

iMobile

Pier

User Guide

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About this document

This guide explains how to use Pier version 0.3.1: mounting remote storage as Windows drives, working with mounted drives, registering, making backups and restoring files from them.

It is written for the users of the product. Installing, updating and removing the product are covered in the Installation and Administration Guide.

1. Purpose

Pier mounts remote file storage as Windows drive letters. It works with WebDAV servers (including Nextcloud and ownCloud), SSH servers that offer SFTP, and NFS version 3 servers. A mounted drive is used in File Explorer and in any program the same way as a local disk.

Pier Backup, which is part of the product, saves folders of the computer to a server as encrypted versions and restores files from them.

2. Conditions of use

- The product is installed on the computer and the "Pier" service is running. Installation is done by an administrator.
- You know the storage address and your credentials on it: a login and password; for SFTP it can be a private key file, and for NFS the uid and gid values.
- Registration needs an e-mail address and Internet access.
- Only a user who is a member of the local Administrators group can configure backups.
- Everyday Windows and File Explorer skills are sufficient.

A mounted drive is visible to every user of the computer. On the server they all act as the account that was entered when the drive was added.

3. Getting started

3.1. Starting the product

1. Open the Start menu and run "Pier". The product's icon appears in the notification area.
2. Click the icon to open the settings window. A right-click opens the menu.

The icon does not start by itself when you sign in. Drives are mounted by the service, so they are available without the icon.

If the product reports that the service is not installed or not running, or that the Dokany driver is not installed, agree to the installation (administrator rights are needed) or contact your administrator.

3.2. The settings window

Tab	Content
Drives	the list of drives: letter, name, server, state, cache size, number of files waiting to be uploaded; the control buttons
Backup	backup jobs and their state
Transfers	running and queued uploads and downloads

Tab	Content
Log	messages of the service
Account	registration and the edition
Settings	interface language and updates

A drive's state is "mounted", "unmounted", "offline" or "error".

3.3. The icon's menu

For each drive: "Open in Explorer", "Sync now", and "Unmount" or "Mount". General items: "Auto-update", "Check for updates" (or "Install update" with a version number), "Open Pier" and "Exit".

4. Main tasks

4.1. Mounting WebDAV storage

1. On the Drives tab press "Add".
2. On the Connection page choose the WebDAV protocol and a drive letter. Letters already in use on the computer are marked with an asterisk.
3. Paste the whole link to the folder into "Address (link)". For Nextcloud the link looks like `https://cloud.example.com/remote.php/dav/files/<login>`. The port, the path and the Nextcloud login are taken from the link.
4. Type the password. For Nextcloud an app password is recommended.
5. Press "Check". The product connects to the server, tests writing, renaming and other capabilities and shows a report.
6. Press "OK". The drive is saved only if the connection to the server succeeds; on an error the window stays open with what you typed.

"HTTPS" and "Verify certificate" are selected by default. Clearing "Verify certificate" makes the connection less secure. "Mount at start" mounts the drive every time the service starts; "Read only" forbids writing to the drive.

Note. On WebDAV servers other than Nextcloud and ownCloud, any change to a file sends the whole file to the server again.

4.2. Mounting a server over SFTP

1. Press "Add" and choose the SFTP protocol.
2. Enter the server name in "Address (link)", the port in "Port" if it is not 22, and the folder in "Remote path".
3. Enter the login and the password. To sign in with a key, press the button next to "SSH key (PEM)" and choose the private key file; "Password" then takes the key's passphrase.
4. Press "Check", then "OK".

RSA, ECDSA and Ed25519 keys in OpenSSH format are supported. A key in PuTTY (.ppk) format must first be converted to OpenSSH format.

Note. The product does not verify the SSH server's host key. Connect only to servers on a network you trust.

4.3. Mounting an NFS export

1. Press "Add" and choose the NFS protocol.
2. Enter the server name in "Address (link)" and the export in "Remote path", for example `/srv/share`.
3. In "Options" enter the identity to use on the server, for example `uid=1000,gid=1000`.
4. Press "Check", then "OK".

Data sent over NFS version 3 is not encrypted.

4.4. Working with a drive

A mounted drive opens in File Explorer like any other. Keep in mind:

- a file is read from the server in parts and kept in a cache on the computer; reading it again is served from the cache;
- a saved file is first written to the cache and then sent to the server in the background. While the "Pending" column is not zero, some changes have not been sent yet;
- when the connection drops, a transfer continues once the connection is back; the upload queue survives a reboot;
- when a file has been changed both on the computer and on the server, the computer's version is sent to the server.

The buttons on the Drives tab act on the selected drive.

Button	Action
"Edit"	open the drive's settings
"Remove"	remove the drive from the product together with its cache; unsent changes are lost
"Mount", "Unmount"	mount or unmount the drive
"Check"	repeat the server check and show the report
"Sync"	start sending pending changes immediately
"Offline", "Online"	switch offline mode on or off
"Clear cache"	delete from the cache the data already sent to the server
"Refresh"	refresh the list

4.5. Offline mode

1. Open the files you will need beforehand, so that they are in the cache.
2. Select the drive and press "Offline". Reads are served from the cache and changes are queued.
3. When the connection is back, press "Online". The queued changes are sent to the server.

A file that is not in the cache cannot be opened in offline mode.

4.6. Watching transfers

The Transfers tab shows, for each file, the direction (upload or download), the progress and the state: "active", "waiting", "retry" with the attempt number, "done" or "failed". To stop an upload, right-click it and choose "Stop upload...". The changes to that file on the computer are dropped and the server keeps its previous version.

4.7. Drive settings

"Edit" opens the drive editor. Besides the Connection page it has these pages:

- Network: timeouts, the number of attempts and the delays between them, the number of connections, a speed limit, the upload chunk size. On a bad link raise the timeouts and the number of attempts and lower the chunk size;
- Cache: the cache folder and size (4096 MB by default), block size, read-ahead, how long file information is trusted, write-back delay, offline mode;
- Compatibility: Unicode normalisation of names, what to do with names that differ only by letter case, allowing Windows reserved names, setting the modification time on the server, hiding files whose names start with a dot.

4.8. Registration

The product works without registration for the first 14 days. Seven days before the period ends the settings window starts showing a reminder. When the period is over, the drives you have keep working, but drives and backups can be added or changed only after registration.

1. Open the Account tab and press "Register..."
2. Enter your e-mail address and press "Send code".
3. Enter the code from the e-mail and press "Activate".

Registration is free. One address can be registered on up to 3 computers in the Free edition and up to 10 in the Pro edition. If there are more, the computer that has not contacted the account server for the longest time is signed out; the product on it says so and offers to register again.

The Pro edition lifts the limit of 5 drives mounted at once, allows several backups and running them on a schedule, and removes the ads. It is taken out in the iMobile account (the "Buy Pro" button). Afterwards press "Refresh license".

4.9. Making a backup

The tasks in this and the following subsections are available to members of the Administrators group.

1. Open the Backup tab and press "Add".
2. Under "Folders to copy" press "Add folder..." and choose the folders. "Skip (masks, separated by ;)" can hold masks of files that should not be copied.
3. Under "Keep the copy on" choose a configured drive and enter a folder in "Folder there", or choose "Another server..." and define a WebDAV, SFTP, NFS or S3 server.
4. Type the backup password twice. The copy is encrypted with this password on the computer. The password cannot be recovered: without it nobody can read the copy. Write it down and keep it somewhere other than the computer.
5. Under "When" leave "By hand" or, in the Pro edition, choose "Every few hours" or "Every day" and set the time.
6. If needed, change how many versions are kept: latest, daily, weekly, monthly.
7. Press "Check" (the product reports whether the server answers and whether the folder already holds a copy), then "OK".
8. Select the job and press "Back up now".

Every run creates a new version of all the folders of the job; only data that has changed is sent to the server. The outcome of a run is shown in the "Last copy" column: "Done", "Done, with warnings" (some files could not be read; see "Log..." for details), "Failed" or "Stopped". An interrupted run is continued by the next run.

The Free edition allows one job, started by hand.

4.10. Restoring files

1. On the Backup tab select the job and press "Restore...".
2. Choose a version by its date in the "Version" list.
3. Go to the folder you need. To restore particular files and folders, select them and press "Restore selected..."; to restore the whole version, press "Restore everything...".
4. Choose "To where they were" (files that have changed since are replaced) or "To another folder...".

The progress of the restore is shown on the Backup tab. Restoring is not limited by the edition and does not require registration.

4.11. Verifying and deleting versions

- "Verify copy" downloads and checks all the data of the copy on the server, so verifying a large copy takes a long time.
- "Delete version" in the restore window deletes the selected version. Files that are in no other version are gone for good. The only remaining version cannot be deleted.
- "Remove" on the tab removes the job only; the copy on the server stays.

4.12. Language and updates

The Settings tab is where you choose the interface language and whether updates are installed automatically. The product checks for a new version every 6 hours. During an automatic installation the drives go away for about a minute. With the option cleared the product only announces a new version, and you start the installation with the button on this tab or from the icon's menu.

5. Messages and common difficulties

Message or symptom	Cause	What to do
"The Pier service is not installed or not running"	the service is not installed or is stopped	agree to the installation or contact your administrator
"Driver not installed"	the Dokany driver is missing	agree to the installation or contact your administrator
A drive in the "error" state with the text <code>credentials rejected</code>	the server refused the login or password	press "Edit" and correct the credentials
A text starting with <code>TLS:</code>	the server certificate failed validation	contact your administrator
"Free version: at most 5 drives mounted at once"	limit of the Free edition	unmount a drive you do not need or take out the Pro edition
"The period without registration is over"	14 days have passed without registration	register on the Account tab
"This computer has been signed out"	the e-mail address is registered on more computers than the edition allows	register again
"Backups are set up by an administrator of this computer"	you are not a member of the Administrators group	contact your administrator
"This is part of Pier Pro"	a schedule or a second job was chosen in the Free edition	keep starting the backup by hand or take out the Pro edition

Message or symptom	Cause	What to do
"Done, with warnings" for a backup	some files were held open by another program or could not be reached	open "Log...", close the programs holding the files and run the backup again
A file on the drive cannot be created or renamed	the name is not allowed by the server or by Windows, or differs from an existing one only by letter case	choose another name; the rules are set on the Compatibility page
A large file opens slowly from the middle	the server ignores requests for part of a file	tell the server's administrator; the server check shows this in its report

Detailed error messages of the service are in English; their full text is on the Log tab. Lines on the Drives, Transfers and Log tabs can be selected and copied to pass on to an administrator.

6. Finishing work

"Exit" in the icon's menu closes the icon and the settings window. The service keeps running: drives stay mounted, and uploads and scheduled backups continue.

To unmount a drive, select it on the Drives tab and press "Unmount". Before unmounting or removing a drive, it is best to wait until the "Pending" column shows zero.

When the computer is shut down, unfinished uploads stay in the cache and continue after the service next starts. Until then, changes that have not been sent to the server exist only on this computer.

Document history

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1.0	2026-10-06	0.3.1	First issue