

CentOS allows SSH access for the user root. Following security best practices it is advisable to disable SSH access for the user root and access SSH using accounts other than root and use the sudo command when root privileges are required.

This document describes how to manually replace the root user with a new user. The following steps assume you have installed a CentOS AMI [Amazon Machine Image]

Data contained in <data> is user defined
Commands are in *italic*

This example creates ec2-user as both the group and the new user, this is not required you are free to use any naming convention.

1. Add a new Group and user

ssh to your newly launched EC2 CentOS Instance using the default root user

Create a new group

```
groupadd -g <500> <ec2-user>
```

Create a new user

```
useradd <ec2-user>
```

Add user to the new group

```
useradd -g ec2-user ec2-user
```

2. Create the .ssh dir

When your user has been created you will need to add the .ssh directory, to store the authentication_keys file.

```
mkdir /home/ec2-user/.ssh
```

3. Add the new group and user to sudoers file

```
sudo visudo
```

add the following lines to the sudoers file

PLEASE NOTE: Changes to sudoers MUST be carried out using visudo to avoid errors.

Usage notes: when editing a file using vim: i = insert mode, use this to enter text. Once you have entered the entire text; exit insert mode by hitting escape key. To save the file use :wq

add to user section

```
<ec2-user> ALL=(ALL) ALL
```

add to the group section

```
%ec2-user ALL=(ALL) ALL
```

then add, typically just below group

```
%ec2-user ALL=(ALL) NOPASSWD: ALL
```

save the file, and exit

4. Copy ssh public key from root

```
cp /root/.ssh/authorized_keys /home/<ec2-user>/.ssh/authorized_keys
```

5. Set permissions

The new user needs permission to authorized_keys

```
chown -R ec2-user:ec2-user /home/ec2-user/
```

Test that your new user works as expected, login and try a sudo command

6. Clean up

Remove /root/.ssh/authorized_keys

```
Sudo rm /root/.ssh/authorized_keys
```