Change Minecraft difficulty, game mode, PvP and spawn protection

Use this guide when a Java server starts correctly but its gameplay rules do not match your community. Changing one setting at a time makes it easier to identify a plugin override or an unexpected side effect. These steps apply to the server configuration, not the video settings on a player's computer.

Record what you want to change

Write down the intended difficulty, whether players may fight, and the default mode for new arrivals. Decide separately whether everyone should have their mode reset when reconnecting. Tell players before introducing a rule that could affect combat, building or survival progress.

In the game panel, confirm the server name and connection address. Stop it normally and wait for saving to finish. Download a copy of `server.properties`, then take a completed file backup before changing several rules. Keep the copy under a recognisable name outside the server rather than overwriting the only previous configuration.

Edit a small set of properties

Open `server.properties` in the file manager. Find the existing line for each setting instead of appending duplicates. A typical survival example is:

```
difficulty=normal
gamemode=survival
force-gamemode=false
pvp=true
spawn-protection=16
```

`difficulty` chooses peaceful, easy, normal or hard. `gamemode` sets the default mode; `force-gamemode=true` reapplies that default on joining. `pvp` controls player-versus-player damage. `spawn-protection` controls the protected area around world spawn; zero disables it, and the vanilla protection needs at least one operator.

Do not change authentication, networking or port settings while working on gameplay rules. A copied configuration from another host may contain unrelated values that stop players connecting. Keep the rest of the file intact and save it once you have checked the edited lines.

Restart and test as a player

1. Start the server and watch Console until startup completes.
2. Join using an ordinary test account. Administrative permissions may bypass restrictions.
3. Check the intended mode on a new or suitable test player, then disconnect and reconnect to test your force-mode decision.
4. Test combat only with consenting players in a safe area. Keep valuable inventories out of the test.
5. Check block placement near spawn and outside the protected area. Record the coordinates and result.

A protection plugin, per-world plugin or mod can add its own rules. If one world behaves differently, inspect that world's configuration and active protection rules before repeatedly changing the global file. A successful operator test does not prove visitors have the same permissions.

If your change does not stick

Stop the server and reopen the file to confirm the value was saved. Note any startup configuration that regenerates it. Record your software version, the changed properties and the exact test that failed. Ask support to inspect a suspected panel or startup override; do not reinstall to reset a gameplay option.

To reverse this configuration edit, restore the saved lines while stopped and restart. This does not undo player actions that occurred under the new rules. See operator and whitelist permissions.

Further reading: Paper's property reference.

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