Azure Definitions & Terminology

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Check out these common definitions and terminology you'll encounter in Azure.

Agent – A software installed on a device that allows administrators to manage it. Azure and Intune do not require agents to manage resources. Azure AD Connect can require an agent, depending on the sign-on method chosen.

Autoscale – A function of Azure allowing your tenant to automatically spin up additional virtual machines (horizontal scaling) during peak times, and to reduce the number of virtual machines during low points. Autoscaling does not modify the Series selected to provision virtual machines.

Azure – A cloud computing platform that provides access, management, and development applications and services globally..

Azure Account – See ***Tenant****.

Azure Active Directory (AAD) – Azure's built-in cloud-based identity and access management service. Can be used on its own or configured to function in a hybrid environment with traditional on-premises resources.

Azure Active Directory Domain Services (AAD DS) – Allows you to manage identities and resources through services such as domain join, group policy, LDAP and Kerberos or NTLM Authentication. You can do all of this without the need to deploy and manage DCs in the cloud.

Azure AD Connect – Synchronizes user accounts, group memberships and credential hashes from an on-premises Active Directory environment to Azure Active Directory.

Azure AD Join – An option in Azure that allows devices (desktops, laptops, etc.) to be joined to AAD.

Azure Blades – A 'blade' is the term used to refer to a page in Azure. (E.g., The Azure Active Directory Blade, a user blade, etc.)

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Azure Cloud Shell – A terminal interface available in the Azure web portal, which allows you to leverage the functions of PowerShell.

Azure Command-Line Interface (CLI) – Azure CLI is one of many options available to work in Azure. Administrators can submit individual commands (referred to as Interactive Mode) or combine commands into scripts (Scripted Mode).

Azure Directory – See ***Tenant*.**

Azure Files – A fully managed cloud-based file share. Azure files can be accessed via Server Message Block protocol (SMB, Network File System protocol (NFS) and Azure Files REST API.

Azure Portal– A web portal which allows administrators to visualize and work with the different elements available in their Azure instance.

Azure Resource Manager (ARM) – The current version of Azure is built on the Azure Resource Manager. ARM provides a management layer that allows you to create, update, and delete resources in Azure. ARM allows multiple methods of input including: The Azure Portal, Azure PowerShell, Azure CLI and REST API Clients.

Cloud Service Provider (CSP) – Cloud Service Providers are third-party entities that provide various scalable resources such as cloud-based platform, infrastructure, application and storage services.

Compute – A broad term referring to the processing power of a resource. For example, the compute selected for a virtual machine will determine the VM's processing power.

Frequency – A general term referring to how often units are measured. (E.g., Kilowatts per-hour, KB/MB/GB per-second, etc.)

Globally Unique Identifier (GUID) – A globally unique identifier (sometimes referred to as a UUID [Universally Unique Identifier]) is a globally unique ID that identifies a digital entity. Each Azure tenant has an associated GUID.

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Identity – An entity with a verifiable set of parameters. The identity can be a user with a username and password. Identities can also be applications or other servers that require authentication by using secret keys or certificates.

Identity Management – A term used to refer to both the act of governing and managing identities, and the systems / tools that enable that governance.

Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) – A type of cloud computing service that offers compute, storage and networking resources. With IaaS services, all physical hosts, networks and data centers are managed by Microsoft. Everything else is managed or co-managed by you.

Intune – Originally an MDM (Mobile Device Management) platform, Intune allows administrators to manage and administer devices remotely. Intune supports several different operating systems, which allows administrators to define compliance policies, push updates, wipe devices remotely, and more.

IO Size – Also known as Block Size, IO size is the size of the request an application uses to perform input and output operations on storage resources.

IOPS – An acronym referring to input and output operations per second. Used to measure storage system performance based on drive speed and workload type.

License – A service that can be accessed or used once it is purchased. Licenses are added to subscriptions.

Management Group – Logical containers that allow you to manage access, policy and compliance across multiple subscriptions. Subscriptions sit within management groups, which in turn can be used with Azure Policy and Azure Role Based Access Controls (RBAC).

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Microsoft 365 – A cloud-based suite of productivity software and cloud-based services. Microsoft 365 is also used to administer identities and can be connected to your Azure tenant.

Network – In Azure, network refers to both the various types of network you've configured in your tenant and the various components of those networks.

Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) – Like IaaS, PaaS offers compute, storage and networking services. It also includes middleware such as development tools, database management systems and more. With PaaS services, you share management responsibilities with Microsoft. The responsibilities shared depend on the service you select.

Pooled Desktops – A term refers to a Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) where assigned resources (pooled resources) are hosted in the Cloud and shared to the users. Each active virtual machine (VM) consumes some of the pooled resources.

PowerShell – PowerShell can connect directly to your Azure tenant, allowing you to run commands for the instance. Like Azure CLI, PowerShell can run individual commands (Interactive Mode), or commands can be combined into scripts (Scripted Mode).

Resource – A functional asset within Azure. E.g., Virtual Machines, SQL Servers, Disks, etc.

Resource Group – A collection of resources grouped logically. Resource groups live inside of subscriptions.

Role-Based Access Control (RBAC) – This is a method to manage access to resources based on the role assigned to a user / identity.

Security Principal – An identity becomes a security principal when it is paired with an authentication method (biometrics, username / password, etc.)

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Series – A series is a configuration of parameters for virtual machines. Each series features CPUs, Memory and storage components for deploying virtual machines.

Service – Services enable functions within Azure. Services can be slotted into Azure to enable different functions.

SKU – SKUs catalog the available services offered. SKUs are used to purchase licenses, which are in turn added to your subscriptions.

Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) – SaaS services are characterized by out-of-the-box, ready to deploy software and services. With SaaS you'll manage certain elements of the applications as they relate to your environment, but the services and functions underpinning that application are managed elsewhere (by Microsoft or the Developer).

Storage – A term used to refer to different types of storage (HDD, SSD, Lake, Blob, etc.)

Subscription – A logical container within your tenant that is used to store and separate licenses. Subscriptions hold all the details of all your resources (virtual machines, databases, etc.)

System-Assigned Managed Identity – A form of managed identity that is automatically associated with resources provisioned in Azure. These support 1-to-1 relationships between resources, and only exist as long as the resource exists.

Tenant – A globally unique reserved Azure service instance that is created when you sign up for a Microsoft cloud service such as Azure, Intune or Microsoft 365.

Throughput – The measurement of how many units of information a system can process at any given time. To calculate throughput, multiply IOPS by the IO Size.

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Unit – A general term referring to what is being billed. (E.g., Kilowatts, KB/MB/GB, etc.)

User – A term used to refer to an individual with an associated identity. A user can be an internal employee, or a guest invited to access internal resources, such as a consultant.

User-Assigned Managed Identity – A form of managed identity that you create. Unlike System-Assigned Managed Identities, User-Assigned Managed Identities are not directly tied to a resource. You can use these to configure, manage and govern identity at scale.