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Jack Hyman

Author of *Microsoft Power BI
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Microsoft® Azure® For Dummies®, 2nd Edition

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Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Introduction](#)

[About This Book](#)

[Foolish Assumptions](#)

[Icons Used in This Book](#)

[Beyond the Book](#)

[Where to Go from Here](#)

[Part 1: Getting Started with Microsoft Azure](#)

[Chapter 1: Introducing Microsoft Azure](#)

[What Is Cloud Computing?](#)

[Understanding Cloud Computing Models](#)

[Introducing Microsoft Azure Services](#)

[Starting Your First Azure Subscription](#)

[Staying Current with Azure](#)

Chapter 2: Exploring Azure Resource Manager

[Introducing Azure Resource Manager](#)
[Getting Familiar with Azure Regions](#)
[Introducing the Azure Management Tools](#)
[Installing Azure CLI on the Desktop](#)

Part 2: Deploying Infrastructure Services to Microsoft Azure

Chapter 3: Managing Storage in Azure

[Understanding Azure Storage Data Types](#)
[Working with a Storage Account](#)
[Introducing Azure Disk Storage](#)

Chapter 4: Planning Your Virtual Network Topology

[Understanding Virtual Network Components](#)
[Creating a Virtual Network](#)
[Configuring Virtual Networks](#)
[Connecting Virtual Networks](#)
[Deploying Azure Firewall](#)
[Digging into Virtual Private Networks and Gateways](#)

Chapter 5: Deploying and Configuring Azure Virtual Machines

[Planning Your VM Deployment](#)
[Recognizing Azure VM Components](#)
[Architectural Considerations](#)
[Cost-Savings Opportunities](#)
[Deploying Azure VMs from the Azure Marketplace](#)
[Configuring Your VMs](#)
[Starting, Stopping, and Resizing VMs](#)
[Using Azure Virtual Desktop](#)
[Extending Your VM's Capabilities](#)

Chapter 6: Shipping Docker Containers in Azure

[Understanding Docker](#)
[Implementing Azure Container Instances](#)
[Storing Images in Azure Container Registry](#)
[Introducing Azure Kubernetes Service](#)
[Using Containers with Azure App Service](#)

Part 3: Deploying Platform Resources to Microsoft Azure

Chapter 7: Deploying and Configuring Azure App Service Apps

[Introducing Azure App Service](#)
[Deploying Your First Web App](#)
[Configuring a Web App](#)
[Monitoring a Web App](#)

Chapter 8: Running Serverless Apps in Azure

[Defining Serverless](#)
[Working with Azure Functions](#)
[Building Workflows with Azure Logic Apps](#)

Chapter 9: Managing Databases in Microsoft Azure

[Revisiting the IaaS versus PaaS Question](#)
[Comparing Relational and Nonrelational Databases in Azure](#)
[Implementing Azure SQL Database](#)
[Implementing Azure Cosmos DB](#)

Chapter 10: Using Data Analytics and Machine Learning in Azure

[Dipping into Data Analytics](#)
[IoT in a Nutshell](#)
[Accessing Azure Machine Learning and Cognitive Solutions](#)

Part 4: Providing High Availability, Scalability, and Security for Your Azure Resources

Chapter 11: Protecting the Azure Environment

[Core Security Tactics in Azure](#)

[Protecting Your Storage Account's Blob Data](#)

[Protecting Your Virtual Machines](#)

[Protecting Your App Services](#)

[Protecting Your Databases](#)

Chapter 12: Managing Identity and Access with Azure Active Directory

[Understanding Active Directory](#)

[Creating Users and Groups](#)

[Configuring Role-Based Access Control \(RBAC\)](#)

[Protecting Your Identity and Data with MFA](#)

Chapter 13: Implementing Azure Governance

[Implementing Taxonomic Tags](#)

[Implementing Azure Policy](#)

[Dipping into Azure Security, Privacy, and Trust](#)

[Touring Azure Advisor](#)

Part 5: Going Beyond the Basics in Microsoft Azure

Chapter 14: Discovering DevOps in Microsoft Azure

[Introducing the Azure DevOps Tools](#)

[Collaborating with GitHub](#)

[Automating with Azure DevTest Labs](#)

Chapter 15: Monitoring Your Azure Environment

[Azure Monitor](#)

[Azure Log Analytics](#)

[Monitoring and Tweaking Your Azure Spending](#)
[Azure Advisor](#)

Chapter 16: Extending Your On-Premises Environment to Azure

[Data Migration Options](#)
[Server Migration Options](#)
[Hybrid Cloud Options](#)
[Introducing Azure Arc](#)

Part 6: The Part of Tens

Chapter 17: Top Ten Azure Technology Opportunities to Watch

[Focus on Hybrid and Multi-Cloud](#)
[Increase Usage of Event-Driven Serverless Containers](#)
[Rapid AI and Edge Adoption](#)
[Emphasis on Zero Trust Cloud Security](#)
[Transformation through Hyper and Intelligence Automation](#)
[Bringing Data Analytics Mainstream](#)
[Maturing of IoT and Cognitive Services](#)
[Building Vertical Solutions in the Cloud to Accelerate Innovation](#)
[Pushing Low-Code and No-Code Development](#)
[Environmental Sustainability](#)

Chapter 18: Ten Ways to Optimize an Azure Environment

[Leverage the Stop-Start Button for Virtual Machines](#)
[Rightsize Capacity and Storage](#)
[Use Spot and B-Series VMs](#)
[Tidy Up Your Azure Environment](#)
[Avoid Disaster with Azure Backup](#)
[Monitor Your Spending with Azure Cost Tools](#)
[Maximize Azure Autoscaling and Hybrid Use Benefits](#)
[Use Elastic Database Pools](#)
[Promote Cloud-Native Features First](#)

[Purchase Azure Capacity Using Reservations](#)

[Index](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Connect with Dummies](#)

[End User License Agreement](#)

List of Tables

Chapter 3

[TABLE 3-1 Replication Protection](#)

[TABLE 3-2 Storage Tiers](#)

[TABLE 3-3 Comparison of Storage Types](#)

Chapter 4

[TABLE 4-1 Types of Network Connectivity](#)

[TABLE 4-2 Default Inbound Security Rules](#)

[TABLE 4-3 Default Outbound Security Rules](#)

Chapter 5

[TABLE 5-1 Windows Server VM Sizes in Azure](#)

Chapter 9

[TABLE 9-1 Relational and Nonrelational Databases](#)

[TABLE 9-2 SQL Database Products](#)

Chapter 10

[TABLE 10-1 Select Data Throughput Edition for IoT Hub](#)

[TABLE 10-2 IoT Hub Capabilities](#)

[TABLE 10-3 Key Cognitive Services Offered in Microsoft Azure](#)

Chapter 11

[TABLE 11-1 Azure Security Center Feature Comparison](#)

Chapter 12

[TABLE 12-1 Azure AD and AD Domain Services Comparison](#)

[TABLE 12-2 Azure AD Edition Comparison](#)

Chapter 13

[TABLE 13-1 Common Azure Taxonomic Tagging Patterns](#)

[TABLE 13-2 Documentation to Support the Governance Process](#)

Chapter 14

[TABLE 14-1 The DevOps Cycle](#)

Chapter 17

[TABLE 17-1 Data Analytic Offerings in Microsoft Azure](#)

List of Illustrations

Chapter 1

[FIGURE 1-1: In Azure, you can ensure that a virtual machine includes disaster r...](#)

[FIGURE 1-2: A hybrid cloud in which the on-premises corporate network extends t...](#)

[FIGURE 1-3: Microsoft Word Online, part of the Microsoft Office 365 product fam...](#)

[FIGURE 1-4: The Windows Azure portal, circa 2012.](#)

[FIGURE 1-5: The Azure Marketplace includes prebuilt Windows and Linux VM images...](#)

[FIGURE 1-6: Signing in to the Azure portal for the first time.](#)

[FIGURE 1-7: Viewing your Free Trial subscription in the Azure portal.](#)

[FIGURE 1-8: Configuring the Azure portal user experience.](#)

Chapter 2

[FIGURE 2-1: The Azure Resource Explorer allows you to view the ARM REST API dir...](#)

[FIGURE 2-2: You can locate and download the JSON source code behind every Azure...](#)

[FIGURE 2-3: Azure management scopes.](#)

[FIGURE 2-4: Providing high availability for replica VMs by placing them in avail...](#)

[FIGURE 2-5: The Azure portal is your administrative base of operations.](#)

[FIGURE 2-6: Enable the Azure development workload in Visual Studio 2022.](#)

[FIGURE 2-7: Azure Resource Explorer gives you access to the ARM APIs.](#)

[FIGURE 2-8: Azure Storage Explorer.](#)

[FIGURE 2-9: Azure Bicep file orchestration and modularity.](#)

Chapter 3

[FIGURE 3-1: Creating a general purpose storage account.](#)

[FIGURE 3-2: Configuring advanced storage account options.](#)

[FIGURE 3-3: Watching a Microsoft Azure deployment.](#)

[FIGURE 3-4: Azure Storage Explorer.](#)

[FIGURE 3-5: Try right-clicking everything in Azure Storage Explorer to see avai...](#)

[FIGURE 3-6: Changing the access tier of a blob in an Azure storage account.](#)

[FIGURE 3-7: Azure Cloud Shell and your cloud share.](#)

[FIGURE 3-8: Use Managed Disk storage for your VMs in Azure.](#)

Chapter 4

[FIGURE 4-1: This chapter uses the Azure virtual network infrastructure.](#)

[FIGURE 4-2: The Create virtual network configuration screen.](#)

[FIGURE 4-3: Azure generates nifty network diagrams for you.](#)

[FIGURE 4-4: NSG1 configuration.](#)

[FIGURE 4-5: In the Azure portal, most resources have a context menu from which ...](#)

[FIGURE 4-6: Configuring VNET Peering.](#)

[FIGURE 4-7: A hub-and-spoke virtual network topology.](#)

[FIGURE 4-8: Difference between a virtual network gateway and Azure ExpressRoute...](#)

[FIGURE 4-9: Azure ExpressRoute connectivity approaches.](#)

Chapter 5

[FIGURE 5-1: Azure Marketplace is a one-stop shop for several VM types.](#)

[FIGURE 5-2: Availability set on the left; availability zones on the right.](#)

[FIGURE 5-3: The Create a Virtual Machine blade.](#)

[FIGURE 5-4: The Overview blade with IP address.](#)

[FIGURE 5-5: Creating a resource group deployment project in Visual Studio 2022.](#)

[FIGURE 5-6: The ARM template in the code editor.](#)

[FIGURE 5-7: Validating our ARM template.](#)

[FIGURE 5-8: Remote Desktop Connection works the same way with Azure VMs as it d...](#)

[FIGURE 5-9: Azure VM TCP/IP settings in the Azure portal.](#)

[FIGURE 5-10: Use the toolbar to start, stop, or restart a VM in the Azure porta...](#)

[FIGURE 5-11: Azure Monitor is a method to monitor infrastructure and applicatio...](#)

Chapter 6

[FIGURE 6-1: The Docker container deployment process.](#)

[FIGURE 6-2: Docker Desktop is easily accessible from the Windows notification a...](#)

[FIGURE 6-3: Deploying a Docker container using the Azure Container Instance ser...](#)

[FIGURE 6-4: Retrieving admin credentials from our Azure Container Registry.](#)

[FIGURE 6-5: Redeploy options for a Container.](#)

[FIGURE 6-6: AKS high-level architecture.](#)

[FIGURE 6-7: The Kubernetes Web UI Dashboard.](#)

[FIGURE 6-8: A new Azure web app powered by a Docker container.](#)

Chapter 7

[FIGURE 7-1: App Service required and optional components.](#)

[FIGURE 7-2: An App Service plan provides raw compute power as well as potential...](#)

[FIGURE 7-3: Deployment integration options, including GitHub.](#)

[FIGURE 7-4: Ensuring that Visual Studio will use Git for source code version co...](#)

[FIGURE 7-5: Working with an App Service web app in Visual Studio.](#)

[FIGURE 7-6: Committing code changes using Git and Visual Studio.](#)

[FIGURE 7-7: Publishing a web app to Azure App Service.](#)

[FIGURE 7-8: Deployment slots allow you to move among development, staging, and ...](#)

[FIGURE 7-9: Each deployment slot is a separate instance of your web app.](#)

[FIGURE 7-10: The Azure portal gives you visibility into the ramifications of a ...](#)

[FIGURE 7-11: Adding a custom domain to your App Service.](#)

[FIGURE 7-12: Scaling out of App Service.](#)

[FIGURE 7-13: Application Insights telemetry data in the Azure portal.](#)

Chapter 8

[FIGURE 8-1: Logic Apps requires no API knowledge and uses a drag-and-drop work...](#)

[FIGURE 8-2: Azure Function for taking action on uploaded image files.](#)

[FIGURE 8-3: Creating an Azure Function App.](#)

[FIGURE 8-4: Creating a function step by step.](#)

[FIGURE 8-5: The workflow for an Azure Logic App.](#)

[FIGURE 8-6: Dynamic content placed in several fields to create an email using a...](#)

Chapter 9

[FIGURE 9-1: You can save time by deploying a preinstalled VM from the Azure Mar...](#)

[FIGURE 9-2: Deploying a new Azure SQL Database.](#)

[FIGURE 9-3: Configuring Compute+Storage for an Azure SQL Database.](#)

[FIGURE 9-4: Configuring a new Azure SQL Database Server.](#)

[FIGURE 9-5: Configuring georeplication for Azure SQL Database.](#)

[FIGURE 9-6: Georeplicated Azure SQL database with automatic failover configured...](#)

[FIGURE 9-7: Accessing the Connection in Azure Data Studio.](#)

[FIGURE 9-8: The Cosmos DB Quick Start blade.](#)

Chapter 10

[FIGURE 10-1: An empty Azure Databricks workspace.](#)

[FIGURE 10-2: Creating an Azure Databricks workspace.](#)

[FIGURE 10-3: Launching the Azure Databricks Workspace.](#)

[FIGURE 10-4: The Azure Databricks portal.](#)

[FIGURE 10-5: Select IoT Hub under the Internet of Things blade.](#)

[FIGURE 10-6: Creating a new Azure IoT Hub.](#)

[FIGURE 10-7: Selecting messaging units in Azure IoT Hub.](#)

[FIGURE 10-8: Creating an Azure IoT Central Application.](#)

[FIGURE 10-9: Selecting the device template.](#)

[FIGURE 10-10: Accessing the IoT Central Application URL.](#)

[FIGURE 10-11: Azure IoT Central device configuration example.](#)

[FIGURE 10-12: Creating an Azure Machine Learning workspace.](#)

[FIGURE 10-13: Launching Azure Machine Learning Studio.](#)

[FIGURE 10-14: Azure Machine Learning Studio.](#)

[FIGURE 10-15: Sampling of Cognitive Services accessible through the All Service...](#)

[FIGURE 10-16: The Azure Bot Framework process.](#)

[FIGURE 10-17: List of Azure Bot integration options.](#)

Chapter 11

[FIGURE 11-1: Microsoft Defender for Cloud free tier example.](#)

[FIGURE 11-2: The Secure Score for Azure Resources.](#)

[FIGURE 11-3: Microsoft Defender for Cloud recommendations.](#)

[FIGURE 11-4: Azure Defender for Cloud security alerts.](#)

[FIGURE 11-5: Inventory in Azure Defender for Cloud.](#)

[FIGURE 11-6: Searching for Azure Key Vault.](#)

[FIGURE 11-7: Creating a certificate in Azure Key Vault.](#)

[FIGURE 11-8: Setting up Microsoft Sentinel.](#)

[FIGURE 11-9: Creating a storage snapshot.](#)

[FIGURE 11-10: Notification of snapshot creation.](#)

[FIGURE 11-11: Managing blob snapshots in the Azure portal.](#)

[FIGURE 11-12: Configuring soft delete for Azure storage account blobs.](#)

[FIGURE 11-13: An example of a single backup instance and associated history, in...](#)

[FIGURE 11-14: Choosing a VM restore point.](#)

[FIGURE 11-15: Restoring an Azure App Service app.](#)

[FIGURE 11-16: Customizing Azure SQL Database automatic backup.](#)

[FIGURE 11-17: Create and track Azure support requests on the Help + Support bla...](#)

Chapter 12

[FIGURE 12-1: Relationship between Azure AD and Azure subscriptions.](#)

[FIGURE 12-2: Moving an Azure subscription to another Azure AD tenant.](#)

[FIGURE 12-3: Custom domain names in Azure Active Directory.](#)

[FIGURE 12-4: You purchase AD Premium licenses in the Microsoft 365 portal rathe...](#)

[FIGURE 12-5: The application access panel is a one-stop shop that lets Azure AD...](#)

[FIGURE 12-6: Azure management scopes use inheritance to simplify administration...](#)

[FIGURE 12-7: Viewing RBAC role assignments options to select from when adding a...](#)

[FIGURE 12-8: Access multifactor authentication.](#)

[FIGURE 12-9: Examples of Conditional Access and how to create a new conditional...](#)

Chapter 13

[FIGURE 13-1: It's best practice to tag resources during their deployment.](#)

[FIGURE 13-2: Tag reporting in the Azure portal.](#)

[FIGURE 13-3: Use tags to perform Azure cost analysis.](#)

[FIGURE 13-4: Browsing built-in Azure Policy definitions.](#)

[FIGURE 13-5: List of Policy assignments.](#)

[FIGURE 13-6: Microsoft Trust Center.](#)

[FIGURE 13-7: Azure Advisor provides detailed recommendations and sometimes fixe...](#)

Chapter 14

[FIGURE 14-1: An Azure DevOps board.](#)

[FIGURE 14-2: Azure Repos configuration interface.](#)

[FIGURE 14-3: Azure Test Plan use case interface.](#)

[FIGURE 14-4: Searching GitHub for Microsoft assets.](#)

[FIGURE 14-5: GitHub Actions within the GitHub Marketplace.](#)

[FIGURE 14-6: Creating a GitHub action with a Git repository.](#)

[FIGURE 14-7: Accessing Azure DevTest Labs.](#)

[FIGURE 14-8: Configuring a new DevTest Lab environment.](#)

[FIGURE 14-9: Adding resources to a DevTest Lab.](#)

[FIGURE 14-10: Azure DevTest Lab base and environment name.](#)

Chapter 15

[FIGURE 15-1: Azure Activity Log records administrative events initiated by you ...](#)

[FIGURE 15-2: Viewing the JSON source for an Azure Activity Log event.](#)

[FIGURE 15-3: Azure Monitor Diagnostics settings allow you to enable diagnostics...](#)

[FIGURE 15-4: Configuring Azure resource diagnostics.](#)

[FIGURE 15-5: Enabling Guest-Level Monitoring.](#)

[FIGURE 15-6: Reviewing the installed extensions on the virtual machine.](#)

[FIGURE 15-7: Metrics Explorer in Azure Monitor gives you at-a-glance diagnostic...](#)

[FIGURE 15-8: Configuring signal logic for an Azure Monitor alert rule.](#)

[FIGURE 15-9: Completing the alert rule definition.](#)

[FIGURE 15-10: Example of triggered alert in Azure portal.](#)

[FIGURE 15-11: Azure Log Analytics Log Search interface.](#)

[FIGURE 15-12: Azure Cost Analysis example.](#)

[FIGURE 15-13: Azure Budget Creation.](#)

[FIGURE 15-14: Azure Budget Alerts.](#)

[FIGURE 15-15: Azure Advisor.](#)

Chapter 16

[FIGURE 16-1: The Data Box product family.](#)

[FIGURE 16-2: Create Project for Azure Migrate.](#)

[FIGURE 16-3: Complete a Database Assessment for Compatibility or Feature Parity...](#)

[FIGURE 16-4: The DMA tool can perform database migration as well as assessment.](#)

[FIGURE 16-5: Adding tools to an Azure Migrate server migration project.](#)

[FIGURE 16-6: Azure server assessment reports include graphs and table data.](#)

[FIGURE 16-7: Representative Azure S2S VPN topology.](#)

[FIGURE 16-8: ExpressRoute representative topology.](#)

[FIGURE 16-9: Arc topology overview.](#)

[FIGURE 16-10: Choosing a server onboarding method for Arc.](#)

[FIGURE 16-11: Viewing an Arc-managed system's policy settings.](#)

[FIGURE 16-12: Verifying policy compliance and remediation status.](#)

[FIGURE 16-13: Applying taxonomic tags to an Arc resource.](#)

Introduction

Microsoft Azure is a public cloud service in which you rent compute services from Microsoft that run in Microsoft's data centers. You pay only for the resources you use over the course of your billing period.

Microsoft Azure For Dummies is intended to provide you with a gentle yet thorough introduction to Microsoft Azure. In this updated second edition, I cover the must-know features you are likely to encounter as you begin the Azure journey. I show you how things work and why it makes sense to use specific features. Undoubtedly, cloud computing can be complex at first, but it also has the potential to save you or your organization money, time, and effort.

About This Book

Many books on Microsoft Azure have been published, yet most cover laser-focused areas: analytics, security, machine learning, systems administration, app development, and so on. And certification texts generally cover just enough to pass a focused exam and are not a general reference on all core Azure capabilities. With the constant feature rollouts in the Azure platform, it can be hard to keep up, which is why in this edition of *Microsoft Azure For Dummies*, I cover the new features and those that have undergone drastic change since the first edition of this book was published in 2019.

I've worked with Azure for close to a decade. Here's a bit of a secret: Whether you are the most experienced Azure Cloud Engineer or just starting out, you'll experience some technical challenges every now and then. Even

Microsoft Most Valued Professionals (MVPs) find it labor-intensive to stay current with the constant changes introduced by the Azure product management team.

Thus, I wrote this book with the intention of helping you with the following:

- » **Becoming comfortable with Microsoft Azure:** I give you this comfort by sticking to what Microsoft calls the “80 percent scenarios,” or Azure deployments used by 80 percent of its customer base.
- » **Gaining skill with programmatic deployment:** Along the way, I show you how to use Azure PowerShell, Azure Command-Line Interface (CLI), and Azure Resource Manager (ARM) templates to get your Azure work done. These Azure access methods change less frequently than the Azure portal graphical user interface (GUI).
- » **Becoming comfortable with tools and staying current:** You can expect the Azure portal to change such that what you see on your screen may not match what’s in this book. Why is that? Because no two Azure users deploy the same resources or configure their user experience the same way. So don’t be alarmed! I updated both chapters in [Part 6](#) of the book (“The Part of Tens”) to help you plan for the future of Azure and how to optimize your environment.

In addition, I include many web addresses throughout this book. If Microsoft changes a page address and the link I provide no longer works, don’t fret! Simply run a Google search for the article title and you’ll find the updated page address nearly instantly.

Throughout this book, you’ll also find dozens of step-by-step procedures. I want you to keep the following points

in mind as you work through them:

- » You need an Azure subscription to follow the steps. If you haven't already done so, you can create a free Azure account (<https://azure.microsoft.com/free>) that gives you 30 days to spend \$200 USD on any Azure service. This quota should get you through this book's material as long as you delete your deployments when you finish using them.
- » I often provide sample values that work in my environment but may not be supported in yours based on geography and resources utilized. You should customize these procedures to suit your requirements.
- » You'll likely need a few additional tools along the way. All of these tools are available from the Microsoft website as *Azure utilities*.

Finally, most of the Azure administration and development tools discussed are available for Windows, macOS, and Linux. (I'm using a Windows 10 or 11 Enterprise workstation.)

Foolish Assumptions

I wrote this book with several types of readers in mind. See whether you can place yourself roughly or exactly in any of the following descriptions:

- » You're an experienced IT professional who may or may not already be using Azure for future initiatives at work.
- » You might be preparing for an Azure certification.
- » You're an IT newcomer who wants to know Azure to future-proof your career.

- » You're proficient in other public cloud platforms, such as Amazon Web Services or Google Cloud Platform, and you want to see how Azure compares.
- » You need a quick reference, not a hundred Azure books, to lead you in the right direction for business and technical success.

Regardless of your present attitude and orientation toward Azure, I hope that by studying this book and applying its methods you become more knowledgeable about Azure and thereby excel in your profession.

Icons Used in This Book

If you've read a *For Dummies* book before, then you're probably familiar with the icons. If not, or if you want a formal description of each, then read on!



TIP The Tip icon marks tips (duh!) and shortcuts that you can use to make working with Azure easier.



REMEMBER Remember icons mark especially important information. To siphon off the most important information in each chapter, skim the paragraphs that have these icons.



TECHNICAL STUFF The Technical Stuff icon marks information of a highly technical nature. You'll be digging into the weeds a bit more. You can skip if you like, though!



WARNING The Warning icon tells you to watch out! It marks important information that may save you headaches.



ON THE WEB When you see the On the Web icon, it points to valuable Azure-related websites. Most of these URLs direct you to more detailed information on the Microsoft website.

Beyond the Book

Beyond what's included between the covers of this book, I created a Cheat Sheet that includes tips, tricks, and shortcuts for the Azure services you use over the course of the book. You can find the Cheat Sheet and other information related to this book (such as errata) by visiting <https://www.dummies.com> and searching for "Azure For Dummies" in the search box.

Where to Go from Here

Although I'd read this book in order starting with [Chapter 1](#), you may not prefer to use that method. You can dip into any chapter with no formal dependency on those that come before it, so flip to the chapter that you want to begin with and let's get to work!

Part 1

Getting Started with Microsoft Azure

IN THIS PART ...

Figuring out exactly what “cloud computing” means and how Microsoft Azure fits into the cloud computing picture

Differentiating the different cloud computing deployment and service delivery models

Exploring the Azure Subscription Models

Understanding the basics of Azure Resource Manager and Azure Regions

Gaining familiarity with the Microsoft Azure script and UI-based administrative tools

Chapter 1

Introducing Microsoft Azure

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Introducing the cloud
- » Differentiating among the cloud computing models
- » Introducing the major Microsoft Azure services
- » Starting your Azure subscription
- » Learning how Azure deploys product updates

Welcome to cloud computing, and welcome to Microsoft Azure! I'm not sure what occurred in your professional or personal life to lead you to read this book, but I'm glad you're here with me. In this chapter, I cover ground-level terminology, beginning with precisely what buzzwords *the cloud* and *cloud computing* mean.

By the end of this chapter, you'll have your very own Azure subscription running at the free tier. Are you excited? I hope so!

What Is Cloud Computing?

Ask one hundred people to define cloud computing and I am confident the responses may make you laugh, cry, or think a bit. You see, many people at first think cloud technology is anything but shared compute capacity and resources using a common interface.

Most people use cloud services whether they're aware of doing so or not. Think of your smartphone. Where do you think your photos, media, files, and settings are being backed up? What is behind your ability to retrieve your content wherever you are in the world, provided you have an internet connection?

Do you use a web-hosting company to host your personal website? Where is the physical server that houses your website? How about accessing that digital video service or music heard over the Internet?

These scenarios are examples of cloud computing, in which you simply rent resources on another organization's infrastructure.

The resources you rent consist of the following hardware and software components:

- » **Compute:** *Compute* is raw computing power — the central processing unit (CPU) and random-access memory (RAM) that form the platform for applications and data.
- » **Storage:** *Persistent storage* means you have a place on Microsoft's servers to store your files and other data. When you save a file to a cloud-hosted storage account, the file should remain in place forever, or at least until you move or delete it.
- » **Network:** Azure provides a software-defined network infrastructure on which you can host your virtual machines and other Azure services. Because the cloud almost always involves an internet connection, *online* and *cloud* are essentially synonymous. I say almost always because a business can create a private cloud that shares most attributes of a public cloud but is local to its private network environment. Microsoft also

sells a private, portable version of Azure called Azure Stack.

» **Analytics:** You'll never get to touch the cloud provider's compute, storage, or network resources. The closest you'll get is viewing its telemetry data in your web browser or from a management app. Thus, Azure and other public cloud providers give you tools to see precisely how much of their services you consume each minute. Cloud analytics also gives you valuable troubleshooting and performance-tuning advice for your cloud infrastructure.

Businesses are interested in using the cloud because it allows them to offload a lot of what's scary, annoying, and/or expensive about maintaining an on-premises data center, such as the following:

- » **Power:** It's potentially very expensive to provide electricity to all the equipment necessary to host your applications and services. And what happens if your on-campus data center experiences a utilities outage? When you move your data into the cloud, your provider takes on the risk of these issues.
- » **Capital expenditure:** When you run an on-premises data center, you either rent your physical servers or purchase them outright. As such, you're responsible for all hardware upgrades and repairs. All that hardware can be expensive, too.
- » **Security and configuration overhead:** If you can't afford local systems administrators, or if your existing resources are stretched thin, it can be too easy to leave a vulnerability in place on an on-premises server that can be compromised by bad actors. By contrast, when you use a public cloud service like Azure, you rely upon Microsoft's human and machine learning-

based threat intelligence to help keep your applications, services, and data safe.

Do you see the trend here? Cloud computing is popular because it's convenient for the end user and cheaper for the enterprise business. Before I go any further, however, I want to codify what I mean by *cloud computing*.

NIST definition

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST, pronounced *nihst*), a research laboratory in the United States, developed the standard definition of cloud computing. According to NIST, the five essential characteristics of cloud computing are

- » **On-demand self-service:** Cloud customers can provision services at any time and are charged only for the resources they consume.
- » **Broad network access:** Cloud services are ordinarily offered globally, and the customer is encouraged to place services as geographically near its consumers as possible.
- » **Resource pooling:** Cloud services are *multitenant*, which means that different customers' environments are isolated. You should never, ever see another Azure customer's data, and vice versa.
- » **Rapid elasticity:** A cloud services customer can accommodate variable traffic patterns by configuring their services to scale accordingly. For instance, you can configure Azure to automatically duplicate your web servers to accommodate traffic spikes and then remove servers automatically when they are no longer needed.