Azure Files vs SharePoint

Overview

When deciding between Azure Files and SharePoint for file storage and management, it is essential to consider the specific use cases, requirements, and features of each service.

Summary

This document compares Azure Files and SharePoint, highlighting their key features and use cases. Azure Files is a cloud-based file storage solution optimized for scalability, integration with Active Directory, and cost-effective long-term storage, while SharePoint serves as a collaborative platform designed for sharing, managing, and versioning files with seamless integration into Microsoft Office. The comparison table outlines their respective strengths, such as Azure Files' suitability for archival and backup versus SharePoint's robust collaboration and file management capabilities.

Comparison Table

	Azure Files	SharePoint
Description	Azure Files is a cloud-based file storage service that allows you to create file shares accessible via the SMB protocol. It is suitable for scenarios where you need to store large amounts of data and access it programmatically or through the Azure Portal.	SharePoint is a web-based collaboration platform that integrates with Microsoft Office. It is designed for sharing and managing content, knowledge, and applications.
Key Features	• Scalability: Azure Files can handle large volumes of data and scale as needed. • Access: Files can be accessed programmatically or through the Azure Portal. It also supports mounting a file share as a standard mapped drive. • File/Folder Permissions Fidelity: Azure Files supports integration with Active Directory to maintain existing (or add new) NTFS permissions. • Cost: Generally lower cost compared to SharePoint, especially for long-term storage. The base cost is around $20 per month for 1 TB of storage. • Use Cases: Ideal for archival purposes, backup storage, and scenarios where files are rarely accessed or modified.	• Collaboration: Provides a user-friendly interface for sharing and collaborating on files. • Access: Users can easily read, write, and share files through the SharePoint web interface. • File Versioning: Supports file versioning, allowing users to track changes and revert to previous versions. • Integration: Seamlessly integrates with other Microsoft Office products and services.
Limitations	• User Access: Access to Azure files should be controlled through a VPN connection adding an extra barrier for users needing immediate file access • User Interface: Lacks a user-friendly interface for end-users. Accessing files requires programmatic methods or the Azure Portal. • File Versioning: Limited support for file versioning compared to SharePoint.	• Cost: Higher cost compared to Azure Files, with a price of around $200 per TB. However Microsoft 365 subscription provides each user with up to 2TB of personal storage to replace "home drives" • Scalability: While scalable, it may not be as cost-effective for storing large volumes of data that are rarely accessed. • Permissions: SharePoint does not support NTFS file-level permissions but relies on EntraID

	Azure Files	SharePoint
		groups which can be synced from your on-premises Active Directory. Access is controlled at the site, library, and folder levels (though file sharing permissions can be modified by the owner as needed).
Recommendations	For files that are primarily for archival purposes and rarely accessed, if the business requires maintaining mapped drives for applications of scanning devices, or needs to maintain NTFS security permissions Azure Files is the better option due to its lower cost AD integration, and scalability.	For files that need to be frequently accessed, modified, and shared among users, SharePoint is the preferred choice due to its user-friendly interface and collaboration features such as simultaneous editing.