

Use PuTTY as an SSH client on Windows

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The SSH protocol was developed as a secure, encrypted replacement for the RSH protocol. RSH is used for remote shell access to a UNIX (or UNIX-like) system and was once popular among sysadmins before network security became the constant concern it is now. Now, thanks to SSH, the same convenience can be had with an encrypted protocol famous for its versatility and strong security.

While OpenSSH is probably the most used implementation of SSH in the world, PuTTY is likely the most used SSH client for the Microsoft Windows platform.

PuTTY's basic capabilities

Like OpenSSH, PuTTY is a very versatile tool for remote access to another computer. It's probably used more often by people who want secure remote shell access to a UNIX or Linux system than for any other purpose, though that is only one of its many uses.

PuTTY is more than just an SSH client. It supports all of the following protocols:

raw: The raw protocol is normally used for network debugging.

rlogin: This is an unencrypted UNIX remote login protocol that uses port 513 by default.

serial: The serial option is used to connect to a serial line. The most common purpose for this is to establish a serial connection between computers in lieu of an Ethernet or other network connection.

SSH: As already noted, SSH is an encrypted secure remote login protocol, which uses port 22 by default.

Telnet: Like rlogin, Telnet (*telecommunication network*) is an unencrypted remote login protocol. It typically uses port 23 and is available on many systems other than UNIX. Like rlogin, Telnet has waned in popularity due to privacy concerns.

In addition to the five protocols supported by PuTTY, it also supports features such as saved session configurations, session logging, locale (language) settings, and proxy sessions.

The importance of SSH on Windows

Of course, there are a number of reasons to use a tool like PuTTY. But the most common purposes are related to the SSH protocol.

It's a terrible idea to connect to a Web host over an unencrypted connection for management of your Web hosting account and for file transfers. Using an unencrypted login is a good way to get your Web hosting account "owned" by a malicious security cracker. Using a secure,

encrypted protocol like SSH for such purposes is a much better option. SSH via PuTTY offers a quick, easy way to securely access a UNIX shell environment from a Windows system. This is handy not only because of the obvious need some people have for working with both Windows and UNIX/Linux systems, but also for both people who are forced to use Windows and want access to the power of the UNIX shell and people who are forced to use UNIX and want the convenience of their Windows environment while they do it. As with OpenSSH, PuTTY can be used as a secure Web proxy. PuTTY can be used to secure TortoiseSVN connections with a Subversion server.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it's a good start.

Getting PuTTY

Unlike most UNIX and Linux systems, Windows does not come with any SSH server or client software installed by default. Even when they don't come with OpenSSH already installed, free UNIX and Linux systems generally make it very easy to install.

Luckily, it is almost as easy to install Windows' most popular SSH client software. All you have to do is download the Putty.exe file for your version of Windows from the PuTTY download page. Yes, it really *is* that easy. The downloaded executable file is the PuTTY program.



***Chad Perrin** is an IT consultant, developer, and freelance professional writer. He holds both Microsoft and CompTIA certifications and is a graduate of two IT industry trade schools. Read his full bio and profile.*

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