

# How do I replace a lost key pair for my EC2 Windows instance when using EC2Config or EC2Launch to reset the administrator password?

<https://aws.amazon.com/premiumsupport/knowledge-center/ec2-windows-replace-lost-key-pair/>  
[https://docs.aws.amazon.com/AWSEC2/latest/WindowsGuide/ResettingAdminPassword\\_EC2Launch.html](https://docs.aws.amazon.com/AWSEC2/latest/WindowsGuide/ResettingAdminPassword_EC2Launch.html)

## Create an AMI and launch a new instance

When you use EC2Config or EC2Launch to reset a lost password, you must use its key pair to retrieve the administrator password. If you've lost the key pair, you can create an AMI of the existing instance, and then launch a new instance. You can then select a new key pair by following the instance launch wizard. Follow these steps:

Note: If you receive errors when running AWS Command Line Interface (AWS CLI) commands, [make sure that you're using the most recent AWS CLI version](#).

1. [Create a new key pair](#), and then save the private key file in a safe place. You can create a key pair using the console, the AWS CLI, or AWS Tools for Windows PowerShell.  
Note: To give the new key pair the same name as the lost key pair, you must first [delete the lost key pair](#).
2. From the [Amazon EC2 console](#), choose Instances from the navigation pane.
3. Select your instance. From the Description tab, note the Instance type, VPC ID, Subnet ID, Security groups, and IAM role for the instance.
4. [Stop your instance](#). Warning: If this instance has an [instance store volume](#), any data on it is lost when the instance is stopped. If the [instance shutdown behavior](#) is set to Terminate, the instance terminates when it is stopped.
5. Select your instance. For Actions, choose Image, Create Image.  
For Image name, enter a name.  
(Optional) For Image description, enter a description.
6. Choose Create Image, and then choose Close.
7. Choose AMIs from the navigation pane. If the Status is pending, the AMI is still being created. When the Status is available, continue to the next step.
8. Select the AMI, and then choose Launch.

9. [Complete the wizard](#). Be sure to select the same Instance type, VPC ID, Subnet ID, Security groups, and IAM role as the instance that you are replacing.  
For Select a key pair, choose the new key pair.
10. (Optional) If the original instance has an associated [Elastic IP address](#), [reassociate](#) the Elastic IP address to the new instance.
11. (Optional) If any [Amazon Elastic Block Store \(Amazon EBS\) volumes](#) aren't captured during the AMI creation, [detach](#) the volume, and then [attach](#) the volume to the new instance.  
Note: When you detach the volume, you can skip the step to unmount the volume, because the original instance is already in stopped state.
12. Now that the private key file is replaced, you can reset the administrator password.  
Use [EC2Config](#) for Windows Server 2012 R2 and earlier. Use [EC2Launch](#) for Windows Server 2016 and later.
13. (Optional) To clean up, you can [terminate the stopped instance](#) for which the key pair is lost.

# Reset the Windows administrator password using EC2Launch

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If you have lost your Windows administrator password and are using a Windows Server 2016 or later AMI, you can use the EC2Rescue tool, which uses the EC2Launch service to generate a new password.

If you are using a Windows Server AMI earlier than Windows Server 2016, see [Reset the Windows administrator password using EC2Config](#).

## Warning

When you stop an instance, the data on any instance store volumes is erased. To keep data from instance store volumes, be sure to back it up to persistent storage.

## Note

If you have disabled the local administrator account on the instance and your instance is configured for Systems Manager, you can also re-enable and reset your local administrator password by using EC2Rescue and Run Command. For more information, see [Using EC2Rescue for Windows Server with Systems Manager Run Command](#).

## Note

There is an AWS Systems Manager Automation document that automatically applies the manual steps necessary to reset the local administrator password. For more information, see [Reset Passwords and SSH Keys on Amazon EC2 Instances](#) in the *AWS Systems Manager User Guide*.

To reset your Windows administrator password using EC2Launch, you need to do the following:

- [Step 1: Detach the root volume from the instance](#)
- [Step 2: Attach the volume to a temporary instance](#)
- [Step 3: Reset the administrator password](#)
- [Step 4: Restart the original instance](#)

## Step 1: Detach the root volume from the instance

You can't use EC2Launch to reset an administrator password if the volume on which the password is stored is attached to an instance as the root volume. You must detach the volume from the original instance before you can attach it to a temporary instance as a secondary volume.

### To detach the root volume from the instance

1. Open the Amazon EC2 console at <https://console.aws.amazon.com/ec2/>.
2. In the navigation pane, choose **Instances**.
3. Select the instance that requires a password reset and choose **Actions, Instance state, Stop instance**. After the status of the instance changes to **Stopped**, continue with the next step.
4. (Optional) If you have the private key that you specified when you launched this instance, continue with the next step. Otherwise, use the following steps to replace the instance with a new instance that you launch with a new key pair.
  - a. Create a new key pair using the Amazon EC2 console. To give your new key pair the same name as the one for which you lost the private key, you must first delete the existing key pair.
  - b. Select the instance to replace. Note the instance type, VPC, subnet, security group, and IAM role of the instance.
  - c. Choose **Actions, Image and templates, Create image**. Type a name and a description for the image and choose **Create image**. In the navigation pane, choose **AMIs**. After the image status changes to **available**, continue to the next step.
  - d. Select the image and choose **Actions**, and then **Launch**.

- e. Complete the wizard, selecting the same instance type, VPC, subnet, security group, and IAM role as the instance to replace, and then choose **Launch**.
  - f. When prompted, choose the key pair that you created for the new instance, select the acknowledgement check box, and then choose **Launch Instances**.
  - g. (Optional) If the original instance has an associated Elastic IP address, transfer it to the new instance. If the original instance has EBS volumes in addition to the root volume, transfer them to the new instance.
  - h. Terminate the stopped instance, as it is no longer needed. For the remainder of this procedure, all references to the original instance apply to this instance that you just created.
5. Detach the root volume from the original instance as follows:
    - a. In the **Description** pane of the original instance, note the ID of the EBS volume listed as the **Root device**.
    - b. In the navigation pane, choose **Volumes**.
    - c. In the list of volumes, select the volume noted in the previous step, and choose **Actions, Detach Volume**. After the volume status changes to **available**, continue with the next step.

## Step 2: Attach the volume to a temporary instance

Next, launch a temporary instance and attach the volume to it as a secondary volume. This is the instance you use to run EC2Launch.

### To launch a temporary instance and attach the volume

1. Launch the temporary instance as follows:
  - a. In the navigation pane, choose **Instances**, choose **Launch instances**, and then select an AMI.

#### Important

To avoid disk signature collisions, you must select an AMI for a different version of Windows. For example, if the original instance runs Windows Server 2019, launch the temporary instance using the base AMI for Windows Server 2016.

- b. Leave the default instance type and choose **Next: Configure Instance Details**.
- c. On the **Configure Instance Details** page, for **Subnet**, select the same Availability Zone as the original instance and choose **Review and Launch**.

#### Important

The temporary instance must be in the same Availability Zone as the original instance. If your temporary instance is in a different Availability Zone, you can't attach the original instance's root volume to it.

- d. On the **Review Instance Launch** page, choose **Launch**.
- e. When prompted, create a new key pair, download it to a safe location on your computer, and then choose **Launch Instances**.
2. Attach the volume to the temporary instance as a secondary volume as follows:
  - a. In the navigation pane, choose **Volumes**, select the volume that you detached from the original instance, and then choose **Actions, Attach Volume**.
  - b. In the **Attach Volume** dialog box, for **Instances**, start typing the name or ID of your temporary instance and select the instance from the list.
  - c. For **Device**, type **xvdf** (if it isn't already there), and choose **Attach**.

## Step 3: Reset the administrator password

Next, connect to the temporary instance and use EC2Launch to reset the administrator password.

### To reset the administrator password

1. Connect to the temporary instance and use the EC2Rescue for Windows Server tool on the instance to reset the administrator password as follows:
  - a. Download the [EC2Rescue for Windows Server](#) zip file, extract the contents, and run **EC2Rescue.exe**.
  - b. On the **License Agreement** screen, read the license agreement, and, if you accept the terms, choose **I Agree**.
  - c. On the **Welcome to EC2Rescue for Windows Server** screen, choose **Next**.
  - d. On the **Select mode** screen, choose **Offline instance**.
  - e. On the **Select a disk** screen, select the **xvdf** device and choose **Next**.
  - f. Confirm the disk selection and choose **Yes**.
  - g. After the volume has loaded, choose **OK**.
  - h. On the **Select Offline Instance Option** screen, choose **Diagnose and Rescue**.
  - i. On the **Summary** screen, review the information and choose **Next**.
  - j. On the **Detected possible issues** screen, select **Reset Administrator Password** and choose **Next**.
  - k. On the **Confirm** screen, choose **Rescue, OK**.

1. On the **Done** screen, choose **Finish**.
- m. Close the EC2Rescue for Windows Server tool, disconnect from the temporary instance, and then return to the Amazon EC2 console.
2. Detach the secondary (xvdf) volume from the temporary instance as follows:
  - a. In the navigation pane, choose **Instances** and select the temporary instance.
  - b. On the **Storage** tab for the temporary instance, note the ID of the EBS volume listed as **xvdf**.
  - c. In the navigation pane, choose **Volumes**.
  - d. In the list of volumes, select the volume noted in the previous step, and choose **Actions, Detach Volume**. After the volume status changes to **available**, continue with the next step.

## Step 4: Restart the original instance

After you have reset the administrator password using EC2Launch, reattach the volume to the original instance as the root volume and connect to the instance using its key pair to retrieve the administrator password.

### To restart the original instance

1. Reattach the volume to the original instance as follows:
  - a. In the navigation pane, choose **Volumes**, select the volume that you detached from the temporary instance, and then choose **Actions, Attach Volume**.
  - b. In the **Attach Volume** dialog box, for **Instances**, start typing the name or ID of your original instance and then select the instance.
  - c. For **Device**, type **/dev/sda1**.
  - d. Choose **Attach**. After the volume status changes to **in-use**, continue to the next step.
2. In the navigation pane, choose **Instances**. Select the original instance and choose **Instance state, Start instance**. After the instance state changes to **Running**, continue to the next step.
3. Retrieve your new Windows administrator password using the private key for the new key pair and connect to the instance. For more information, see [Connect to your Windows instance](#).
4. (Optional) If you have no further use for the temporary instance, you can terminate it. Select the temporary instance, and choose **Instance State, Terminate instance**.

Thanks & Regards,



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