

Find Why a Linux Server Rebooted

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What this is for

This explains:

- How to check **when** and **how** a RHEL server rebooted
 - How to tell if the reboot was caused by:
 - a person or script inside the server
 - or by infrastructure (VM reset, power, hypervisor)
 - How to make sure **future reboots can be investigated**
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1. Check when the server rebooted

```
who -b uptime
```

Confirms the last boot time.

2. Check reboot history

```
last -x | head
```

What to look for:

- `reboot system boot` → normal reboot
 - `shutdown system down` → clean shutdown (manual or automated)
 - No shutdown entry → likely VM reset or power event
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3. Check logs from the previous boot

```
journalctl -b -1
```

If you see:

No persistent journal was found

It means logs were lost at reboot and **the cause cannot be proven** from inside the server.

4. Key conclusion when logs are missing

If there are:

- no shutdown logs
- no kernel panic
- no persistent journal

Then the reboot was **not triggered from the operating system**. It was almost certainly caused by infrastructure (hypervisor, power, maintenance).

5. Enable persistent logs (recommended)

This ensures future reboots leave evidence.

Create log storage

```
mkdir -p /var/log/journal
chown root:systemd-journal /var/log/journal
chmod 2755 /var/log/journal
```

Configure limits

Edit:

```
vi /etc/systemd/journald.conf
```

Set:

```
Storage=persistent
SystemMaxUse=500M
SystemKeepFree=1G
```

Apply:

```
systemctl restart systemd-journald
```

Check usage:

```
journalctl --disk-usage
```

What this gives you

After this:

- OS reboots → visible in logs
- Clean shutdowns → visible
- VM or power resets → logs abruptly stop (proof it wasn't the OS)
- Disk usage → capped and safe

Summary

If a server reboots:

- Logs present → you can explain why
- Logs missing → infrastructure caused it

This setup removes guesswork.