

Cloudflare 403 Forbidden Checklist

Find where the 403 came from, the rule behind it and the smallest change that fixes it.

Most Cloudflare 403s are fixed by changing one rule or one setting. The hard part is finding which one. This checklist starts with the Ray ID, separates Cloudflare blocks from server blocks and ends with a record of what you changed, so the next block is quicker to solve.

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How to use this checklist

Work top to bottom for each block a visitor reports, and keep the logs filled in as you go.

- 1 **Get the Ray ID first.** It is on the visitor's screenshot, or in the cf-ray response header when you reproduce the block yourself.
- 2 **Decide where the block happened.** An event in Security Events means Cloudflare. No event means your server.
- 3 **Find the exact rule.** The event names the service and the rule that acted.
- 4 **Narrow the rule instead of switching it off.** A tighter expression or a skip rule fixes most cases.
- 5 **Test, then watch the log.** Repeat the request, then check Security Events over the next few days for new blocks.
- 6 **Write the change down.** The change log at the end saves the next person from guessing.

KEEP SECURITY ON

Pausing Cloudflare or dropping the Security Level makes the error disappear and removes the protection for every visitor. Fixing the one rule keeps both the site and the visitor happy.

Cloudflare or your server?

WHAT YOU SEE	WHERE IT CAME FROM	WHERE TO LOOK
Cloudflare page with a Ray ID and a 1xxx code	Cloudflare	Security Events, then the setting the code points to
Cloudflare page with a Ray ID and no code	Cloudflare	Security Events, filtered by the Ray ID
The site's own error page or a plain server page	Usually your server	Search the cf-ray value in Security Events; no event means the server
A Just a moment or Verify you are human page that repeats	A Cloudflare challenge	The challenge page section of this checklist
403 only on images shown on other sites	Hotlink Protection	Security settings, or a skip rule for the trusted site
Error 1015, You are being rate limited	A rate limiting rule	Rate limiting rules under Security

Error codes

CODE	WHAT THE PAGE SAYS	WHAT CAUSED IT
1020	Access denied	A custom rule with a Block action
1010	Access banned based on your browser's signature	Browser Integrity Check or a rule on the browser's signature
1009	Country or region banned	A rule that blocks the visitor's country
1005	ASN banned	A rule that blocks the visitor's network
1006 to 1008	Your IP address has been banned	An IP Access Rule or custom rule
1015	You are being rate limited	A rate limiting rule

Ray ID log

Log every block you investigate. Security Events records times in UTC, so convert the visitor's local time before searching.

DATE AND TIME (UTC)	RAY ID	VISITOR IP	SERVICE	RULE	ACTION

WHEN THE EVENT LOOKS MISSING

Check the time zone first, then the date range on the log. If the Ray ID still returns nothing, Cloudflare passed the request on and the 403 came from the server.

Cloudflare settings to check

- ☐ Custom rules: none broader than intended, like a path or country block with no allow condition
- ☐ Managed rules: the flagged rule noted, with a skip rule for that path only
- ☐ IP Access Rules: no old country, network or IP blocks nobody remembers adding
- ☐ Rate limiting rules: thresholds realistic for logins, APIs and shared office networks
- ☐ Bot Fight Mode: not challenging your API, webhooks or app traffic, since it cannot be skipped
- ☐ Security Level: at Medium unless there is a reason, with I'm Under Attack mode off
- ☐ Browser Integrity Check: not blocking a tool or script you rely on
- ☐ Hotlink Protection: trusted sites that show your images are let through with a skip rule
- ☐ AI crawler settings: the crawlers you want are allowed

WHERE THESE LIVE

Most of these sit under Security in the Cloudflare dashboard. Menu names change from time to time, so the dashboard search is the quickest way to each one.

Skip rule planner

Plan each skip rule before creating it. The narrower the match, the less the rule gives away.

TRAFFIC	PATH	METHOD	SOURCE IPS	FEATURES TO SKIP

EXAMPLE EXPRESSIONS

Webhook path: `(starts_with(http.request.uri.path, "/wp-json/payments/webhook") and http.request.method eq "POST")`

Webhook from known IPs: `(starts_with(http.request.uri.path, "/wp-json/payments/webhook") and ip.src in {192.0.2.0/24})`

Keep Log matching requests switched on for every skip rule.

Server-side checks

Use these when Security Events has no event for the Ray ID.

- ☐ Real visitor IPs restored from the CF-Connecting-IP header on the server
- ☐ Security plugin set to read the real visitor IP, not Cloudflare's address
- ☐ Host firewall allowlists Cloudflare's published IP ranges
- ☐ .htaccess has no leftover deny rules or old IP restrictions
- ☐ ModSecurity checked with the host, using the request time and URL
- ☐ Files at 644 and folders at 755, unless the host says otherwise
- ☐ Server error log requested from the host for the time of the block

ASKING THE HOST

Send the time in UTC, the URL and the visitor IP, so the host can find the matching line in its logs.

Challenge page problems

For visitors

- Turn off the VPN or proxy
- Pause browser extensions, or try a private window
- Allow JavaScript and cookies for the site
- Update the browser, or try another one
- Switch networks, for example from Wi-Fi to mobile data

For site owners

- ☐ No challenge on API endpoints, webhooks or app traffic
- ☐ Challenge Passage set between 15 and 45 minutes (the default is 30)
- ☐ Turnstile widgets on your forms allowed by your Content Security Policy
- ☐ Cloudflare status page checked when many visitors report it at once

Visitor message and change log

MESSAGE TO SEND A BLOCKED VISITOR

Sorry about that. Our site's security blocked your request by mistake. Could you send a screenshot of the error page, including the Ray ID at the bottom and the time it happened? That lets us find the exact rule and fix it for you.

DATE	CHANGE MADE	REASON	CHECKED IN SECURITY EVENTS

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