Best practices for securing Windows Server-based Lightsail instances

Last updated: October 16, 2017

In this article, we provide tips and tricks to help you avoid security risks when using your Lightsail instance running Windows Server.

About Lightsail passwords

When you create a Windows Server-based instance, Lightsail randomly generates a long password that is hard to guess. You use this password uniquely with your new instance. You can use the default password to connect quickly to your instance using remote desktop (RDP). You are always logged in as the **Administrator** on your Lightsail instance.

Managing your password

You can change the password on your Windows Server-based instance to something you can remember. This might be useful if you want to use a remote desktop client to access your Lightsail instance. Lightsail never stores a password you generate.

Note
You can use either the Lightsail-generated password or your own custom password with the browser-based RDP client in Lightsail. If you use a custom password, you will be prompted for your password every time you log in. It's easier to use the Lightsail-generated default password with the browser-based RDP client if you want quick access to your instance.

Use the Windows Server password manager to change your password securely. Press `Ctrl` + `Alt` + `Del`, and then choose **Change a password**. Be sure to keep a record of your password, because Lightsail doesn't store your password. If you need to retrieve your password, see the following: Using the non-default key with Windows-based Lightsail instances.

If you change your password from the unique, default password, be sure to use a strong password. You should avoid passwords that are based on names or dictionary words, or repeating sequences of characters.

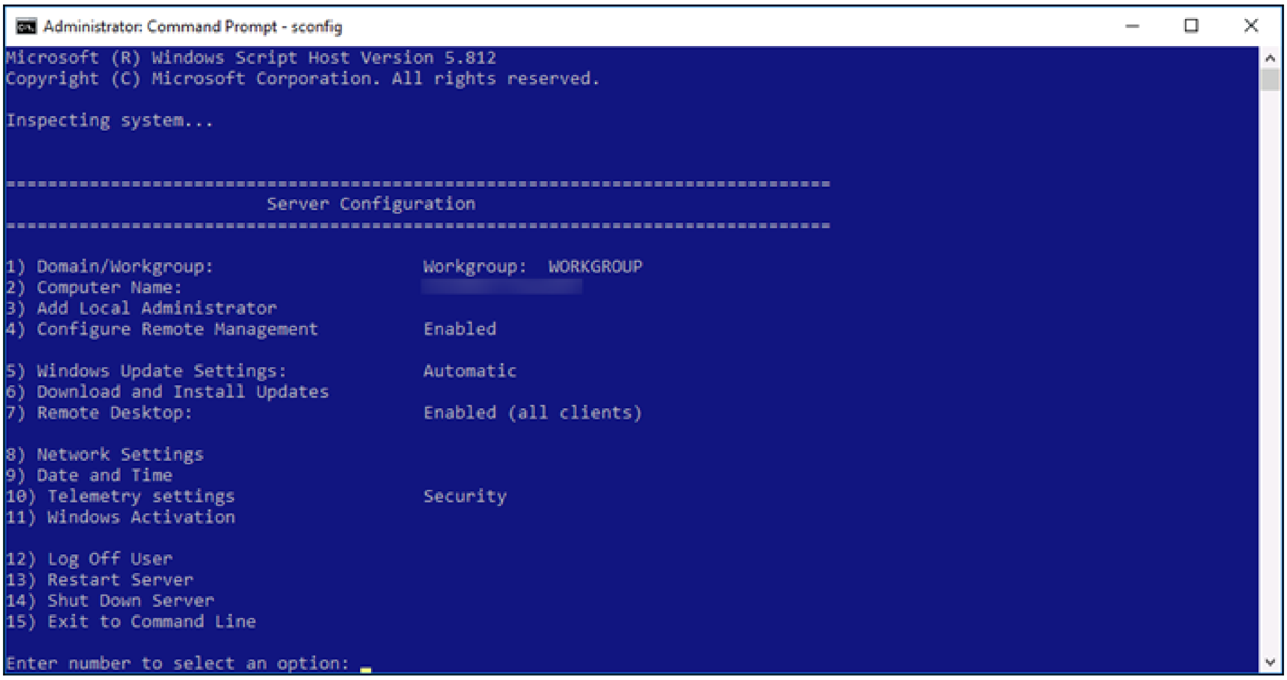
Security patching

We recommend keeping your Windows Server-based Lightsail instances updated with the latest security patches. Be sure your server is configured to download and install updates. The following procedure tells you how to do this directly on your Lightsail instance running Windows Server.

1. On your Windows Server-based instance, open a command prompt.

2. Type `sconfig`, and then press `Enter`.

Windows Update Settings (number 5) are at `Automatic` by default.



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Microsoft (R) Windows Script Host Version 5.812
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Inspecting system...


===============================================================================
                         Server Configuration
===============================================================================

1) Domain/Workgroup:                    Workgroup:  WORKGROUP
2) Computer Name:                       [redacted]
3) Add Local Administrator
4) Configure Remote Management          Enabled

5) Windows Update Settings:             Automatic
6) Download and Install Updates
7) Remote Desktop:                      Enabled (all clients)

8) Network Settings
9) Date and Time
10) Telemetry settings                  Security
11) Windows Activation

12) Log Off User
13) Restart Server
14) Shut Down Server
15) Exit to Command Line

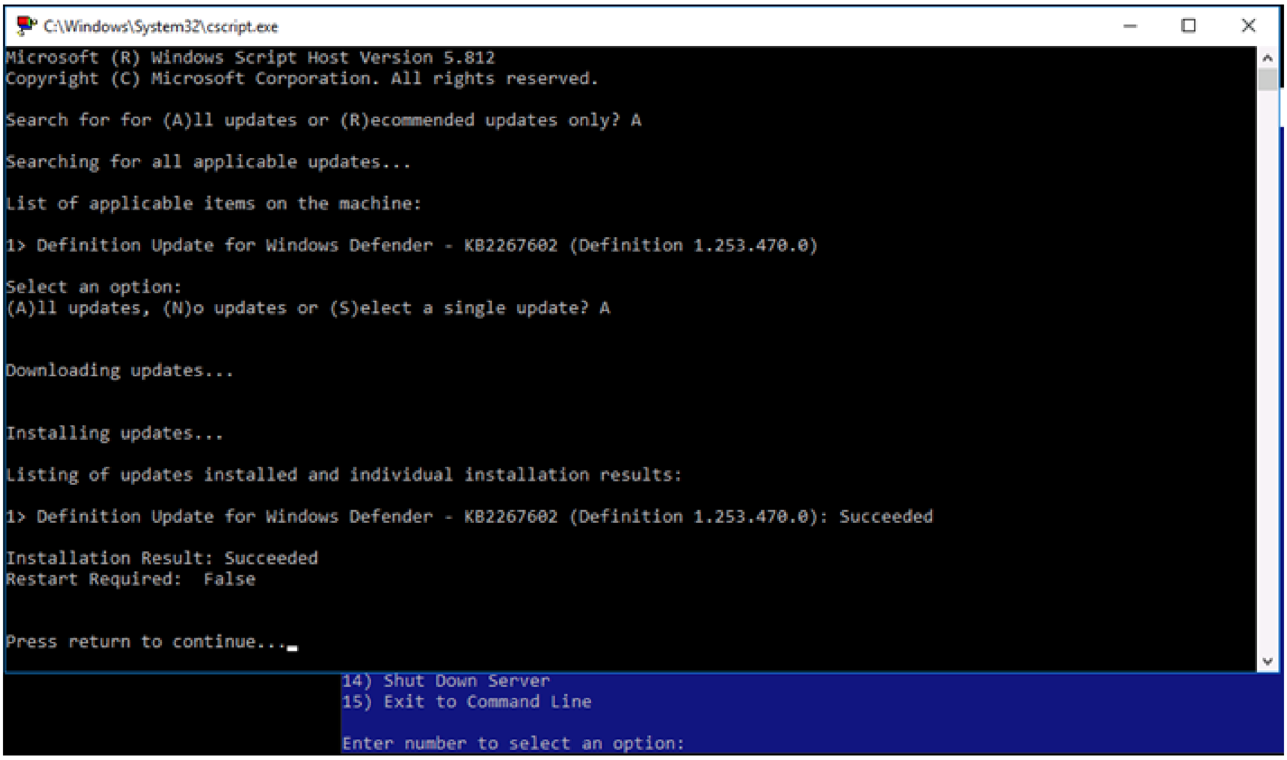
Enter number to select an option: _
```

3. To download and install new updates, type `6`, and then press `Enter`.

4. Type `A` to search for **(A)ll updates** in the new command window, and then press `Enter`.

5. Type `A` again to install **(A)ll updates**, and then press `Enter`.

   When finished, you see a message with the installation results and more instructions (if those apply).



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Search for for (A)ll updates or (R)ecommended updates only? A

Searching for all applicable updates...

List of applicable items on the machine:

1> Definition Update for Windows Defender - KB2267602 (Definition 1.253.470.0)

Select an option:
(A)ll updates, (N)o updates or (S)elect a single update? A


Downloading updates...


Installing updates...

Listing of updates installed and individual installation results:

1> Definition Update for Windows Defender - KB2267602 (Definition 1.253.470.0): Succeeded

Installation Result: Succeeded
Restart Required:  False


Press return to continue..._
```

```
14) Shut Down Server
15) Exit to Command Line

Enter number to select an option:
```

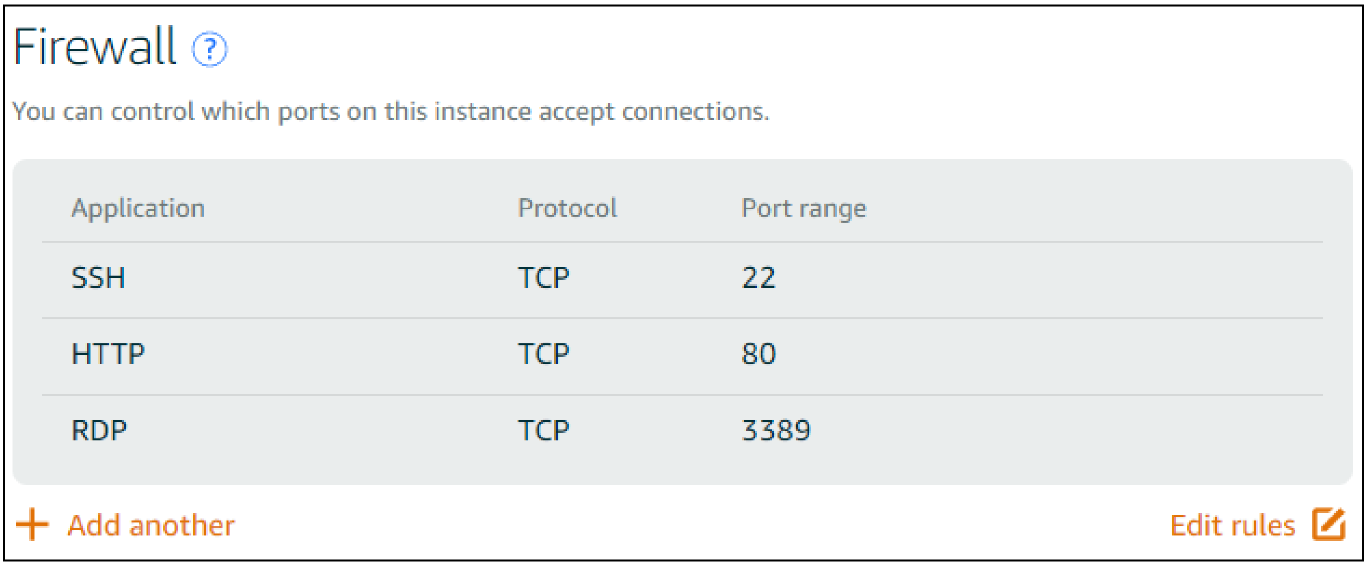
Enabling Account Lockout Policy in Windows Server

You can configure Windows Server to temporarily or indefinitely disable accounts when a certain number of unsuccessful login attempts has been reached. For example, you can lock out someone who attempts to log in to your instance using three unsuccessful passwords.

For more information, see Account Lockout Policy in the *Windows Server documentation*.

Ports and firewall settings

By default, we open the following ports on your Windows Server-based instances.



Firewall

You can control which ports on this instance accept connections.

Application	Protocol	Port range
SSH	TCP	22
HTTP	TCP	80
RDP	TCP	3389

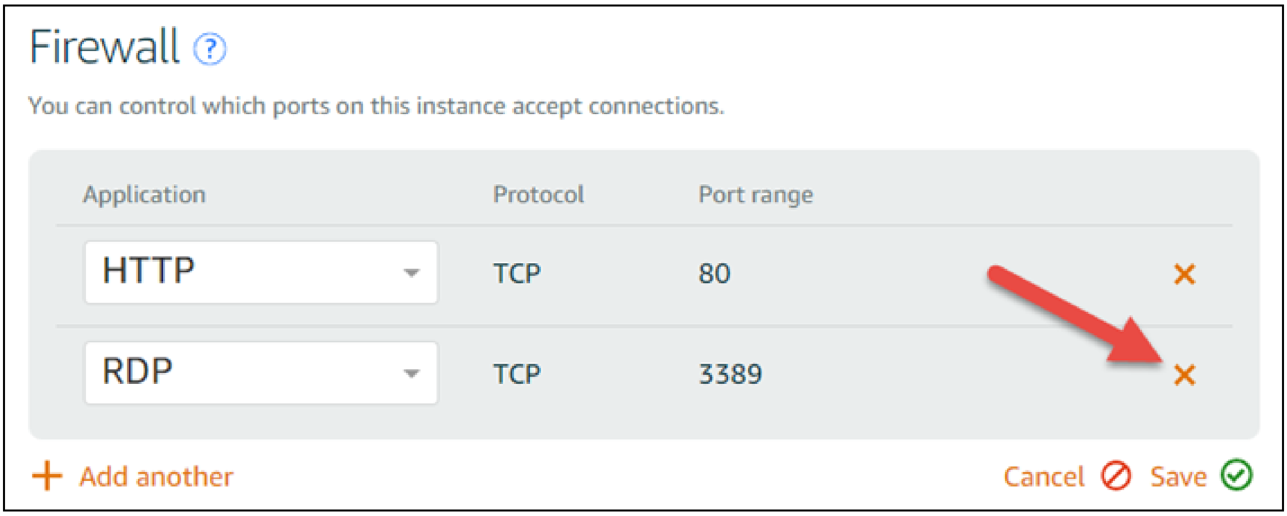
The ports you enable are exposed to the world and can't be restricted by source IP. To restrict access to your instance, you can turn off these ports and only enable them when you need to access your instance. Here's how:

1. Find the instance you want to manage in Lightsail, and then choose **Manage**.

2. Choose **Networking**.

3. On the **Networking** page for your instance, choose **Edit rules**.

4. Delete the RDP/TCP/3389 rule by choosing the orange "x" next to the rule.



Firewall

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RDP	TCP	3389

5. Choose **Save**.