

# Getting Started: What do I need to know about the Debian 5 environment introduced in May 2009?

Attention: Modwest introduced the "Debian 5" hosting environment in May 2009. Debian 5 has been superceded by the [Debian 6 hosting environment](#), which you should consider unless you specifically need PHP 5.2.x. As of April, 2011, the Debian 5 environment will receive no further updates. The information below remains for historical purposes.

## Before Switching

- If you are using Ruby on Rails, do not switch. The new environment is not prepared for RoR.
- Although most accounts switch seamlessly, be prepared to update applications and configurations for any incompatibilities that occur.

## How to Switch

There is an [interface in OnSite](#) that will allow you to select which hosting environment you desire.

## Common Questions

### What is different?

All the software we provide is newer. In particular, these common scripting languages:

- PHP 4.4.6 (or 5.0.4) to PHP 5.2.6
- Perl 5.6.1 to Perl 5.10.0
- Python 2.1 to Python 2.5

And these other frequently-used packages:

- ImageMagick 5.5.7 to ImageMagick 6.3.7

You can get a good idea of the new programming environment by looking at our [PHP Info](#), [PEAR Info](#), and [Perl Modules](#).

### Is there downtime involved when switching environments?

Generally, no. Most hosting accounts will switch over without any downtime. If you have some applications which are not the latest version, they may break and require you to update. We recommend that you update all of your third-party applications to the newest version available before switching environments.

### How long does the switch take?

The operation takes about 5 minutes, although your site will remain available during this time.

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It looks like my applications are not working and need much work to be compatible with the new platform. Can I switch back?

Yes, you can, although we recommend working through the errors, for the old environment is deprecated. Switching back takes the same length of time as the initial transition.

Will my files or directory tree change?

No. Any files that you have uploaded will remain the same.

I am using one of your experimental versions of PHP, will this be a problem?

No, when you switch, there will be only one version of PHP available, PHP 5.2.6. Your scripts will automatically use that version.

I am using PHP4 still, and I've made a lot of configuration customizations in my `/conf/php.ini`. Will they work in the new environment?

PHP's configuration options have changed, in some places drastically, from `php4` to `php5`. It may just be easier to copy `/etc/php5/php.ini` to `/conf/php.ini` and modify it as you see fit.

Are all the same software in the new environment?

Mostly. We've worked hard to make sure that all the major programs you need are in the new environment, like PHP, Perl, and their extensions. However, there are thousands of other utilities potentially used that we may have missed. If you require software that we do not have, let us know, and we can install most anything for you.

Do my shell, FTP, mailbox, or database credentials change?

No. All of your users will remain untouched by the transition.

Typical Adjustments

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If you have any custom PHP code, you should review php.net's migration appendices:

- <http://us.php.net/manual/en/migration5.php>
- <http://us.php.net/manual/en/migration51.php>
- <http://us.php.net/manual/en/migration52.php>

Those in a hurry may find this summary list of PHP changes more helpful:

- PHP5's object oriented syntax is greatly changed from PHP4. You can make PHP4 act more like PHP5 in this case with the configuration directive, [zend.ze1-compatibility-mode](#)
- PHP uses a new XML extension.
- Some extensions, like pfpro are no longer available in PHP5.
- registerglobals is off by default.
- mngosearch does not work in the new environment.

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