How to add CNAME Record in cPanel using the DNS Zone Editor (Video)

cPanel Control Panel · https://www.aeserver.com/support/how-to-add-cname-record-in-cpanel-using-the-dns-zone-editor-video/

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A CNAME record is one of the most useful DNS record types you will ever set up. It lets you point a hostname (like *www*, *blog*, or *shop*) to another domain name, instead of to a specific IP address. This guide explains exactly what CNAME records do, when you need them, and walks you through adding one in cPanel using the DNS Zone Editor.

The video above shows the full process. The written guide below gives you the complete reference: real-world examples for UAE businesses (Microsoft 365, Google Workspace, Shopify, Cloudflare verification), how CNAME differs from A and MX records, how to verify the record is working, and what to do when something does not behave as expected.

What Is a CNAME Record

CNAME stands for **Canonical Name**. It is a DNS record that maps one domain name (the *alias*) to another domain name (the *canonical* or *true* name). When someone types the alias into their browser or sends an email to it, the DNS system follows the CNAME pointer to the canonical name and uses its IP address to deliver the request.

A simple example: *www.example.com* is often a CNAME pointing to *example.com*. Both addresses load the same website, but you only have to manage one IP address. Change the IP address of *example.com* and *www.example.com* follows automatically.

If you are new to DNS in general, our guide on what DNS is and how it works covers the basics in detail.

When to Use a CNAME Record

You should use a CNAME record (rather than an A record or other type) in the following situations:

Use Case	Example
Pointing www to your root domain	www.yourcompany.ae points to yourcompany.ae
Connecting a subdomain to a third-party service	shop.yourcompany.ae points to your Shopify store domain
Verifying domain ownership for cloud services	Microsoft 365, Google Workspace, AWS, and Cloudflare often require a CNAME for verification
Setting up email service hostnames	autodiscover.yourcompany.ae points to autodiscover.outlook.com for Microsoft 365
Connecting a CDN or proxy	cdn.yourcompany.ae points to your CDN provider's hostname
Creating a vanity URL for a hosted blog	blog.yourcompany.ae points to yourcompany.medium.com or similar

⚠ **IMPORTANT:** A CNAME record cannot be used on the root domain (yourcompany.ae itself). The DNS standard requires the root to use an A or AAAA record. For the root, use ALIAS or ANAME if your DNS provider supports them, or simply use an A record pointing to your server's IP. CNAMEs are only valid on subdomains and hostnames.

Before You Add a CNAME Record

Before adding the record, gather the following information:

What You Need	Details
cPanel access	Your cPanel login credentials, available from your AEserver client area or welcome email.
The hostname you want to create	The subdomain part only, like "www", "shop", "mail", or "blog". cPanel will append your domain automatically.
The target hostname	The fully qualified domain name (FQDN) you want the alias to point to. For example: shops.myshopify.com, autodiscover.outlook.com, yourcompany.com.

Confirmation that no conflicting record exists	A hostname can have a CNAME record OR other records (A, MX, TXT), not both. If "www" already has an A record, you must remove it before adding a CNAME for the same name.

TIP: If you are setting up a CNAME because a third-party service (like Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace) asked you to, copy the exact target hostname from their setup wizard. A single typo will make the record useless. Verify both the name and the target before saving.

Step-by-Step: Adding a CNAME Record in cPanel

1

Log In to Your cPanel Account

Open your browser and go to your cPanel URL (typically https://yourdomain.ae:2083) or sign in through the AEserver client area. Enter your cPanel username and password.

2

Open the Zone Editor

From the cPanel dashboard, scroll down to the **Domains** section and click **Zone Editor**. Alternatively, type "zone editor" into the search bar at the top of cPanel to jump straight to it.

The Zone Editor lists every domain on your hosting account, with quick action buttons for adding common record types directly.

3

Click the "+ CNAME Record" Button

Find the row for the domain you want to add the record to. On that row, click the **+ CNAME Record** button. A small form will open, asking for the Name and the CNAME target.

Want more options? If you need to set a custom TTL, edit existing records, or add advanced record types, click the **Manage** button instead. This opens the full DNS zone view where every record is editable.

4

Enter the Name (Alias)

In the Name field, type just the subdomain part of the hostname you want to create. For example, type **www** if you want to create www.yourdomain.ae.

When you click outside the box, cPanel automatically appends your domain to the name. So "www" becomes "www.yourdomain.ae" in the saved record. You do not need to type the full domain yourself.

⚠ **IMPORTANT:** Do not include the protocol (no "https://" or "http://"). Do not include a trailing dot. Just the hostname segment.
5

Enter the CNAME Target

In the CNAME field, enter the fully qualified domain name you want the alias to point to. Examples:

- **For www pointing to your root domain:** yourdomain.ae
- **For Shopify:** shops.myshopify.com
- **For Microsoft 365 autodiscover:** autodiscover.outlook.com
- **For Cloudflare verification:** the exact target string Cloudflare provides

Always use the full domain. Do not include "https://" or paths after the domain.

6

Click "Add a CNAME Record"

Click the **Add a CNAME Record** button. cPanel saves the record immediately and confirms with a success message. The record is now live in your DNS zone, but propagation across the internet can take some time (see the propagation section below).

Common CNAME Record Examples for UAE Businesses

Here are the most frequent CNAME setups our UAE customers configure. Use these as reference templates.

Setup	Name	CNAME Target
www to root domain	www	yourdomain.ae

Microsoft 365 autodiscover	autodiscover	autodiscover.outlook.com
Microsoft 365 Lync/Teams discovery	lyncdiscover	webdir.online.lync.com
Microsoft 365 SIP federation	sip	sipdir.online.lync.com
Google Workspace verification	(provided by Google, e.g., gv-xxxxxx)	gv-verify.googlehosted.com
Shopify online store	shop or www	shops.myshopify.com
Wix custom domain	www	www678.wixdns.net (your specific value)
Squarespace custom domain	www	ext-cust.squarespace.com
Mailchimp DKIM verification	k1._domainkey	dkim.mcsv.net
Cloudflare email routing verification	(provided by Cloudflare)	(provided by Cloudflare)

TIP: If you are setting up Microsoft 365 with your custom domain or DMARC for email security, the providers will give you the exact CNAME values to use. Always copy them as-is, including any random characters.

CNAME vs Other DNS Records

Knowing which record type to use is half the battle. Here is the quick reference:

Record Type	What It Does
A Record	Points a hostname to an IPv4 address (like 192.0.2.1). Use when you have a specific server IP.
AAAA Record	Same as A but for IPv6 addresses. Used for modern dual-stack hosting.
CNAME Record	Points a hostname to another hostname. Use when the target service gives you a domain name, not an IP.
MX Record	Tells the world where to deliver email for your domain. Required for any working email setup.

TXT Record	Stores arbitrary text. Used for SPF, DKIM, DMARC, and domain ownership verification.
NS Record	Specifies which nameservers are authoritative for your domain. See our guide on how to change nameservers on AEserver.
SRV Record	Specifies a service location (port and target). Used by VoIP, Microsoft Teams, XMPP.

For complete DNS management, including bulk edits and template imports, see our DNS Management Tool guide.

After Adding the Record: Verify and Wait for Propagation

Once you save the CNAME record in cPanel, it is active on your nameservers immediately. However, the rest of the internet does not see it instantly. DNS resolvers around the world cache records based on a Time To Live (TTL) value, and they will only check for the new record after their existing cache expires.

Stage	Typical Timing
Record live on AEserver nameservers	Immediate
Visible to most users in the UAE	A few minutes to 1 hour
Full global propagation	Up to 24 to 48 hours
Effective TTL after first lookup	Default 14400 seconds (4 hours), but configurable

How to Verify Your CNAME Record

Use any of these methods to confirm the record is working:

- **Online DNS checkers:** Sites like dnschecker.org, mxtoolbox.com, or whatsmydns.net let you query your CNAME from servers around the world. Look for a green check mark from at least the UAE and a couple of other regions.
- **Command line (Mac, Linux):** Open Terminal and run *dig CNAME www.yourdomain.ae* or *host www.yourdomain.ae*. The CNAME target should appear in the answer.
- **Command line (Windows):** Open Command Prompt and run *nslookup -type=CNAME www.yourdomain.ae*.

- **Browser test:** If the CNAME is for a website, open www.yourdomain.ae in an incognito window. Make sure you are not seeing a cached version.

Troubleshooting Common Issues

"A CNAME record already exists for this name"

You can only have one CNAME for a given hostname, and you cannot mix CNAME with other record types on the same name. Delete the old record first using the Manage option in Zone Editor, then add the new one.

"The Zone Editor will not let me add a CNAME on the root domain"

This is enforced by the DNS standard, not by cPanel. CNAME is not allowed on the root (apex) of a domain. Use an A record pointing to your server's IP address instead, or contact AEserver support if you need an ALIAS-style record at the root.

My new CNAME is not resolving even after several hours

First, double-check that you saved the record (return to Zone Editor and confirm it appears in the list). Next, verify there is no conflicting A or other record on the same hostname. Then test from multiple networks: home Wi-Fi, mobile data, and a VPN. If it works from some networks but not others, it is a propagation delay, give it more time.

The CNAME points to the right target but the website still does not load

The CNAME is only the DNS pointer. The destination service must also be configured to accept your hostname. For example, Shopify will not serve your shop on shop.yourdomain.ae unless you also add the custom domain inside Shopify's admin. CNAME plus configuration on the target side, both are required.

"This CNAME causes a loop"

You created a circular reference: A points to B, B points back to A. DNS will refuse to resolve. Trace the chain back and fix the loop, usually by replacing one CNAME with an A record pointing to the actual IP.

SSL certificate errors after adding CNAME

If you point a hostname to a third-party service, that service needs a valid SSL certificate covering your custom hostname. For Shopify, Wix, Squarespace, and Microsoft 365, this is handled automatically once you add the domain on their side. For your own server, you will need to install or extend your SSL certificate, see our guide on how to install an SSL certificate in cPanel.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I have multiple CNAME records for the same hostname?

No. The DNS standard allows only one CNAME per hostname. If you need to point a hostname to multiple destinations for redundancy or load balancing, use multiple A records or a load balancer service instead.

Can I have a CNAME and an MX record on the same name?

Not on the same exact hostname. CNAMEs cannot coexist with other record types. However, you can have an MX on yourdomain.ae and a CNAME on mail.yourdomain.ae, those are different hostnames.

What is the difference between CNAME and ALIAS records?

CNAME is the standard DNS record. ALIAS (also called ANAME) is a non-standard record some providers offer that mimics CNAME behavior but works on the root domain. AEserver supports CNAME records as standard. For root-level aliasing, contact support to discuss options.

Will adding a CNAME break my email?

Only if you accidentally create a CNAME on a hostname that already has MX records, or on the root domain where MX lives. Adding "www CNAME yourdomain.ae" does not affect email at all. Always check the existing zone before adding any record.

How do I delete or change a CNAME record?

In Zone Editor, click **Manage** next to the domain. Find the CNAME row, then click Edit to change values or Delete to remove it entirely. Changes take effect within minutes locally and within 24 to 48 hours globally.

Can a CNAME slow down my website?

Slightly, by adding one extra DNS lookup. In practice this is a few milliseconds and unnoticeable for users. The benefit (centralized management of one IP address) almost always outweighs the cost. For very high-traffic sites, modern CDNs eliminate even this small overhead.

Do CNAME records work with subdomains I created in cPanel?

Yes. If you have already created a subdomain like blog.yourdomain.ae in cPanel, you can replace its default A record with a CNAME pointing elsewhere. See our guide on what is a subdomain for the basics, and how to find subdomains of a domain if you need to audit existing ones.

Can I use a CNAME for email forwarding?

No, CNAME is for hostname routing, not for email. Email forwarding requires MX records and an email forwarding service. CNAMEs are sometimes part of email setup (autodiscover, DKIM verification) but they do not handle the actual mail delivery.

Summary

1. **A CNAME record points a hostname to another hostname**, not to an IP address. Use it whenever the target gives you a domain name instead of an IP.
2. **CNAMEs cannot live on the root domain.** Only on subdomains and hostnames. Use A records on the root.
3. **One CNAME per hostname, no mixing with other record types.** If a name has a CNAME, it cannot also have an A, MX, or TXT.
4. **To add one in cPanel:** log in, open Zone Editor, click "+ CNAME Record" on the target domain, enter the name and target, and save.
5. **cPanel auto-appends your domain** to the name field, so type just the subdomain part (like "www" or "shop").
6. **Always copy the target hostname exactly** as the third-party service provides it. Typos break the record silently.
7. **Propagation takes minutes locally and up to 48 hours globally.** Verify with dig, nslookup, or online DNS checkers.

8. **The destination service usually needs your custom hostname configured on its side too.** CNAME alone is not enough, the target must accept the alias.

If you run into issues you cannot resolve, the AEserver support team is available 24/7 through chat, email, and phone. Have your domain name and the exact CNAME values ready to share.

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