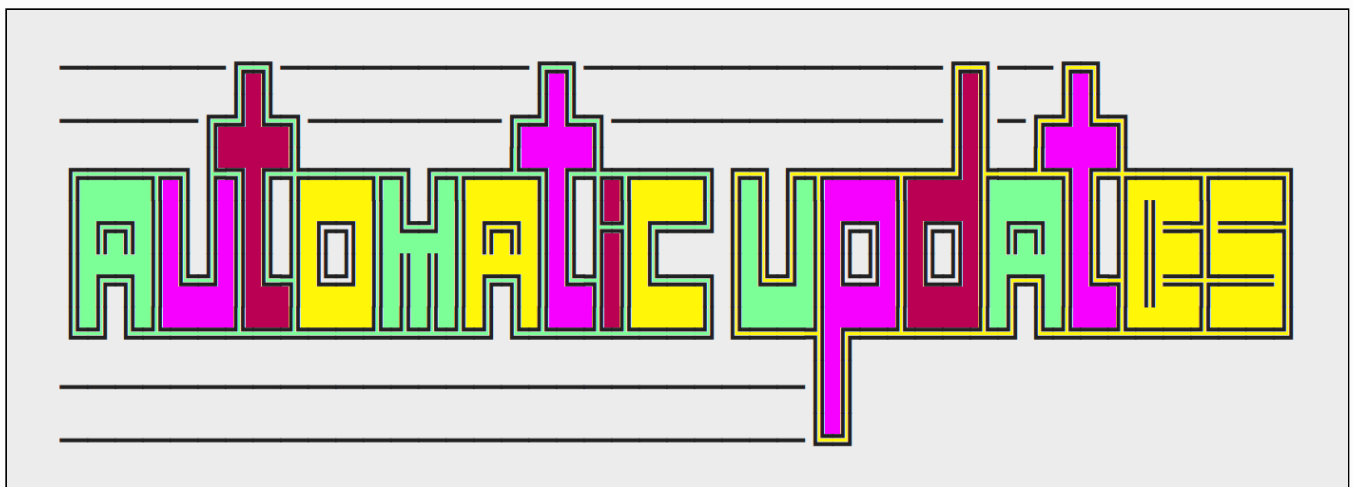




How to set up automatic updates on Ubuntu Server 18.04

This guide explains how to configure automatic updates in Ubuntu Server 18.04 “Bionic Beaver”.



This tutorial is based on the following official Ubuntu Documentation article:
[Ubuntu Server Guide » Package Management » Automatic Updates](#)

Step 1: package installation

Install the **unattended-upgrades** package:

```
sudo apt install unattended-upgrades
```

This package may already be installed on your server.

Step 2: configure automatic updates

Edit the configuration file (here with nano – replace with any other text editor):

```
sudo nano /etc/apt/apt.conf.d/50unattended-upgrades
```

The beginning of the configuration file should look like this:

```
// Note that in Ubuntu security updates may pull in new dependencies
// from non-security sources (e.g. chromium). By allowing the release
// pocket these get automatically pulled in.
Unattended-Upgrade::Allowed-Origins {
    "${distro_id}:${distro_codename}";
    "${distro_id}:${distro_codename}-security";
    // Extended Security Maintenance; doesn't necessarily exist for
    // every release and this system may not have it installed, but if
    // available, the policy for updates is such that unattended-upgrades
    // should also install from here by default.
    "${distro_id}ESM:${distro_codename}";
//    "${distro_id}:${distro_codename}-updates";
//    "${distro_id}:${distro_codename}-proposed";
//    "${distro_id}:${distro_codename}-backports";
};
```

Anything after a double slash “//” is a comment and has no effect. To “enable” a line, remove the double slash at the beginning of the line (replace with nothing or with spaces to keep alignment).

The most important: uncomment the “**updates**” line by deleting the two slashes at the beginning of it:

```
"${distro_id}:${distro_codename}-updates";
```

Optional: You should uncomment and adapt the following lines to ensure you’ll be notified if an error happens:

```
Unattended-Upgrade::Mail "user@example.com";
```

```
Unattended-Upgrade::MailOnlyOnError "true";
```

Recommended: remove unused kernel packages and dependencies and make sure the system automatically reboots if needed by uncommenting and adapting the following lines:

```
Unattended-Upgrade::Remove-Unused-Kernel-Packages "true";
```

↑ You may have to add a semicolon at the end of this line. ↑

```
Unattended-Upgrade::Remove-Unused-Dependencies "true";
```

```
Unattended-Upgrade::Automatic-Reboot "true";
Unattended-Upgrade::Automatic-Reboot-Time "02:38";
```

To save your changes in nano, use `Ctrl` + `O` followed by `Enter`. To quit, use `Ctrl` + `X`.

Step 3: enable automatic updates

Enable automatic updates and set up update intervals by running:

```
sudo nano /etc/apt/apt.conf.d/20auto-upgrades
```

In most cases, the file will be empty. Copy and paste the following lines:

```
APT::Periodic::Update-Package-Lists "1";
APT::Periodic::Download-Upgradeable-Packages "1";
APT::Periodic::AutocleanInterval "7";
APT::Periodic::Unattended-Upgrade "1";
```

The time interval is specified in days, feel free to change the values. Save changes and exit.

Step 4: check if it works

You can see if the auto-upgrades work by launching a dry run:

```
sudo unattended-upgrades --dry-run --debug
```

The dry run should output something like this:

```
root@          :~# sudo unattended-upgrades --dry-run --debug
Initial blacklisted packages:
Initial whitelisted packages:
Starting unattended upgrades script
Allowed origins are: ['o=Ubuntu,a=xenial', 'o=Ubuntu,a=xenial-security', 'o=UbuntuE
SM,a=xenial', 'o=Ubuntu,a=xenial-updates']
pkgs that look like they should be upgraded:
Fetched 0 B in 0s (0 B/s)

fetch.run() result: 0
blacklist: []
whitelist: []
No packages found that can be upgraded unattended and no pending auto-removals
root@          :~#
```

Another way to check if automatic updates work is waiting a few days and checking the unattended upgrades logs:

```
cat /var/log/unattended-upgrades/unattended-upgrades.log
```

Done! Ubuntu Server 18.04 should now update itself once a day.

By Johannes Eva, April 2018 – November 2019

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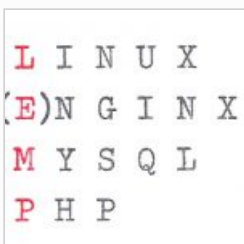
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5 Comments

haddad

January 24, 2020 at 6:16 pm Reply

is there a way to setup the updates to run on a specific day of the week, eg: Saturdays at 6am? or something like that?

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Jordy

October 17, 2019 at 2:34 pm Reply

What about the `/etc/apt/apt.conf.d/10periodic` file? It has the same content as `/etc/apt/apt.conf.d/20auto-upgrades`.

afc

June 27, 2019 at 10:34 am Reply

Personally, I would not recommend to configure the auto reboot (step 2).

One of the good things about linux is that nearly all updates do not require system reboot. This setting makes linux behave like windows, doesn't it?

Vladimir

June 21, 2019 at 4:49 pm Reply

Don't uncomment `${distro_id}:${distro_codename}-updates` unless you know what you're doing. This will enable unattended NON-SECURITY updates, which may break your server configuration.

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