503 **503.my.id**
THE 503 ERROR DIAGNOSTIC CENTER

503 Cheat Sheet

503 Service Unavailable Error: What It Means and How to Fix It

Fix first, read later. Most 503s are temporary overload or maintenance, not a broken site.

1. Wait 2 minutes and reload — note the exact time.
2. Check whether it is only you: run the URL through our 503 Checker (503.my.id/tools/503-checker/).
3. Still 503? Follow the Decision Tree (503.my.id/tools/503-decision-tree/) — your platform branch decides the fix.

What 503 Means

A 503 means the server is alive, but temporarily unable to handle your request.

RFC 9110 §15.6.4 defines it as a temporary condition: overload, or scheduled maintenance.

Servers can name that delay with a `Retry-After` header (RFC 9110 §10.2.3). That header is a promise: come back at this time, not before.

A 503 is therefore different from a crash. The machine answered you. It simply refused the work, politely, for now.

The Exact Messages You Might See

WordPress, during updates or stuck maintenance:

> *Briefly unavailable for scheduled maintenance. Check back in a minute.*

nginx serves its default page with this line:

> *503 Service Temporarily Unavailable — nginx*

Apache's default wording is longer:

> *503 Service Unavailable — The server is temporarily unable to service your request due to maintenance downtime or capacity problems.*

Behind Cloudflare, the error page carries Cloudflare branding and a CF-Ray ID. That branding matters: it tells you which layer answered.

The 5 Causes Behind Most 503s

1. Maintenance mode that never switched off

WordPress writes a `.maintenance` file when an update starts. It deletes the file when the update finishes cleanly.
Interrupt the update, and the file stays — and so does the 503.
Lab status: reproduced and fixed, 16 November 2026.

2. The PHP worker pool is full

PHP-FPM runs a fixed number of worker processes per pool. When every worker is busy, new PHP requests wait in a queue.
Wait too long, and the web server gives up on them.
Lab status: reproduced and measured, 16 November 2026.

3. The backend is down, and the proxy says 503

Sometimes PHP is not busy. It is simply not running. The proxy then has nobody to hand the request to.
Apache answers that situation with a 503, instantly.
Lab status: reproduced, 16 November 2026.

4. A CDN rule returns 503 on purpose

Cloudflare rate-limit and firewall rules can answer 503 deliberately. So can a Worker script that returns the status itself.
The origin server may be perfectly healthy underneath.
Lab status: documented from Cloudflare's official docs; reproduction runs on our live lab subdomain.

5. Your hosting plan ran out of room

Shared hosting caps entry processes, I/O, and PHP workers per account. Hit the cap, and the platform refuses new work with a 503.

The Resource Usage graph in cPanel shows the fault, timed to the minute.

Lab status: documented from cPanel and CloudLinux docs; full reproduction in the cPanel guide.

503 vs 500 vs 502 vs 504 vs 429

These five codes are confused constantly, and the fixes do not overlap.

Code	Meaning	Whose problem	First move
500	The app itself crashed	Server / your code	Read the PHP error log
502	Proxy got no valid answer	Backend down or crashed	Check PHP / app is running
503	**Busy or in maintenance**	**Server — temporarily**	**Wait, then run the decision tree**
504	Backend too slow to answer	Slow script or query	Find what holds the workers
429	Rate limit was hit	Client sending too fast	Slow down, honor Retry-After

How Long Before It Hurts SEO?

Short answer: hours are fine; days are not.

Google treats a 503 as temporary and comes back to retry. Send `Retry-After`, and you tell the bot when to return.

Stretch the outage across several days, and pages risk dropping out.

Proof From Our Lab

Maintenance mode, captured live:

```
HTTP/1.1 503 Service Unavailable
Server: nginx
Retry-After: 600

Briefly unavailable for scheduled maintenance.
Check back in a minute.
```

A saturated pool writes this log line:

```
[16-Nov-2026 13:10:51] WARNING: [pool lab]
server reached pm.max_children setting (3),
consider raising it
```