



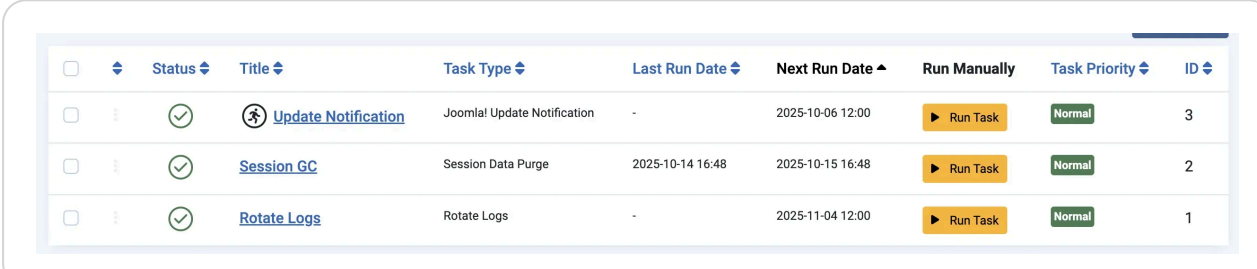
Detect Locked Joomla Scheduled Tasks Before They Cause Problems

Joomla's Task Scheduler can leave tasks stuck in a locked state after crashes or timeouts. mySites.guru detects and unlocks them across all your sites.

Phil E. Taylor | 26 March 2026

Joomla's Task Scheduler has been running background jobs since Joomla 4.1: sending update notifications, cleaning up expired sessions, rotating logs, processing privacy consent requests. It works well, right up until a task crashes mid-execution. When that happens, the lock is never released. The task sits there marked as "running" even though the process died minutes or hours ago.

In the Joomla admin, locked tasks show up with a running person icon in System > Scheduled Tasks:



<input type="checkbox"/>	Status	Title	Task Type	Last Run Date	Next Run Date	Run Manually	Task Priority	ID
<input type="checkbox"/>	👤	Update Notification	Joomla! Update Notification	-	2025-10-06 12:00	▶ Run Task	Normal	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	✅	Session GC	Session Data Purge	2025-10-14 16:48	2025-10-15 16:48	▶ Run Task	Normal	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	✅	Rotate Logs	Rotate Logs	-	2025-11-04 12:00	▶ Run Task	Normal	1

But nobody checks that screen regularly. If you manage 30 Joomla sites, you're not logging into each one to inspect the task scheduler. Update notifications stop arriving, sessions pile up, logs grow unchecked, and you don't find out until something breaks.

How does mySites.guru detect and unlock locked Joomla tasks?

Every time you run a snapshot on a Joomla 5 or 6 site, mySites.guru checks for locked scheduled tasks automatically. The result appears in the audit dashboard alongside the rest of your site health data:

- 0 locked tasks: green badge, everything healthy
- 1 or more locked tasks: warning badge with the count, plus Investigate and Fix buttons

Click Investigate to see exactly which tasks are stuck. mySites.guru connects to the site and pulls the full details: task name, type, how long it's been locked, the last exit code,

and an Unlock button to fix it on the spot.

Investigate any locked scheduled tasks Manage Site

joomla5 upgrded to 6 https://joomla5.managemysitesguru.orb.local/

PHP 8.4.13 6.0.2 1c829c66a75b

About This Tool Compare All Sites Learn ×

Joomla's Task Scheduler (4.1+) runs background jobs like update notifications, log rotation, and session cleanup. When a task starts, Joomla writes a **locked** timestamp on it. If the task finishes normally, the lock is cleared. But if PHP crashes or the process is killed mid-run, the lock stays and the task gets stuck. A task locked for more than 5 minutes (Joomla's default timeout) has almost certainly failed. Stuck tasks won't run again until unlocked, which means missed notifications and logs that never get rotated.

Exit codes: **0** = completed OK, **1** = finished with an error, **2** = task will resume on next run, **3** = timed out (exceeded 300s).

Information correct as of Mar 26, 2026, 10:18 AM and before your changes Reload

1 Locked Task Found

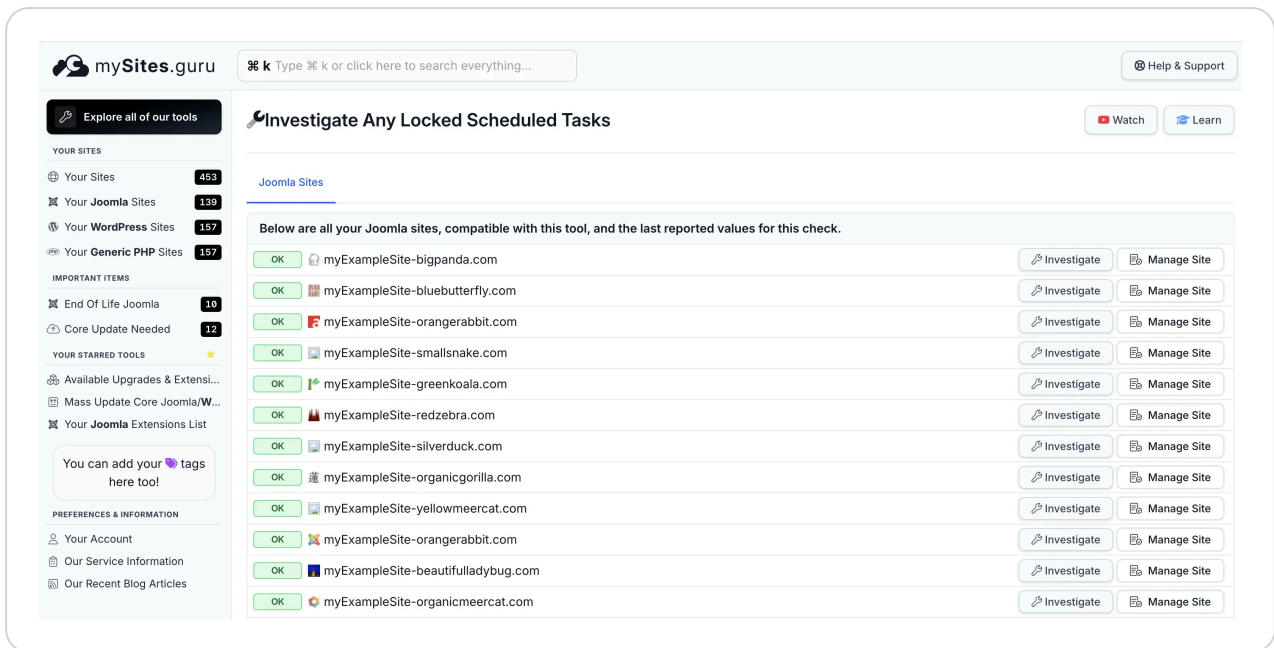
TASK NAME	TYPE	LOCKED SINCE	LAST EXIT CODE	ACTIONS
Update Notification	update.notification	2025-10-14 16:48:03	0 (OK)	Unlock

If a task has been locked for more than 15 minutes, mySites.guru flags it with an additional warning. Joomla's default task timeout is 300 seconds. Anything beyond that is almost certainly stuck, not actively running.

The check itself is lightweight - a single **COUNT(*)** query against an indexed column, adding negligible overhead to the snapshot.

What about checking all your sites at once?

If you manage dozens or hundreds of Joomla sites, you don't want to open each snapshot individually. The pivot page shows the locked task count for every connected Joomla site on a single screen. One glance tells you which sites have stuck tasks and which are clean. Click Investigate on any flagged site to drill into the details, or Fix to unlock the stuck tasks remotely.



This is where the real time savings come in. Instead of logging into 200 Joomla admin panels to check System > Scheduled Tasks on each one, you get the full picture from one page. Sites with zero locked tasks show green. Sites with stuck tasks show a warning count. Sort, scan, fix, move on.

What can locked Joomla tasks break?

Stuck scheduled tasks don't crash your site, but the downstream effects accumulate:

- Update Notification: you stop getting emails about available Joomla and extension updates. The update check still works from mySites.guru, but local admin notifications go silent.
- Session GC: expired sessions aren't cleaned up. The `#__session` table grows, slowing database queries.
- Privacy Consent: GDPR consent expiry processing stops. Users who should be re-prompted aren't.
- Log Rotation: action logs grow without bounds. On high-traffic sites, this eats disk space fast.
- Custom tasks from third-party extensions stop running with no error message.

That last one deserves extra attention. Third-party extensions can register their own scheduled tasks via `com_scheduler` plugins. Akeeba Backup is the most common example - it provides a task plugin for automated backup schedules. If you've set up Akeeba to run nightly backups via the scheduler and the task locks, your backups stop silently. You won't know until you need a restore and find the most recent backup is three weeks old.

Any extension that ships a `com_scheduler` task plugin is at risk. The Investigate view in mySites.guru shows the task type identifier, so you can tell immediately whether a locked task belongs to Joomla core or a third-party extension.

None of these cause immediate, visible errors. That's the problem. They're the kind of issues you discover weeks later when someone asks "why haven't we had an update notification in a month?" or when a backup is needed and the latest one is stale.

Why do Joomla scheduled tasks get stuck?

Joomla scheduled tasks get stuck when the PHP process running them dies without releasing the database lock. The four most common causes:

1. PHP hits `max_execution_time` or `memory_limit`, the process dies, and the database lock persists because there's no cleanup handler.
2. Long-running tasks lose their database connection, especially on shared hosting with aggressive connection timeouts.
3. The web server or PHP-FPM restarts while a task is running. The lock stays.
4. A third-party plugin providing a scheduled task throws a fatal error. The task framework can't catch it, so the lock remains.

These aren't edge cases. On a busy shared host, PHP timeouts and connection drops happen regularly. If you manage multiple Joomla sites across different hosts, you'll eventually run into locked tasks on at least a few of them.

Note: [Joomla 5.4.2 improved cascade behaviour](#)

Before Joomla 5.4.2, a single stuck task would block *all* other scheduled tasks from running. The scheduler checked for any locked task and refused to start new ones, even if the lock had long exceeded its timeout. Joomla 5.4.2 fixed this by respecting the configured timeout, so a timed-out task no longer prevents other tasks from executing. The stuck task itself still needs manual unlocking, but at least it no longer takes the entire scheduler down with it.

How do I unlock a stuck Joomla scheduled task?

The fastest way is directly from mySites.guru. When the snapshot flags locked tasks, click Fix to unlock them remotely. mySites.guru connects to the site and clears the lock on the stuck tasks without you ever logging into the Joomla admin. This is the whole point of the feature - detect and resolve locked tasks across all your sites from one dashboard, instead of logging into each one individually.

If you prefer to fix it manually, you can also unlock tasks from the Joomla admin:

1. Go to **System > Scheduled Tasks**
2. Find the task showing the running person icon
3. Click the task to open it
4. The task detail screen will show the lock state, and you can manually unlock it

Or if you have database access:

```
UPDATE #__scheduler_tasks SET locked = NULL WHERE id = <task_id>;
```

Replace `#__` with your actual table prefix (usually `jml_` or similar) and `<task_id>` with the task ID shown in the mySites.guru investigate results.

Which Joomla versions support scheduled task detection?

The Task Scheduler was introduced in Joomla 4.1, but this feature targets **Joomla 5 and Joomla 6** sites. Those are the actively supported major versions, and the ones where mySites.guru invests in new audit tooling.

Joomla 4 sites will not show locked task data. Joomla 3 has no task scheduler at all.

Where did this feature come from?

This feature was requested by [Marc Dechèvre](#) (WoluWeb), a long-time Joomla contributor and mySites.guru user. Marc noticed that locked tasks were a recurring pain point for agencies managing Joomla sites at scale. The information was always there in the database, but nobody had an easy way to check it across multiple sites without logging into each one individually.

If you have feature ideas for mySites.guru, get in touch via the [contact form](#) or reply to any newsletter email. User feedback drives the roadmap.

Further reading

- [Joomla Scheduled Tasks Documentation](#) - official help page covering task types, options, and the scheduler interface
- [Get to Know the Joomla Task Scheduler](#) - Joomla Community Magazine introduction to the feature from its launch
- [Execution History of Scheduled Tasks \(Joomla 5.x\)](#) - how to review task execution logs, added in Joomla 5.3
- [Issue #47217: Fix scheduled tasks stopping when one gets stuck](#) - the Joomla issue tracker entry for the 5.4.2 cascade fix
- [Akeeba Backup Scheduled Tasks Integration](#) - how Akeeba uses the Joomla scheduler for automated backups

How do I try it?

The locked scheduled tasks check ships with all [mySites.guru subscriptions](#) at no extra cost. Connect your Joomla 5 or 6 sites and the next snapshot picks up any locked tasks automatically.

Not a subscriber? The [free audit](#) runs a broad set of Joomla health checks on any site. Worth a look.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are Joomla scheduled tasks?

Joomla 4.1 introduced a Task Scheduler (com_scheduler) that runs background jobs like update notifications, session garbage collection, log rotation, and privacy consent expiry. These tasks run on a cron-like schedule from the Joomla admin panel.

Why do Joomla scheduled tasks get stuck in a locked state?

When a task crashes or times out mid-execution, the lock is never released. The task stays marked as running even though the process has ended. Joomla shows these with a running person icon in the backend.

How long before a locked task is considered stuck?

Joomla's default task timeout is 300 seconds (5 minutes). If a task has been locked for more than 15 minutes, it is almost certainly stuck rather than actively running.

How do I unlock a stuck Joomla scheduled task?

In the Joomla admin, go to System > Scheduled Tasks, find the task with the running icon, and click it. You can manually unlock it from the task detail screen, or run the SQL query:
`UPDATE #__scheduler_tasks SET locked = NULL WHERE id = X.`

Does mySites.guru detect locked scheduled tasks automatically?

Yes. Every snapshot of a Joomla 5 or 6 site checks for locked scheduled tasks and reports the count in the audit dashboard. If any are found, you get a warning badge with Investigate and Fix buttons. Fix unlocks the stuck tasks remotely without logging into the Joomla admin.

Did Joomla 5.4.2 fix the locked task problem?

Partially. Before Joomla 5.4.2, one stuck task blocked all other scheduled tasks from running. Joomla 5.4.2 fixed this cascade issue by respecting the configured timeout. However, stuck tasks still need manual unlocking - the fix only prevents them from blocking other tasks.

Does this feature work with WordPress sites?

No. WordPress does not have an equivalent built-in task scheduler. This feature is Joomla-only, supporting Joomla 5 and Joomla 6.

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Get in touch

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