**Step 1: Research Cloud Service Providers**

**Cloud Computing and Its Benefits**

Cloud computing is the delivery of computing services over the internet, including storage, processing power, databases, networking, software, and analytics. The main benefits of cloud computing include:

* **Cost Efficiency**: Pay only for the resources you use, reducing capital expenditure.
* **Scalability**: Easily scale resources up or down based on demand.
* **Accessibility**: Access services from anywhere with an internet connection.
* **Flexibility**: Use a wide range of services and technologies without long-term commitments.
* **Security**: Benefit from advanced security features and compliance certifications.
* **Reliability**: High availability and disaster recovery options.

**Popular Cloud Service Providers**

1. **Amazon Web Services (AWS)**:
   * Extensive range of services including compute, storage, databases, machine learning, and more.
   * Global infrastructure with numerous data centers.
   * Free tier includes 12 months of free services with limited usage.
2. **Microsoft Azure**:
   * Integrated with Microsoft products and services.
   * Offers a wide range of services including AI, analytics, and IoT.
   * Free account includes 12 months of popular services, a credit for the first 30 days, and free access to 25+ services.
3. **Google Cloud Platform (GCP)**:
   * Strong in data analytics, machine learning, and AI.
   * Free tier includes a $300 credit for the first 90 days and always free services with usage limits.
4. **Linode**:
   * Known for simplicity and ease of use.
   * Offers compute, storage, and networking services.
   * Free trial includes a $100 credit for the first 60 days.
5. **DigitalOcean**:
   * Developer-friendly platform with a focus on simplicity.
   * Offers compute, storage, and networking services.
   * Free trial includes a $100 credit for the first 60 days.

Steps to Create a Free Account on Google Cloud Platform (GCP):

1. Visit Google Cloud's Sign-Up Page: https://cloud.google.com/free

2. Click on the "Get started for free" button.

3. Sign in with your Google account or create a new one if you don't have one.

4. Accept the terms of service and click on the "Agree and continue" button.

5. Provide your personal information, including your name and address.

6. Enter your payment information (required for verification, but you won't be charged during the free trial).

7. Click on the "Start my free trial" button.

8. Complete any additional setup steps as prompted.

9. You will be redirected to the Google Cloud Console.

