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Find more answers in Amazon S3 Technical FAQs

General

Q: What is Amazon S3?

Amazon S3 is storage for the Internet. It's a simple storage service that offers software developers a highly-scalable, reliable, and low-latency data storage infrastructure at very low costs.

Q: What can I do with Amazon S3?

Amazon S3 provides a simple web services interface that you can use to store and retrieve any amount of data, at any time, from anywhere on the web. Using this web service, developers can easily build applications that make use of Internet storage. Since Amazon S3 is highly scalable and you only pay for what you use, developers can start small and grow their application as they wish, with no compromise on performance or reliability. It is designed to be highly flexible: Store any type and amount of data that you want; read the same piece of data a million times or only for emergency disaster recovery; build a simple FTP application, or a sophisticated web application such as the Amazon.com retail web site. Amazon S3 frees developers to focus on innovation, not figuring out how to store their data.

Q: How can I get started using Amazon S3?

To sign up for Amazon S3, click the "Sign up for This Web Service" button on the Amazon S3 detail page. You must have an Amazon Web Services account to access this service; if you do not already have one, you will be prompted to create one when you begin the Amazon S3 sign-up process. After signing up, please refer to the Amazon S3 documentation and sample code in the Resource Center to begin using Amazon S3.

Amazon S3 was carefully engineered to meet the requirements for scalability, reliability, speed, low-cost, and simplicity that must be met for Amazon's internal developers. Amazon S3 passes these same benefits onto any external developer. More information about the Amazon S3 design requirements is available on the Amazon S3 detail page.

Q: What can developers do now that they could not before?

Until now, a sophisticated and scalable data storage infrastructure like Amazon's has been beyond the reach of small developers. Amazon S3 enables any developer to leverage Amazon's own benefits of massive scale with no up-front investment or performance compromises. Developers are now free to innovate knowing that no matter how successful their businesses become, it will be inexpensive and simple to ensure their data is quickly accessible, always available, and secure.

Q: What kind of data can I store?

You can store virtually any kind of data in any format. Please refer to the Amazon Web Services Licensing Agreement for details.

Q: How much data can I store?

The total volume of data and number of objects you can store are unlimited. Individual Amazon S3 objects can range in size from 1 byte to 5 terabytes. The largest object that can be uploaded in a single PUT is 5 gigabytes. For objects larger than 100 megabytes, customers should consider using the Multipart Upload capability.

Q: How can I use Amazon S3's lifecycle policy to lower my Amazon S3 storage costs?

With Amazon S3's lifecycle policies, you can configure your objects to be archived to Amazon Glacier or deleted after a specific period of time. You can use this policy-driven automation to quickly and easily reduce storage costs as well as save time. In each rule you can specify a prefix, a time period, a transition to Amazon Glacier, and/or an expiration. For example, you could create a rule that archives all objects with the common prefix "logs/" 30 days from creation, and expires these objects after 365 days from creation. You can also create a separate rule that only expires all objects with the prefix "backups/" 90 days from creation. Lifecycle policies apply to both existing and new S3 objects, ensuring that you can optimize storage and maximize cost savings for all current data and any new data placed in S3 without time-consuming manual data review and migration. Within a lifecycle rule, the prefix field identifies the objects subject to the rule. To apply the rule to an individual object, specify the key name. To apply the rule to a set of objects, specify their common prefix (e.g. "logs/"). You can specify a transition action to have your objects archived and an expiration action to have your objects removed. For time period, provide the date (e.g. January 31, 2013) or the number of days from creation date (e.g. 30 days) after which you want your objects to be archived or removed. You may create multiple rules for different prefixes. For more information, please refer to the Lifecycle Management topic in the Amazon S3 developer guide.

Q: How can I delete large numbers of objects?

You can use Multi-Object Delete to delete large numbers of objects from Amazon S3. This feature allows you to send multiple object keys in a single request to speed up your deletes. Amazon does not charge you for using Multi-Object Delete.

Q: How can I configure my objects to be deleted after a specific time period?

You can use the Object Expiration feature to remove objects from your buckets after a specified number of days. You can define the expiration rules for a set of objects in your bucket through the Lifecycle Configuration policy that you apply to the bucket. Each Object Expiration rule allows you to specify a prefix and an expiration period. The prefix field identifies the objects subject to the rule. To apply the rule to an individual object, specify the key name. To apply the rule to a set of objects, specify their common prefix (e.g. "logs/"). For expiration period, provide the number of days from creation date (i.e. age) after which you want your objects removed. You may create multiple rules for different prefixes. For example, you could create a rule that removes all objects with the prefix "logs/" 30 days from creation, and a separate rule that removes all objects with the prefix "backups/" 90 days from creation.

After an Object Expiration rule is added, the rule is applied to objects that already exist in the bucket as well as new objects added to the bucket. Once objects are past their expiration date, they are identified and queued for removal. You will not be billed for storage for objects on or after their expiration date, though objects may still be accessible while they are in queue before they are removed. As with standard delete requests, Amazon S3 doesn't charge you for removing objects using Object Expiration. For more information on using Object Expiration, please refer to the Object Expiration topic in the Amazon S3 Developer Guide.

Q: What does Amazon do with my data in Amazon S3?

Amazon will store your data and track its associated usage for billing purposes. Amazon will not otherwise access your data for any purpose outside of the Amazon S3 offering, except when required to do so by law. Please refer to the Amazon Web Services Licensing Agreement for details.

Q: Does Amazon store its own data in Amazon S3?

Yes. Developers within Amazon use Amazon S3 for a wide variety of projects. Many of these projects use Amazon S3 as their authoritative data store, and rely on it for business-critical operations.

Q: How is Amazon S3 data organized?

Amazon S3 is a simple key-based object store. When you store data, you assign a unique object key that can later be used to retrieve the data. Keys can be any string, and can be constructed to mimic hierarchical attributes.

Amazon S3 provides simple, standards-based REST and SOAP web services interfaces that are designed to work with any Internet-development toolkit. The operations are intentionally made simple to make it easy to add new distribution protocols and functional layers.

Q: How reliable is Amazon S3?

Amazon S3 gives any developer access to the same highly scalable, reliable, fast, inexpensive data storage infrastructure that Amazon uses to run its own global network of web sites. The service was designed for 99.99% availability, and carries a service level agreement providing service credits if a customer's availability falls below 99.9%.

Q: What data consistency model does Amazon S3 employ?

Amazon S3 buckets in the US West (Oregon), US West (Northern California), EU (Ireland), Asia Pacific (Singapore), Asia Pacific (Tokyo), Asia Pacific (Sydney) and South America (Sao Paulo) Regions provide read-after-write consistency for PUTS of new objects and eventual consistency for overwrite PUTS and DELETES. Amazon S3 buckets in the US Standard Region provide eventual consistency.

Q: What happens if traffic from my application suddenly spikes?

Amazon S3 was designed from the ground up to handle traffic for any Internet application. Pay-as-you-go pricing and unlimited capacity ensures that your incremental costs don't change and that your service is not interrupted. Amazon S3's massive scale enables us to spread load evenly, so that no individual application is affected by traffic spikes.

Q: What is the BitTorrent™ protocol, and how do I use it with Amazon S3?

BitTorrent is an open source Internet distribution protocol. Amazon S3's bandwidth rates are inexpensive, but BitTorrent allows developers to further save on bandwidth costs for a popular piece of data by letting users download from Amazon and other users simultaneously. Any publicly available data in Amazon S3 can be downloaded via the BitTorrent protocol, in addition to the default client/server delivery mechanism. Simply add the ?torrent parameter at the end of your GET request in the REST API.

Q: Does Amazon S3 offer a Service Level Agreement (SLA)?

Yes. The Amazon S3 SLA provides for a service credit if a customer's monthly uptime percentage is below our service commitment in any billing cycle. More information can be found here.

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Regions

Q: Where is my data stored?

Amazon S3 offers storage in the US Standard, US West (Oregon), US West (Northern California), EU (Ireland), Asia Pacific (Singapore), Asia Pacific (Tokyo), Asia Pacific (Sydney), South America (Sao Paulo), and AWS GovCloud (US) Regions. You specify a Region when you create your Amazon S3 bucket. Within that Region, your objects are redundantly stored on multiple devices across multiple facilities.

Q: How do I decide which Region to store my data in?

There are several factors to consider based on your specific application. You may want to store your data in a Region that…

> …is near to your customers, your data centers, or your other AWS resources in order to reduce data access latencies.

> …is remote from your other operations for geographic redundancy and disaster recovery purposes.

> …enables you to address specific legal and regulatory requirements.

> …allows you to reduce storage costs. You can choose a lower priced Region to save money. Please see the pricing section on the S3 detail page.

Q: I'm not in the US or Europe; can I use Amazon S3?

Anyone can use Amazon S3. You just have to decide which Region you want Amazon S3 to store your data in.

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Billing

Q: How much does Amazon S3 cost?

With Amazon S3, you pay only for what you use. There is no minimum fee. You can estimate your monthly bill using the AWS Simple Monthly Calculator.

We charge less where our costs are less. Some prices vary across Amazon S3 Regions and are based on the location of your bucket. There is no Data Transfer charge for data transferred within an Amazon S3 Region via a COPY request. Data transferred via a COPY request between Regions is charged at rates specified on the pricing section of the S3 detail page. There is no Data Transfer charge for data transferred between Amazon EC2 and Amazon S3 within the

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