SSH service failed to start on your CentOS server, don't worry — it's a very common issue. Here are the **exact steps to fix it**.

⬚ Step 1 — Check SSH Status

Run:

sudo systemctl status sshd -l

This will show the **exact error** (port issue, config error, missing folder, etc.)

⬚ Step 2 — Test If SSH Configuration Is Broken

Most of the time SSH fails because of a wrong change in /etc/ssh/sshd_config.

Run:

sudo sshd -t

If there is any syntax error, this command will show it.

⬚ Step 3 — Fix Common SSH Issues

1⬚ Fix: Incorrect Configuration File

Open file:

sudo nano /etc/ssh/sshd_config

Check these lines:

Port 22

PermitRootLogin yes

PasswordAuthentication yes

Make sure **no extra spaces**, **no duplicate entries**, **no wrong keywords**.

Save → CTRL+O

Exit → CTRL+X

Then restart:

sudo systemctl restart sshd

2⬚ Fix: Port 22 Already Used

Check if port 22 is free:

sudo netstat -tulpn | grep 22

If some other process is using it → kill that process or change SSH port.

3⬚ Fix: Missing ssh_host Keys

Sometimes SSH keys are corrupted or missing.

Regenerate:

sudo ssh-keygen -A

sudo systemctl restart sshd

4⬜ Fix: SELinux Blocking SSH

Run:

sudo setenforce 0
sudo systemctl restart sshd

If SSH starts → SELinux is blocking your config.

5⬜ Fix: Wrong Permissions

SSH needs correct permissions:

sudo chmod 600 /etc/ssh/ssh_host_*
sudo chmod 700 /var/run/sshd

Restart:

sudo systemctl restart sshd