



CHECKLIST

AWS Reserved Instances Cost Optimization Checklist

A practical checklist for evaluating Reserved Instances for steady-state AWS virtualization workloads, validating commitment fit, and checking operational readiness before purchase.

AWS Virtualization Cost Optimization with Reserved Instances

Pre-purchase checklist

Use this checklist to decide whether Reserved Instances are a good fit for an AWS virtualization workload and to reduce the risk of overcommitting.

1) Confirm the workload is a reservation candidate

- ☐ The workload runs continuously or near-continuously.
- ☐ The instance fleet has a stable baseline that is separate from burst capacity.
- ☐ The workload is not primarily short-lived, ephemeral, or event-driven.
- ☐ The environment is not in the middle of a migration, replatforming, or major redesign.
- ☐ The team can explain which instances are expected to exist for the full term.



2) Verify usage stability

- ☐ Review at least 30 to 90 days of EC2 usage.
- ☐ Break usage down by region, instance family, operating system, and tenancy.
- ☐ Identify the true baseline demand, not the monthly average.
- ☐ Separate temporary spikes, seasonal peaks, and deployment-related churn.
- ☐ Confirm that baseline demand is durable enough to support a commitment.

3) Check compatibility with reservation attributes

- ☐ The expected future instance family is known and unlikely to change often.
- ☐ The region is stable and not likely to shift soon.
- ☐ The operating system and tenancy match the intended reservation scope.
- ☐ The reservation can realistically cover the instances that will remain running.
- ☐ The workload does not rely on frequent changes that would break compatibility.

4) Size the commitment conservatively

- ☐ Match only the stable baseline to a reservation candidate.
- ☐ Avoid using blended averages as the primary sizing input.
- ☐ Keep burst capacity on flexible pricing.
- ☐ Leave room for architectural changes, maintenance events, and growth uncertainty.
- ☐ Validate that underutilization risk is acceptable before purchasing.

5) Evaluate the financial trade-off

- ☐ Compare the reservation discount against the flexibility being given up.



- ☐ Estimate savings using realistic coverage, not idealized full utilization.
- ☐ Confirm that unused commitment would not erase the expected benefit.
- ☐ Review the impact of term length on renewal risk.
- ☐ Verify that the purchase aligns with budget ownership and forecasting.

6) Review operational ownership

- ☐ A clear owner is assigned for capacity planning.
- ☐ Someone is responsible for tracking utilization and renewal dates.
- ☐ The platform or workload owner understands the commitment boundary.
- ☐ Finance, operations, and engineering agree on coverage assumptions.
- ☐ The reservation plan is documented and easy to audit.

7) Check for lifecycle and architecture risks

- ☐ No near-term OS refresh is expected to change eligibility.
- ☐ No instance family migration is planned that would invalidate coverage.
- ☐ Autoscaling policies will not make the reservation obsolete.
- ☐ Deployment patterns will not fragment usage across too many shapes.
- ☐ Fallback capacity remains available if workload behavior changes.

8) Preserve security and governance controls

- ☐ Identity and access controls remain unchanged by the cost decision.
- ☐ Network exposure is still governed by approved security groups and rules.
- ☐ Encryption requirements for storage and data in transit remain in place.
- ☐ Instance ownership and purpose are documented in inventory records.
- ☐ Reservation planning does not bypass standard hardening reviews.



9) Decide whether to proceed

Proceed with Reserved Instances if most of the following are true:

- ☐ The workload is stable and predictable.
- ☐ The reservation scope matches real usage.
- ☐ The team can sustain enough compatible demand for the term.
- ☐ The savings are meaningful after flexibility risk is considered.
- ☐ The plan has an owner and a review cadence.

Do not proceed, or proceed only partially, if most of the following are true:

- ☐ The workload is bursty, seasonal, or short-lived.
- ☐ The environment is changing frequently.
- ☐ Future instance shape is uncertain.
- ☐ Forecasting accuracy is too weak to avoid underutilization.
- ☐ No one owns renewal and coverage tracking.

10) Recommended approval questions

Before purchase, answer these questions in writing:

- ☐ What exact baseline is being covered?
- ☐ Which workload owns the commitment?
- ☐ What usage changes could make the reservation ineffective?
- ☐ What is the fallback plan if demand drops or shifts?
- ☐ How will coverage be reviewed before renewal?

Quick rule of thumb



If the team cannot describe the workload's stable baseline without checking the latest deployment artifact, the environment is probably too dynamic for aggressive commitment.

If the workload has a clearly defined, long-lived baseline, Reserved Instances can be an effective way to reduce steady-state AWS compute cost without sacrificing control.

Suggested review cadence

- ☐ Recheck utilization monthly.
- ☐ Reassess coverage before major releases or migrations.
- ☐ Review renewal decisions well before the commitment term ends.
- ☐ Update ownership notes whenever the workload changes materially.

Final sign-off

- ☐ Baseline demand confirmed
- ☐ Commitment scope validated
- ☐ Financial trade-off approved
- ☐ Operational owner assigned
- ☐ Security controls preserved
- ☐ Renewal review scheduled

Decision: _____

Approved by: _____

Date: _____