

Securing n8n Workflows: A Practitioner's Checklist

“A webhook with no signature check is a public API with extra steps.”

n8n makes it easy to wire a webhook to a workflow in minutes. It does not make security the default — that's on the person building it. This checklist covers the ingress boundary most workflows get wrong.

Scope	Webhook authentication, credential handling, permission boundaries
Audience	Teams building or reviewing n8n automation
Companion	Bridges Nazline's security review with Harrison Ndeke's n8n engineering
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1. Ingress Validation

Every inbound webhook should be authenticated before the workflow body executes — not after. Signature verification (HMAC) plus timestamp/nonce checking closes both spoofed-caller and replay-attack paths in one gate.



Security Principle

Validate before you trigger — not inside the first node of the workflow.

2. Credential Handling

Never inline secrets in a workflow's JSON — use n8n's credential store, not hardcoded values in a node.

Scope credentials narrowly: a workflow that only needs read access shouldn't hold a write-capable API key.

Rotate on personnel change: a shared workflow credential outlives the person who set it up unless rotation is a process, not an afterthought.

3. Practitioner Checklist

Check	Why it matters
Webhook signature verified before workflow logic runs	Blocks spoofed and forged trigger events
Timestamp + nonce checked (replay protection)	Stops a captured legitimate request being resent
Credentials in n8n's store, not inline	Prevents secret leakage via exported/shared workflow JSON
Workflow permissions scoped to minimum need	Limits blast radius if a single workflow is compromised
Error/dead-letter path doesn't leak secrets in logs	Debug logs are a common accidental leak surface

4. What This Is Not

This is not a case against automation platforms — n8n is capable, production-grade tooling. The gap is that convenience defaults are not security defaults, and the team building the workflow is responsible for the difference.

Related Work

This checklist pairs with n8n workflow engineering by Harrison Ndeke (harrisonndeke.co.ke) and supports the Secure Automation & AI Workflow Review service.

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