P4J - Site Backup

User Manual

Version 1.1.0 · October 2026
For Joomla 5 and Joomla 6
plus4j.com

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1. Introduction

P4J - Site Backup creates a backup of your Joomla website and downloads it straight to your computer as a single ZIP file. Three types of backup are available:

Type	What it contains
Full	All the site files plus the database (the file `database.sql`).
Content	The site files only, without the database.
Database	The database only (`database.sql`).

The ZIP file is created while it downloads. **No archive is ever saved on the server**: there are no old backups taking up space on your hosting, and nobody can download a backup from the site. The only copy is the one on your computer, so keep it in a safe place.

You can add a short note to each backup (for example “Before updating the template”). The note is saved inside the ZIP file as `readme.txt`.

Requirements

- Joomla 5 or Joomla 6.
- PHP 8.1 or later.
- For the **Full** and **Database** backups: a MySQL or MariaDB database (the database used by almost every hosting provider).

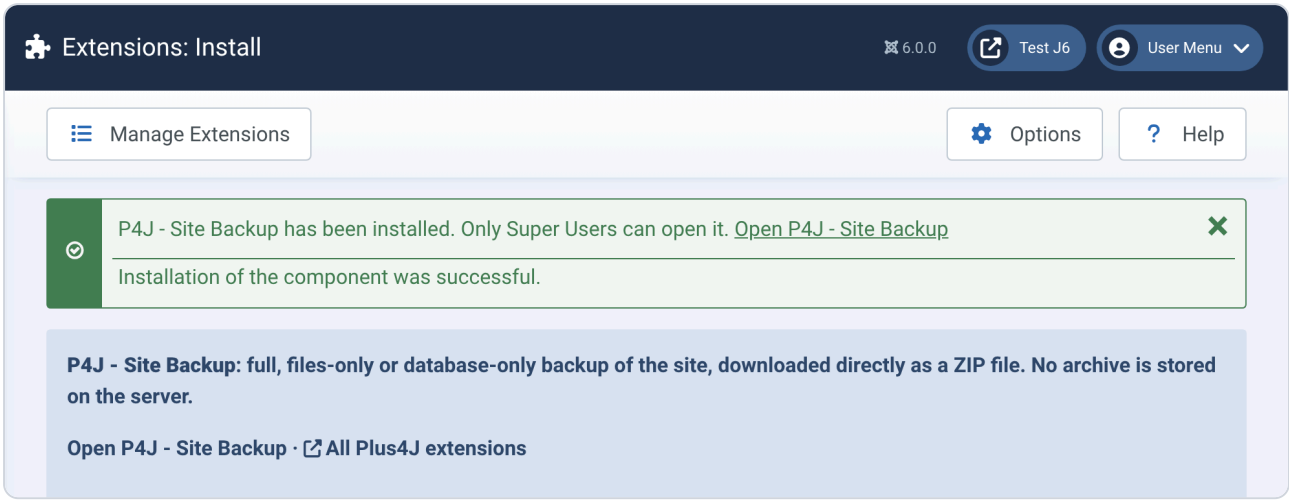
> **Who can use it**
> A backup contains the whole site, including the configuration file and the database with all the user accounts. For this reason P4J - Site Backup can only be opened by **Super Users**. Other administrators do not see it in the menu and cannot open it.

2. Installation and updates

2.1 Installing

1. Download the package `com_sitebackup_v1.1.0.zip` from your Plus4J download area. Do not unzip it.
2. In the Joomla administration, open **System → Install → Extensions**.
3. In the **Upload Package File** tab, drag the ZIP file onto the page (or click **Or browse for file** and choose it).

When the installation is complete, Joomla shows a green message with a link to open the component, followed by a short description.

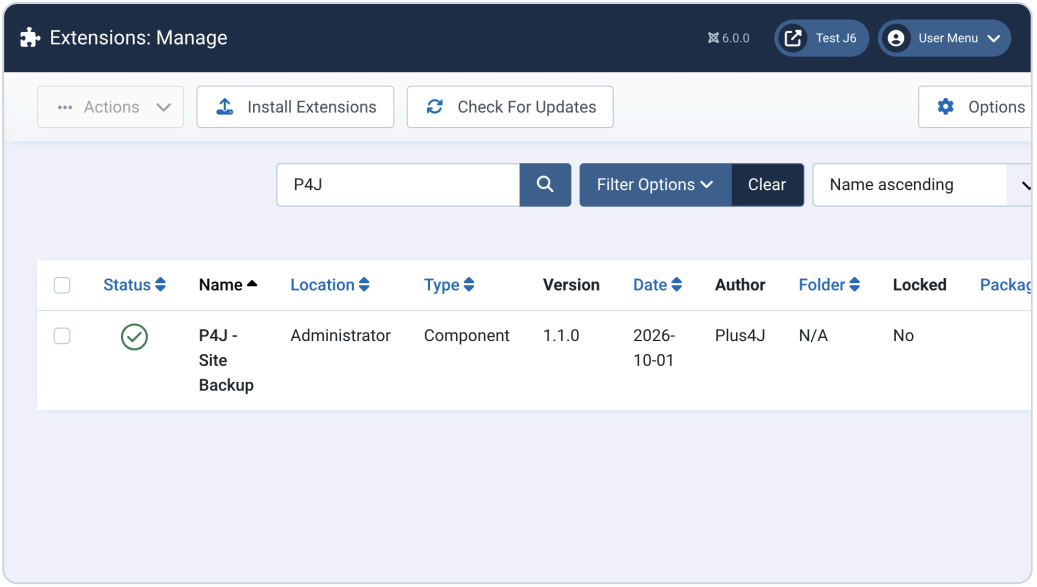


Installation completed

2.2 Updating from a previous version

If the earlier **Site Backup** (version 1.0.x) is already installed, simply install the new package as described above. You do not need to uninstall anything first.

- Your options (excluded folders and files, database tables, compression level) are kept.
- The component now appears with its new name, **P4J - Site Backup**, both in the **Components** menu and in the list of extensions.
- Like every Plus4J product, its name starts with “P4J - ”. Typing **P4J** in the search box of **System → Manage → Extensions** shows all the Plus4J extensions installed on the site.



Searching for “P4J” in Extensions: Manage

2.3 New versions

When a new version is published, Joomla tells you in the usual way: in the update notifications of the Home Dashboard and in **System → Update → Extensions**.

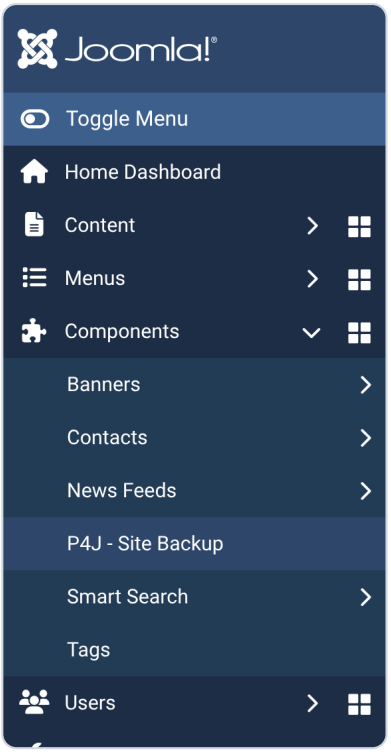
New versions are installed by hand:

1. Download the new package from your Plus4J download area (`https://plus4j.com/area-download`). You will be asked to log in if you are not logged in already.
2. Install it over the current version, as described in 2.1.

> **About the Update button**
> If you press **Update** in Joomla's list of updates, Joomla shows a red error message. This is expected: the message contains a link that takes you to the Plus4J download area, where you can download the new version.

3. Opening P4J - Site Backup

Open **Components → P4J - Site Backup** in the administration menu.

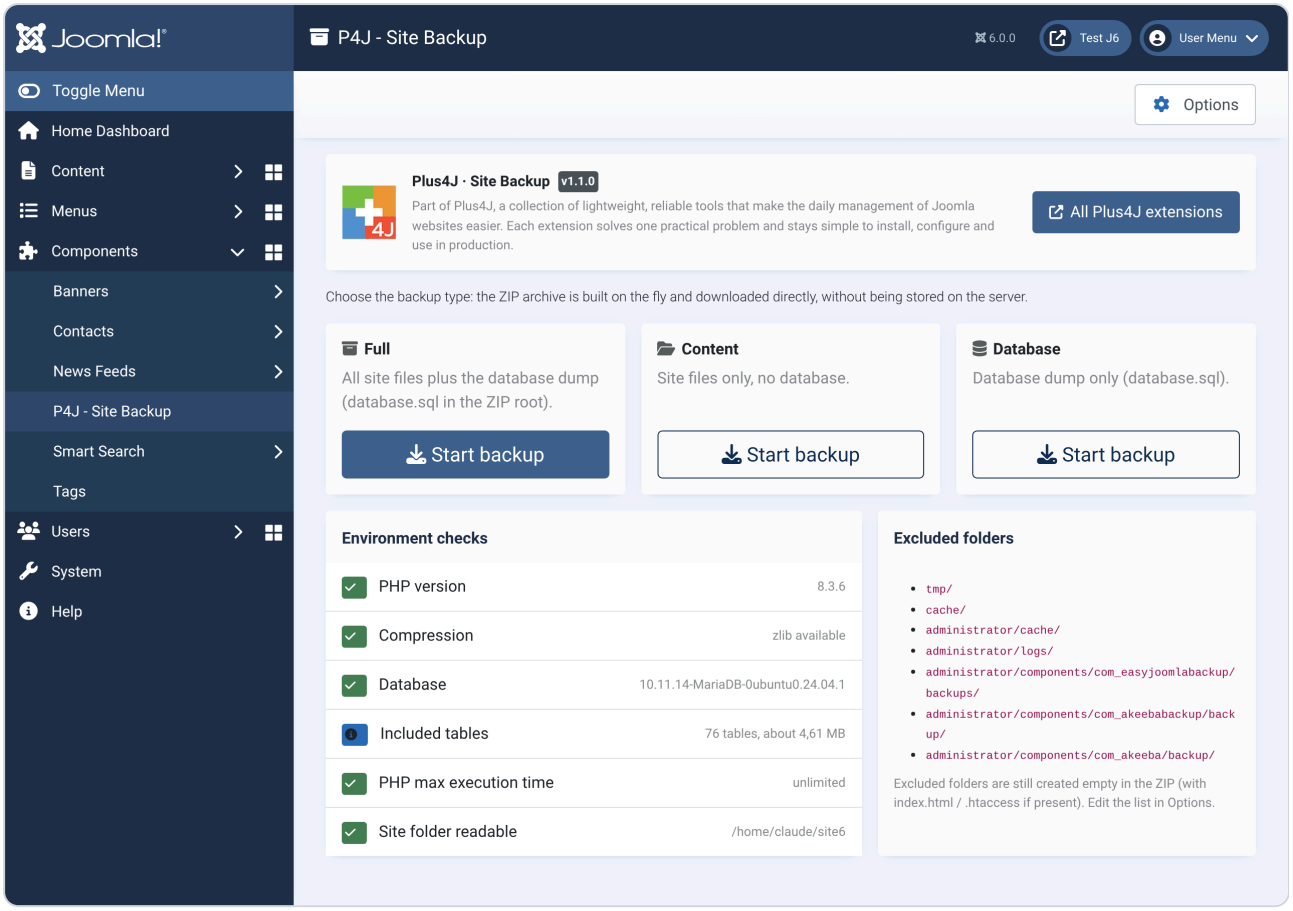


The Components menu

All Plus4J extensions start with “P4J - ”, so in the Components menu they are listed next to each other.

> **Don't see it in the menu?**
> Check that you are logged in as a Super User. The menu item is hidden for everyone else.

4. The main page

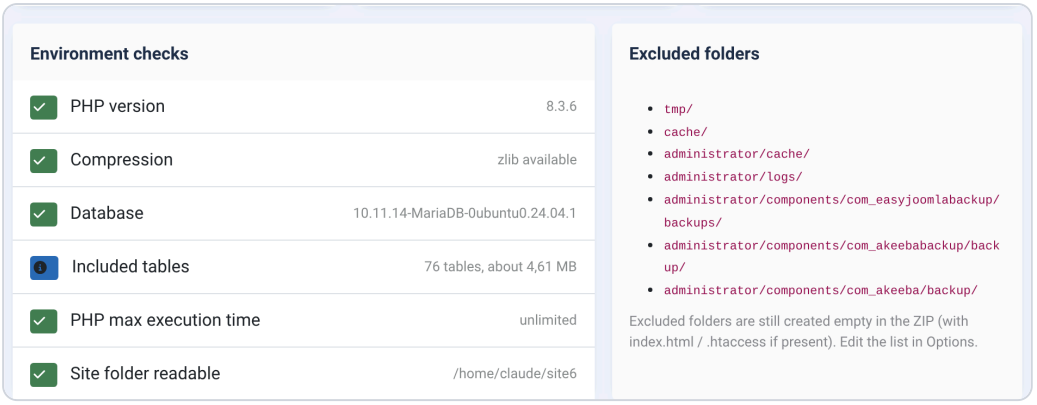


The main page of P4J - Site Backup

From top to bottom the page shows:

- **The Plus4J box** with the version installed and the **All Plus4J extensions** button, which opens the catalogue on plus4j.com.
- **The three backup types** (Full, Content, Database), each with its **Start backup** button.
- **Environment checks**: a quick look at the server. Hover the mouse over a row to read what it means.
- **Excluded folders**: the folders that are left out of the backup.
- The **Options** button at the top right opens the settings (chapter 6).

Environment checks



Environment checks and excluded folders

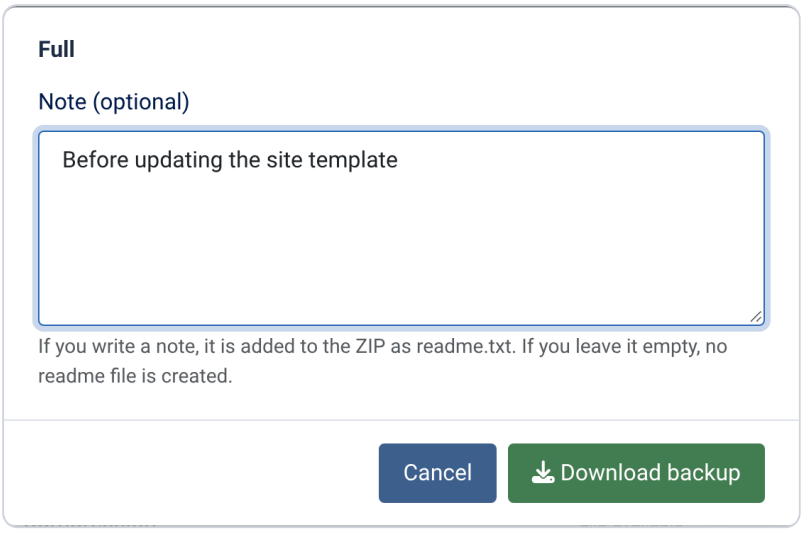
Check	Meaning
PHP version	The PHP version of the server. Information only.
Compression	Green: files are compressed in the ZIP. Yellow: the backup still works, but the ZIP is larger. You can ask your hosting provider to enable the PHP “zlib” extension.
Database	Green: the database can be included. Red: the database type is not supported; only the **Content** backup is available.
Included tables	How many tables go into the backup and their approximate size.
PHP max execution time	The time limit set by the hosting. P4J - Site Backup tries to remove it during the backup. With a low limit a very large site may stop half way (see chapter 8).
Site folder readable	Green: the files can be included. Red: only the **Database** backup is available.

Green means everything is fine, blue is information, yellow is a warning that does not stop the backup, red means that some backup types cannot start.

5. Making a backup

5.1 Step by step

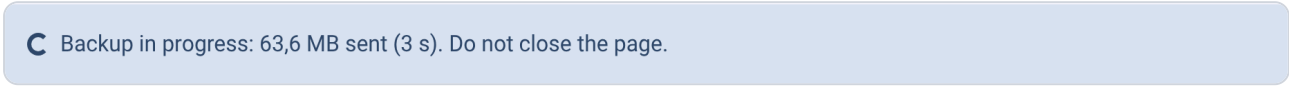
1. Click **Start backup** under the type you want.
2. A window opens. If you wish, write a note: it will be saved in the ZIP as `readme.txt`. If you leave it empty, no readme file is created.
3. Click **Download backup**.



The note window

The download starts after a few moments, using your browser's usual download. The file is named with the date and time of the backup, for example `20261025-143512.zip` (year, month, day, hour, minutes, seconds, in your time zone).

While the download is running, the page shows its progress:

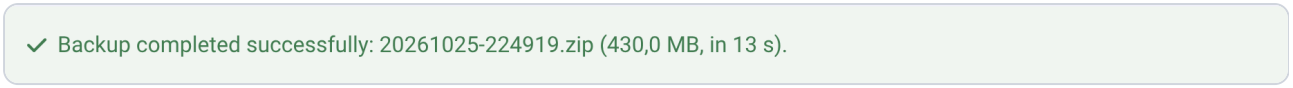


Backup in progress

> **Keep the page open**
> Do not close the page or the browser until the download has finished. You can keep working in the administration in another tab.

5.2 The result of the backup

When the backup is finished, the page shows the result:



Backup completed successfully

Message	What to do
Backup completed successfully (green)	Nothing: the ZIP file is complete.
Backup completed, but incomplete (yellow)	A few files or folders could not be read and were left out. Their list is in the file `sitebackup-warnings.txt` inside the ZIP. Check it: often these are files you do not need, otherwise ask your hosting provider about their permissions.
Backup failed (red)	The message explains why (for example a time limit of the hosting). The downloaded file is incomplete: delete it. See chapter 8.
Backup cancelled (yellow)	The download was stopped in the browser. Delete the incomplete file and start again.
The result of the backup could not be verified	The page could not follow the backup. Check that the downloaded ZIP opens correctly.

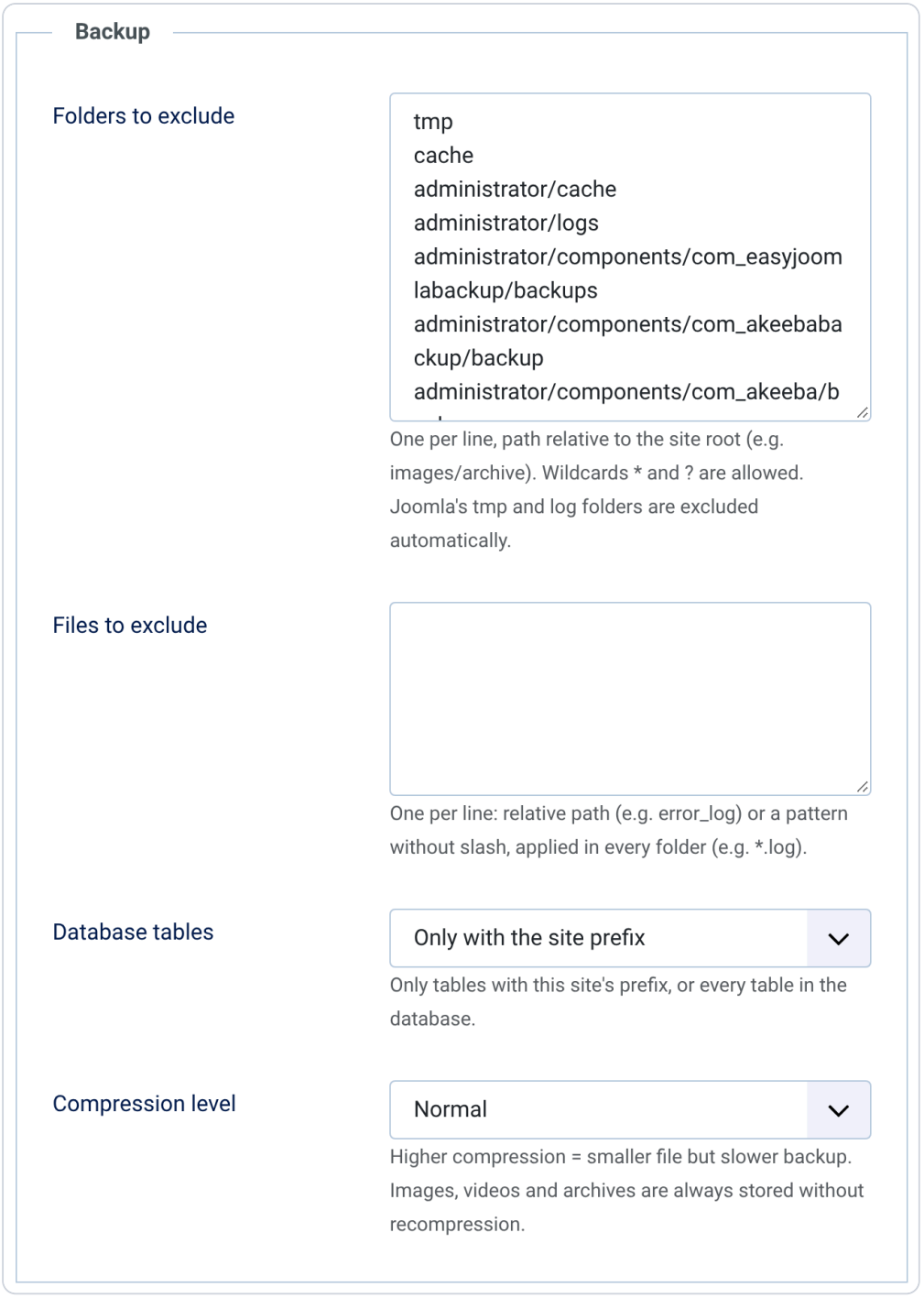
5.3 What the ZIP file contains

- **The site files** (Full and Content), with the same folders as on the server.
- `database.sql` (Full and Database): the complete database, ready to be imported.
- `readme.txt`: your note, if you wrote one.
- `sitebackup-warnings.txt`: only if something could not be included.

Excluded folders (for example `cache` and `tmp`) are present in the ZIP but empty, apart from their protection files (`index.html`, `.htaccess`). This way the site structure is complete when it is restored.

6. Options

Click **Options** at the top right of the main page.



The options

Option	Description
Folders to exclude	One folder per line, written from the main folder of the site (for example `images/archive`). You can use `*` and `?` as wildcards. The folders already listed are caches, logs and the backup folders of other backup tools. Joomla's temporary and log folders are always excluded, even if they are not in the list.
Files to exclude	One per line. Write a path (for example `error_log`) to exclude one file, or a pattern without "/" to exclude matching files in every folder (for example `*.log`).
Database tables	**Only with the site prefix** (recommended): only this site's tables. **All database tables**: useful when the same database also holds other applications.
Compression level	**Fast**, **Normal** or **Maximum**. Higher compression gives a smaller file but takes longer. Images, videos and archives are already compressed and are always stored as they are.

Click **Save & Close** to go back to the main page: the list of excluded folders is updated.

7. Using a backup to restore the site

A backup is useful only if it can be restored. These are the general steps; if you are not sure, ask your hosting provider or the person who manages the server.

Restoring the files

1. Unzip the backup on your computer.
2. Upload the files to the main folder of the site (for example with an FTP program or your hosting's file manager), replacing the existing ones.

Restoring the database

1. Open the database management tool of your hosting (usually phpMyAdmin) and select the site's database.
2. Import the file `database.sql`. The tables in the file replace the existing ones with the same name.

Moving the site to another server or database

The file `configuration.php` contains the database details. If the site is restored to a different server or database, update the database name, user, password and server in that file.

> **Take care**
> Restoring replaces the current content of the site. If in doubt, make a new backup of the current state before restoring an older one.

8. Common problems

The backup stops half way with a “time limit” message

Some hosting providers stop PHP after a certain time. P4J - Site Backup tries to remove the limit, but not every hosting allows it. Try these in order: exclude large folders that do not need to be in every backup (for example an archive of videos) in **Options**; choose the **Fast** compression level; make a **Database** backup and a **Content** backup separately; ask your hosting provider to raise the PHP time limit.

I closed the page during the backup

The download may stop. If the file did not finish downloading, it is incomplete: delete it and start a new backup.

The Database check is red

The site uses a database other than MySQL or MariaDB (for example PostgreSQL). The **Content** backup works; the database must be saved with the tools of your hosting.

Where are the backups stored on the server?

Nowhere. Each backup is created during the download and goes straight to your computer. This is why it is important to keep the downloaded files in a safe place, preferably in more than one copy.

The ZIP file is large

Check the **Excluded folders** list: add folders you do not need (for example old archives or other backups saved on the server). The **Maximum** compression level reduces the size of text files, but not of images and videos.

Another administrator cannot find P4J - Site Backup

This is intended: only Super Users can use it, because a backup contains all the site data.

Where can I find the other Plus4J extensions?

Click **All Plus4J extensions** on the main page, or visit `https://plus4j.com/extensions`.