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Cloud Security with AWS IAM



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The screenshot shows the AWS IAM 'Create policy' interface. The top navigation bar includes 'IAM', 'Policies', and 'Create policy'. Below this, a progress bar indicates 'Step 1: Specify permissions' is selected, with 'Step 2: Review and create' available. A note says 'Add permissions by selecting services, actions, resources, and conditions. Build permission statements using the JSON editor.' The main area is titled 'Policy editor' and contains a JSON code block:

```
1 « {  
2   "version": "2012-10-17",  
3   "Statement": [  
4     {  
5       "Effect": "Allow",  
6       "Action": "ec2:Describe*",  
7       "Resource": "*",  
8       "Condition": {}  
9     },  
10    {"Effect": "Allow",  
11      "Action": "ec2:Describe*",  
12      "Resource": "*"  
13    },  
14    {"Effect": "Allow",  
15      "Action": "ec2:Describe*",  
16      "Resource": "*"  
17    },  
18    {"Effect": "Deny",  
19      "Action": "ec2:Describe*",  
20      "Resource": "*"  
21    },  
22    {"Effect": "Deny",  
23      "Action": "ec2:Describe*",  
24      "Resource": "*"  
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1471 }  
1472 }  
1473 }  
1474 }  
1475 }  

```



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Introducing Today's Project!

Today, we're here to learn how to create and manage EC2 instances, set up IAM policies, create IAM users and groups, and customize our AWS account with an alias—all from scratch.

Tools and concepts

In this project, I learned how to launch and manage EC2 instances, create and apply IAM policies, set up IAM users and groups, use account aliases for easier login, and control user access through permissions.

Project reflection

1 hour 30 minutes.

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Tags

Tags are key-value pairs that help you organize and manage AWS resources. They're useful for tracking costs, identifying resources by purpose, owner, or environment, and simplifying resource management across large projects.

I assigned the following tags to my two EC2 instances:
First EC2 instance: Key = Env, Value = production
Second EC2 instance: Key = Env, Value = development

The screenshot shows the 'Launch an instance' wizard in the AWS Management Console. The current step is 'Name and tags'. A blue header bar at the top contains a message: 'It seems like you may be new to launching instances in EC2. Take a walkthrough to learn about EC2, how to launch instances and about best practices' with a 'Take a walkthrough' button, and a 'Do not show me this message again' link. Below the header, the 'Name and tags' section is titled 'Launch an instance' with an 'Info' link. It says 'Amazon EC2 allows you to create virtual machines, or instances, that run on the AWS Cloud. Quickly get started by following the simple steps below.' The 'Name and tags' section contains two sets of fields for defining tags:

Name and tags		
Key Info	Value Info	Resource types Info
<input type="text" value="Name"/> X	<input type="text" value="nextwork-dev-jon"/> X	<input type="button" value="Select resource types"/> ▼ Remove
Instances X		
Key Info	Value Info	Resource types Info
<input type="text" value="Env"/> X	<input type="text" value="development"/> X	<input type="button" value="Select resource types"/> ▼ Remove
Instances X		

At the bottom of the 'Name and tags' section, there is a blue 'Add new tag' button and a note: 'You can add up to 48 more tags.'



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IAM Policies

IAM Policies define permissions for AWS users, groups, or roles. They control what actions can be performed on which resources, helping enforce security and access control within an AWS environment.

The policy I set up

For this project, I've set up a policy using JSON.

This policy allows some actions (like starting, stopping, and describing EC2 instances) for instances tagged with "Env = development" while denying the ability to create or delete tags for all instances.

When creating a JSON policy, you have to define its Effect, Action and Resource.

In a JSON IAM policy: Effect specifies whether the policy allows or denies the action. Action defines what AWS service operations are allowed or denied Resource specifies the ARN of the AWS resource the action applies to.

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My JSON Policy

Skip 1 [IAM](#) > [Policies](#) > Create policy

Specify permissions Info

Step 2 Review and create

Specify permissions

Add permissions by selecting services, actions, resources, and conditions. Build permission statements using the JSON editor.

Policy editor

```
1 ┌ {  
2   "version": "2012-10-17",  
3   "statement": [  
4     {  
5       "effect": "allow",  
6       "action": "logs:CreateLogGroup",  
7       "resource": "",  
8       "condition": {  
9         "StringEquals": {  
10           "aws:RequestTag/region": "development"  
11         }  
12       }  
13     },  
14     {  
15       "effect": "allow",  
16       "action": "logs:DescribeLogStreams",  
17       "resource": "",  
18     },  
19     {  
20       "effect": "deny",  
21       "action": ["logs:DeleteLogGroup",  
22                   "logs:CreateLogGroup",  
23                   "logs:CreateLogStream",  
24                 ],  
25       "resource": "",  
26     }  
27   }  
28 }
```

[+ Add new statement](#)

Visual **JSON** Actions ▾

Edit statement

Select a statement

Select an existing statement in the policy or add a new statement.

[+ Add new statement](#)

5851 of 6144 characters remaining

[CloudWatch Feedback](#)

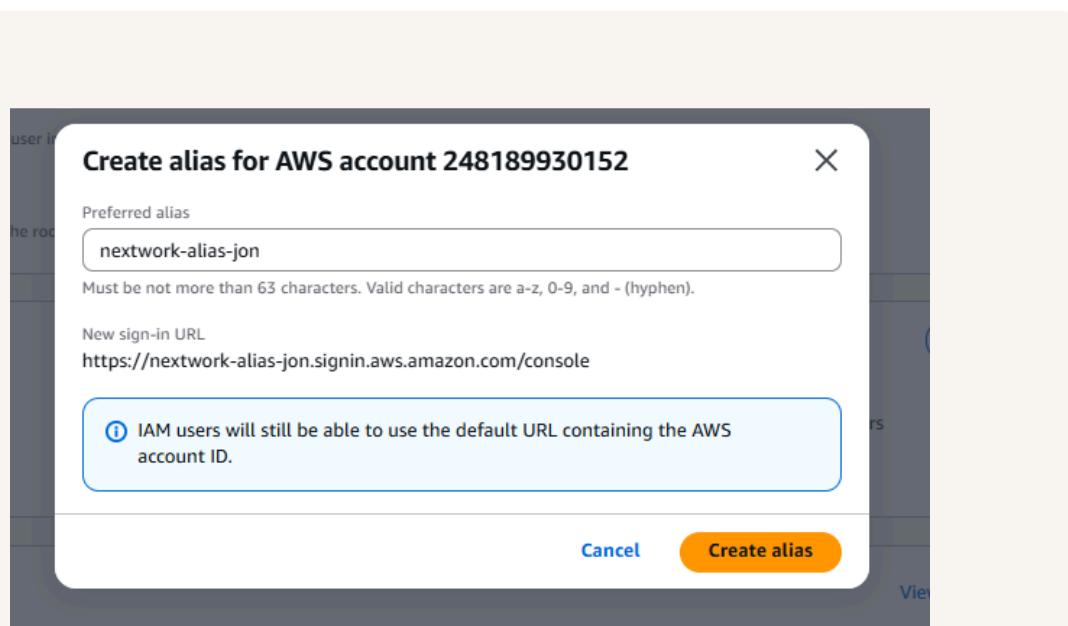
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Account Alias

An Account Alias is a custom name that replaces the default AWS account ID in the login URL, making it easier for users to remember and access the AWS Management Console.

Creating an account alias took me a minute. Now, my new AWS console sign-in URL is <https://sacnet-jon.signin.aws.amazon.com/console>





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IAM Users and User Groups

Users

IAM users are individual identities created within AWS to represent a person or application. Each user has unique credentials and can be assigned specific permissions to access AWS resources securely.

User Groups

IAM user groups are collections of IAM users that share the same permissions. By assigning policies to a group, you can manage permissions for multiple users at once, making access control simpler and more efficient.

Attaching a policy to a user group grants all users in that group the permissions defined in the policy. This ensures consistent access control and makes it easier to manage permissions for multiple users at once.



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Logging in as an IAM User

The two ways to share a new user's sign-in details are: Email – Send the login credentials directly to the user's email from the AWS Console setup screen. Download .csv – Download the user's credentials as a CSV file and share it securely.

I observed that the new IAM user's AWS dashboard had limited access—only the services and actions allowed by the attached IAM policy were visible. This confirmed that the user's permissions were correctly restricted to their role.

The screenshot shows a successful user creation message at the top: "User created successfully. You can view and download the user's password and email instructions for signing in to the AWS Management Console." Below this, a sidebar lists steps: Step 1 (Specify user details), Step 2 (Set permissions), Step 3 (Review and create), Step 4 (Retrieve password), with Step 4 being the current active step. The main content area is titled "Retrieve password" and contains "Console sign-in details" with a URL (https://signin.aws.amazon.com/console) and a "Show" link for the password. It also includes a "Email sign-in instructions" button. At the bottom are "Cancel", "Download .csv file", and "Return to users list" buttons.

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Testing IAM Policies

I tested my JSON IAM policy by attempting to stop both EC2 instances. The action was successful on the development instance but denied on the production instance, confirming that the policy correctly limited access as intended.

Stopping the production instance

When I tried to stop the production instance using the new IAM user, access was denied. This happened because the IAM policy only allowed actions on the development instance, not the production one.



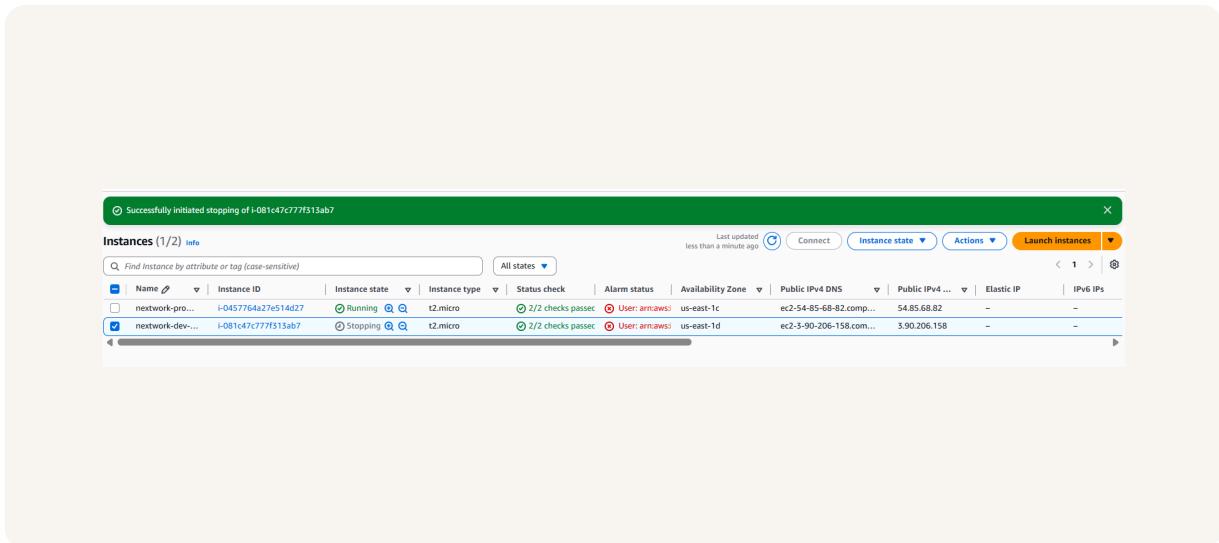
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Testing IAM Policies

Stopping the development instance

When I tried to stop the development instance, the action was successful. This confirmed that the IAM policy correctly granted the necessary permissions for that instance.





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