Microsoft 365 Storage Guidance for Education

Information management & guidance

About this document:

Purpose: This document is intended to help IT leaders at educational institutions understand Microsoft storage policies and effectively manage their school's storage consumption for Microsoft 365 applications. It focuses on (but is not limited to) storage management for OneDrive, SharePoint, and Exchange, and it provides step-by-step guidance to help you:

- Understand Microsoft storage changes and how much storage your school is allocated
- Determine how much storage your school is consuming within OneDrive, SharePoint, and Exchange
- Set and toggle storage limits for OneDrive, SharePoint, and Exchange
- Identify and delete inactive users, files, and data from OneDrive, SharePoint, Exchange, and additional applications
- Understand initial options for expanding your storage capacity, if needed
- Implement best practices for storage management at your school

Audience: IT and system managers at K-12 and higher education institutions.

Terminology: All K-12 and higher education institutions are collectively referred to as "schools."

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Beginning at contract renewal (no sooner than August 1, 2024) all school tenants will receive **100TB of free pooled storage***

Microsoft 365 and Office 365 A3 and A5 customers will get an additional **50GB and 100GB of pooled storage** per paid user, respectively (See [additional SKUs](#))

New storage tools will provide **greater visibility** into your pooled storage and help you better manage storage across services

Effective Feb 1, 2024, Office 365 A1 free users will have a **maximum limit of 100GB OneDrive storage***

Additional **storage packs** will be available for purchase

*In addition to the new A1 OneDrive limit, A1 users will continue to have a maximum limit of 50GB for their primary Exchange mailbox and 50GB for their archive mailbox.

What is pooled storage?

In a pooled storage environment, individual storage resources are grouped together and managed as a single entity. Pooled storage is often used in environments where there's a need for flexible and scalable storage capacities, such as schools.

What are the benefits of effective information management?

Reduce security risk

Minimize security risk created by legacy storage and data sprawl

Globally, Education and Research is #1 most attacked industry.[1]

K-12 schools receive over 80% of workplace malware attacks.[2]

Minimize environmental impact

Reduce our collective carbon footprint

Over half of stored data does not serve a purpose. This "dark data" takes up space on servers and results in increased electricity consumption, generating 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 alone.[3]

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1 Review your storage usage and consumption

Microsoft 365 admin storage reports

Use the Microsoft 365 Admin Center Storage page to view and understand your tenant's pooled storage consumption and the total consumption for each service.

Other usage reports in the Microsoft 365 Admin Center can be helpful for targeted purposes such as reviewing object level consumption, but reports may measure total storage per service differently than the pooled storage page. Only the totals shown on the pooled storage page will be utilized for pooled storage enforcement.

How to:

1. Navigate to the M365 Admin Center
2. Expand the **Reports** tab on the left
3. Click on **Storage**

How is your total capacity calculated?

Your storage capacity or quota = 100TB base capacity for using Microsoft 365, plus...
+ 50GB per paid A3 license
+ 100GB per paid A5 license
+ Any storage packs you've added

Additional paid products can contribute to your capacity. Learn more here.

What does the reports dashboard include?

- Total storage consumption
- Total pooled storage limit
- Storage consumption by service (OneDrive, SharePoint, and Exchange)
- Capacity warnings and errors if approaching or over capacity

Largest OneDrive, SharePoint, and Exchange sites & mailboxes

These reports are also available in the admin center to help you view the storage consumption of objects within OneDrive, SharePoint and Exchange. You can leverage these reports during planning to identify sites that may be impacted by new quotas, as well as identify users approaching or over capacity. Reports are refreshed once in 48 hours. Refreshing reports on demand is available for SharePoint and OneDrive.

These reports provide a list of the largest 1000 OneDrive, SharePoint, and Exchange sites and mailboxes in your tenant. For each site or mailbox, they show the last activity date, storage consumption, and limit. OneDrive's report also displays the site owner; SharePoint's adds the site name and URL; and Exchange's lists the mailbox owner.

These reports can be exported as CSVs. Learn more | FAQ

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2 Manage and implement storage limits

Define data storage limits

Setting storage limits is a critical step in managing your school's storage consumption, as it caps the amount of data individual users can store. You can set storage limits for users in OneDrive, SharePoint, and Exchange to ensure they don't exceed their individual storage allotment and help your school stay under its total storage capacity.

Set and modify OneDrive limits*

Manage OneDrive storage consumption by setting limits on OneDrive. By default, each user receives a 1TB limit (except Office 365 A1 100GB limit as of February 2024.) IT admins can manage OneDrive limits granularly, based on group membership. Specific groups of students and/or faculty can be configured differently with ease, using the same groups utilized for other IT policies and configurations throughout Microsoft 365. Admins should assign SharePoint admin roles to modify SharePoint and OneDrive limits in the SharePoint admin center.

Beginning in October 2023, limits can be set through security groups. If a user belongs to two security groups, the highest limit will be applied, up to what the license permits. The limit defined in the UX will be applied per user, and the latest changes will always override previously applied limits. Limits set through security groups will be applied within 24 hours or when the users log into their account, whichever is sooner.
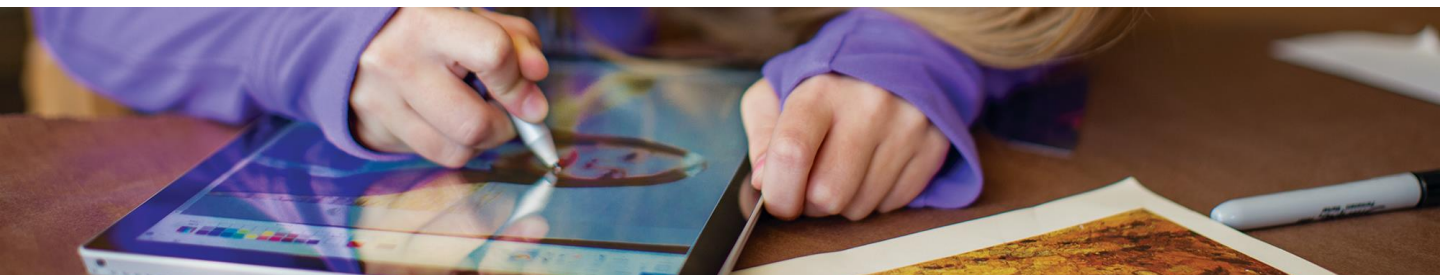
How to:

1. In the Microsoft 365 admin center, go to **Reports > Storage > Storage Limits**
2. Select **OneDrive > Storage limits for security groups** and assign your limits

Additional resources:

- [Set default storage limit for OneDrive users](#)
- [Change a user's OneDrive limit](#)
- [Set default OneDrive limit using PowerShell](#)

*Can be set through security groups beginning in October 2023

2 Manage and implement storage limits

Configure SharePoint limits

You can configure SharePoint limits to define how much storage can be consumed per site.

How to:

1. In the SharePoint admin center, go to **Settings** > **Site storage limits** > **Manual**
2. To set individual site limits:

   Go to **Active sites** > select a site > **Storage** > set a site limit > **Save**

Additional resources:

- Manage SharePoint site storage limits
- Manage site creation in SharePoint
- Recommended secure document policies

Configure Mailbox limits

Configure mailbox limits to manage and prevent unexpected growth. The default limit for user mailboxes is determined by the user's assigned service plan but can always be adjusted down as needed. Learn more

Mailbox limits can be set using PowerShell. Learn more

Which mailboxes count towards pooled storage?

User mailboxes, group mailboxes, and shared mailboxes all contribute. Archive mailboxes (and all others) and recoverable items do not count towards pooled storage.

Additional resources:

- Set mailbox limits
- Set mailbox limits via PowerShell
- Configure mailbox plans in Exchange Online
- Block large file attachments
- Enable archive mailboxes, archive policy, and deleted item retention policy
- Manage group mailboxes

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③ Reduce your storage

Use storage efficiently

Taking steps to reduce your storage consumption before your organization has reached its limit is crucial when managing your storage efficiently and effectively. We recommend limiting Teams recording retention, enabling archive mailboxes, implementing a deleted item retention policy, and deleting inactive users in bulk to reduce your overall storage profile.

Manage inactive users and groups

Delete inactive users in bulk

Use the Entra Admin Center to delete users in bulk with a simple comma-separated values (CSV) file. Learn more

How to:

1. Navigate to **Azure Active Directory** > **Users** > **All users** > **Bulk operations** > **Bulk delete**
2. Download the **CVS template** and add a row for each user you want to delete
3. Upload the **CSV file** > **click submit** and verify completion

Additional resources:

- Restore a deleted user
- Restore users in bulk
- Close an account in an unmanaged directory

Set group expiration policies

Microsoft 365 group expiration policies will automatically remove inactive groups from your system. When a group expires and is deleted, its associated storage in SharePoint and Exchange is also deleted. Learn more

Group expiry is turned off by default. To enable it, go to:

1. **Azure Active Directory** > **Groups** > **Expiration**

Additional resources:

- Delete users in bulk
- Group expiration policy

What happens to deleted users?

When you delete a user's account, Microsoft will delete that user's data within 30 days. Deleted users will still be included in the Activity chart for the periods they were active, but they'll no longer appear in the User Details table. Removing a user's license triggers a mailbox deletion process, but it does not trigger OneDrive deletion. OneDrive accounts from unlicensed users must be deleted by IT to reclaim storage.

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③ Manage the user and identity lifecycle to reduce storage

View users' last sign-in times

Clean up old and inactive accounts with a complete list of users' last sign-in times. Use the *signInActivity* information available on Microsoft Graph to review the last interactive or non-interactive sign-in time for each user. Since *signInActivity* describes a property of the user object, Azure AD stores *signInActivity* for your users for as long as the user object exists. Learn more

Additional resources:

- Discover inactive users in your tenant by User type & Sign-in Activity
- Microsoft Graph overview

Manage Teams recordings

Use the Microsoft Teams admin center to limit recording sizes or automatically delete old recordings. Learn more

How to:

1. You can manage meeting expiration setting in the Teams admin center under **Meetings** > **Meeting policies** > **Recording & transcription** > **Default expiration time**

Additional resources:

- Use OneDrive and SharePoint for meeting recordings
- Set limits for Teams meeting recordings

Enable archiving mailboxes

Archive mailboxes provide EDU tenants and users with extra mailbox storage space, which is not included in the pooled storage calculation. Learn more

How to:

1. In the new EAC, go to **Recipients** > **Mailboxes**
2. In the list, select a user mailbox to enable a mailbox archive
3. Select **Others** > **Mailbox archive** > **Manage Mailbox archive** > toggle on **Enabled**

Additional resources:

- Set up an archive and deletion policy
- Learn about auto-expanding archiving

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4 Expand your storage

Options to expand your storage

If you still need additional storage after following the guidance above, consider expanding your storage with the following options.

Option 1: Upgrade your users to premium licenses

	Office 365 A1	Microsoft 365 A3	Microsoft 365 A5
Storage allocation	100TB of free pooled storage per tenant across SharePoint, OneDrive, and Exchange	50GB is added to the tenant's central pooled storage for each paid Microsoft 365 or Office 365 A3 license	100GB is added to the tenant's central pooled storage for each paid Microsoft 365 or Office 365 A5 license
User limits *(Admins can set lower limits)*	100GB (OneDrive) 50GB (Exchange)	1TB (OneDrive) 100GB (Exchange)	1TB (OneDrive) 100GB (Exchange)

Option 2: Purchase additional storage packs

To help you get exactly the storage you need, you can purchase additional storage packs for $300 USD ERP (estimated retail price) per month providing an additional 10TB of storage to the pool.

Resources:

- [Add more storage to your Microsoft 365 license](#)

Option 3: Expand beyond Microsoft 365 storage

Azure Files and Azure Blob Storage can expand your storage profile and capacity beyond Microsoft 365. For detailed guidance, check out our [information lifecycle and storage management whitepaper](#).

Resources:

- [Introduction to Azure Files](#)
- [Planning for Azure Files](#)
- [Azure Files pricing](#)
- [Azure Blob Storage](#)
- [SharePoint server in Microsoft Azure](#)

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⑤ Implement best practices

This page summarizes the recommended best practices for information and storage management. Explore this document for detailed guidance on all these best practices.

Monitor storage in OneDrive, SharePoint, and Exchange

Track storage consumption across your tenant to identify top consumers and optimize your schools' storage resources.

Monitor and manage inactive users and groups

Monitor and remove inactive users and groups that are no longer needed to optimize your Microsoft 365 tenant's storage capacity.

Enable limits across OneDrive, SharePoint, and Exchange

Manage unexpected growth in Microsoft 365 storage by setting customizable limits on SharePoint Sites, Mailboxes, and OneDrive.

Enable Teams meeting recordings retention settings

Automatically delete old Teams meeting recordings by setting meeting recording retention times.

Enable archive mailboxes

Provide users archive mailboxes for older emails which must be retained for regulatory or legal purposes and enable Archive policy to automate the process of moving older mail to the archive.

Enable Exchange deletion policies

Automatically delete outdated or unnecessary data, such as expired contracts, old emails, or spam messages, by defining retention periods and deletion settings.

For a more holistic guide to managing your data, check out our information lifecycle and storage management whitepaper.

Connect with a Microsoft certified partner for additional support. Learn more

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