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Tagging limitations in AWS and Microsoft Azure

Tagging is a way to identify each public cloud service for reporting, alerts, and cost allocation. AWS and Microsoft Azure have different restrictions on tag names.

Use this handy quick reference to see the limitations of both cloud vendors in one place.

Resource-based tag restrictions

AWS	Azure
Limit of 50 tags per resource in most cases	Limit of 15 tags per resource
Tag restrictions pertain to all resources	Tag restrictions are specific to the type of resource
For each resource, each tag key must be unique and have only one value	For each resource, each tag key must be unique and have only one value

Tip: Cimpl Cloud lets you map multiple tags to a single alias to correct mistakes or merge like values. Example: The tags (key and value) Environment=Production, environment=production, Env=Prod, and env=prod can all be mapped to CC_Environment=Production.

Syntax-based tag restrictions

AWS	Azure
Tag keys and values are case-sensitive	Only tag values are case-sensitive
128-character maximum key length	512-character maximum key length (except for storage accounts)
256-character maximum value length	256-character maximum value length
The prefix "aws:" is reserved for AWS use	Copyrighted Microsoft terms (such as "Windows," "Azure" and "Microsoft") cannot be used in Azure tagging
Allowed characters include letters, numbers, spaces, and the following special characters: . : + = @ _ / -	Tag names can't contain the characters: <, >, %, &, \, ?, /If your tag names or values include spaces, enclose them in double quotes (such as "Cost Center")

Cost allocation tag restrictions

AWS and Azure
Up to 500 tags can be visible on customer usage reports
Only some services allow tagging on creation
You can't backdate the application of a tag (That is, you can see data starting from the time you created the tag)
You can use characters outside of those listed in the general restrictions if you apply standard base-64 encoding to your tag (Billing and Cost Management does not encode or decode your tag for you)
In AWS, user-defined tags will have the prefix "user:" in cost allocation reports

Tagging tips

- Since tag keys (in AWS) and tag values (in AWS and Azure) are case sensitive, decide on a convention for capitalizing tags, and consistently implement it across all resource types.
- Align cost allocation tags with the business units
- Avoid multi-value tags, which are complicated and become hard to manage
- Almost everything can be tagged. Even if you're just starting out on your cloud journey, expenses will grow and it will matter soon enough! Putting in the effort at the beginning prevents hours of work down the road.
- Start small, focusing on the resources you know you'll need to report on.
- While it's better to over-tag than under-tag, you don't want clutter. If a resource is not a big expense and you don't think you're ever going to report on it, there's no need to tag it. For example, you don't want to have to manage hundreds of tags for resources that cost a fraction of a cent.
- Tags aren't permanent and you have the flexibility to make changes. Just keep in mind that you can't report on tags retroactively so you won't be able to track historical data for a tag.

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