

5xx Server Error Triage Card

SEOs Hut

Which link broke, whose job it is, and the first move. Companion to seoshut.com/blog/5xx-server-error/

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Code	Meaning	Which link broke	Whose job	First move
500	Internal Server Error	Server or PHP	You / developer	Read the error log; .htaccess → plugins → theme → memory → core
502	Bad Gateway	Machine behind the reporter	Host (processes) / you (plugin)	Wait a minute; check PHP-FPM / origin; Cloudflare branding tells who
503	Service Unavailable	Server or hosting limits	Shared: you cause load, host sets ceiling	Check resource graphs; caching, bots, cron; then plan
504	Gateway Timeout	Slow PHP, database or API	You (task) / host (timer)	Find the slow task; cache, batch, shorten; raise timer last
507	Insufficient Storage	Hosting storage	You + host	Free disk space; clear old backups and logs
508	Resource Limit Is Reached	Hosting limits (CloudLinux)	Shared	Entry-process graph; caching, bot rules; bigger plan
509	Bandwidth Limit Exceeded	Hosting quota (non-standard)	Host, on request	Lift or reset quota; compress images, add CDN
429	Too Many Requests	Rate limit (Google treats as server error)	You / firewall config	Allow Googlebot; do not keep it up for 2–3 days
520	Unknown origin response	Cloudflare ↔ origin	You + host	Origin log; oversized headers or cookies
521	Web server is down	Origin refused connection	Host / your firewall	Allow Cloudflare IPs; check web server process
522	Connection timed out (19 s)	Cloudflare ↔ origin	Host + your DNS	Check origin IP in DNS; server load; firewall
523	Origin is unreachable	DNS / routing	You (DNS)	Fix A/AAAA record; update origin IP after migration
524	A timeout occurred (125 s)	Slow task on origin	You (task) + host	Batch long tasks; cache; bypass Cloudflare for /wp-admin/
525 / 526	SSL handshake / certificate	Origin SSL	You (CF mode) + host (cert)	Match SSL mode; install valid or Origin CA certificate
530	Origin DNS error	Origin hostname DNS	You	Fix the hostname's DNS record

Fix order that finds the cause fastest

1. Confirm

Private window; curl -I; host status page

2. Which link

Cloudflare branding; admin vs front end; one page or all

3. WordPress ladder (500)

.htaccess → plugins → theme → memory → debug log → core

4. Timeouts (502/504/524)

Find the slow task; cache, batch, short API timeouts

5. Limits (503/508)

Caching, bot rules, server cron; then the plan

6. Prove + tell Google

200 in curl; URL Inspection live test; Validate fix

What Google does while it lasts

First 5xx: crawling slows, in proportion to the number of failing URLs.

While it continues: content served with the error is ignored; indexed URLs kept "but eventually dropped".

503 or 429 for more than 2–3 days: Google may crawl the site less in the long term.

Persistent: URLs removed from the index; after a fix, crawl rate returns gradually.

robots.txt on 5xx: crawling of the whole site stops for 12 hours; last good copy used for 30 days; then crawling stops.

The chain of timers (defaults)

19 s Cloudflare opening a connection (522)

30 s PHP max_execution_time

60 s Nginx proxy / fastcgi read; Apache TimeOut (504)

125 s Cloudflare waiting for a response (524)

Planned maintenance

Serve **503 + Retry-After** for one or two days at most; never 503 on robots.txt; never a 200 "under construction" page.