Joomla Beginners Guide

Joomla is a great Content Management System with a lot of flexibility and with an easy-to-use user interface that a lot of people get intimidated about when they realize how many options and configurations are available. This manual is meant to serve as a guide to Joomla's basic features and help you install and start your first Joomla website.

We have all been beginner users at some point, so I hope this guide helps answer some of the questions you might have.

Joomla is a platform based on PHP and MySQL which was created in 2005 by a team of open source developers. It currently has 200,000 community users and contributors. Joomla is free to anyone who wants to download it and use it to create a website. It is also open to anyone who wants to create extensions and templates. The most current version of Joomla can be downloaded from http://www.joomla.org/download.html

Installation :

Basic Requirements :

There are two ways to install Joomla. Manually and using an installation software such as Fantastico or C-panel, which are installed in the host's server and offer an user friendly interface for the management of the site and the installation of software, but the requirements for both are very similar.

Since Joomla is a database driven system, it requires a SQL database to run. That's where it will install its tables and store information you add to it. Joomla also does better on a relatively fast server, so if you have been on the same server for longer than you can remember, contact your host and check if it's been upgraded and if that's not the case, ask to be moved to a newer server.

Joomla uses a lot of resources and your site will load faster if the server can handle many processes at once. There is also a chance that the technology on older servers won't support Joomla's newest versions. You can view a list of the most current requirements at: http://help.joomla.org/content/view/1938/302/

If you are using Fantastico or C-Panel, check the version of the installer. You want the newest version of Joomla if possible, and at the very least one version behind. New versions usually

carry security upgrades as well as bug fixes, and when dealing with a dynamic site, those fixes can make a big difference.To determine Joomla's latest version, visit the Joomla website.

Manual Installation :

Now what do you do if your server does not provide you with C-Panel? Don't worry, there are a few more steps, but it's still not a long process.

You will need a database, an FTP program and Joomla Installation files.

Step 1: Database Configuration

Most hosts nowadays, allow you to create databases using their administration. You won't have to know how to deal with the database once it's created. All you need is the:

- Database Name
- Database ID
- Database Password
- Database Path (or address)

Once you create the database, you should have access to all that information. Keep it safe, since Joomla will ask you for it during the installation.

Step 2: Downloading Joomla Files

Once you have the database set up, you need the Joomla Installation files. You can get the most updated files from: http://www.joomla.org/download.html

Download them to your computer as a zip file and extract them to your website folder. Now, you have two options here. If you want Joomla to be your whole site, or the main part of your site, you should put it on the root folder, which is the main folder for your site.

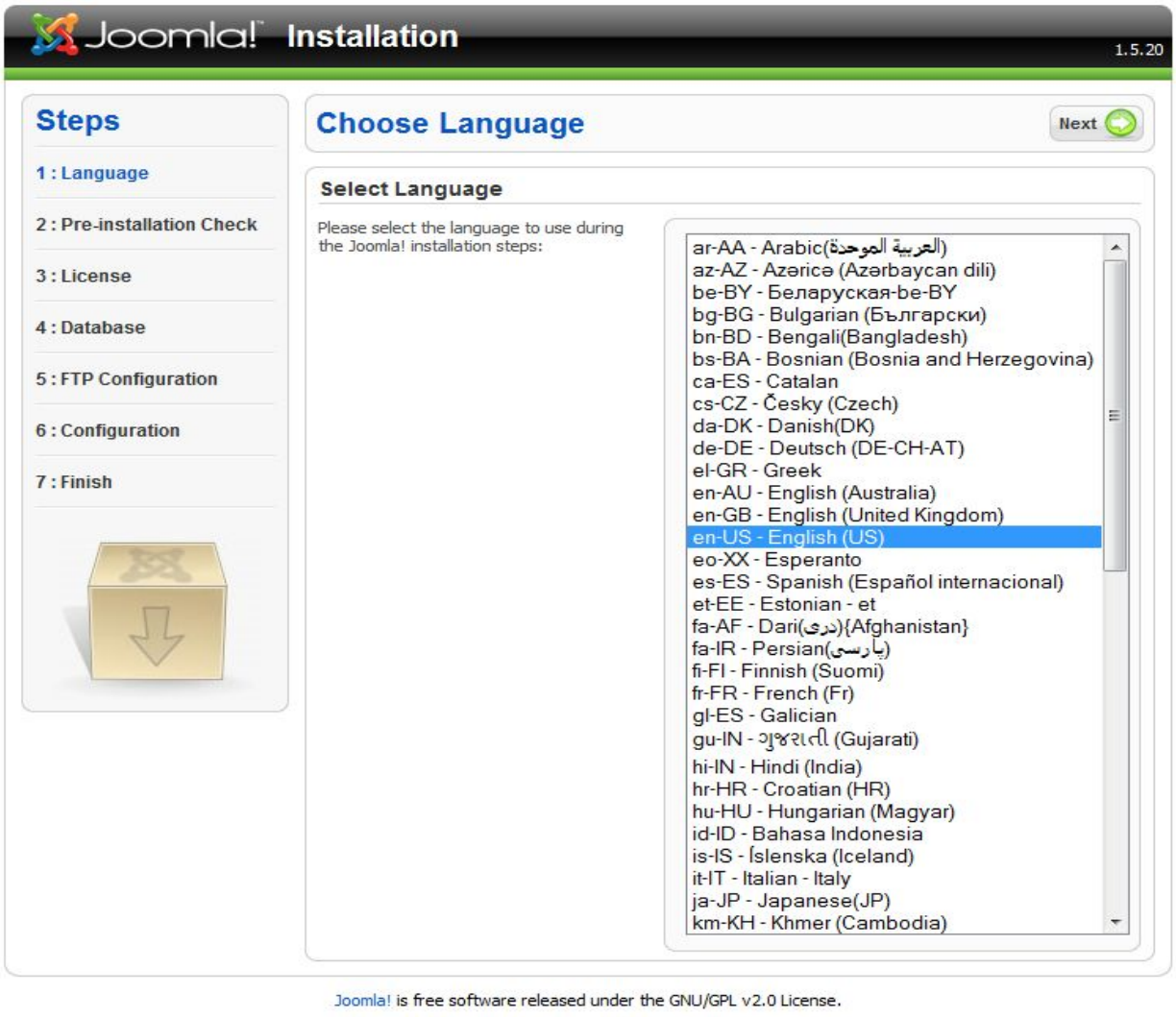
If instead, you already have a site and you only want Joomla to be part of that site, in a subfolder such as: http://mysite.com/joomla, then you should create that folder and extract all of the files to that folder instead.

Step 3: Uploading Joomla Files

Next, you should upload all of the Joomla files to your host using an FTP program, or extract the zip file directly to your server through the server's file manager.

Step 4: Running the Installation

Once that is done, go to (if you uploaded Joomla to the root folder):
http://yoursite.com/index.php
Or if you uploaded it to a sub-folder, go to: ***http://yoursite.com/JoomlaFolder/index.php***
From that point on, follow the install wizard.



It will ask you for a language, and then it will check whether your server can handle Joomla without any problems. On some specific hosts, Joomla's folders might not default to their correct permission settings, which would cause it to display an error saying 'Access is not allowed'. In that case, you might have to access those folders and change the permissions by hand.

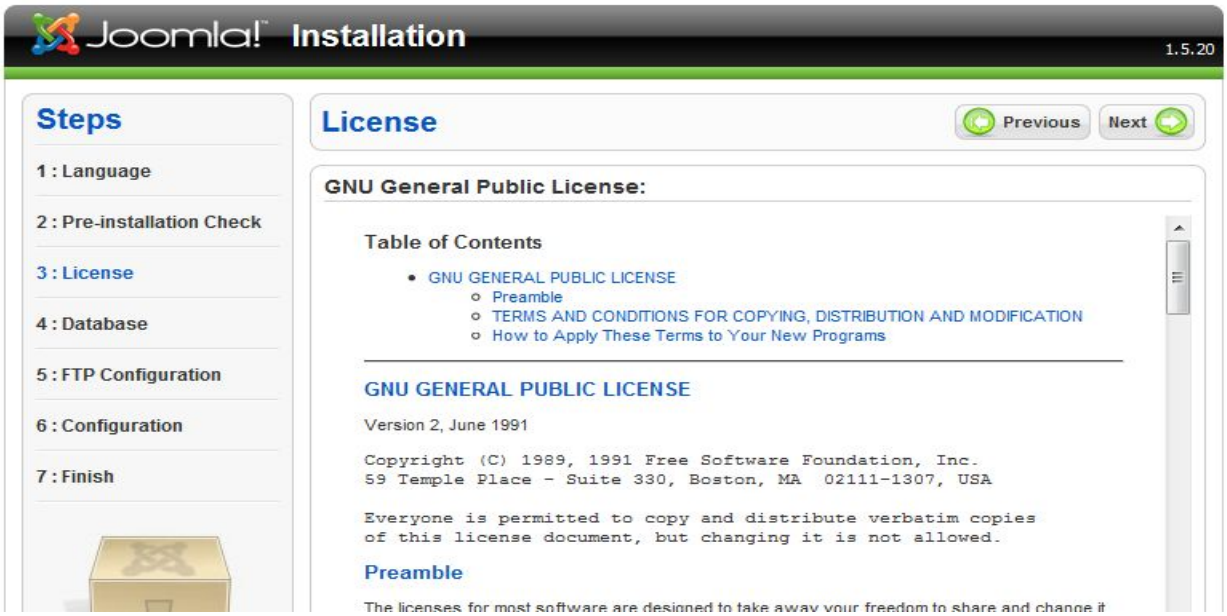
Some hosts provide an interface on their administration that allows you to do that, otherwise, check the permission instructions on the FTP program you are using. When changing permissions, you must be very careful, because if you change the wrong folders, your site may be wide open to hackers.

There are many discussions about which security setting should be used with Joomla.
The basic permission settings are:

644	755
Owner has Read and Write	Owner has Read, Write and Execute
Group has Read only	Group has Read and Execute
Other has Read only	Other has Read and Execute
757	**777 (less secure)**
Owner has Read, Write and Execute	Owner has Read, Write and Execute
Group has Read and Execute	Group has Read, write and Execute
Other has Read, Write and Execute	Other has Read, Write and Execute

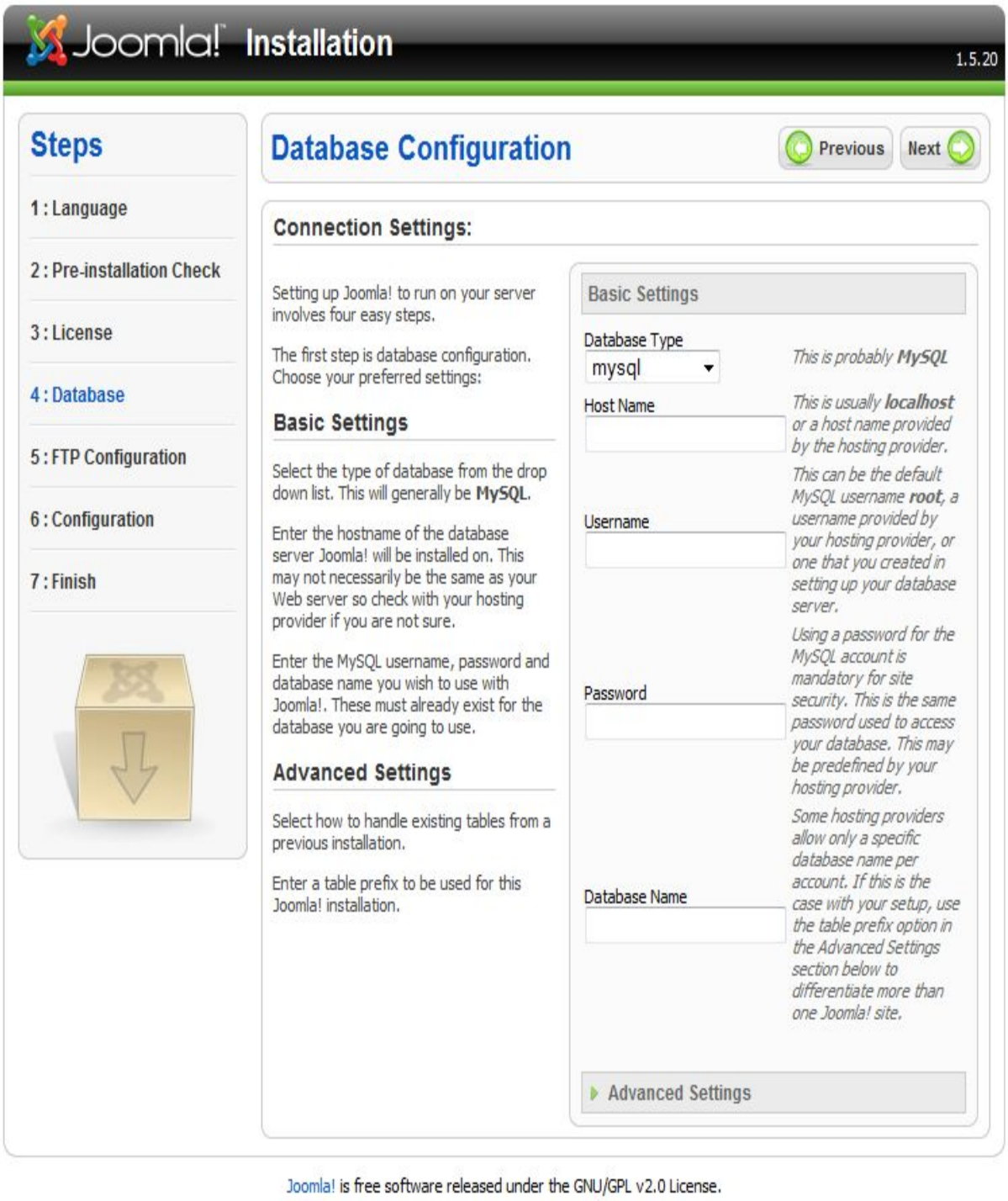
Step 5: License

Next, read over Joomla's license, it is pretty straightforward.



Step 6: Database Information

The following page is where you will need your database information.



Select:

- The type of database (mysql is the most common)
- Hostname (the address or path to your database)
- Username and password (for the database)

- Database name (you probably chose that when creating the database)

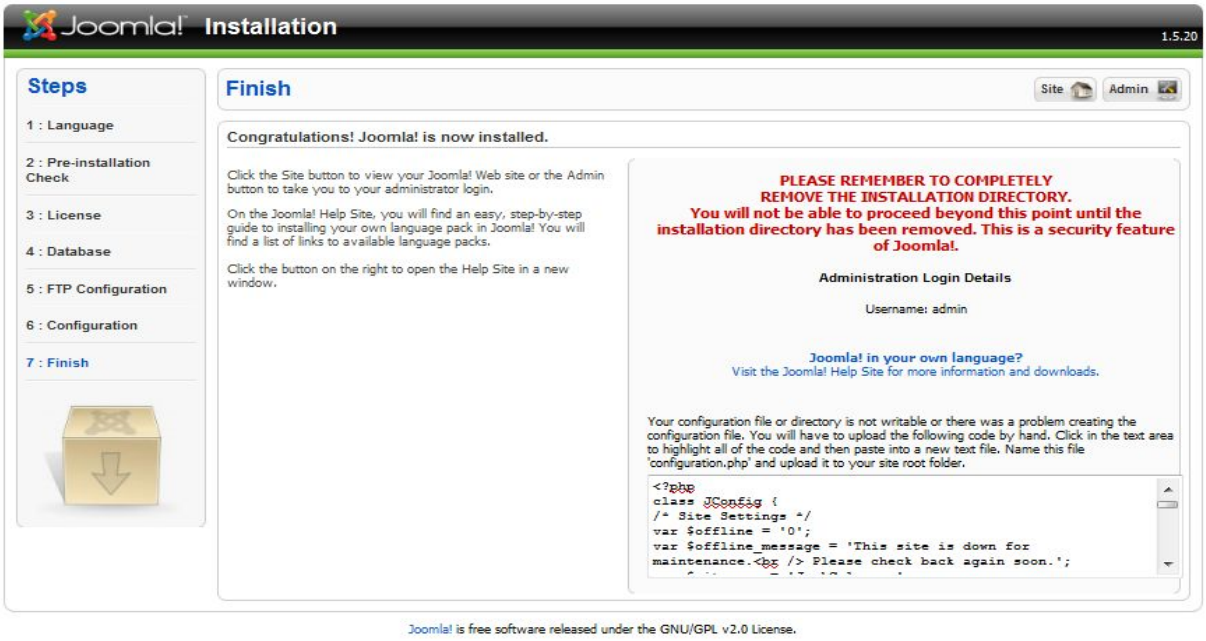
Note: Depending on your host, you might not have been given a choice to select your options for the database creation. In that case, try hostname “localhost” and username and password provided by your hosting company.

If you are installing on a localhost using WAMP or XAMPP, the Username is usually “root” and the password is nothing/blank. Unless you know what you are doing or have received an error during the installation, don’t bother looking at the advanced settings.

Continue through the configuration. You will be asked to add basic information such as email and site name, and be given an option to install “Sample Data”. As I explained on the C-panel install, this option will install pages, menus and directories with Joomla information.

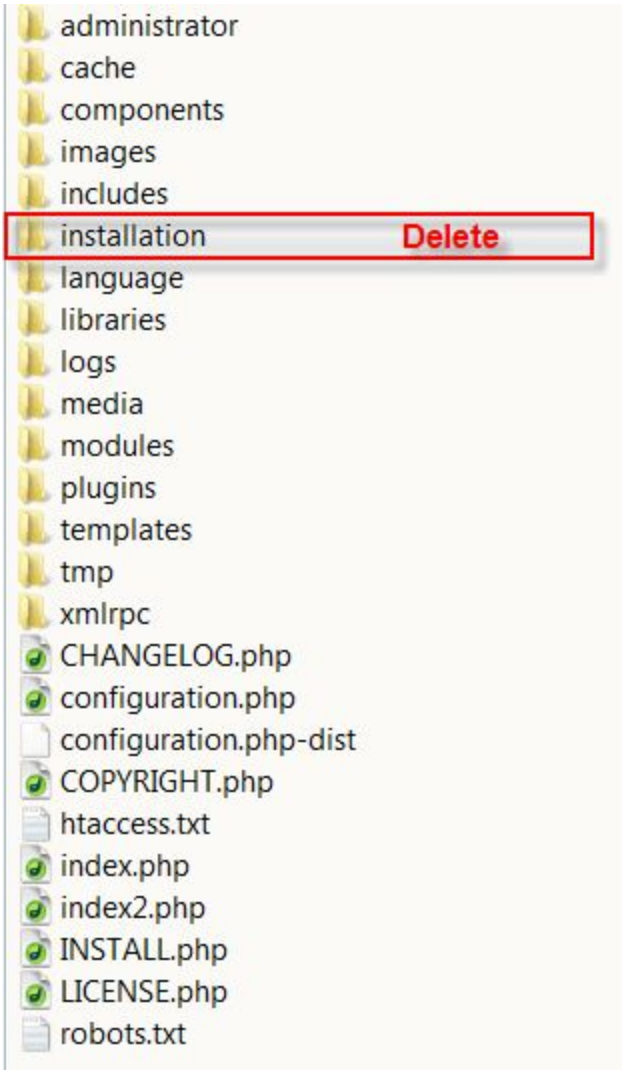
If you’d like to see them and change them around as a way of learning how to use the site, leave this option. I usually don’t like having all those pages installed on my sites, because I have to delete them later.

If you continue with the prompts, you should now have a “Congratulations” page.



All you need to do now to start using your Joomla site is to go back to FTP and delete the “Installation” directory. Having this directory still on the site is a major security issue.

You are now ready to start adding content to your website through the Joomla interface.



Step 7: Configuration Settings

Once Joomla is installed, it's time to start adding content and managing your site. You will need to log into the administration of the site. The default administration can be found at: http://(your site and folder where Joomla is installed)/administrator. You will need the username and password you set up during installation to log in and access the backend of your site.

User Manager

The user manager allows you to create new users by clicking the “new” button and to edit existing users. You can also use this interface to define what permission group they belong to, which defines what they can and can’t do on the site.

For example, “super administrators” have full control of the site; meanwhile, registered users can access parts of the front end of the site that require a log in, but not much else.

SEO Settings

Search Engine friendly URLs will modify the address of your pages from something that looks like this: http://yoursite.com/index.php?option=com_mtree&task=listcats&cat_id=1922&Itemid=35

to something that looks like this: http://yoursite.com/about-us/contact or http://yoursite.com/index.php/about-us/contact.html

If you choose to add a suffix to the URL (that's the .html part) That will only work in some hosts if you use an Apache mod_rewrite, hence that option. The best way to find out is just to try without it, and if you have problems, change that option to yes. You can even have it so there is no index.php in the URL.

System Settings

Under the system settings you will see several options you might want to consider modifying, which control whether users can register on your site and what kind of privileges they can have.

User Settings

Allow user registration (yes, no) – Determines whether people are allowed to register as site users or not. If you select yes, you can determine what level of access the new users will have when they sign up. The options are:

New user registration type:

Registered – Can't edit or publish any articles. The user is simply a registered user of the site with no privileges.

Author – Can create content and determine where it should go and some minor settings relating to their individual articles.

Editor – Has the same ability as the above users, but they can also edit articles by other users.

Publisher – Can do all of the above, plus the ability to choose whether an article will be published or not.

New User account activation (yes, no) - Determines whether the site requires that they respond to an activation email.

Path to media folder - if you decide to change where the media manager files are stored you can put the new URL here.

Path to image folder - if you decide to change where your photos are stored you can put the new URL here.

Minimum User Level for Media Manager (author) – Allows you to decide which kinds of users can have access to your media manager, which would allow them to upload pictures, delete them and move them. Author is the default choice, since they might need access to upload images to articles they create.

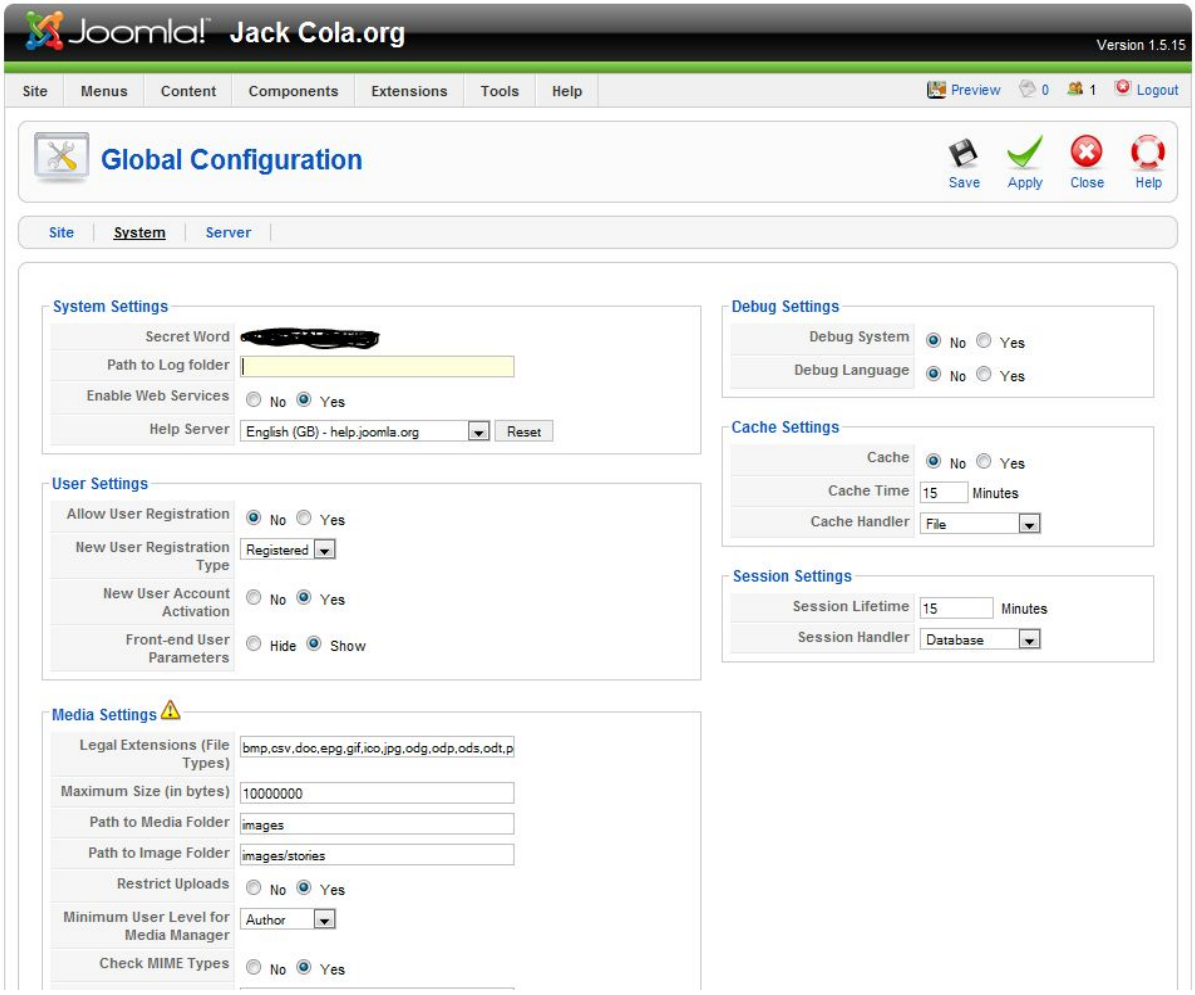
Most of the other ones you should only change if you know what they do.

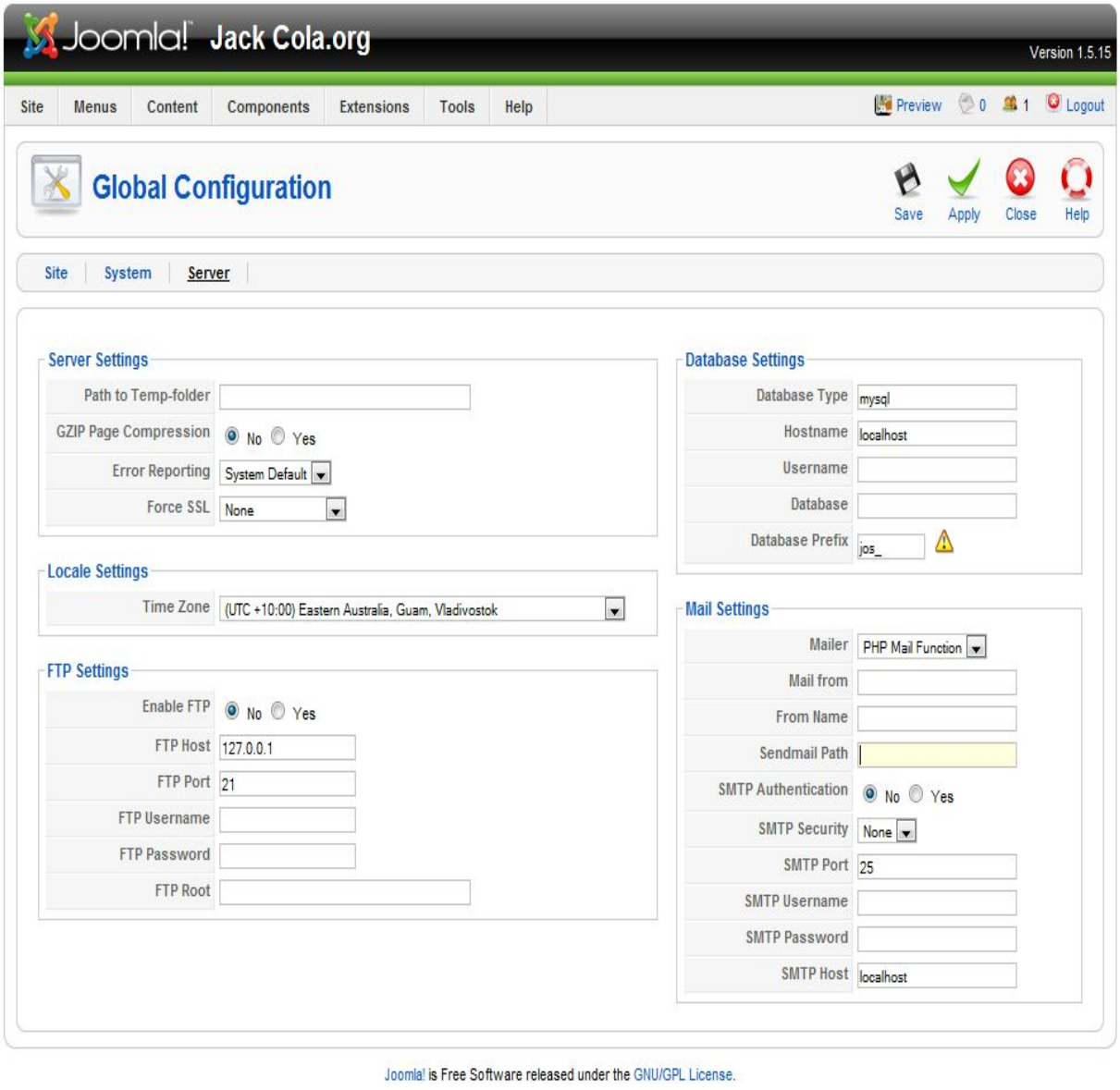
Server Settings

Most options will already be set for you during installation. The options you must change are:

Under mail settings: Mail from - the email you want to use when sending messages from your Joomla site

From name: The sender name you want the receivers to see on the emails you send using your Joomla site.





Tools

Most of the tools under this button can be used for general management maintenance of the site and communication among users. You can send private messages to users or mass messages to all of them.

When another user is editing a file, a little padlock prevents others from editing it at the same time, and “checks it out” for the time being. The Global Check In basically makes everything that was checked out available for editing by checking them in again. Some mods cache some of the information for speed’s sake. You can clear that cache if you need to by using the “Clean Cache Admin” and the “Purge Cache Admin”.