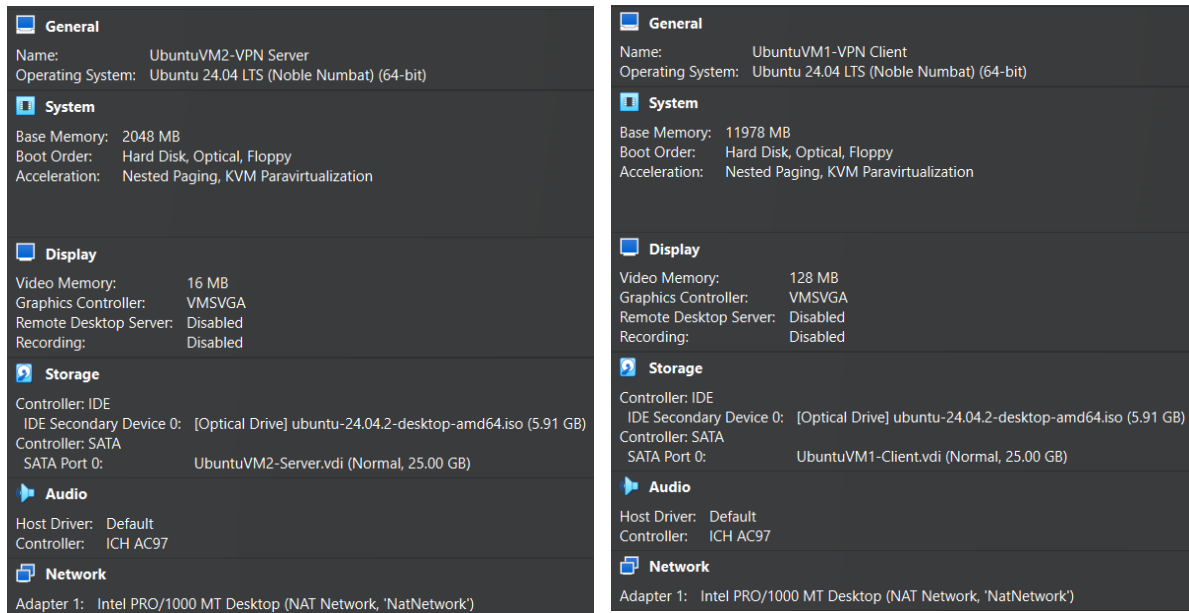


# LAB: VPN CONFIGURATION AND SECURE COMMUNICATION

Steps taken to set up the VPN:

## 1. VM creation and network setup in VirtualBox

Create two virtual machines. One for VPN Server, and another one for VPN Client.



Notice that both VMs have been named respectively. Both have been assigned with more than 2 GB of RAM and 1/2CPUs. Also, they have been assigned to ubuntu 24.04 LTS 64-bit ISO image and use NAT network adapter to access the internet.

## 2. OpenVPN installation steps

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo apt update
Ign:1 cdrom://Ubuntu 24.04.2 LTS _Noble Numbat_ - Release amd64 (20250215) noble InRelease
Hit:2 cdrom://Ubuntu 24.04.2 LTS _Noble Numbat_ - Release amd64 (20250215) noble Release
Hit:4 http://archive.ubuntu.com/ubuntu noble InRelease
Hit:5 http://security.ubuntu.com/ubuntu noble-security InRelease
Hit:6 http://archive.ubuntu.com/ubuntu noble-updates InRelease
Hit:7 http://archive.ubuntu.com/ubuntu noble-backports InRelease
Reading package lists... Done
Building dependency tree... Done
Reading state information... Done
227 packages can be upgraded. Run 'apt list --upgradable' to see them.
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo apt install openvpn
Reading package lists... Done
Building dependency tree... Done
Reading state information... Done
Suggested packages:
  openvpn-dco-dkms openvpn-systemd-resolved easy-rsa
The following packages will be upgraded:
  openvpn
1 upgraded, 0 newly installed, 0 to remove and 226 not upgraded.
Need to get 681 kB of archives.
After this operation, 0 B of additional disk space will be used.
Get:1 http://archive.ubuntu.com/ubuntu noble-updates/main amd64 openvpn amd64 2.6.12-0ubuntu0.24.04.3 [681 kB]
Fetched 681 kB in 4s (175 kB/s)
Preconfiguring packages ...
(Reading database ... 212032 files and directories currently installed.)
Preparing to unpack .../openvpn_2.6.12-0ubuntu0.24.04.3_amd64.deb ...
Unpacking openvpn (2.6.12-0ubuntu0.24.04.3) over (2.6.12-0ubuntu0.24.04.1) ...
Setting up openvpn (2.6.12-0ubuntu0.24.04.3) ...
Processing triggers for man-db (2.12.0-4build2) ...
```

Run “sudo apt update” “sudo apt install openvpn” for both VMs

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ openvpn --version
OpenVPN 2.6.12 x86_64-pc-linux-gnu [SSL (OpenSSL)] [LZO] [LZ4] [EPOLL] [PKCS11] [MH/PKTINFO] [AEAD] [DCO]
library versions: OpenSSL 3.0.13 30 Jan 2024, LZO 2.10
DCO version: N/A
Originally developed by James Yonan
Copyright (C) 2002-2024 OpenVPN Inc <sales@openvpn.net>
Compile time defines: enable_async_push=no enable_comp_stub=no enable_crypto_ofb_cfb=yes enable_dco=yes enable_dco_arg=yes
enable_debug=yes enable_dependency_tracking=no enable_dlopen=unknown enable_dlopen_self=unknown enable_dlopen_self_static=unknown
enable_fast_install=needless enable_fragment=yes enable_iproute2=no enable_libtool_lock=yes enable_lz4=yes enable_lzo=yes
enable_maintainer_mode=no enable_management=yes enable_option_checking=no enable_pam_dlopen=no enable_pedantic=no
enable_pkcs11=yes enable_plugin_auth_pam=yes enable_plugin_down_root=yes enable_plugins=yes enable_port_share=yes
enable_selinux=no enable_shared=yes enable_shared_with_static_runtimes=no enable_silent_rules=no enable_small=no
enable_static=yes enable_strict=no enable_strict_options=no enable_systemd=yes enable_unit_tests=no enable_werror=no
enable_win32_dll=yes enable_wolfssl_options_h=yes enable_x509_alt_username=yes with_aix_soname=aix with_crypto_library=openssl
with_gnu_ld=yes with_mem_check=no with_openssl_engine=auto with_sysroot=no
```

Run “openvpn --version” to verify the installation.

On VPN Server VM, run `ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo nano /etc/openvpn/server.conf`

Then, continue config server.conf with basic server configuration:

```
GNU nano 7.2 /etc/openvpn/server.conf
port 1194
proto udp
dev tun

server 10.0.0.0 255.255.255.0
push "dhcp-option DNS 8.8.8.8"
push "dhcp-option DNS 8.8.4.4"
push "redirect-gateway def1 bypass-dhcp"

ca /etc/openvpn/ca.crt
cert /etc/openvpn/server.crt
key /etc/openvpn/server.key
dh /etc/openvpn/dh.pem

comp-lzo

keepalive 10 120

user nobody
group nogroup

log /var/log/openvpn.log

verb 3
```

### 3. Certificate/key generation using EasyRSA

On both VMs, run `ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo apt install easy-rsa`

If successful, it should return something like this:

```
Preparing to unpack .../5-easy-rsa_3.1.7-2_all.deb ...
Unpacking easy-rsa (3.1.7-2) ...
Setting up libccid (1.5.5-1) ...
Setting up pcscd (2.0.3-1build1) ...
Created symlink /etc/systemd/system/sockets.target.wants/pcscd.socket → /usr/lib/systemd/system/pcscd.socket.
pcscd.service is a disabled or a static unit, not starting it.
Setting up libeac3:amd64 (1.1.2+ds+git20220117+453c3d6b03a0-1.1build2) ...
Setting up opensc-pkcs11:amd64 (0.25.0-rc1-1build2) ...
Setting up easy-rsa (3.1.7-2) ...
Setting up opensc (0.25.0-rc1-1build2) ...
Processing triggers for man-db (2.12.0-4build2) ...
Processing triggers for desktop-file-utils (0.27-2build1) ...
Processing triggers for gnome-menus (3.36.0-1ubuntu3) ...
Processing triggers for libc-bin (2.39-0ubuntu8.4) ...
```

Continue to create a directory for EasyRSA and attempt to initialize EasyRSA PKI:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ mkdir ~/easy-rsa
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ cd ~/easy-rsa
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ easyrsa init-pki
easyrsa: command not found
```

Try locating EasyRSA directory since the initialization above failed:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo find / -name easyrsa
find: '/run/user/1000/gvfs': Permission denied
find: '/run/user/1000/doc': Permission denied
/usr/share/easy-rsa/easyrsa
```

Proceed to set EasyRSA Path:

Run `ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ nano ~/.bashrc`

At this highlighted line at the end of the script:

```
GNU nano 7.2 /home/ubuntu/.bashrc
fi
fi
export PATH=$PATH:/usr/share/easy-rsa/
```

Don't forget to reload the shell configuration with `ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ source ~/.bashrc`

Try reinitializing to verify the solution:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ cd ~/easy-rsa
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ easyrsa init-pki

Notice
-----
'init-pki' complete; you may now create a CA or requests.

Your newly created PKI dir is:
* /home/ubuntu/easy-rsa/pki

Using Easy-RSA configuration:
* undefined
```

Then, on **VPN Server VM** only, build the Certificate Authority:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ easyrsa build-ca
```

```
-----
Common Name (eg: your user, host, or server name) [Easy-RSA CA]:MyVPN CA

Notice
-----
CA creation complete. Your new CA certificate is at:
* /home/ubuntu/easy-rsa/pki/ca.crt
```

Continue with generating the Server Certificate and Key:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ easyrsa gen-req server nopass
```

```
Common Name (eg: your user, host, or server name) [server]:MyVPN Server
Notice
-----
Private-Key and Public-Certificate-Request files created.
Your files are:
* req: /home/ubuntu/easy-rsa/pki/reqs/server.req
* key: /home/ubuntu/easy-rsa/pki/private/server.key
```

Sign the server certificate:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ easyrsa sign-req server server
Signature ok
The Subject's Distinguished Name is as follows
commonName           :ASN.1 12:'MyVPN Server'
Certificate is to be certified until Jul 21 03:26:31 2027 GMT (825 days)

Write out database with 1 new entries
Database updated

Notice
-----
Certificate created at:
* /home/ubuntu/easy-rsa/pki/issued/server.crt
```

For the key exchange during VPN connection setup, generate the Diffie-Hellman (DH) Parameters:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ easyrsa gen-dh
DH parameters appear to be ok.

Notice
-----

DH parameters of size 2048 created at:
* /home/ubuntu/easy-rsa/pki/dh.pem
```

Optionally, generate the HMAC key for the additional layer of security for the OpenVPN server:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ openvpn --genkey secret ta.key
```

Finally, generate client certificate and key so that it allows the VPN Client VM to connect to the OpenVPN server:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ easyrsa gen-req client1 nopass

Common Name (eg: your user, host, or server name) [client1]:MyVPN Client
Notice
-----
Private-Key and Public-Certificate-Request files created.
Your files are:
* req: /home/ubuntu/easy-rsa/pki/reqs/client1.req
* key: /home/ubuntu/easy-rsa/pki/private/client1.key
```

Sign it: `ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ easyrsa sign-req client client1`

```

Signature ok
The Subject's Distinguished Name is as follows
commonName      :ASN.1 12:'MyVPN Client'
Certificate is to be certified until Jul 21 03:29:59 2027 GMT (825 days)

Write out database with 1 new entries
Database updated

Notice
-----
Certificate created at:
* /home/ubuntu/easy-rsa/pki/issued/client1.crt

```

Then, organize all the necessary generated files by copying them to appropriate directories for OpenVPN:

```

ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ sudo cp pki/ca.crt /etc/openvpn/
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ sudo cp pki/issued/server.crt /etc/openvpn/
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ sudo cp pki/private/server.key /etc/openvpn/
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ sudo cp pki/dh.pem /etc/openvpn/
ubuntu@ubuntu:~/easy-rsa$ sudo cp ta.key /etc/openvpn/

```

Now, it is time to copy the generated client certificates to the client machine. On the **Client VPN VM**:

Firstly, copied the ca.crt as follows:

```

ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ ssh ubuntu@10.0.2.4 "sudo cat /etc/openvpn/ca.crt" /etc/openvpn/
ubuntu@10.0.2.4's password:
-----BEGIN CERTIFICATE-----
MIIDPzCCAiegAwIBAgIUHVHfGSB0WEYg4cozUuBt9e+t5Q88wDQYJKoZIhvcNAQEL
BQAwEjEQMA4GA1UEAwHSVZQTiBDQTAeFw0yNTA0MTAwNTU3MjFhFw0zNTA0MDgw
NTU3MjFhFhEBAQgNVBAMMB0LWUE4gQ0EwggEiMA0GCSqGSIb3DQEBAQUAA4IB
DwAwggEKAoIBAQNmgvwek5LLsGvPcWUa4WMP4CVO3Hh9WRHMv7U8Aen5aFFgAQB
Smkxd1t4/EHSN1Xn7iRrk4VQ6js1S0FmGj1Q/tDmqF4VuR9o7QnqNVEQ6ZJyIt5E
1RhczKVPawi1cK9M0t6tfwKjQ32RbpLGLwNiZT0bJRqH1/ZsFb3o1aalwMmydXN2
M1tDPd67CtEboIYG4xqFsNJ+bZLZ/f921aFmI0+jMhsHbphEBF9hamsj735FdBSt
7bBck5FJixSq2K0acK6vZ/JdhuczIoNk9r7kqp3te7TuMk94WHkQnsux/+ZA2CC+
FyiRGa1d/mR2iYOjyN0Q+EFkD98UfLAYrnNnAgMBAAGjgYwwgYkwDAYDVDR0TBAUw
AwEB/zAdBgNVHQ4EFgQUUpW0BgER7QQiNXim5MawO1VB2vCAwTQYDVDR0jBEYwRIAU
pW0BgER7QQiNXim5MawO1VB2vCCBFqQUMBIXEDAOBgNVBAMMB0LWUE4gQ0GCFFR3
xkgTlhGIOHKM1LgbfXvreUPPMAsGA1UdDwQEAWIBBjANBgkqhkiG9w0BAQsFAAOC
AQEAWt3LyqzmiZJyDwxfccpcw+oFhakT3my/HxKjeLXHqz9qwnMak8iL3VJl5wm
IqF76HlqgGo6uvSwaW1J7WrIUJjEr1uHXMbQnesutku/JhOpoSG/8j0ZnD4ztKFD
WT18GChGi88mNAaxSDsCLldAwwpjeHfGU0FsxZGXrKWSuOhUzUSMj2HIDSHc+J4I
YGxXoEL90e7j4AUumcUM0mA0nsGZb8Egpx92UKJSFakhZDuc9/K92d0pq7yTpxCx
C9Bmj+bal6hvneZ02uKZgRREmkTiI2c1XzQZ2pCI75edMs8cA6VFneZAmgupaJTh
Vj2eSedW4tb8/crPpw3kCft0mw==
-----END CERTIFICATE-----
cat: /etc/openvpn/: Is a directory

```

Proceed to copy the content from ---BEGIN CERTIFICATE--- until ---END CERTIFICATE--- and paste it here

```

ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo nano /etc/openvpn/ca.crt

```

Then, copied the client1.crt:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ ssh ubuntu@10.0.2.4 "sudo cat ~/easy-rsa/pki/issued/client1.crt" > ~/client1.crt
ubuntu@10.0.2.4's password:
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo mv ~/client1.crt /etc/openssl/client1.crt
mv: cannot stat '~/client1.crt': No such file or directory
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo mv ~/client1.crt /etc/openssl/client1.crt
```

Next, copied the client1.key:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ ssh ubuntu@10.0.2.4 "sudo cat ~/easy-rsa/pki/private/client1.key" /etc/openssl/
ubuntu@10.0.2.4's password:
-----BEGIN PRIVATE KEY-----
MIIEvAIBADANBgkqhkiG9w0BAQEFAASCBywggSiAgEAAoIBAQC0Jz4zswd00H3
WVrZr+ZQuHjLXDvaHirk51z6mQs7HPsGFvdKZtxKoiVHhujgkbIm642AmEHRZoa+
2LpTW6cWHbezek0e7F3Wb4LPaZS/eqmOngaEyigxAUSgDHEMG7q2w5vLvY6K6PsT
u1a07QOCjYros2+OjoloL4sberciEK1nBLD0MScu/7jApcNnaPvbQ+JAdi7dQnq3
qwm/2PfmdXg3Nt5GA9q6Zf3r50xhxQTsC0E/vs39iPntsqxVNgeLyD1vf0i3ccnu
tWC1dC9wgRHJvAMqUfVo5dZwMlteKGDW2YpHTGmOhk7qzhZs1ZiJfLBMd8CIA/T
RAogYi+hAgMBAAECggEAD6Mamzilv64RnW1vUIMMwXvuLjIeFMISbhf/4wQBcd1X
kLpuOCqJmN0sR1MJ6/xQi2MDVS6TjFQS+sNvzFmTF5bq4uNgMZx8e3kC0psL0DVB
eFREueuMwkXjUnZFuwEHI4DcR52YmF1jH+ofegobdfQQs2QgXyrtJ0Wok4Uda6rn
xktGNp1u3BnDrfpmWPopVfFQLMegVaxmCpIrsA+Exmdbk2GNpvW8VWLQIdAiJn/2
LgEnXsvwWCU4mePyBuOrPSvM5T60/LidGK2+JLHqqziwhxWmUhsAniS97LyUaqiB
KenZRz1M8Q/avxsCo0WDS5AptIEHVtnNTfRtFIQ/eQKBgQDQ1AYuym2VIK0xs+tP
5ox6DFxMDu7wSnLKycGVjUim5DVH0z9xHb7/NWPQyrMTk2byuv2g/jCQJozq56nb
RgdkLfhFzfpeCFQqskG01y18IOGdu8IqZY+Ph727sL6PP67adB/6SDPnmK+GON1g
oxFZ4s4mPi0E3xACI/hGJx3L7QKBgQD0IxjPphfFUmCkxyog7hNKIEh9zjg1ATY7
0Fw5fFZFtnJtj5VX1tNpELQV3+L73/EfklgQdCildnmkvvsA/sVeNji0oyTRkhYB
eUhUq2Jcew/j9z0mVKt/WzggBYZTqnvNd/4F3ZGN1XkbsnrEcTaCba0mM1bBZqn5
fZK8T20EBQKBgFGNm+SGFYmZt5PcidcoWFAJp7nkUxfWwygqRENda7QRh2VHcI1C
aqbMOPD/WDQa6qd8szQ+UMTa6UmLs1/410YeVckdCdvTMNuDxep8yjjyhsrqg6tEX
3JrXDhfQjHrxCd4yX5Kkw/B8RoAKkRn+VPZfhtaUjYxLeLr9RSZQfGh5AoGATHiT
5M+bP+GpMjckaddorX0voyIGv2YXIVackJbfpIersIBuZxn3fF46RxNMTnqYQorS
HGG1qIJLMbQ9NAWdWf6wbLG4WEGNXr+RPKq1mC3zZj2YbtKzKovnqlvveTEkuEJW
lehMpyTpn+m7Veq/B0HnAblPL5j1SbS+c7l9/UCgYACwt0ymSjvRdv/0wUJJRuN
gk0iG+h6j3LciniPgYAe0b/MUA3XvDjNXfKkyKZ7BcXin1T6SjxkmAta05KejEX
h2fDB8rU10yZGxb9Lk5Twlof1JA7C+Ev71hy/oPjldMQk0etJrWZzPhVwrONG2d7
IZ01suzh/VgqJu2GkSE+gg==
-----END PRIVATE KEY-----
cat: /etc/openssl/: Is a directory
```

Proceed to copy the content from ---BEGIN CERTIFICATE--- until ----END CERTIFICATE--- and paste it here

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo nano /etc/openssl/client1.key
```

Remark: Had to use ssh to view the file then create the files manually instead of directly using the scp due to storage constraint to install openssh-server at my Server VPN VM.

After this operation, 341 MB of additional disk space will be used.  
Proof: **E:** You don't have enough free space in /var/cache/apt/archives/.

#### 4. VPN server and client configuration

After successfully generating all the necessary files, I cross-checked the earlier configured server.conf to make sure it specifies the correct paths to the certificate and key files:



```

GNU nano 7.2 /etc/openvpn/server.conf
port 1194
proto udp
dev tun

server 10.0.0.0 255.255.255.0
push "dhcp-option DNS 8.8.8.8"
push "dhcp-option DNS 8.8.4.4"
push "redirect-gateway def1 bypass-dhcp"

ca /etc/openvpn/ca.crt
cert /etc/openvpn/server.crt
key /etc/openvpn/server.key
dh /etc/openvpn/dh.pem

comp-lzo

keepalive 10 120

user nobody
group nogroup

log /var/log/openvpn.log

verb 3

```

To generate client.ovpn, copy from a template file and rename it.

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ cp /usr/share/doc/openvpn/examples/sample-config-files/client.conf ~/client.ovpn
```

Proceed to edit all the critical info on the client.ovpn:

```

dev tun proto udp remote 10.0.2.4 1194

ca /etc/openvpn/ca.crt
cert /etc/openvpn/client1.crt
key /etc/openvpn/client1.key

```

## 5. Test the VPN Connection Between Server and Client

On **Client VPN VM**, run `ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo openvpn --config client.ovpn` to start the VPN client on the client machine.

Make sure it's free from error:

```

ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo openvpn --config client.ovpn
2025-05-16 14:47:51 Note: --cipher is not set. OpenVPN versions before 2.5 defaulted to BF-CBC as fallback when cipher negotiation failed in this case. If you need this fallback please add '--data-ciphers-fallback BF-CBC' to your configuration and/or add BF-CBC to --data-ciphers.
2025-05-16 14:47:51 Note: Kernel support for ovpn-dco missing, disabling data channel offload.
2025-05-16 14:47:51 WARNING: file '/etc/openvpn/client1.key' is group or others accessible
2025-05-16 14:47:51 OpenVPN 2.6.12 x86_64-pc-linux-gnu [SSL (OpenSSL)] [LZO] [LZ4] [EPOLL] [PKCS11] [MH/PKTINFO] [AEAD] [DCO]
2025-05-16 14:47:51 library versions: OpenSSL 3.0.13 30 Jan 2024, LZO 2.10
2025-05-16 14:47:51 DCO version: N/A
2025-05-16 14:47:51 TCP/UDP: Preserving recently used remote address: [AF_INET]10.0.2.4:1194
2025-05-16 14:47:51 Socket Buffers: R=[212992->212992] S=[212992->212992]
2025-05-16 14:47:51 UDPv4 link local: (not bound)
2025-05-16 14:47:51 UDPv4 link remote: [AF_INET]10.0.2.4:1194

```

Ping from client to server:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ ping 10.0.2.4
PING 10.0.2.4 (10.0.2.4) 56(84) bytes of data.
64 bytes from 10.0.2.4: icmp_seq=1 ttl=64 time=2.46 ms
64 bytes from 10.0.2.4: icmp_seq=2 ttl=64 time=1.73 ms
64 bytes from 10.0.2.4: icmp_seq=3 ttl=64 time=1.05 ms
64 bytes from 10.0.2.4: icmp_seq=4 ttl=64 time=2.07 ms
^C
--- 10.0.2.4 ping statistics ---
4 packets transmitted, 4 received, 0% packet loss, time 3004ms
rtt min/avg/max/mdev = 1.045/1.827/2.459/0.519 ms
```

Ping from server to client:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ ping 10.0.2.8
PING 10.0.2.8 (10.0.2.8) 56(84) bytes of data.
64 bytes from 10.0.2.8: icmp_seq=1 ttl=64 time=1.99 ms
64 bytes from 10.0.2.8: icmp_seq=2 ttl=64 time=0.795 ms
64 bytes from 10.0.2.8: icmp_seq=3 ttl=64 time=1.18 ms
^C
--- 10.0.2.8 ping statistics ---
3 packets transmitted, 3 received, 0% packet loss, time 2020ms
rtt min/avg/max/mdev = 0.795/1.321/1.994/0.500 ms
```

Proof of successful VPN connection:

```
ubuntu@ubuntu:~$ sudo journalctl -u openvpn --no-pager | tail -20
Apr 05 12:03:47 ubuntu systemd[1]: Starting openvpn.service - OpenVPN service...
Apr 05 12:03:48 ubuntu systemd[1]: Finished openvpn.service - OpenVPN service.
```