Tutorial: Launch and configure a Windows Server 2016 instance in Amazon Lightsail

Last updated: November 1, 2018

Amazon Lightsail is the easiest way to get started with Amazon Web Services (AWS) if you just need virtual private servers. Lightsail includes everything you need to launch your project quickly – a virtual machine, SSD-based storage, data transfer, DNS management, and a static IP – for a low, predictable price.

This tutorial shows you how to launch and configure a Windows Server 2016 instance on Lightsail. It includes steps to connect to your instance via RDP, create a static IP and attach it to your instance, and create a DNS zone and map your domain. When you're done with this tutorial, you have the fundamentals to get your instance up and running on Lightsail.

Contents

Step 1: Sign up for AWS

This tutorial requires an AWS account. Sign up for AWS, or sign in to AWS if you already have an account.

Step 2: Create a Windows Server 2016 instance in Lightsail

Get your Windows Server 2016 instance up and running in Lightsail. For more information, see Get started with Windows Server-based instances in Lightsail.

1. Sign in to the Lightsail console.

2. On the **Instances** tab of the Lightsail home page, choose **Create instance**.
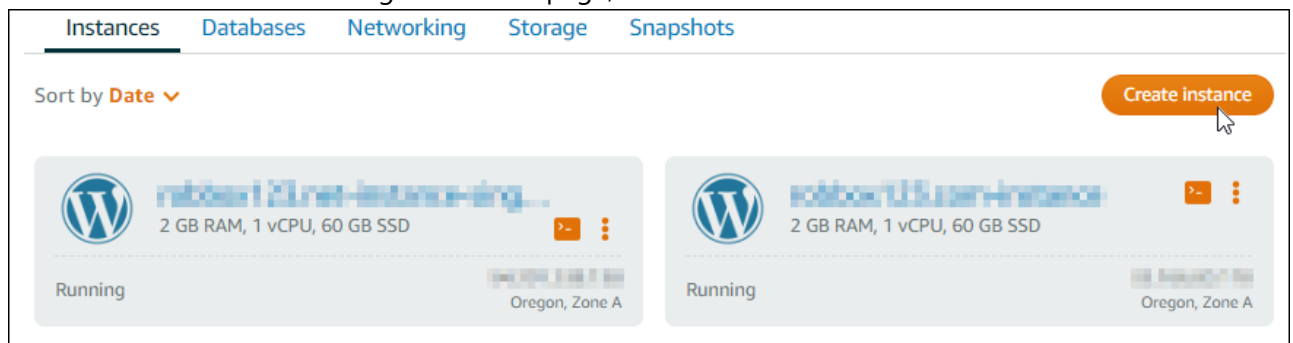
3. Choose the AWS Region and Availability Zone for your instance.

4. Choose your instance image.

   1. Choose **Microsoft Windows** as the platform.

   2. Choose **OS Only**, then choose **Windows Server 2016** as the blueprint.
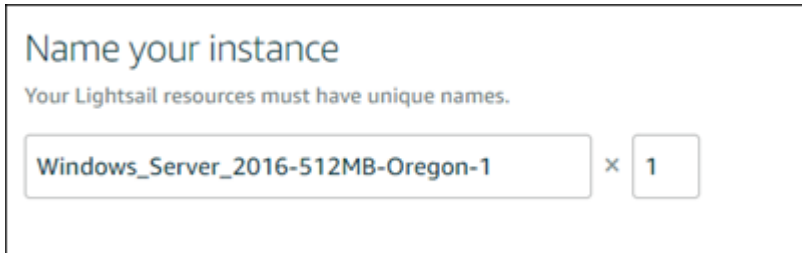

5. Choose an instance plan.

   A plan includes a low, predictable cost, machine configuration (RAM, SSD, vCPU), and data transfer allowance. You can try the $8 USD Lightsail plan without charge for one month (up to 750 hours). AWS credits one free month to your account.

6. Enter a name for your instance.

Resource names:

- Must be unique within each AWS Region in your Lightsail account.
- Must contain 2 to 255 characters.
- Must start and end with an alphanumeric character or number.
- Can include alphanumeric characters, numbers, periods, dashes, and underscores.

Name your instance
Your Lightsail resources must have unique names.

| Windows_Server_2016-512MB-Oregon-1 | × | 1 |

7. Choose one of the following options to add tags to your instance:

- **Add key-only tags** or **Edit key-only tags** (if tags have already been added). Enter your new tag into the tag key text box, and press **Enter**. Choose **Save** when you're done entering your tags to add them, or choose **Cancel** to not add them.

Key-only tags

🏷 Version 1   ×   Customer 1|

Add a tag key and press **Enter**.   ⊘ Save ⊘ Cancel

- **Create a key-value tag**, then enter a key into the **Key** text box, and a value into the **Value** text box. Choose **Save** when you're done entering your tags, or choose **Cancel** to not add them.

  Key-value tags can only be added one at a time before saving. To add more than one key-value tag, repeat the previous steps.

Key-value tags

| Key | | Value |
| Project | → | Earth |

Note
For more information about key-only and key-value tags, see Tags in Amazon Lightsail.

8. Choose **Create instance**.
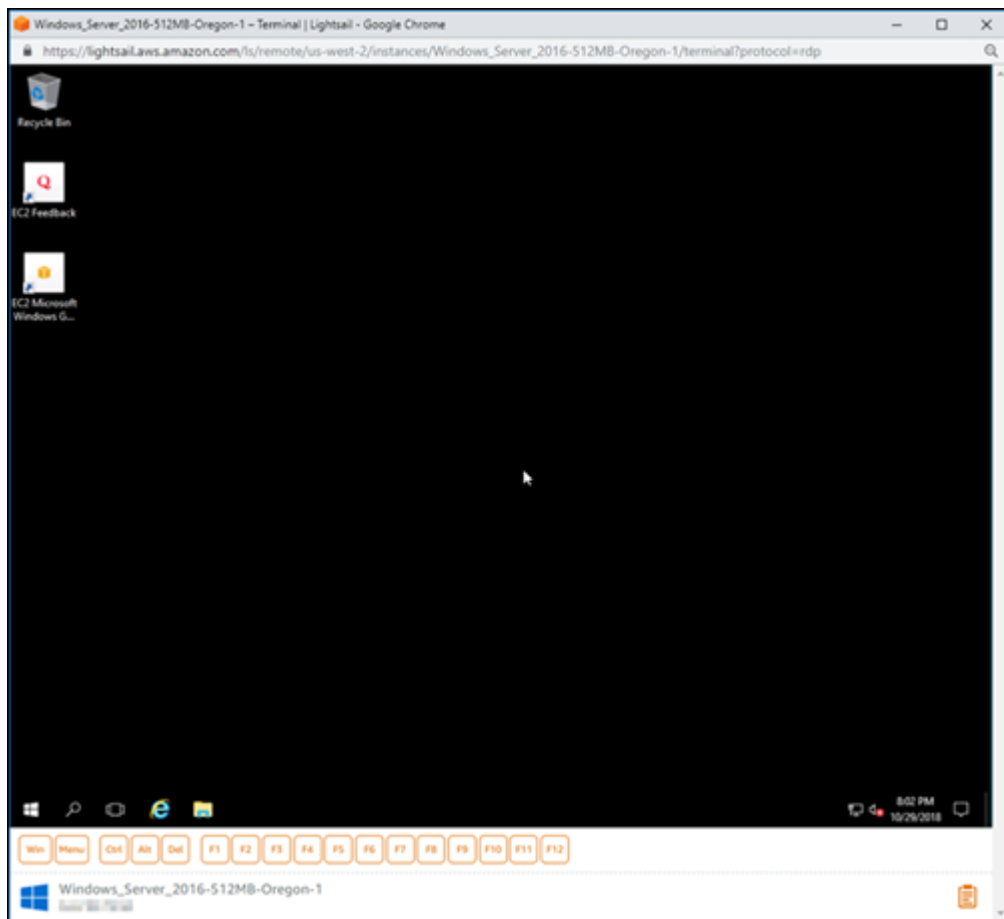
Step 3: Connect to your Windows Server 2016 instance via RDP

Connect to your Windows Server 2016 instance using the browser-based RDP client in the Lightsail console. For more information, see Connecting to your Windows instance in Amazon Lightsail.

1. On the **Instances** tab of the Lightsail home page, choose the RDP quick-connect icon for your Windows Server 2016 instance.
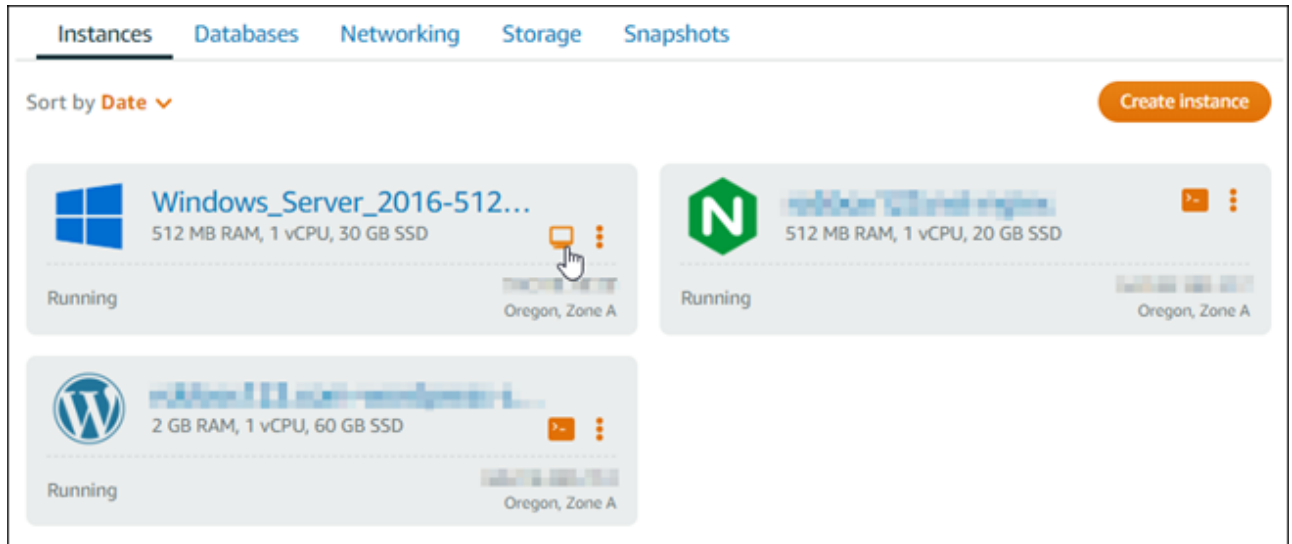
2. After the browser-based RDP client window opens, you can begin configuring your Windows Server 2016 instance:

Step 4: Create a Lightsail static IP address and attach it to your Windows Server 2016 instance

The default public IP for your Windows Server 2016 instance changes if you stop and start the instance. A static IP address, attached to an instance, stays the same even if you stop and start your instance.

Create a static IP address and attach it to your Windows Server 2016 instance. For more information, see Create a static IP and attach it to an instance in Amazon Lightsail in the Lightsail documentation.

1. On the **Instances** tab of the Lightsail home page, choose your running Windows Server 2016 instance.
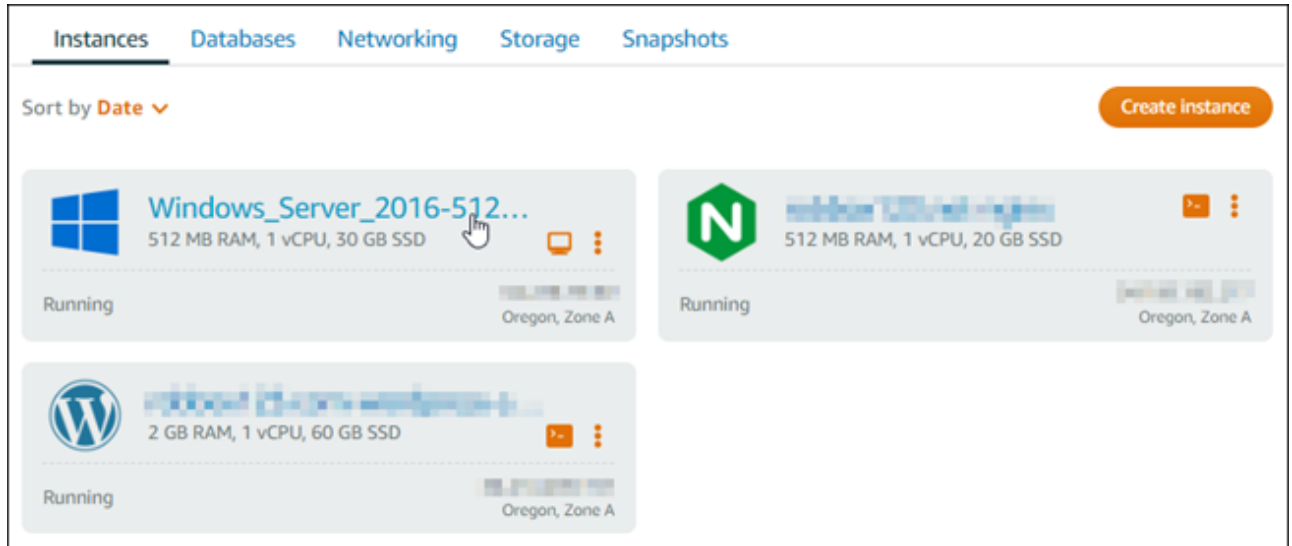
2. Choose the **Networking** tab, then choose **Create static IP**.
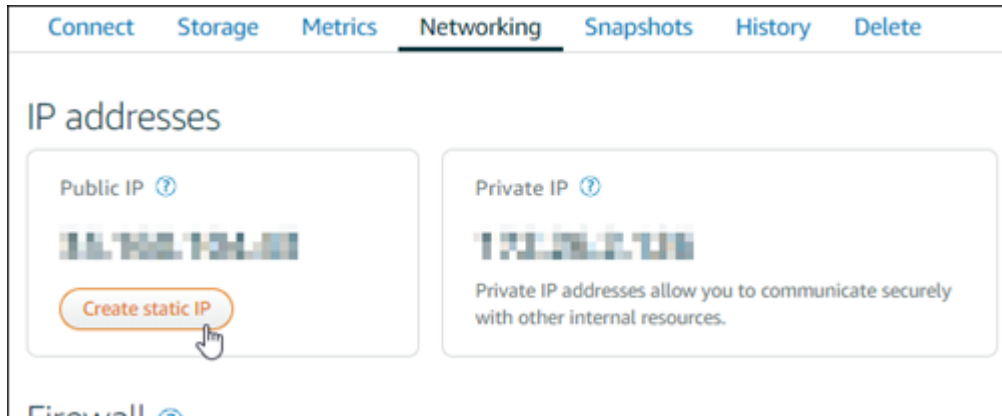
3. The static IP location, and attached instance are pre-selected based on the instance that you chose earlier in this tutorial.
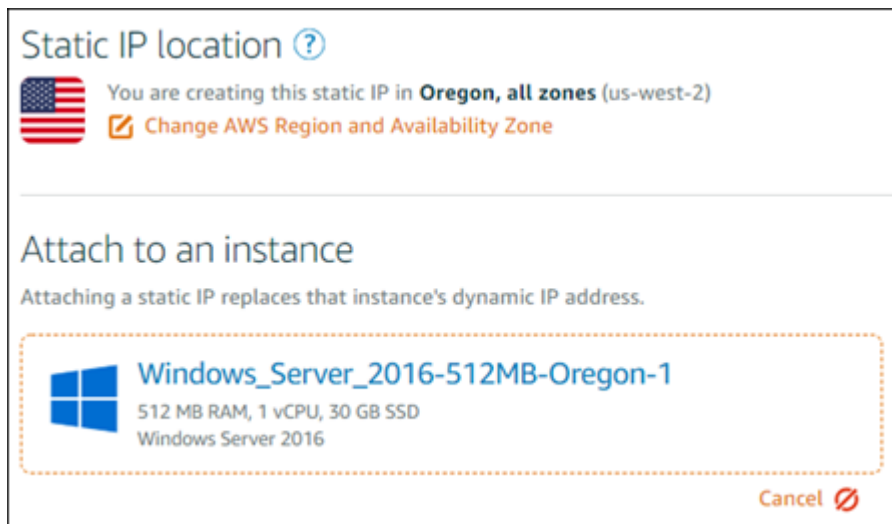
4. Entger a name for your static IP.

   Resource names:

   - Must be unique within each AWS Region in your Lightsail account.
   - Must contain 2 to 255 characters.
   - Must start and end with an alphanumeric character or number.

○ Can include alphanumeric characters, numbers, periods, dashes, and underscores.

5. Choose **Create**.

Name your static IP
Your Lightsail resources must have unique names.

StaticIp-Oregon-1

Static IP addresses are free only while attached to an instance.
You can manage five at no additional cost.

Create

Step 5: Create a Lightsail DNS zone and map a domain to your Windows Server 2016 instance

Transfer management of your domain's DNS records to Lightsail. This allows you to more easily map a domain to your Windows Server 2016 instance, and manage all of your website's resources using the Lightsail console. For more information, see Creating a DNS zone to manage your domain's DNS records in Amazon Lightsail in the Lightsail documentation.

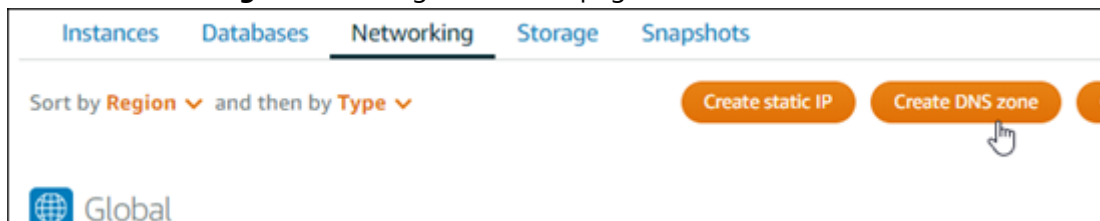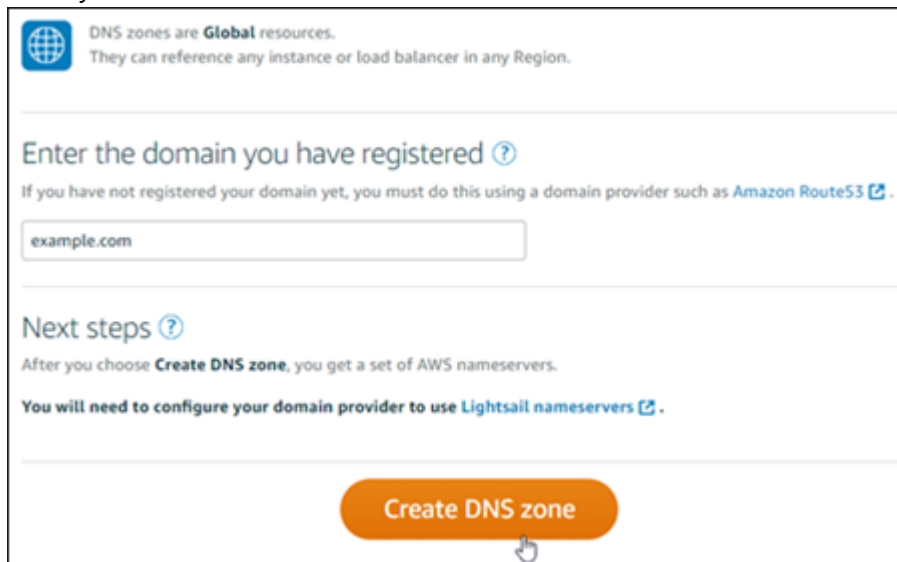1. On the **Networking** tab of the Lightsail home page, choose **Create DNS zone**.

Instances   Databases   Networking   Storage   Snapshots

Sort by Region ⌄ and then by Type ⌄   Create static IP   Create DNS zone

🌐 Global

2. Enter your domain, then choose **Create DNS zone**.

🌐 DNS zones are **Global** resources.
They can reference any instance or load balancer in any Region.

Enter the domain you have registered ⑦
If you have not registered your domain yet, you must do this using a domain provider such as Amazon Route53 ☑ .

example.com

Next steps ⑦
After you choose **Create DNS zone**, you get a set of AWS nameservers.

You will need to configure your domain provider to use Lightsail nameservers ☑ .

Create DNS zone

3. Make note of the name server addresses listed on the page.

You add these name server addresses to your domain name's registrar to transfer management of your domain's DNS records to Lightsail.
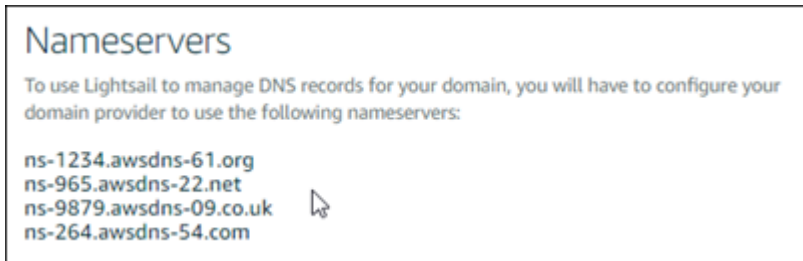
4. After management of your domain's DNS records are transferred to Lightsail, add an A record to point the apex of your domain to your Windows Server 2016 instance, as follows:

   1. In the DNS zone for your domain, choose **Add record**.

   2. In the **Subdomain** box, enter an @ symbol to map the apex of your domain (such as example.com) to your instance. The @ symbol explicitly symbolizes that you're adding an apex record. It is not added as a subdomain.

   3. In the **Maps to** box, choose the static IP that you attached to the Windows Server 2016 instance in the previous step of this tutorial.

   4. Choose the save icon.
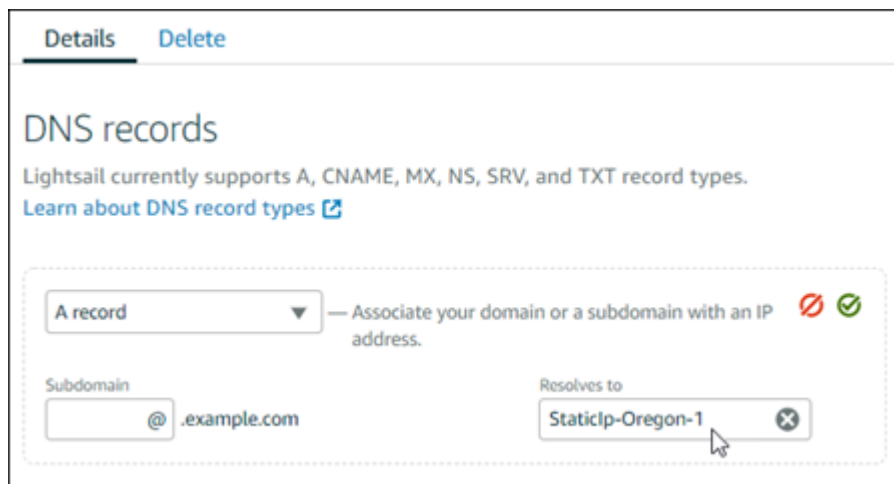
   Allow time for the change to propagate through the internet's DNS before your domain begins routing traffic to your Windows Server 2016 instance.

Next steps

Here are a few additional steps you can perform after launching a Windows Server 2016 instance in Amazon Lightsail:

- Creating a snapshot of your Windows Server instance in Amazon Lightsail
- Best practices for securing Windows Server-based Lightsail instances
- Creating and attaching a block storage disk to your Windows Server instance in Amazon Lightsail
- Extending the storage space of your Windows Server instance in Amazon Lightsail