



n8n: Cloud vs Self-Hosting

Making the right choice for your workflow automation journey

Created by Chinmay Kaitade
MERN Stack Developer | AI Enthusiast

The Big Decision Awaits



Your First Choice

When starting with n8n, you face a crucial decision: use the managed cloud service or self-host on your own infrastructure.

Both paths offer unique advantages, and the right choice depends on your technical skills, budget, and specific requirements.

n8n Cloud: The Easy Path



Instant Setup

Sign up and start building workflows in minutes. No technical configuration required.



Beginner Friendly

Perfect for newcomers who want to focus on learning workflow automation, not server management.



Easy API Integration

No firewall or network configuration headaches. Everything works out of the box.

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Cloud Challenges to Consider

Monthly Costs

Recurring subscription fees with execution limits based on your plan tier.

Third-Party Data Storage

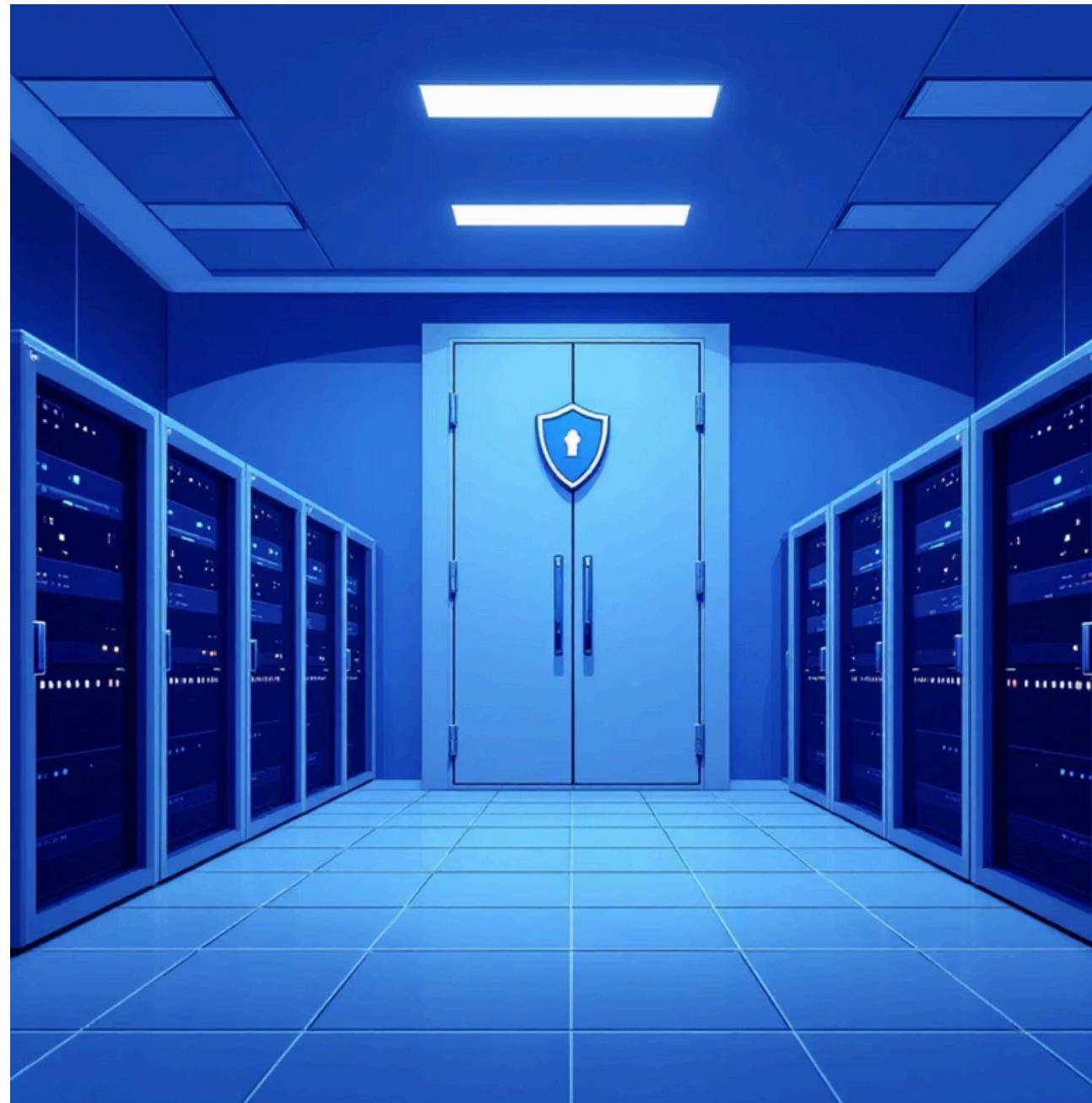
Your sensitive data is stored on n8n's servers, which may concern security-conscious users.

Limited Customization

No custom nodes or core code modifications allowed in the cloud environment.

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Self-Hosting: Total Control



Complete Data Privacy

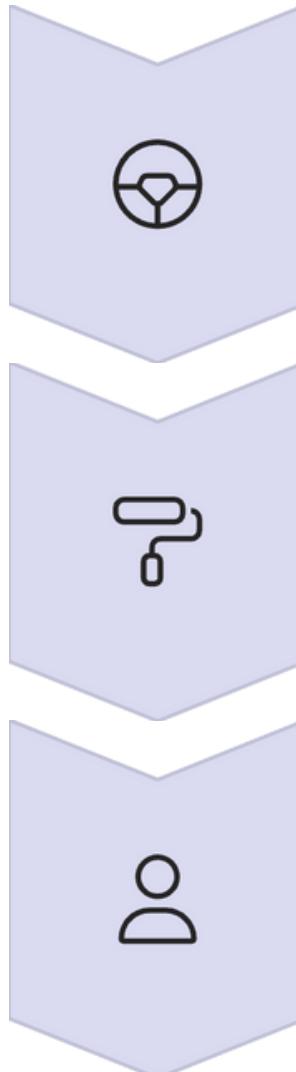
Your data never leaves your infrastructure, ensuring maximum security and compliance.



Cost Effective

Open source software means you only pay for server costs, which can be minimal.

Self-Hosting Challenges



Technical Complexity

Requires Docker knowledge, command-line skills, and server management experience.

Ongoing Maintenance

You handle updates, security patches, backups, and ensuring 24/7 uptime.

Support Responsibility

When things break, you're the one who needs to fix them quickly.

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Side-by-Side Comparison

Feature	Cloud	Self-Hosted
Setup Time	Minutes	Hours to Days
Monthly Cost	\$20-200+	\$5-50+
Data Control	Third-party	Complete
Customization	Limited	Full
Maintenance	None	Your responsibility
Best For	Beginners	Advanced users

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Community Recommendation

Start with n8n Cloud

The n8n community and experts consistently recommend beginning with the cloud-based approach. It removes technical barriers and lets you focus on mastering workflow automation principles.

You can always migrate to self-hosting later once you're comfortable with the platform.

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Your Next Steps

01

Assess Your Skills

Honestly evaluate your technical comfort level with servers, Docker, and command-line tools.

03

Start Small

Begin with cloud to learn the fundamentals, then graduate to self-hosting if needed.

02

Consider Your Budget

Factor in both monetary costs and time investment for setup and maintenance.

04

Build Your First Workflow

The core automation principles remain the same regardless of your hosting choice.

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