Attach an existing disk to another VM in Azure

Get in touch

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Skill Set

- 🧭 Azure Portal Navigation
- 🗑️ Resource Group Management
- 💽 VM Disk Management
- 🌐 RDP Connection Setup
- 📂 File System Verification
- 🛠️ Problem-Solving / Troubleshooting
- 🏗️ Understanding VM Storage Architecture

Certifications

Microsoft Azure Fundamentals (AZ-900)

Working towards the Microsoft Azure Administration (AZ-104)

Scenario

Your department needs to decommission a virtual machine (VM) and retain the data on that VM's disk. You decide that the best option is to attach the disk to a different VM that is currently running. Attach the data disk to the VM and ensure that the disk can be accessed by the operating system.

About the project

The objective of this project was to decommission a virtual machine while retaining its data disk and making that disk accessible from another VM. To achieve this, I deleted **winVM2** along with its associated resources, but preserved its OS/data disk. The retained disk was then attached to **winVM1** through the **Disks** settings in the Azure portal.

The process was successful. After attaching the disk, I connected to **winVM1** using RDP and confirmed the additional disk appeared in **File Explorer** under *This PC* as the **G:** drive, with all files from winVM2 intact. This verified that the disk was properly reattached and accessible, demonstrating a reliable method for reusing storage across Azure virtual machines.

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My Services

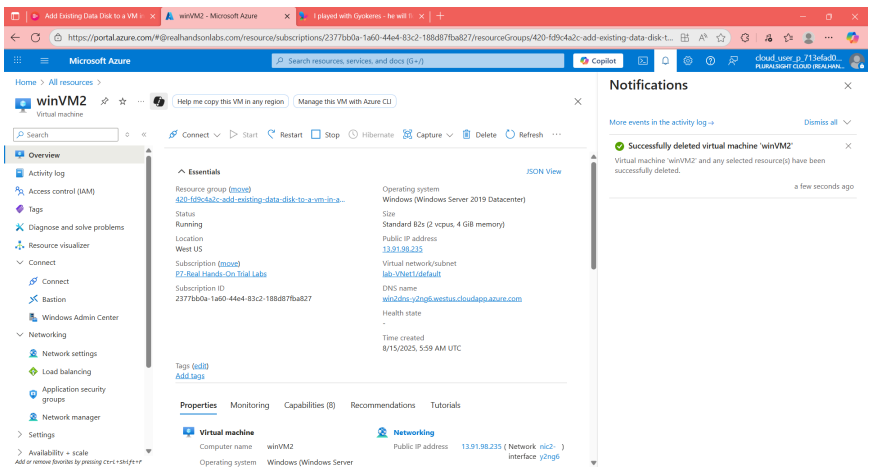
I began the project by decommissioning **winVM2** while ensuring its storage was preserved.

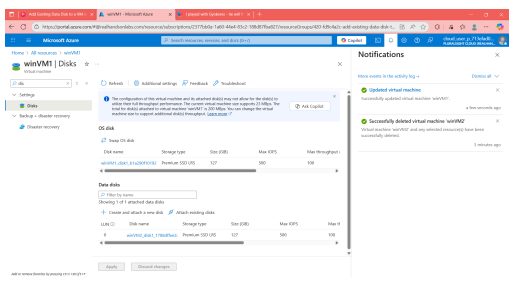
Using the Azure portal, I deleted the VM along with its associated resources, such as the network interface and public IP, but kept the OS/data disk intact.

The deletion process took several minutes to complete, after which I verified the success of the operation through the Azure **Notifications** panel.

I then refreshed the resource group to confirm that winVM2 had been fully removed from the list of resources.

At this stage, the VM was gone, but its disk remained available for attachment to another virtual machine.

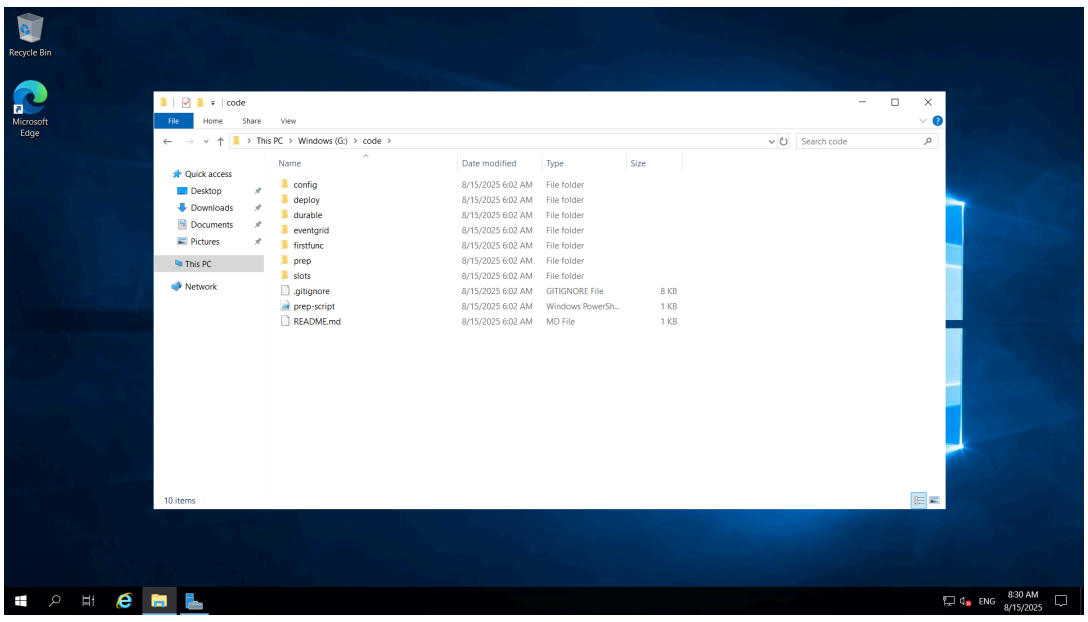




Next, I attached the existing **winVM2** data disk to **winVM1**. From the Azure portal, I navigated to the *Disks* section of winVM1, chose *Attach existing disks*, and selected the retained winVM2 disk from the dropdown menu.

After saving the configuration, the disk was successfully linked to winVM1 for further use.

To confirm the disk attachment, I connected to **winVM1** using Remote Desktop and logged in with the provided credentials. Once inside the VM, I opened **File Explorer** and navigated to *This PC*.



Under the available drives, the **Windows (G:) drive** was visible, containing the files from the former **winVM2** disk. This confirmed that the data disk was successfully attached and accessible from winVM1.

💡Key Takeaways

- Decommissioning a VM in Azure can be done while preserving its disks for reuse.
- Managed disks can be detached from one VM and reattached to another within the same resource group.
- The **Disks** blade in the Azure portal provides the option to attach existing disks to running VMs.
- Verification through **RDP** and **File Explorer** confirms whether the disk has been successfully mounted and is accessible.
- This process is effective for retaining critical data after VM decommissioning and reallocating storage resources without data loss.