```
$ source ~/.bashrc
```

Set IP address to static

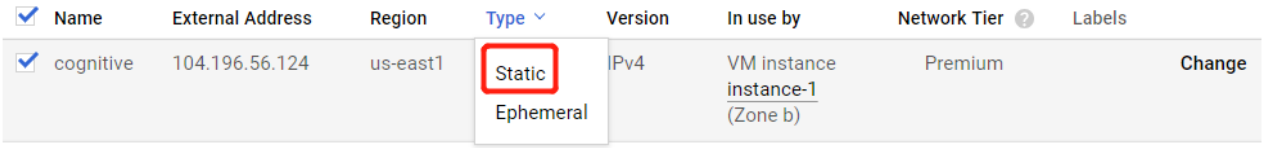
To open jupyter notebook from your local web browser, we need to set the external IP address of our Google Cloud instance from the default--dynamic to static.

To find where to change this setting, follow the step below:

```
MENU->NETWORKING->VPC network->External IP Addresses
```



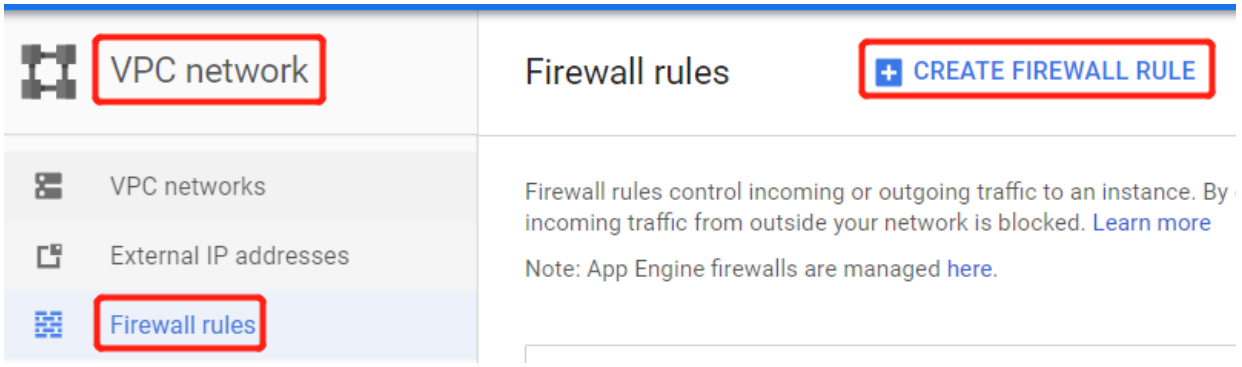
In the list of your addresses, find the one you would like to change and change the type.



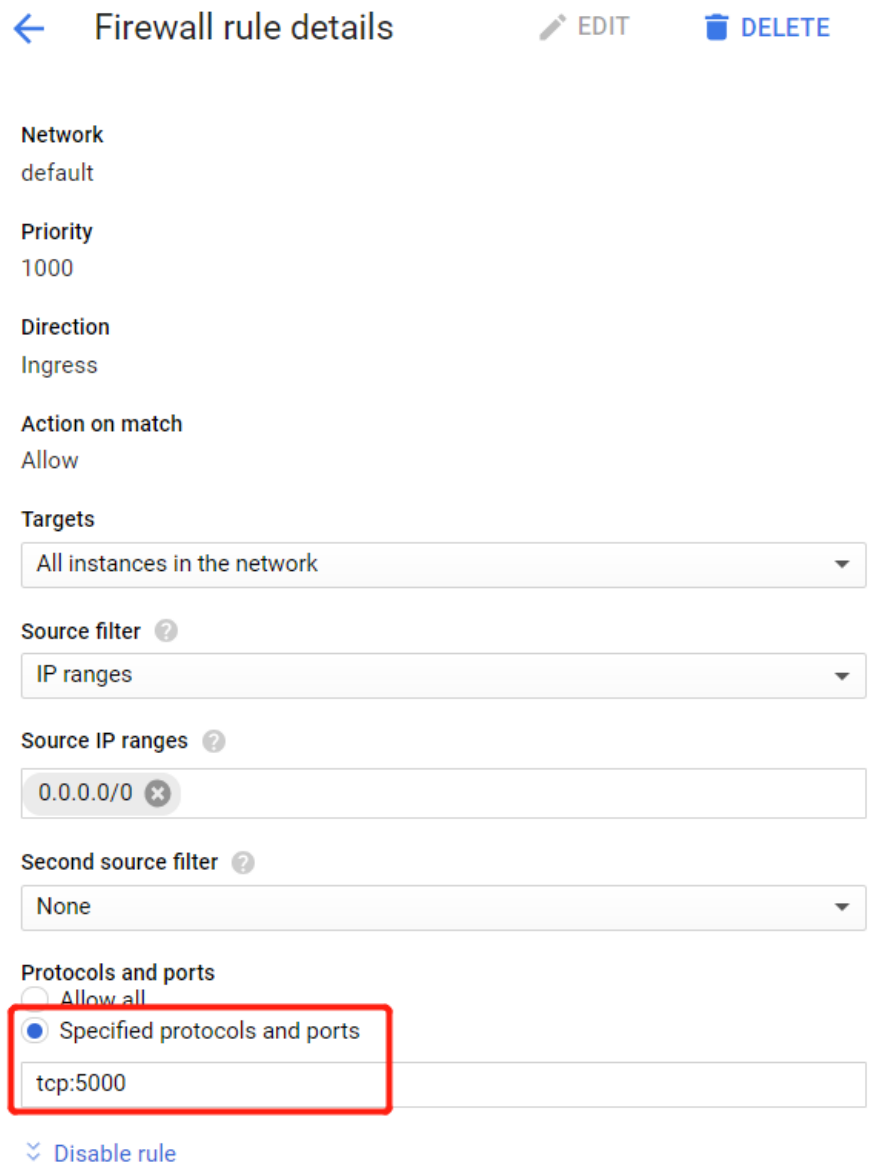
Then you are done. The external IP address of your instance now is static.

Open Jupyter Notebook in a web browser

First we need to create a new firewall rule.



For 'Protocols and ports', choose Specified protocols and ports and set a tcp number you like. I've chosen tcp:5000 as my port number.



Now click on the save button.

Then, in the SSH of your VM, check if you have a Jupyter configuration file by typing this commands:

```
$ ls ~/.jupyter/jupyter_notebook_config.py
```

If it doesn't exist, create one:

```
$ jupyter notebook --generate-config
```

Now open the config file with vi:

```
$ vi jupyter_notebook_config.py
```

Then we need to add several lines in it, with the `<Port Number>` you set before. For me, it's `5000`.

```
c = get_config()
c.NotebookApp.ip = '*'
c.NotebookApp.open_browser = False
c.NotebookApp.port = <Port Number>
```

You can add them anywhere inside this file since most of them are comments. It should look like this:

```
#------------------------------------
# Application(SingletonConfigurable
#------------------------------------
c = get_config()
c.NotebookApp.ip = '*'
c.NotebookApp.open_browser = False
c.NotebookApp.port = 5000
## This is an application.
```

Now you can run jupyter notebook on your server.

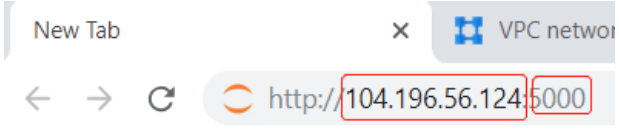
```
$ jupyter notebook
```

You will get something like this:

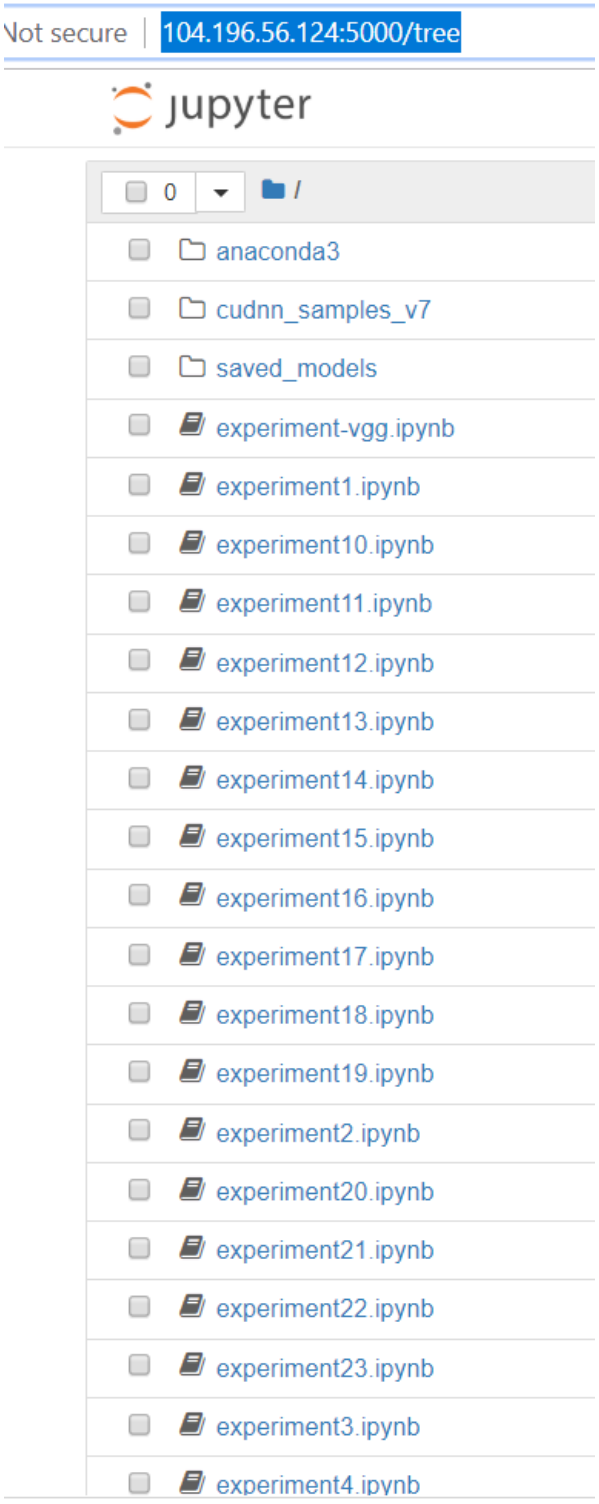
```
:~$ jupyter notebook
[I 18:12:40.393 NotebookApp] Writing notebook server cookie secret to /run/user/1001/jupyter/notebook_cookie_secret
[W 18:12:40.882 NotebookApp] WARNING: The notebook server is listening on all IP addresses and not using encryption
. This is not recommended.
[I 18:12:40.937 NotebookApp] JupyterLab extension loaded from /home/[redacted]/anaconda3/lib/python3.7/site-packa
ges/jupyterlab
[I 18:12:40.937 NotebookApp] JupyterLab application directory is /home/[redacted]/anaconda3/share/jupyter/lab
[I 18:12:40.944 NotebookApp] Serving notebooks from local directory: /home/[redacted]
[I 18:12:40.944 NotebookApp] The Jupyter Notebook is running at:
[I 18:12:40.944 NotebookApp] http://(instance-1 or 127.0.0.1):5000/?token=0d10ed3a5e4b5f59e6789b2eb14c3caf1b5cddd05
0a61676
[I 18:12:40.944 NotebookApp] Use Control-C to stop this server and shut down all kernels (twice to skip confirmatio
```

Copy the token for later login.

Open your web browser and type your `<static external IP address>:<port number>` like this:



Then you can use your token to login jupyter notebook!



File Transfer via WinSCP

> Why use WinSCP? WinSCP can help you easily upload and download files between your local and the instance. It is used in the next part of our tutorial. More importantly, we will need it to download notebooks and models.

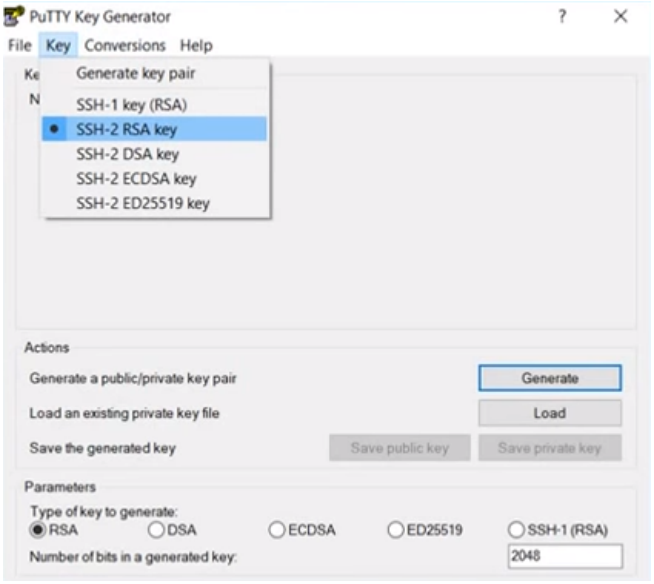
Before starting you should:

- Have WinSCP installed

Now first, we need to use PuTTYgen tool to generate new key.

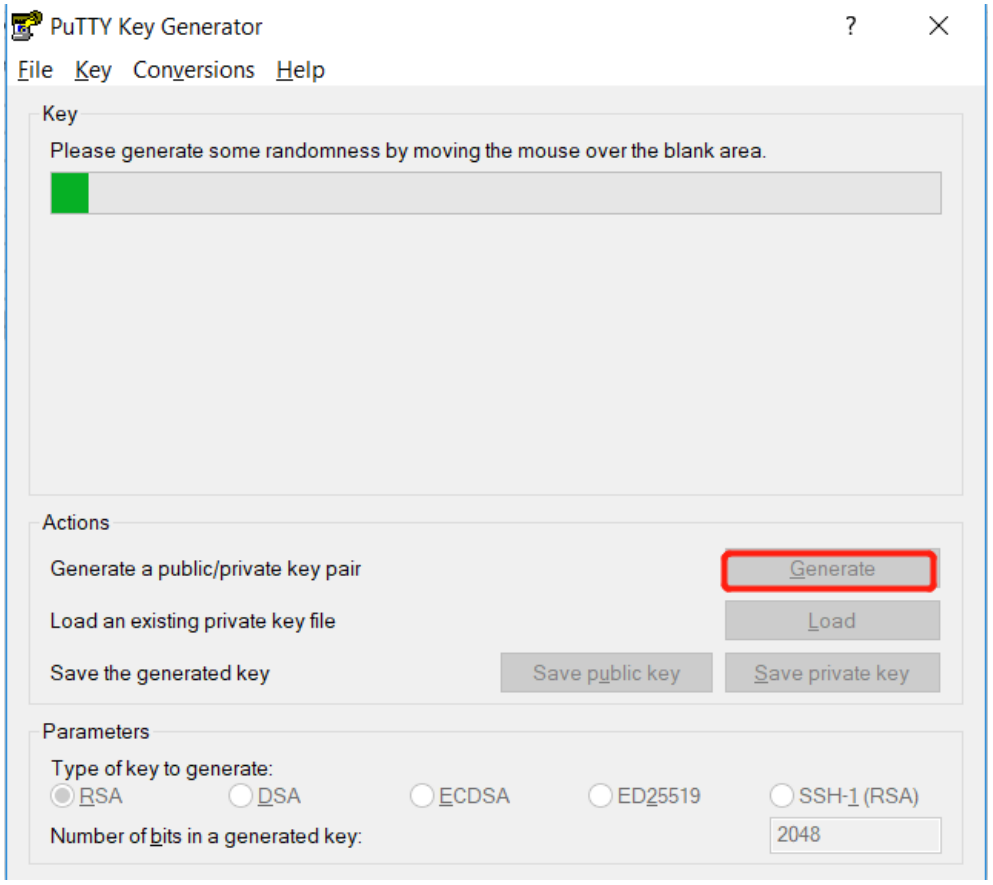
> PuTTYgen installs by default with WinSCP.

Open PuTTYgen, choose `SSH-2 RSA key` under the `Key` tab.

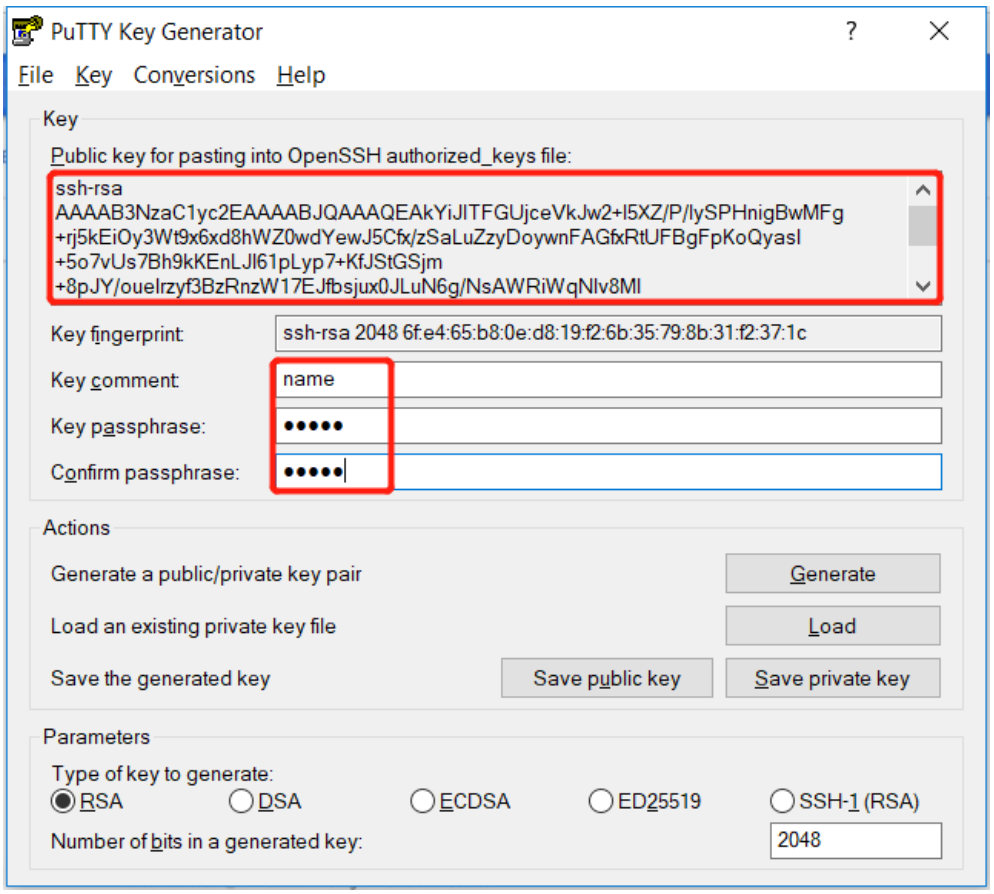


Click `Generate`

> while generating, remember move the mouse over the blank area.

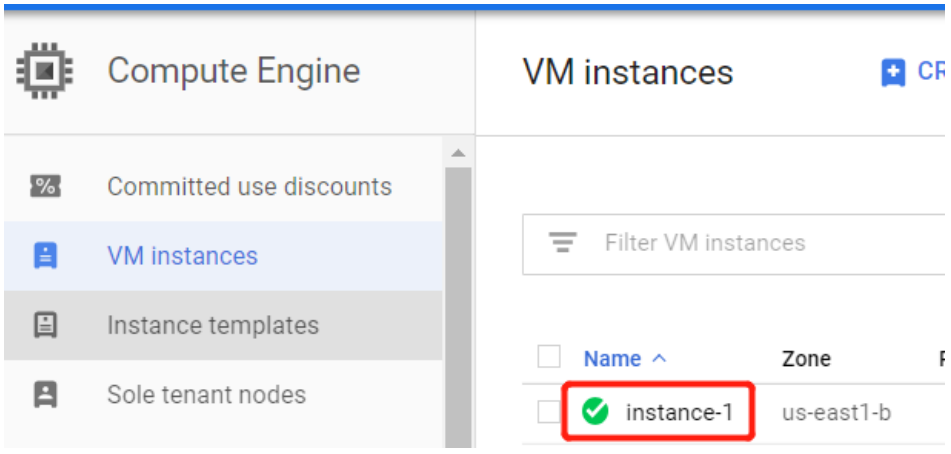


When the generating is done, set the key comment and passphrase(red box below) and you will have a long text string(red box above), copy it.

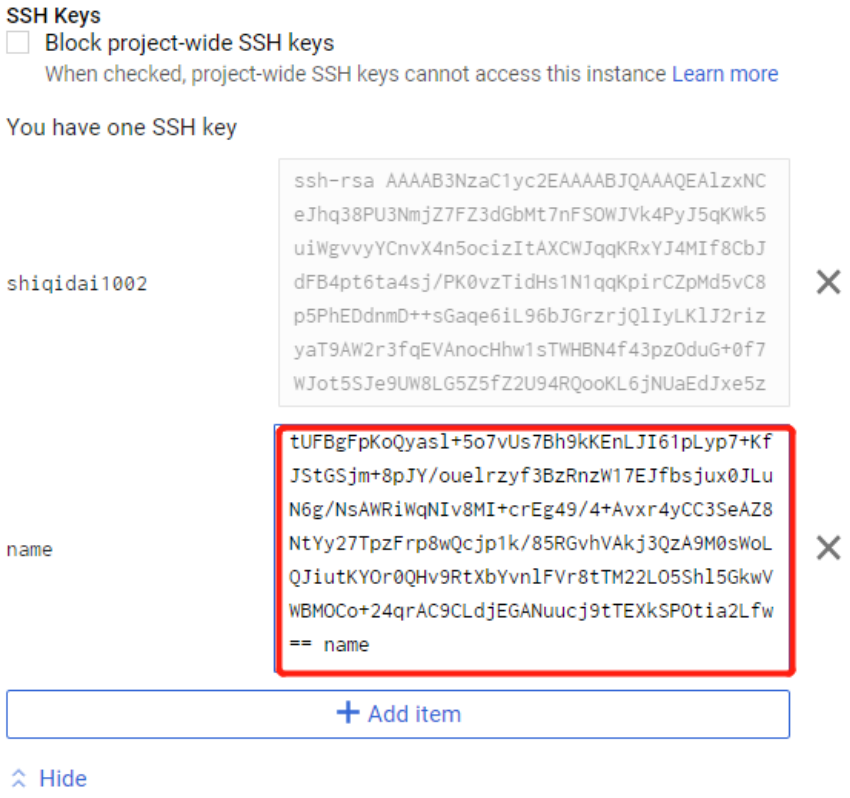


Then click the save button to save your private key to your local.

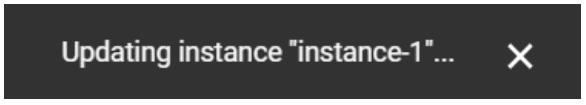
Go to Google Cloud Platform, click on your instance to enter the detail page.



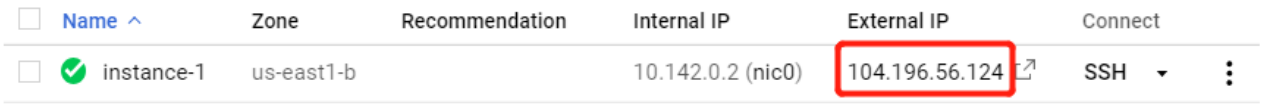
Then click `edit` , scroll down, under `SSH Keys` click `show and edit` , then click `Add Item` and paste the long text of previous generated key here.



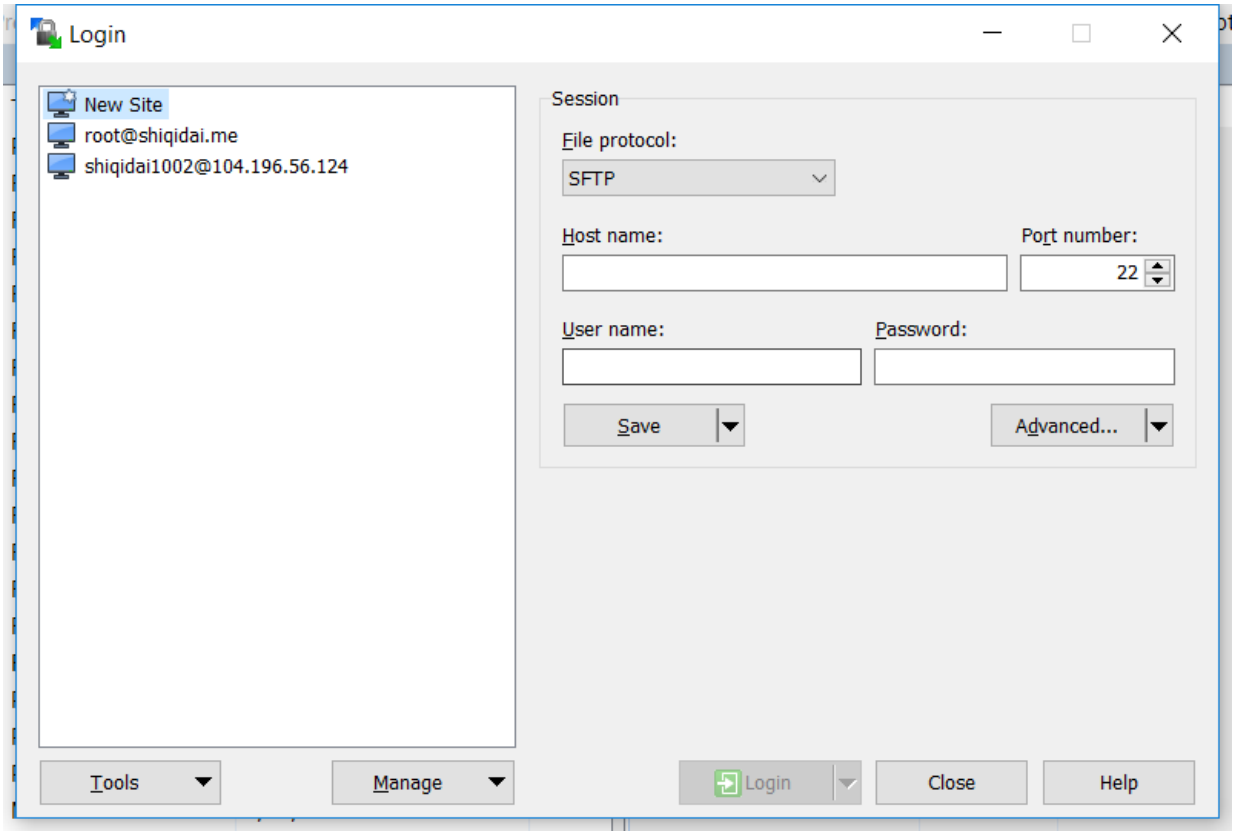
Scroll down to the bottom, `save` it. You will see a pop-up like this:



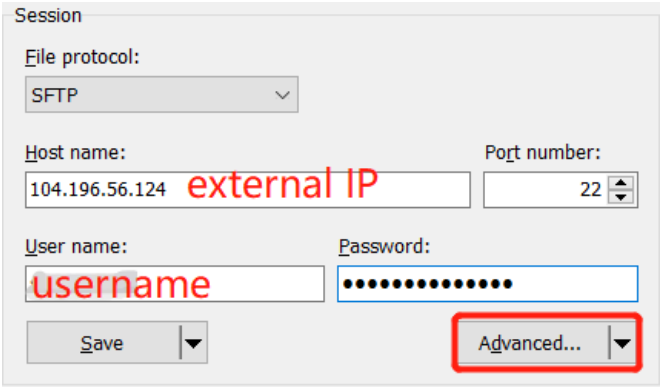
Now go back to your instance, copy the external IP address.



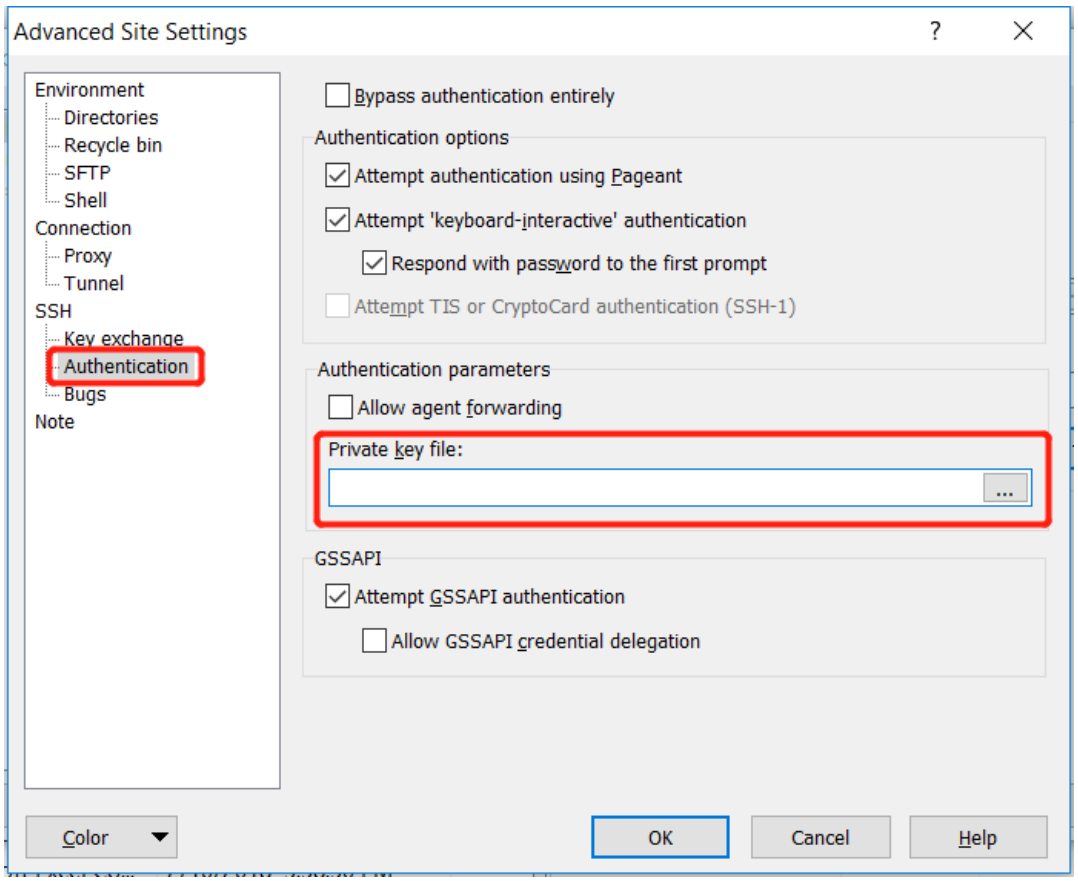
Open WinSCP from your local, from the left panel, choose `New Site` :



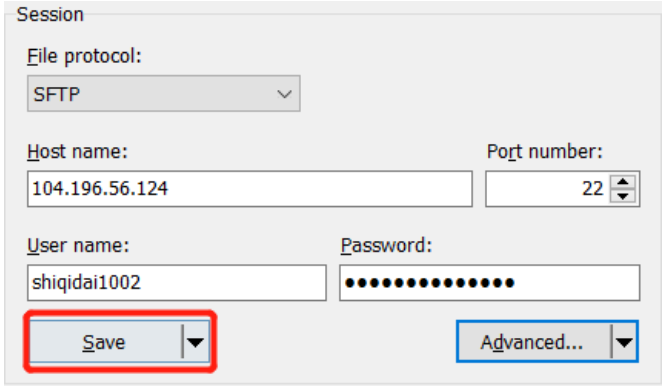
Paste your external IP and type you Google user name and password, then click `Advanced` :



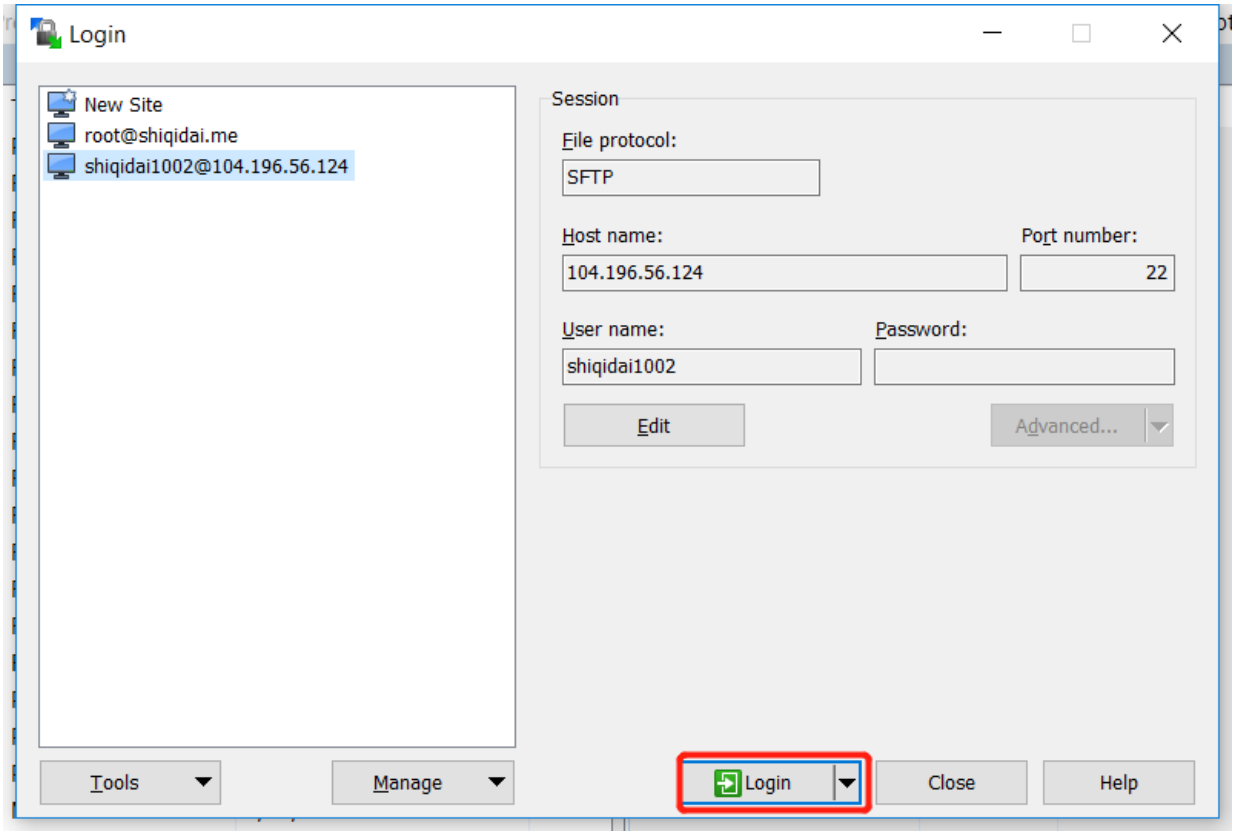
Under advanced setting, choose SSH->Authentication->chose your private key file saved in your local before. Then click `ok`



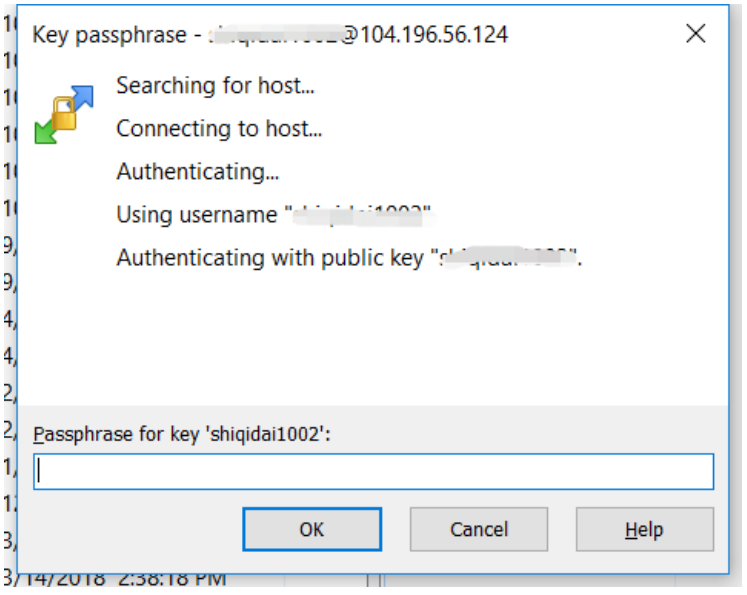
Back to the login window, click `save` to make it easier for you to log in the next time.



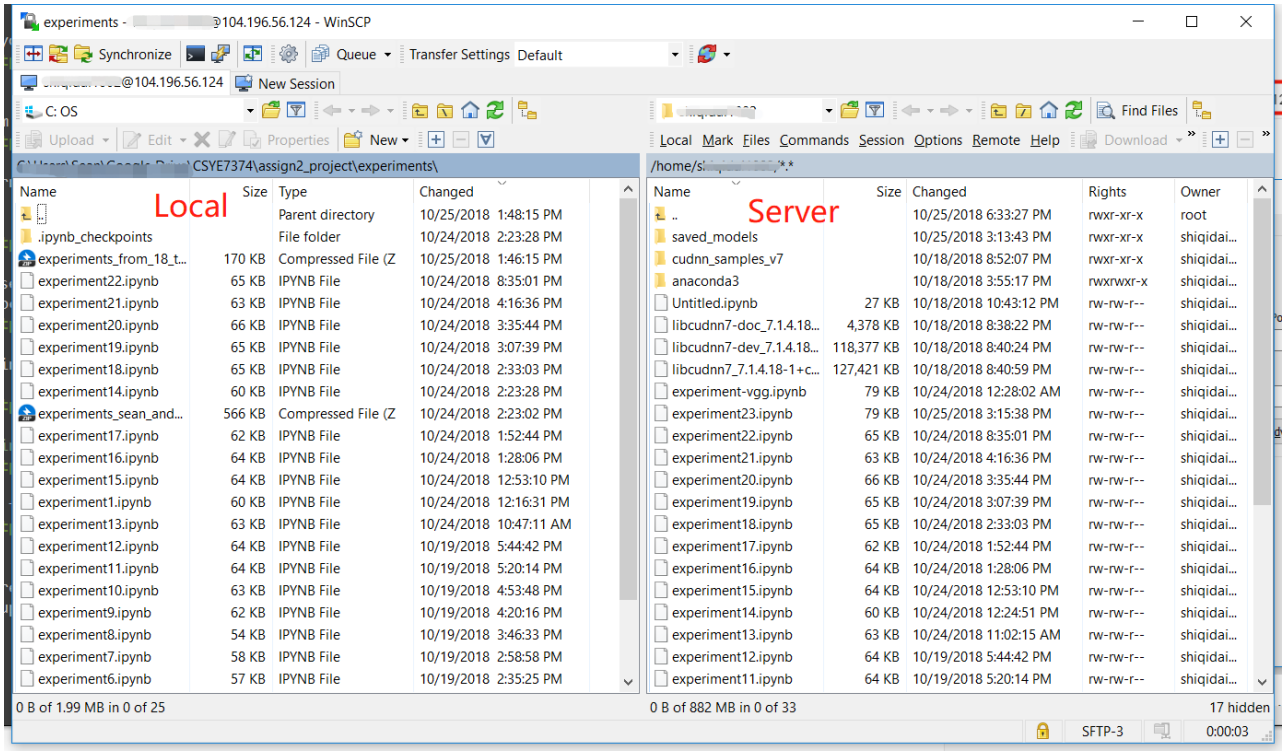
Now we can `login`



It will ask you to enter you passphrase, the one you set when you created the key.



By entering correct passphrase, you are able to connect to the server. Now you are able to easily upload or download files!



Keras using MXNet as backend

After previous actions, we've already got a Python environment installed in our server. Now we are going to configure MXNet based Keras using GPU training.

Install CUDA

To utilize GPU(NVIDIA branded) for training, we have to install two NVIDIA libraries to setup with GPU support. One of them is CUDA, another is cuDNN.

First let's install CUDA.

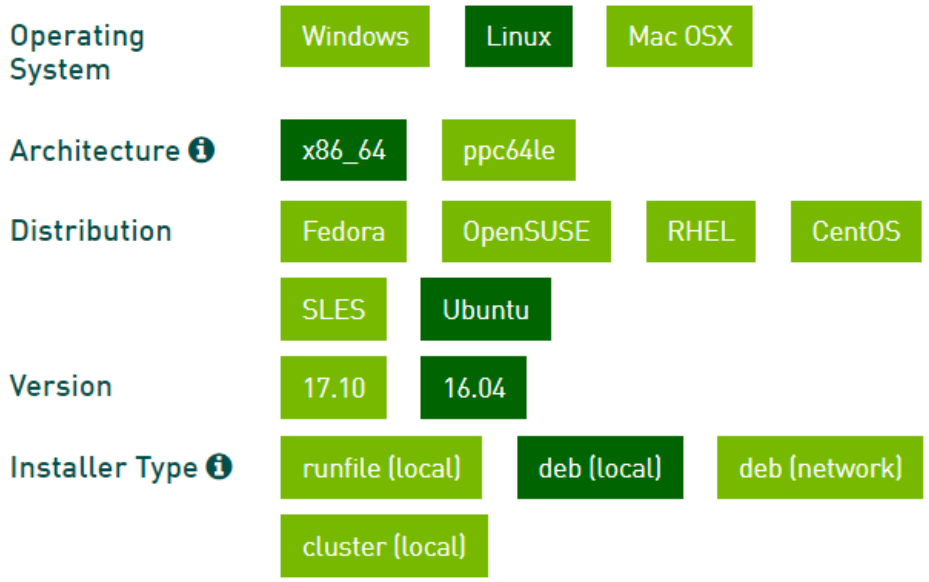
The updated version of CUDA is CUDA10, but normally we use previous version like CUDA8 and CUDA9.0+. In our experiments, we used CUDA9.2, so we will use CUDA9.2 as an example.

> You can also install CUDA 9.2 following the NVIDIA's installation guide.

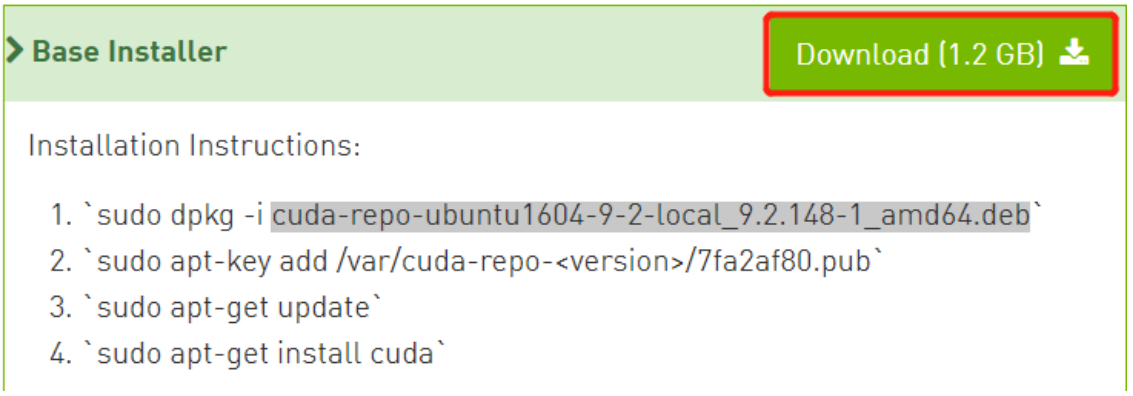
1. **Download CUDA from NVIDIA**

Since we are using an Ubuntu machine, you have to choose the correct CUDA debian package when trying to download from NVIDIA(link).

Make sure you're choosing this:



Then you will see the 'base installer'



For the choices we made, you should get a deb file named as ' `cuda-repo-ubuntu1604-9-2-local_9.2.148-1_amd64.deb` '

Then put the deb file into your sever folder and run the following commands to install it.

> You can upload and download files between local and sever by using WinSCP
>
> ```
> $ sudo dpkg -i cuda-repo-ubuntu1604-9-2-local_9.2.148-1_amd64.deb
> $ sudo apt-key add /var/cuda-repo-ubuntu1604-9-2-local_9.2.148-1_amd64/7fa2af80.pub
> $ sudo apt-get update
> $ sudo apt-get install cuda
> ```
>
> Note: the `<version>` of `cuda-repo-<version>` should be replaced by the version info corresponding to the name of the downloaded deb file.

Make sure to add the CUDA install path to `LD_LIBRARY_PATH` . Using the following commands:

```
$ export CUDA_HOME=/usr/local/cuda
$ export PATH=${CUDA_HOME}/bin${PATH:+:${PATH}}
$ export LD_LIBRARY_PATH=${CUDA_HOME}/lib64/:$LD_LIBRARY_PATH
```

Install cuDNN

Now let's install cuDNN.

First, to download cuDNN, you have to own an NVIDIA developer account. If you don't, you can register it here.

Once you got a developer account, you can download cuDNN from here.

Choose the correct version of cuDNN for your CUDA. For us, we installed CUDA9.2, so we should install cuDNN 7.1.4 or 7.2.1.

Download all 3 '.deb' files: the runtime library, the developer library, and the code samples library for Ubuntu 16.04.

In your download folder, install them in the same order:

```
# the runtime library
$ sudo dpkg -i libcudnn7_7.1.4.18-1+cuda9.2_amd64.deb

# the developer library
$ sudo dpkg -i libcudnn7-dev_7.1.4.18-1+cuda9.2_amd64.deb

# the code samples
$ sudo dpkg -i libcudnn7-doc_7.1.4.18-1+cuda9.2_amd64.deb
```

Now we can verify the cuDNN installation:

1. Copy the code samples somewhere you have write access:
   `cp -r /usr/src/cudnn_samples_v7/ ~`
2. Go to the MNIST example code:
   `cd ~/cudnn_samples_v7/mnistCUDNN`
3. Compile the MNIST example:
   `make clean && make`
4. Run the MNIST example:
   `./mnistCUDNN`

If your installation is successful, you should see `Test passed!` at the end of the output.

Now we are exporting environment variables LD_LIBRARY_PATH in your .bashrc fileby putting the following line in the end or your `.bashrc` file.

```
$ export LD_LIBRARY_PATH="LD_LIBRARY_PATH=${LD_LIBRARY_PATH:+${LD_LIBRARY_PATH}:}/usr/local/cuda/extras/CUPTI/lib64"
```

Last, source it:

```
$ source ~/.bashrc
```

Check if everything is fine

You can verify your CUDA setup with the following commands:

```
$ nvcc --version
$ nvidia-smi
```

> Note: this command also can be used to monitor the usage of your GPU(s) whiling training.

It will look like this when training with GPU:

```
@instance-1:~$ nvidia-smi
Thu Oct 25 18:20:51 2018
+-----------------------------------------------------------------------------+
| NVIDIA-SMI 396.54                 Driver Version: 396.54                    |
|-------------------------------+----------------------+----------------------+
| GPU  Name        Persistence-M| Bus-Id        Disp.A | Volatile Uncorr. ECC |
| Fan  Temp  Perf  Pwr:Usage/Cap|         Memory-Usage | GPU-Util  Compute M. |
|===============================+======================+======================|
|   0  Tesla P100-PCIE...  Off  | 00000000:00:04.0 Off |                    0 |
| N/A   62C    P0   157W / 250W |   1725MiB / 16280MiB |     81%      Default |
+-------------------------------+----------------------+----------------------+

+-----------------------------------------------------------------------------+
| Processes:                                                       GPU Memory |
|  GPU       PID   Type   Process name                             Usage      |
|=============================================================================|
|    0      1744      G   /usr/lib/xorg/Xorg                           100MiB |
|    0      3260      C   /home/shiqidai1002/anaconda3/bin/python     1615MiB |
+-----------------------------------------------------------------------------+
```

Install MXNet

You have to install the right mxnet corresponding to your installed CUDA version. For example, if you use CUDA9, the mxnet for you is 'mxnet-cu90'. If CUDA8, then use 'mxnet-cu80'.

Use the following code to install.

```
$ pip install mxnet-cu92
```

> Since our CUDA version is 9.2, we installed mxnet-cu92 correspondingly.

Install Keras with MXNet backend

We need to install a special version of Keras called 'keras-mxnet', since we are going to use MXNet as backend for Keras.

Use the following code:

```
$ pip install keras-mxnet --user
```

Configure Keras backend and image_data_format

In the previous step, we installed the `keras-mxnet`, by default, the following values are set in the keras config file `keras.json`.

```
backend: mxnet
image_data_format: channels_last
```

Accordong to Keras official documentation:

> We strongly recommend changing the image_data_format to channels_first. MXNet is significantly faster on 'channels_first' data. Default is set to 'channels_last' with an objective to be compatible with majority of existing users of Keras. See performance tips guide for more details.

Thus, we are gonna change the default setting. Usually, you can find `keras.json` file in this path: `.keras/keras.json`

You can use vim to open and edit it when in the same folder.

```
sudo vi keras.json
```

To edit it, press 'i' to enter edit mode. After changing `image_data_format` to `channels_first`, type ':wq' to save and quit.

Validate the Installation

You can validate the installation by trying to import Keras in Python terminal and verifying that Keras is using mxnet backend.

```
$ python
    >>> import keras as k
        Using mxnet backend>>>
```

Or something like this if you are using jupyter notebook

```
Using MXNet backend
```

Related Links

- Keras with Apache MXNet Documentation
- Install CUDA 9.2 and cuDNN 7.1 for PyTorch (GPU) on Ubuntu 16.04
- How To Install Anaconda on Ubuntu 18.04
- Running Jupyter Notebook on Google Cloud Platform in 15 min
- Connecting Securely to Google Compute Engine Server with SFTP
- connect to google compute engine from WinSCP and PuttY