MIGRATION PLAYBOOK · MICROSOFT 365

How to decommission a Microsoft 365 tenant

Closing a tenant is mostly clean-up in the right order: get a working Global Administrator, keep the data you need, move what depends on the tenant, cancel and delete every subscription, remove the other users and apps, then delete the tenant in the Microsoft Entra admin center. This playbook covers each blocker, including apps that cannot be deleted.

Updated 4 Nov 2026 5 phases 22 detailed steps 14 official sources

Part of a Microsoft 365 tenant-to-tenant migration. This is runbook 13 of 13. For the project plan, order of work, licensing, cutover and rollback, see the tenant-to-tenant migration guide and its 43-step checklist.

START HERE

How do you decommission a Microsoft 365 tenant?

SHORT ANSWER

This closes a Microsoft 365 tenant for good. You first make sure someone can sign in as a Global Administrator, then find out what still uses the tenant: people, apps, devices, Azure, domains and other tenants. You keep a copy of the mail and files you are required to keep, move the things that depend on the tenant, cancel and delete every subscription, delete the other users and apps, and finally delete the tenant itself.

- **Recommended route:** Clean decommission: export, clear blockers, cancel and delete subscriptions, delete the tenant
- **Order:** The order matters: once a subscription is deleted, its SharePoint and OneDrive data is deleted immediately and the rest within days.

- **5 phases:** Get in and look, Keep the data, Move dependencies, Close billing and Clear and delete.
- **You're done when:** The Manage tenants list no longer shows the tenant.

Deleting subscriptions and the tenant cannot be undone, so the data and dependency checks come first.

RECOMMENDED ROUTE

Clean decommission: export, clear blockers, cancel and delete subscriptions, delete the tenant

It is the route Microsoft documents for closing a business account, and it finishes in days rather than months once the data is safe.

▼ Other options and when to use them

- **Let the subscriptions lapse**
  : Nothing depends on the tenant and you do not need it gone by a date. Microsoft removes the directory only if no other service uses it.
- **Ask Microsoft support**
  : Nobody can regain Global Administrator access, or the deletion checks keep failing on something you cannot remove.

TOOLS FOR THIS PLAN

Are you ready?
22-question readiness check

Plan your dates
Dated countdown you can add to your calendar

Compare options
Compare Microsoft 365 migration tools

New to the jargon?
Plain-English migration glossary

ORDER TO MIGRATE IN, AND WHY

The order matters: once a subscription is deleted, its SharePoint and OneDrive data is deleted immediately and the rest within days.

1 **A working Global Administrator**
Only a Global Administrator homed in the tenant can delete it.

2 **Dependency inventory**
Apps, devices, Azure and domains that still rely on the tenant break when it goes.

3 **Data kept or exported**

Deleting a subscription deletes the data with it.

4 **Dependencies moved**

Azure subscriptions, Azure DevOps, devices and domains need a new home first.

5 **Subscriptions cancelled and deleted**

Any subscription, active or cancelled, blocks deletion.

6 **Users, apps and products removed**

Only one Global Administrator and no apps may remain.

7 **Tenant deleted**

The last step, in the Microsoft Entra admin center.

SETTINGS CHECKLIST: DECIDE THESE BEFORE YOU COPY

Built-in and third-party tools treat these differently. Tick each one off once you have decided.

Download this checklist (Excel)

☐ **Admin access**

Who will be the last Global Administrator, and how they sign in.

▼ How each tool handles it

Built-in method	Microsoft: only a Global Administrator can delete the tenant, and all other users must be deleted first.

Tip: Use an account on the onmicrosoft.com domain so domain removal does not lock it out.

Microsoft Learn: Delete a Microsoft Entra tenant

☐ **Data to keep**

Which mailboxes, OneDrive and SharePoint content you must keep, and for how long.

▼ How each tool handles it

Built-in method	Microsoft Purview eDiscovery exports mailboxes as PST and files as native copies. Export packages expire after 14 days.

Tip: Download every export package straight away and check it opens.

Microsoft Learn: Export search results in eDiscovery

- [ ] **How each subscription was bought**
  Who can cancel it: you, your partner or your Volume Licensing reseller.

  ▼ How each tool handles it

  Built-in method Subscriptions bought through a partner or reseller are cancelled by that seller. Microsoft Customer Agreement subscriptions outside the 7-day window can only have recurring billing turned off.

  Tip: Check Billing > Your products for the billing account type before you promise a date.

  Microsoft Learn: Cancel your Microsoft business subscription

- [ ] **Azure subscriptions**
  Delete them, or transfer billing ownership to another tenant.

  ▼ How each tool handles it

  Built-in method An active or cancelled Azure subscription blocks tenant deletion. Standard subscriptions can be deleted 7 days after cancelling; free trial and pay-as-you-go after 3 days.

  Tip: Switching the directory alone does not help, because billing stays with the original tenant.

  Microsoft Learn: Delete a Microsoft Entra tenant

- [ ] **Apps that will not delete**
  Which apps are yours to delete and which are Microsoft first-party apps to leave alone.

  ▼ How each tool handles it

  Built-in method Microsoft first-party apps show "You can't delete this application because it's a Microsoft first party application". Microsoft says principals that return "Microsoft Internal" do not prevent deleting the directory.

  Tip: Run the read-only app inventory first so you only delete what you own.

  Microsoft Learn: Can't delete a directory through the Azure portal

THE PLAN, PHASE BY PHASE

1 Get in and look — Week 1

Confirm
a

Global Administrator can sign in.

Inventory users, apps, subscriptions, devices, Azure and domains.

Check recent sign-ins to see what is still in use.

> **Watch out:** Nobody can sign in as a Global Administrator.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**
>
> - Self-service password reset, another admin, your partner, then Microsoft support.

Show the detailed steps (4) →

2 Keep the data Week 1 to 2

Agree what must be kept and for

how long.

Export mailboxes and files with eDiscovery.

Download and check every export package.

> **Watch out:** eDiscovery export needs an E3 or E5 licence for the person exporting.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**
>
> - Export before licences are removed, or let users save their own files and PST exports.

Show the detailed steps (3) →

3 Move dependencies Week 2

Move or delete Azure subscriptions.

Disconnect Azure DevOps and deregister Autopilot devices.

Remove the custom

domain if it is needed elsewhere.

> ⓘ **Watch out:** A domain can be verified in only one tenant at a time.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**
>
> - Remove it from this tenant before adding it to the new one.

Show the detailed steps (5) →

4 Close billing Week 2 to 3

Cancel each subscription through the channel it was bought in.

Delete disabled subscriptions, or wait for them to reach the deleted state.

> ⓘ **Watch out:** Microsoft Customer Agreement subscriptions cannot be deleted early.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**

- Turn off recurring billing and wait for the end of the term.

Show the detailed steps (2) →

5 Clear and delete

After subscriptions are deleted

Turn off directory sync and delete all other users.

Delete apps, self-service sign-up products and MFA providers.

Delete the tenant in the Microsoft Entra admin center.

Watch out: Some tenant configurations will not delete.

WAYS AROUND IT

- Contact Microsoft support with the failing check.

Show the detailed steps (2) →

You are finished when

- The Manage tenants list no longer shows the tenant.
- No invoices or subscriptions remain for it.
- Exports are stored where your retention policy says.
- The domain, if needed, is verified in its new home.

CLICK BY CLICK

What does each step involve?

Open a part when you reach it in the plan. Each step says where to go, what to do and what you should see.

About this migration

What it covers, limits at a glance

Use this playbook when a tenant is no longer needed: after a tenant-to-tenant migration, after a merger, or when a trial or old tenant was left running. Microsoft will not delete a tenant while it still has other users, apps, subscriptions, self-service sign-up products, MFA providers or unpaid invoices, so most of the work is clearing those in order.

If nobody can sign in as an admin any more, start with regain admin access to a Microsoft 365 tenant. If the deletion check already shows a blocker, the cannot delete tenant fix page lists each one.

WHO CAN DELETE **A Global Administrator homed in the tenant**	FASTEST SUBSCRIPTION PATH **Cancel, then delete: data gone in 3 days**	DO-NOTHING PATH **Expired 30 days, then Disabled 90 days, then Deleted**
USERS AT THE END **Only the one Global Administrator who deletes**	MICROSOFT FIRST-PARTY APPS **Cannot be deleted, and do not block deletion**	WHERE **Entra admin center > Overview > Manage tenants > Delete**

1 What do you need before you decommission a Microsoft 365 tenant?

Need	Details	Where to get it
A Global Administrator who can sign in	Homed in this tenant, ideally on the onmicrosoft.com domain. Guests and personal Microsoft accounts cannot run the app clean-up.	Regain admin access if nobody can
Billing access	Billing Administrator (MOSA) or billing account owner or contributor (Microsoft Customer Agreement) to cancel and delete subscriptions.	Microsoft 365 admin center > Billing
Microsoft Graph PowerShell	For the read-only inventory and for apps that cannot be removed in the portal.	Install Microsoft Graph PowerShell
Az PowerShell module	Only if Azure subscriptions or stubborn enterprise apps exist.	Install Az PowerShell
A decision on data	What must be kept, for how long, and where it will live after the tenant is gone.	Your records owner or legal adviser
Partner contact	If any subscription was bought through a Cloud Solution Provider (CSP) or reseller.	Billing > Your products shows the seller

There is no undo at the end. Deleting a subscription deletes its SharePoint and OneDrive data immediately and the rest within days. Deleting the tenant closes the account. Finish steps 1 to 3 before you cancel anything.

2 Find everything that still uses the tenant

4 steps

A tenant that looks unused often still signs people into a SaaS app, owns an Azure subscription or holds the company domain. Run this read-only inventory first and keep the output: it becomes your clean-up list.

What may still depend on the tenant	How to tell	What to do before deletion
Staff signing in to SaaS apps with this tenant (single sign-on)	enterprise-apps.csv rows not owned by Microsoft, with recent sign-ins	Move the app's single sign-on to the new tenant, or switch it to local sign-in
Azure subscriptions	Azure portal > Subscriptions	Delete, or transfer billing ownership to another tenant (see Move what depends on the tenant)
Azure DevOps organisations	Organization settings > Microsoft Entra ID	Disconnect or change directory (see Move what depends on the tenant)
Windows Autopilot devices	Intune > Windows Autopilot > Devices	Delete from Intune, then deregister from Autopilot (see Move what depends on the tenant)
Custom domain and email	Get-MgDomain, MX record	Move mail first; remove the domain if it is needed elsewhere (see Move what depends on the tenant)
Shared mailboxes and forwarding	Exchange admin center > Recipients	Export or move before licences and subscriptions go
Self-service sign-up products	Licenses > Self-service sign-up products	Back up their data, then delete them (see Remove users, apps and every other blocker)
Teams phone numbers	Teams admin center > Voice > Phone numbers	Arrange the numbers' new home with your carrier before cancelling
Sharing-link redirects after a tenant-to-tenant move	OneDrive or SharePoint content was moved out with Microsoft's cross-tenant tools	Old links redirect only until this tenant is deprovisioned. Tell people to update links and bookmarks first

1

Sign in and confirm your role

Where: Microsoft Entra admin center (entra.microsoft.com) > Microsoft Entra ID > Overview

Sign in as a Global Administrator. Note the **Tenant ID** and the primary domain on the Overview page. You will need the tenant ID to make sure PowerShell is pointed at the right tenant.

✓ **You should see:** You see the tenant name, tenant ID and your role as Global Administrator.

2

List users, domains and subscriptions

Where: PowerShell 7 on your admin PC, with Microsoft Graph PowerShell

Connect to the tenant you are closing, then list who and what is left. `OnPremisesSyncEnabled` tells you whether directory sync from on-premises Active Directory is on.

```
Connect-MgGraph -TenantId <tenant-id> -Scopes
"Directory.Read.All","Application.Read.All","AuditLog.Read.All"
Get-MgOrganization | Select-Object DisplayName, Id, OnPremisesSyncEnabled
Get-MgDomain | Select-Object Id, IsVerified, IsDefault
Get-MgSubscribedSku | Select-Object SkuPartNumber, CapabilityStatus, ConsumedUnits
Get-MgUser -All -Property UserPrincipalName,AccountEnabled,OnPremisesSyncEnabled,SignInActivity |
Select-Object UserPrincipalName, AccountEnabled, OnPremisesSyncEnabled, @{n="LastSignIn";e=
{$_.SignInActivity.LastSignInDateTime}} | Export-Csv users.csv -NoTypeInformation
```

✓ **You should see:** A list of domains and licences, and users.csv with every user and their last sign-in. Recent sign-ins mean someone still uses the tenant. If LastSignIn is empty, check Sign-in logs in the Entra admin center instead.

3

List every app, and mark which are Microsoft's

Where: Same PowerShell session

This lists every enterprise app (service principal) and app registration. Microsoft identifies its own first-party apps by the owner tenant ID; Microsoft Learn names `f8cdef31-a31e-4b4a-93e4-5f571e91255a` as the Microsoft Services tenant and also lists `72f988bf-86f1-41af-91ab-2d7cd011db47` for Microsoft-owned apps. Apps with any other owner, or none, are yours or a third party's.

```
$ms = @("f8cdef31-a31e-4b4a-93e4-5f571e91255a","72f988bf-86f1-41af-91ab-2d7cd011db47")
Get-MgServicePrincipal -All -Property
Id,DisplayName,AppId,AppOwnerOrganizationId,ServicePrincipalType,AccountEnabled |
  Select-Object DisplayName, AppId, ServicePrincipalType, AccountEnabled, @{n="Owner";e={ if ($ms
-contains $_.AppOwnerOrganizationId) {"Microsoft"} elseif ($_.AppOwnerOrganizationId)
{$_.AppOwnerOrganizationId} else {"(none)"} }} |
  Sort-Object Owner, DisplayName | Export-Csv enterprise-apps.csv -NoTypeInformation
Get-MgApplication -All | Select-Object DisplayName, AppId, SignInAudience | Export-Csv app-
registrations.csv -NoTypeInformation
```

✓ **You should see:** Two CSV files. Rows marked Microsoft are first-party apps you will leave alone. Every other row is a dependency to move or delete later in this playbook.

4

Check for things that live outside Microsoft 365

Where: Azure portal > Subscriptions, Intune admin center > Devices, Azure DevOps, and the Entra admin center

Look for the dependencies that the PowerShell lists do not show directly:

- **Azure subscriptions**: Azure portal > **Subscriptions**, filtered to this directory.
- **Devices**: Intune admin center > **Devices** > **Windows** > **Enrollment** > **Windows Autopilot** > **Devices**.
- **Azure DevOps**: any organisation whose **Organization settings** > **Microsoft Entra ID** names this tenant.
- **Self-service sign-up products**: Entra admin center > **Microsoft Entra ID** > **Licenses** > **Self-service sign-up products**.
- **Partner relationships**: Microsoft 365 admin center > **Settings** > **Partner relationships**.
- **DNS**: which MX, SPF and autodiscover records point at Microsoft 365 for the tenant's domains.

✓ **You should see:** A complete dependency list. Record it in the decommission checklist so each item has an owner and a date.

3 Keep the data you need

3 steps

Do this while the subscriptions are still active. When a licence is removed, Microsoft holds Exchange Online data for 30 days and then deletes it. When a subscription is deleted, SharePoint and OneDrive data goes immediately.

1

Agree what to keep

Where: With your records owner, using the data retention mapping template

List which mailboxes, OneDrive accounts, SharePoint sites and Teams must be kept, for how long, and in what format. Record it in the data retention mapping so the decision is signed off before anything is deleted.

✓ **You should see:** A signed-off list of what to export and what can be discarded.

2

Export mailboxes and files with eDiscovery

Where: Microsoft Purview portal (purview.microsoft.com) > eDiscovery > Cases

Create a case and a search over the mailboxes and sites to keep. Open the search, select **Export**, choose **Export items with items report** and **Create PSTs for messages**, then select **Export**. Track it in **Process manager** and download the packages from the case. The person exporting needs eDiscovery permissions and, per Microsoft, a Microsoft 365 E3 or E5 licence. For a few mailboxes, you can export a mailbox to PST instead.

✓ **You should see:** Downloaded PST files for mail and native copies of documents, with an items report.

3

Download within 14 days and check

Where: Your admin PC, with 7-Zip or WinZip

Microsoft deletes export packages 14 days after they are created, and cancels any export that runs for more than seven days, so split very large exports. Extract with 7-Zip or WinZip (Microsoft advises against the built-in Windows zip utility), open a sample PST in Outlook and a sample of documents, and store the copies where your retention plan says.

✓ **You should see:** Exports open, item counts look right, and copies are stored outside the tenant.

4 Move what depends on the tenant

5 steps

1

Move or delete Azure subscriptions

Where: Azure portal > Subscriptions

Any Azure subscription, active or cancelled, blocks tenant deletion. Either cancel it and select **Delete subscription** once the option appears (seven days after cancelling for standard subscriptions; three days for free trial and pay-as-you-go), or transfer billing ownership to an account in another tenant and move the subscription there. Microsoft notes that **Switch directory** on its own does not help, because billing stays with the original tenant.

✓ **You should see:** No subscriptions listed for this directory in the Azure portal.

2

Disconnect Azure DevOps

Where: dev.azure.com/{organisation} > Organization settings > Microsoft Entra ID

As a Project Collection Administrator, select **Disconnect directory**, type the organisation name and select **Disconnect**, or connect the organisation to the new tenant instead. Before disconnecting, change the organisation owner to a Microsoft account. Microsoft says users can then migrate everything except work history.

✓ **You should see:** Organization settings no longer shows this tenant as the connected directory.

3

Deregister Windows Autopilot devices

Where: Intune admin center > Devices > Windows

For each device: note the serial number, select **Delete** on the device, then go to **Device onboarding** > **Enrollment** > **Windows Autopilot** > **Devices**, find the serial number, select **Unassign user** if shown, then **Delete** and **Sync**. Microsoft warns not to delete the device from Entra ID by hand, and to remove records in this order. If devices are moving to a new tenant, follow Intune device tenant migration.

✓ **You should see:** The serial numbers no longer appear under Windows Autopilot devices after a refresh.

4

Move single sign-on apps

Where: Each SaaS app's admin settings, and Entra admin center > Enterprise apps in the new tenant

For each non-Microsoft app in enterprise-apps.csv that people still use, set up single sign-on with the new tenant (or local sign-in) and test it before you delete anything here. Apps that nobody has signed in to can simply be deleted later, with the other apps.

✓ **You should see:** Every app people use signs in somewhere other than this tenant.

5

Remove the domain if it is needed elsewhere

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Settings > Domains

A domain can be verified in only one tenant. If the new tenant or another service needs it, follow remove a domain from Microsoft 365: sign in as an admin on the onmicrosoft.com domain, move users and addresses off it, then remove it. Change the MX record first if mail for the domain is moving.

✓ **You should see:** The domain no longer appears on the Domains page and can be verified in its new home.

5 Cancel every subscription the right way

2 steps

How you cancel depends on how the subscription was bought. Check **Billing** > **Your products** in the Microsoft 365 admin center for each one.

Bought through	Who cancels	What happens
Microsoft direct (MOSA billing account)	Billing Administrator, in the admin center	Cancel now, or before the next renewal date. Over 25 licences: reduce to 25 or fewer first.

Bought through	Who cancels	What happens
Microsoft Customer Agreement (MCA)	Billing account or profile owner or contributor	Cancel within 7 days of start or renewal; after that, turn off recurring billing and wait for the term to end.
Cloud Solution Provider or reseller	Your partner or reseller	Ask them to cancel. You cannot cancel these yourself.
Volume Licensing or Enterprise Agreement	Your licensing partner or Microsoft account team	Durations depend on the agreement; confirm with them.
Trial	Billing Administrator	Turn off recurring billing before the trial ends, or it converts to paid.
Self-service sign-up products (Power BI, Power Apps, Dynamics 365, Azure Rights Management)	Global Administrator, in the Entra admin center	Not cancelled in billing. Delete them with the other blockers, below.

1

Cancel each subscription

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Billing > Your products (or Subscriptions in Simplified view)

Select the subscription. For MOSA: **Subscription and payment settings** > **Cancel subscription**, choose **Cancel now**, pick a reason and confirm. For MCA: under **Subscription status** select **Cancel subscription** if you are within the window; otherwise select **edit the recurring billing settings**, set recurring billing to **Off** and save.

✓ **You should see:** The subscription shows Disabled (or recurring billing Off for MCA).

2

Pay any outstanding invoices

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Billing > Bills and payments

Microsoft will not delete a tenant with outstanding invoices or overdue amounts. Pay or resolve them now so they do not block the last step.

✓ **You should see:** No unpaid invoices are listed.

6 Delete the disabled subscriptions

1 step

The tenant cannot be deleted until every licence-based subscription reaches the deprovisioned state. Waiting takes about four months; deleting takes about three days.

Path	How long	Notes
Wait for the lifecycle	Expired 30 days, then Disabled 90 days, then Deleted	Admins can still back up data while Disabled. Durations differ for Volume Licensing and trials.
Delete the subscription	Deprovisioned 72 hours later	Data is deleted within three days; you can reactivate within that time. SharePoint and OneDrive data is deleted immediately.
Microsoft Customer Agreement	End of the term you bought	MCA disabled subscriptions cannot be deleted early.

1

Delete each disabled subscription

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Billing > Your products, with Subscription status set to All

Select the disabled subscription, select **Delete**, accept the terms and select **Delete subscription**. If you cannot delete it straight away, Microsoft says to contact support.

✓ **You should see:** The subscription is marked for deletion and reaches Deprovisioned after 72 hours.

Microsoft Entra ID Free stays. With an MCA billing account you automatically receive Microsoft Entra ID Free, and Microsoft says it cannot be cancelled. If the final deletion checks still flag a subscription you cannot remove, contact Microsoft support.

7 Remove users, apps and every other blocker

5 steps

Once subscriptions are deprovisioned, clear what is left. The table lists every blocker Microsoft documents, including apps that cannot be deleted, and what to do about each.

Blocker or app	What you see	What to do
Other users	Delete check: users still exist	Delete every user except the Global Administrator doing the deletion. If users sync from Active Directory, turn off sync first.
App registrations you created	Listed in app-registrations.csv	Entra admin center > App registrations > All applications > select > Delete.

Blocker or app	What you see	What to do
Enterprise apps you or users added (gallery and SaaS apps)	Non-Microsoft rows in enterprise-apps.csv	Entra admin center > Enterprise apps > select > Properties > Delete.
Enterprise apps with no Delete option in the portal	Delete is unavailable, and the check still fails	Remove with Microsoft Graph PowerShell. If removal fails on dependencies, disable them, then remove again (next step).
Microsoft first-party apps (for example Microsoft Graph, Office 365 Exchange Online)	"You can't delete this application because it's a Microsoft first party application" or "Specified App Principal ID is Microsoft Internal"	Leave them. Microsoft says these do not prevent deleting the directory.
Self-service sign-up products (Power BI, Azure Rights Management, Power Apps, Dynamics 365)	Licenses > Self-service sign-up products	Back up their data, then select the product and Delete. Deletion is immediate and cannot be undone.
Multifactor authentication providers	Delete check: MFA provider linked	Remove the MFA provider linked to the directory.
Azure subscriptions	Delete check: Azure subscription	Delete them, or transfer billing ownership (see Move what depends on the tenant).
Licence-based subscriptions	Delete check: subscriptions	Delete the disabled subscriptions and wait until they are Deprovisioned.

Blocker or app	What you see	What to do
Unpaid invoices	Delete check: billing	Pay or resolve them in Billing > Bills and payments.
Partner directory	"Directory is a Partner directory"	Contact Microsoft Partner Support.
Azure AD B2C directory apps	"Directory contains one or more applications that were added by a user or administrator"	Follow Microsoft's B2C directory deletion article.

1

Turn off directory sync if it is on

Where: PowerShell 7 with Microsoft Graph, after the sync server is retired

If `OnPremisesSyncEnabled` was True in your inventory, turn sync off for the tenant. Microsoft notes this is tenant-wide, clears on-premises properties and cannot be turned back on for 72 hours, which does not matter for a tenant you are deleting.

```
Connect-MgGraph -Scopes "Organization.ReadWrite.All","Directory.ReadWrite.All"
$organizationId = (Get-MgOrganization).Id
Update-MgOrganization -OrganizationId $organizationId -BodyParameter @{ onPremisesSyncEnabled =
$false }
Get-MgOrganization | Select-Object OnPremisesSyncEnabled
```

✓ **You should see:** OnPremisesSyncEnabled no longer shows True, and synced users can be deleted in the cloud.

2

Delete all other users

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Users > Active users

Select every user except the Global Administrator who will delete the tenant, select the three dots, then **Delete user**. For many users, use PowerShell. Microsoft's close-account steps also say to disable MFA on remaining accounts other than the Global Administrator you are using.

```
$me = (Get-MgContext).Account
Get-MgUser -All | Where-Object { $_.UserPrincipalName -ne $me } | ForEach-Object { Remove-MgUser -
UserId $_.Id }
```

✓ **You should see:** Active users shows only your Global Administrator account.

3

Delete your own app registrations and enterprise apps

Where: Microsoft Entra admin center > Applications

Under **App registrations** > **All applications**, delete each app you created. Under **Enterprise apps**, delete the non-Microsoft apps from your inventory. Set **Application type** to **Microsoft Applications** to see the first-party apps you should leave.

✓ **You should see:** Only Microsoft-owned apps remain.

4

Remove apps the portal will not delete

Where: PowerShell 7 with Microsoft Graph and Az, signed in as a Global Administrator homed in this tenant

Microsoft's sample removes every service principal, so check the tenant context first or you could delete apps in the wrong tenant. Guests, Microsoft accounts and multi-directory sessions will not work. Run the remove line more than once, because some fail on dependencies. Errors saying `Specified App Principal ID is Microsoft Internal` are expected and do not block deletion.

```
Connect-MgGraph -TenantId <tenant-id> -Scopes "Application.ReadWrite.All"
Get-MgDomain   # confirm these are the domains of the tenant you are deleting
Clear-AzContext -Scope CurrentUser
Connect-AzAccount -Tenant <tenant-id>
Get-AzContext
# Remove service principals (repeat if some fail on dependencies)
Get-MgServicePrincipal -All | ForEach-Object { Remove-MgServicePrincipal -ServicePrincipalId $_.Id
}
# If some still fail, disable them and try again
Get-MgServicePrincipal -All | ForEach-Object { Update-MgServicePrincipal -ServicePrincipalId $_.Id
-BodyParameter @{ accountEnabled = $false } }
Get-MgServicePrincipal -All | ForEach-Object { Remove-MgServicePrincipal -ServicePrincipalId $_.Id
}
```

✓ **You should see:** Only principals that report Microsoft Internal remain.

5

Delete self-service sign-up products

Where: Microsoft Entra admin center > Microsoft Entra ID > Licenses > Self-service sign-up products

Back up any data first. Select each product, select **Delete**, confirm the state shows **Deleted**, then refresh the page and check it has gone.

✓ **You should see:** The list is empty.

8 Delete the tenant

2 steps

1

Run the deletion checks

Where: Microsoft Entra admin center > Microsoft Entra ID > Overview > Manage tenants

Sign in as the remaining Global Administrator. Select the checkbox for the tenant and select **Delete**. Microsoft lists any check that fails with a link to fix it; work through them using the blocker table above.

✓ **You should see:** Every check shows as passed.

2

Delete

Where: Same page

When all checks pass, select **Delete** to finish. Microsoft says some tenant configurations cannot be deleted; if a check keeps failing on something you cannot remove, open a support request with the exact check that fails.

✓ **You should see:** The tenant is no longer listed under Manage tenants, and your account with Microsoft for it is closed.

WORTH KNOWING

What can go wrong, and how do you avoid it?

The detail behind the plan: options compared, and what experienced engineers check first. Tap any item.

Compare all the ways to do this 3 options –

Clean decommission (this playbook)

MEDIUM EFFORT

Best for: Tenants you want gone on a known date, with data and dependencies handled

- \+ Finishes in days once data is safe
- \+ Every dependency checked
- \+ Domain freed for reuse
- – Hands-on work
- – Subscription deletion cannot be undone

Read more →

Let the subscriptions lapse

LOW EFFORT

Best for: Tenants nobody uses, with nothing to keep and no deadline

- \+ No work beyond turning off billing
- \+ Admins can still recover data while Disabled
- – About four months
- – Microsoft removes the directory only if no other service uses it
- – Domain stays tied up meanwhile

Read more →

Microsoft support-led

MEDIUM EFFORT

Best for: Nobody can get Global Administrator access, or a deletion check will not clear

- \+ The only route when you are locked out
- \+ Microsoft can see blockers you cannot
- – You must prove you own the organisation
- – Timing depends on the case

Read more →

OUR ADVICE

Use the clean decommission when you can sign in and need the tenant or its domain gone. Letting it lapse only suits a tenant with nothing in it. If nobody can sign in as a Global Administrator, regain access first.

Export before you touch licences

COMPLIANCE

Microsoft holds Exchange Online data for 30 days after a licence is removed, then deletes it. Deleting a subscription deletes SharePoint and OneDrive data immediately.

WHAT TO DO

Finish and verify the exports before removing any licence or cancelling anything.

Microsoft Learn: What happens to a user's data when you remove their license

eDiscovery export packages vanish after 14 days

REDUCES RISK

Microsoft deletes export packages 14 days after creation and cancels exports that run for more than seven days.

WHAT TO DO

Download each package the same week, split large exports into batches and check them before moving on.

Microsoft Learn: Export search results in eDiscovery

Find out how each subscription was bought

SAVES TIME

CSP and reseller subscriptions are cancelled by the seller, and Microsoft Customer Agreement subscriptions outside the 7-day window can only have recurring billing turned off.

WHAT TO DO

Check Billing > Your products and contact any partner early, so the end-of-term date is known.

Microsoft Learn: Cancel your Microsoft business subscription

Deleting a subscription saves months but has no grace

REDUCES RISK

Waiting for Expired and Disabled takes about 120 days. Deleting skips both, deprovisions after 72 hours and deletes the data.

WHAT TO DO

Delete only after the exports are checked; otherwise let the lifecycle run so admins can still reach the data.

Microsoft Learn: Delete a Microsoft Entra tenant

Azure subscriptions block deletion even when cancelled

SAVES TIME

An active or cancelled Azure subscription stops the tenant being deleted, and switching directory does not move billing.

WHAT TO DO

Delete them after the waiting period or transfer billing ownership to another tenant.

Microsoft Learn: Delete a Microsoft Entra tenant

Know which apps to leave alone

REDUCES RISK

Microsoft first-party apps cannot be deleted and do not block deletion. Deleting apps in the wrong tenant is the real risk of the bulk PowerShell sample.

WHAT TO DO

Use the app inventory to separate Microsoft-owned apps, and always confirm the tenant context before bulk removal.

Microsoft Learn: Verify first-party Microsoft applications

Keep the last admin off the custom domain

SAVES TIME

You cannot remove a domain that your own sign-in name uses, and the domain often needs to move to a new tenant.

WHAT TO DO

Make the final Global Administrator an onmicrosoft.com account before removing domains or users.

Microsoft Learn: Remove a domain

Directory sync must be off before synced users go

SAVES TIME

Microsoft says to turn off sync first, then delete synced users in the cloud. Turning sync off is tenant-wide and cannot be reversed for 72 hours.

WHAT TO DO

Retire the sync server, then turn sync off as one of the last steps.

Microsoft Learn: Turn off directory synchronization for Microsoft 365

Devices need to leave Autopilot

USER IMPACT

Microsoft says to deregister any device that permanently leaves an organisation, and that removing records out of order can leave devices unrecoverable.

WHAT TO DO

Delete from Intune, then deregister from Autopilot, before the tenant goes.

Microsoft Learn: Windows Autopilot registration overview

Keep a partner who can still help

REDUCES RISK

A partner with the right delegated admin roles can reset passwords and create support requests for you, which matters if the last admin gets locked out mid-way.

WHAT TO DO

Leave any useful partner relationship in place until the tenant is deleted, and keep two Global Administrators until the final step.

Microsoft Learn: Preventing tenant lockouts

FINISH SAFELY

How do you check it worked, or roll back?

Full validation checklist

6 checks

Run these before you declare the migration complete. Record the results in the data validation report.

Check	How to check	What good looks like
Exports are complete	Open a sample PST in Outlook and sample documents, and compare item counts with the eDiscovery items report.	Every mailbox and site on the retention list is present and opens.
Nobody still signs in	In the Entra admin center, check **Sign-in logs** for the last 30 days, or rerun the users.csv export.	No sign-ins other than your own admin account.

Check	How to check	What good looks like
No subscriptions remain	Run `Get-MgSubscribedSku` and check Billing > Your products with status All.	Nothing active, and every disabled subscription is deleted or past its term.
Only Microsoft apps remain	Rerun the enterprise app inventory.	Every remaining row is owned by Microsoft.
Domain is free	Add the domain in its new tenant or service.	It verifies without an "already in use" error.
Tenant is gone	Entra admin center > Manage tenants.	The tenant is no longer listed.

Rollback plan

If it goes wrong

ROLL BACK IF

- An export is missing or will not open
- A business app stops working because it still signed in with this tenant
- Someone finds data that was not on the retention list
- The domain or mail flow for it breaks

POINT OF NO RETURN

Deleting a subscription. You can reactivate it within three days, but its SharePoint and OneDrive data is deleted immediately, and once the tenant is deleted the account is closed.

1

Reactivate a disabled subscription

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Billing > Your products

While a subscription is Expired or Disabled, a Global or Billing Administrator can reactivate it, which restores access to its data.

✓ **You should see:** Users and admins regain access.

2

Restore deleted users

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Users > Deleted users

Microsoft keeps deleted users for 30 days. Restore the account, then reassign a licence.

✓ **You should see:** The user, mailbox and OneDrive are back.

3

Re-add the domain

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Settings > Domains

If the domain has not been verified anywhere else, add and verify it again.

✓ **You should see:** The domain verifies, and you then fix user names and addresses by hand.

4

Reconnect single sign-on

Where: The SaaS app's admin settings

Point the app back at this tenant until its new sign-in is ready.

✓ **You should see:** Users can sign in again.

Agree the triggers and who decides before the go / no-go meeting. Use the rollback plan template.

Common problems and fixes

6 errors

`Delete check fails: license-based subscriptions`

Cause: A Microsoft 365 subscription has not reached Deprovisioned.

Fix: Delete the disabled subscription and wait 72 hours, or wait for the end of the MCA term. See the cannot delete tenant fix page.

`Specified App Principal ID is Microsoft Internal`

Cause: Remove-MgServicePrincipal was run against a Microsoft first-party app.

Fix: Ignore it. Microsoft says these do not prevent deleting the directory.

`You can't delete this application because it's a Microsoft first party application`

Cause: The enterprise app belongs to Microsoft.

Fix: Leave it in place and carry on.

`Directory has one or more Azure subscriptions`

Cause: An active or cancelled Azure subscription is linked.

Fix: Delete it after the waiting period or transfer billing ownership.

`Delete all users except yourself`

Cause: Other users remain, often synced ones.

Fix: Turn off directory sync, then delete the remaining users.

`Cannot delete a disabled subscription`

Cause: MCA subscriptions can only be deleted at the end of the term.

Fix: Wait for the term to end, or contact support if it is MOSA and still fails.

Search the full error library →

FAQ

Frequently asked questions

How long does it take to delete a Microsoft 365 tenant?

Once data is exported, deleting each subscription takes 72 hours to reach Deprovisioned, then the tenant can be deleted. Letting subscriptions lapse instead takes about 120 days.

Do I need to delete every enterprise app?

No. Delete the apps you or your users added. Microsoft first-party apps cannot be deleted and Microsoft says they do not block deletion.

I forgot the global admin password. Can I still decommission the tenant?

Not until someone regains Global Administrator access, through self-service reset, another admin, your partner, or Microsoft support. Follow the recover tenant access how-to, then come back to this playbook.

What happens to the domain when the tenant is deleted?

Remove it first if you need it elsewhere, because a domain can be verified in only one tenant at a time.

Will my data be recoverable after I delete a subscription?

You can reactivate within three days, but SharePoint and OneDrive data is deleted immediately. Export first.

Does a tenant delete itself if I stop paying?

Subscriptions move to Deleted after the Expired and Disabled stages, and Microsoft removes the directory only if no other service uses it.

SOURCES

Official sources

14 official pages this guide is based on

Vendors change limits and features, so confirm details on the source before you rely on them. Last checked 4 Nov 2026.

- Microsoft Learn: Delete a Microsoft Entra tenant
- Microsoft Learn: Can't delete a directory through the Azure portal
- Microsoft Learn: Close your Microsoft business account
- Microsoft Learn: Cancel your Microsoft business subscription
- Microsoft Learn: What happens to my data when my subscription ends
- Microsoft Learn: Verify first-party Microsoft applications in sign-in reports
- Microsoft Learn: Export search results in eDiscovery
- Microsoft Learn: Assign or unassign licenses
- Microsoft Learn: Windows Autopilot registration overview
- Microsoft Learn: Disconnect an Azure DevOps organization from Microsoft Entra ID
- Microsoft Learn: Turn off directory synchronization for Microsoft 365

- Microsoft Learn: Preventing tenant lockouts (Partner Center)
- Microsoft Learn: Delete a user from your organization
- Microsoft Learn: Cross-tenant OneDrive migration FAQs