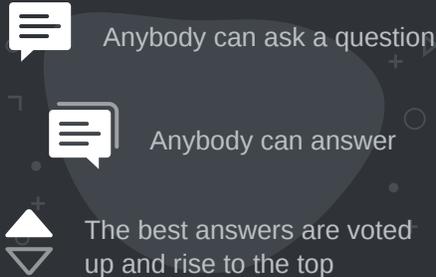


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# UNIX & LINUX

## How to start and use ssh-agent as systemd service?

Asked 3 years, 4 months ago Active 11 months ago Viewed 10k times

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1. How to start **ssh-agent** as **systemd** service? There are some suggestions in the net, but they are not complete.
  2. How to add automatically unencrypted keys if **ssh-agent** service was started successfully? Probably, adding keys from the list of `~/.ssh/.session-keys` would be good.
  3. How to set `SSH_AUTH_SOCK` in any login session afterwards? The most correct way is to push it from **ssh-agent** service to **systemd-logind** service (have no idea if it's ever possible). The plain naive way is just add it to `/etc/profile`.



13



systemd ssh-agent

edited Jan 24 '17 at 19:36

asked Jan 24 '17 at 18:42



midenok

313 ● 2 ● 9

What's missing from the suggestions on the net? – Mark Stosberg Jan 24 '17 at 21:43

2 Answers

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To create a systemd ssh-agent service, you need to create a file in `~/.config/systemd/user/ssh-agent.service` because ssh-agent is user isolated.



```
[Unit]
Description=SSH key agent

[Service]
Type=simple
Environment=SSH_AUTH_SOCK=%t/ssh-agent.socket
ExecStart=/usr/bin/ssh-agent -D -a $SSH_AUTH_SOCK

[Install]
WantedBy=default.target
```



Add `SSH_AUTH_SOCK DEFAULT="%{XDG_RUNTIME_DIR}/ssh-agent.socket"` to `~/.pam_environment`.

Finally enable and start this service.

```
systemctl --user enable ssh-agent
systemctl --user start ssh-agent
```

And, if you are using ssh version higher than 7.2. `echo 'AddKeysToAgent yes' >> ~/.ssh/config`

This will instruct the ssh client to always add the key to a running agent, so there's no need to ssh-add it beforehand.

Note that when you create the `~/.ssh/config` file you may need to run:

```
chmod 600 ~/.ssh/config Or chown $USER ~/.ssh/config
```

Otherwise, you might receive the `Bad owner or permissions on ~/.ssh/config` error.

edited Jun 27 '19 at 17:47



[bubblemelon](#)

5 ● 3

answered Sep 6 '17 at 7:02



[Abner Zhang](#)

386 ● 4 ● 4

`launchd` on OS X is set to start ssh-agent when a Unix socket is accessed (and the `SSH_AUTH_SOCK` variable is prepopulated with the path...) (like `inetd`, but a Unix socket). This seems possible with `systemd` as well. (Whether a system-wide service is an option for a per-user service might be interesting to see....) – [Gert van den Berg](#) Feb 26 '18 at 10:49

I get `Failed to execute operation: Process org.freedesktop.systemd1 exited with status 1` when I run `systemctl --user enable ssh-agent` on centos7 – [scarba05](#) Mar 18 '19 at 8:51

1 [@nealmcb](#) You must have `SSH_AUTH_SOCK` set elsewhere in your system, otherwise `ssh` would never see it. And unless I'm missing something, `Environment` and `ExecStartPre` aren't needed at all. – [Alec Mev](#) May 8 at 21:13 ✎

[@AlecMev](#) Hmm - you may well be right. I was probably trying different things, and notice that I have `SSH_AUTH_SOCK` set in my `.profile`. Sorry for the confusion. – [nealmcb](#) May 9 at 22:10



1



answered Mar 18 '19 at 8:57



scarba05

111 ● 3

