

Managing Expectations

If you are thinking about self-hosting some of your digital infrastructure, there are a few things to consider beforehand.

3.1 Becoming a sysadmin

Firstly, depending on your current level of expertise, you might have to prepare to take in a whole bunch of new information, and learn (a lot of) new things about computers. While you don't really need to know or learn programming itself, becoming a system administrator, or sysadmin for short, involves learning how to install and use [Linux](#), and using the [command line](#).

These things can seem scary and confusing to people that so far have only worked with [graphical user interfaces \(GUIs\)](#). But it's just about getting your hands dirty, learning by doing, and with a little bit of practice these things will seem much less daunting than they might do now! This guide includes a small introduction to the command line, and there are many articles on the internet that give beginners an introduction on how to interact with their computers through text based interfaces (see [Graphical user interfaces, shells, consoles, and terminals](#) for more information).

3.2 Time (well?) spent

As previously mentioned, self-hosting can be time-consuming (even though there are [good reasons](#) to think of it as necessary time-commitments rather than extra unnecessary work!). There is the initial time to set up a functioning system, starting with choosing the right hardware, installing an operating system, and setting up and configuring all the services that you want to run. We recommend taking some time to really dive into this, and give yourself enough time and space to figure things out.

And then there is maintenance. You should make a habit of updating your system and software periodically. You might have to install new services, and figure out ways in which they don't conflict with other services you have set up (even though using [docker](#), as we strongly recommend, solves many of those issues). And you might have to switch out, or upgrade hardware. Something might break, and stop working, and you might have to figure out what it is and how to fix it. If you are the person in charge of the server, people in your surroundings might ask you to solve issues for them, sometimes at inconvenient times.

This does **not** mean that you will have to spend your days to make sure your emails still send—often it can be closer to one hour per week. But it's important to manage expectations, yours and those of others, and to realize that maintenance will require continuous engagement—similarly to how you have to clean your kitchen every so often, or how you have to keep your finances organized. In a lot of cases, it can make sense that these become the tasks of a dedicated individual or group of people.

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