Change the built-in Minecraft server-list MOTD

The message of the day, usually called the MOTD, is the description shown underneath a Minecraft Java server in the multiplayer list. It is different from a welcome message displayed after joining. This guide changes the built-in description in `server.properties`; a proxy or MOTD plugin can replace that description before a player sees it.

Establish who controls the message

Record the exact address players enter and the current text. Check whether the address reaches this game server directly or a network proxy. If a proxy answers the status request, its own configuration may be authoritative. Also check the plugin list for a server-list message provider. Editing several competing message sources makes the result difficult to diagnose.

Download `server.properties` before making changes. Keep it private because that file can contain remote-console credentials. Record the installed Minecraft and Paper release. Options and text handling can evolve between 1.21.11 and 26.x; use the documentation matching the installed build instead of copying a screenshot from another release.

Make a plain-text change first

Stop the server cleanly. In the file manager, open the active `server.properties` file. Find the existing `motd=` entry and replace its value with a short plain-text description, such as this illustrative example:

```
motd=Community survival - new players welcome
```

Keep the value on the same physical line. Do not add a second `motd` key at the bottom of the file or wrap the value in quotation marks just because a YAML example uses them. Properties files and YAML use different syntax. Save the file and start the server normally.

Once plain text works, add any formatting supported by the exact software answering the ping. Legacy colour escapes, JSON components and MiniMessage are different formats. A plugin accepting MiniMessage does not mean that `server.properties` accepts the same markup. Check the relevant implementation before trying colours or line breaks.

Verify the change

Refresh the server entry in Minecraft Java and compare it with your saved screenshot or notes. Join once to ensure the service is still reachable. If the old message remains, check the public address, proxy and plugins before editing again. A server-list website can cache results, so its delayed update is weaker evidence than a fresh client ping.

A listing that appears offline is a separate issue. Check whether status responses were disabled and whether the address and gameplay port are correct. Changing a description cannot repair a failed network connection. Do not alter `online-mode`, forwarding secrets or firewall settings while investigating a cosmetic message.

Undo the change

Restore the previous `motd` value in the same file during another clean stop, then start and refresh. If the value changes back by itself at startup, preserve a copy of both versions and inspect panel-managed variables or startup arguments. Report that evidence to support rather than repeatedly overwriting a value controlled elsewhere. Your world files do not need to be restored.

Related help

- Fix common Minecraft connection errors
- Find Minecraft logs and send useful troubleshooting details
- Back up game files before making changes

Reference

Paper server.properties reference. Paper command-line overrides.

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