



Role based access control (RBAC)

ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 105

NetApp
July 24, 2026

Table of Contents

- Role based access control (RBAC) 1
 - Learn about ONTAP tools RBAC 1
 - RBAC components. 1
 - Two RBAC environments 1
 - RBAC with VMware vSphere 2
 - How vCenter Server RBAC works with ONTAP tools 2
 - vCenter Server RBAC considerations for ONTAP tools 4
 - RBAC with ONTAP 9
 - How ONTAP RBAC works with ONTAP tools 9
 - ONTAP RBAC considerations for ONTAP tools 10

Role based access control (RBAC)

Learn about ONTAP tools RBAC

Role-based access control (RBAC) is a security framework for controlling access to resources within an organization. RBAC simplifies administration by defining roles with specific levels of authority to perform actions, instead of assigning authorization to individual users. The defined roles are assigned to users, which helps reduce risk of error and simplifies management of access control across your organization.

The RBAC standard model consists of several implementation technologies or phases of increasing complexity. The result is that actual RBAC deployments, based on the needs of the software vendors and their customers, can differ and range from relatively simple to very complex.

RBAC components

At a high level, there are several components that are generally included in every RBAC implementation. These components are bound together in different ways as part of defining the authorization processes.

Privileges

A *privilege* is an action or capability that can be allowed or denied. It might be something simple, such as the ability to read a file, or a more abstract operation specific to a given software system. Privileges can also be defined to restrict access to REST API endpoints and CLI commands. Every RBAC implementation includes predefined privileges and might also allow administrators to create custom privileges.

Roles

A *role* is a container that includes one or more privileges. Roles are generally defined based on particular tasks or job functions. When a role is assigned to a user, the user is granted all the privileges contained in the role. And as with privileges, implementations include pre-defined roles and generally allow custom roles to be created.

Objects

An *object* represents a real or abstract resource identified within the RBAC environment. The actions defined through the privileges are performed on or with the associated objects. Depending on the implementation, privileges can be granted to an object type or a specific object instance.

Users and groups

Users are assigned or associated with a role applied after authentication. Some RBAC implementations allow only one role to be assigned to a user while others allow multiple roles per user, perhaps with only one role active at a time. Assigning roles to *groups* can further simplify security administration.

Permissions

A *permission* is a definition that binds a user or group along with a role to an object. Permissions can be useful with a hierarchical object model where they can optionally be inherited by the children in the hierarchy.

Two RBAC environments

There are two distinct RBAC environments you need to consider when working with ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10.

ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10 requires specific privileges in both vCenter and ONTAP to perform its

operations. While ONTAP tools automates storage management tasks, it does not create user accounts in either vCenter or ONTAP. Service accounts must be created by a vSphere administrator as needed. This documentation provides guidance for administrators to assign the necessary roles and permissions for effective ONTAP tools management.

VMware vCenter Server

The RBAC implementation in VMware vCenter Server is used to restrict access to objects exposed through the vSphere Client user interface. As part of installing ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10, the RBAC environment is extended to include additional objects representing the capabilities of ONTAP tools. Access to these objects is provided through the remote plug-in. See [vCenter Server RBAC environment](#) for more information.

ONTAP cluster

ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10 connects to an ONTAP cluster through the ONTAP REST API to perform storage related operations. Access to the storage resources is controlled through an ONTAP role associated with the ONTAP user provided during authentication. See [ONTAP RBAC environment](#) for more information.

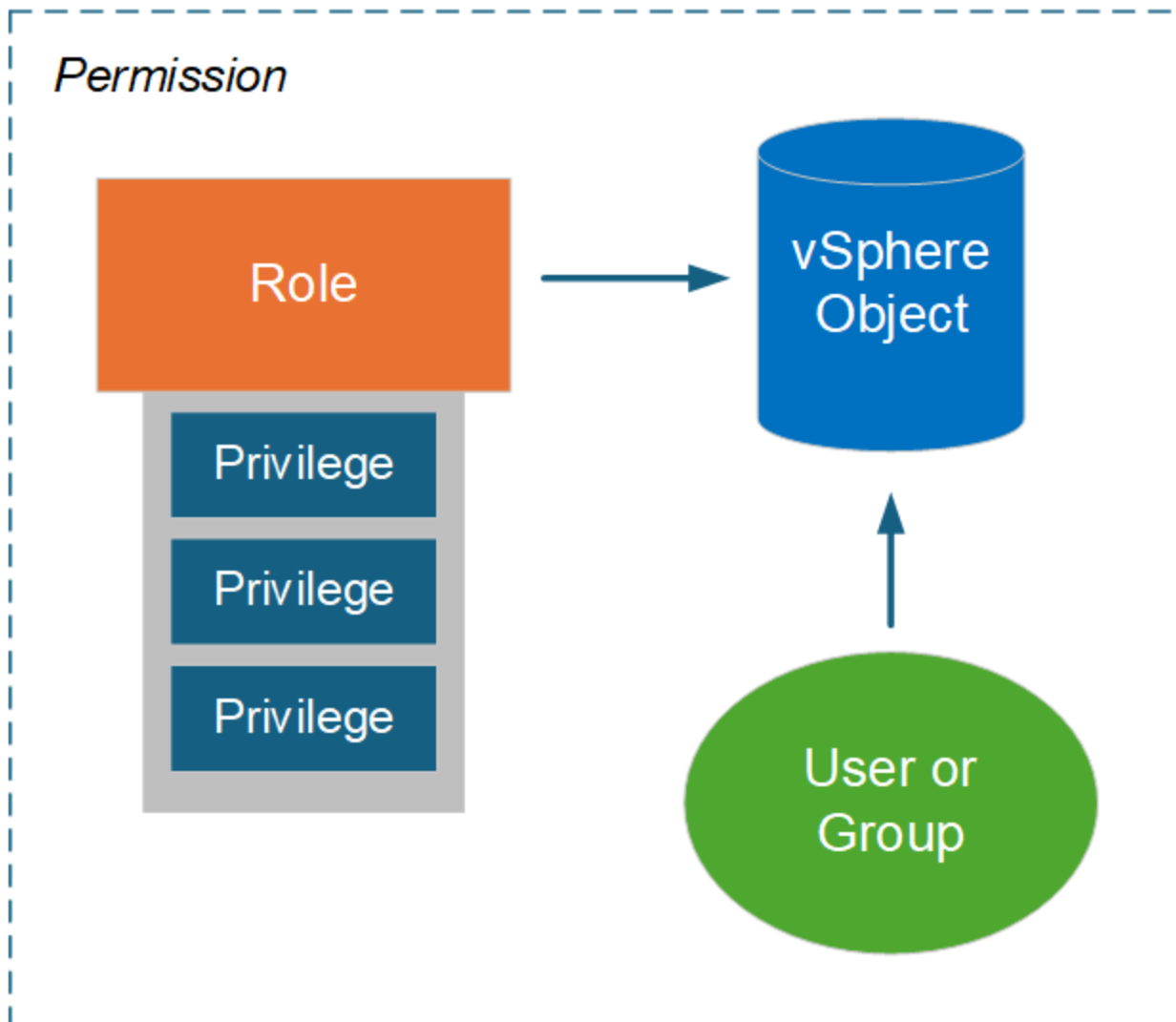
RBAC with VMware vSphere

How vCenter Server RBAC works with ONTAP tools

VMware vCenter Server provides an RBAC capability that enables you to control access to vSphere objects. It is an important part of the vCenter centralized authentication and authorization security services.

Illustration of a vCenter Server permission

A permission is the foundation for enforcing access control in the vCenter Server environment. It's applied to a vSphere object with a user or group included with the permission definition. A high-level illustration of a vCenter permission is provided in the figure below.



Components of a vCenter Server permission

A vCenter Server permission is a package of several components that are bound together when the permission is created.

vSphere objects

Permissions are associated with vSphere objects, such as the vCenter Server, ESXi hosts, virtual machines, datastores, data centers, and folders. Based on the object's assigned permissions, vCenter Server determines which actions or tasks can be performed on the object by each user or group. For the tasks specific to ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere, all permissions are assigned and validated at the root or root folder level of vCenter Server. See [Use RBAC with vCenter server](#) for more information.

Privileges and roles

There are two types of vSphere privileges used with ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10. To simplify working with RBAC in this environment, ONTAP tools provides roles containing the required native and custom privileges. The privileges include:

- Native vCenter Server privileges

These are the privileges provided by vCenter Server.

- ONTAP tools-specific privileges

These are custom privileges unique to ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere.

Users and groups

You can define users and groups using Active Directory or the local vCenter Server instance. Combined with a role, you can create a permission on an object in the vSphere object hierarchy. The permission grants access based on the privileges in the associated role. Note that roles aren't assigned directly to users in isolation. Instead, users and groups gain access to an object through role privileges as part of the larger vCenter Server permission.

vCenter Server RBAC considerations for ONTAP tools

There are several aspects of the ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10 RBAC implementation with vCenter Server you should consider before using it in a production environment.

vCenter roles and the administrator account

You only need to define and use the custom vCenter Server roles if you want to limit access to the vSphere objects and associated administrative tasks. If limiting access is not required, you can use an administrator account instead. Each administrator account is defined with the Administrator role at the top level of the object hierarchy. This provides full access to the vSphere objects, including those added by ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10.

vSphere object hierarchy

The vSphere object inventory is organized in a hierarchy. For example, you can move down the hierarchy as follows:

vCenter Server → Datacenter → Cluster → ESXi host → Virtual Machine

All permissions are validated in the vSphere object hierarchy except the VAAI plug-in operations, which are validated against the target ESXi host.

Roles included with ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10

To simplify working with vCenter Server RBAC, ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere provides predefined roles tailored to various administrative tasks.



You can create new custom roles if needed. To do so, clone one of the existing ONTAP tools roles and edit it as needed. After making the configuration changes, the affected vSphere client users need to log out and log back in to activate the changes.

To view the ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere roles, select **Menu** at the top of the vSphere Client and click **Administration** and then **Roles** on the left.

The following privileges must be included in the role assigned to the vCenter user responsible for deploying or onboarding vCenter Server. Ensure these privileges are configured as a prerequisite for the deployment or

onboarding process.

- Alarms
 - Acknowledge alarm
- Content Library
 - Add library item
 - Check in a template
 - Check out a template
 - Download files
 - Import storage
 - Read storage
 - Sync library item
 - Sync subscribed library
 - View configuration settings
- Datastore
 - Allocate space
 - Browse datastore
 - Low level file operations
 - Remove file
 - Update virtual machine files
 - Update virtual machine metadata
- ESX Agent Manager
 - View
- Folder
 - Create folder
- Host
 - Configuration
 - Advanced settings
 - Change settings
 - Network configuration
 - System resources
 - Virtual machine autostart configuration
 - Local operations
 - Create virtual machine
 - Delete virtual machine
 - Reconfigure virtual machine
- Network
 - Assign network

- Configure
- OvfManager
 - OvfConsumer Access
- Host profile
 - View
- Resource
 - Assign virtual machine to resource pool
- Scheduled task
 - Create tasks
 - Modify task
 - Run task
- Tasks
 - Create task
 - Update task
- vApp
 - Add virtual machine
 - Assign resource pool
 - Assign vApp
 - Create
 - Import
 - Move
 - Power off
 - Power on
 - Pull from URL
 - View OVF environment
- Virtual machine
 - Change Configuration
 - Add existing disk
 - Add new disk
 - Add or remove device
 - Advanced configuration
 - Change CPU count
 - Change Memory
 - Change Settings
 - Change resource
 - Extend virtual disk
 - Modify device settings

- Remove disk
- Reset guest information
- Upgrade virtual machine compatibility
- Edit Inventory
 - Create from existing
 - Create new
 - Move
 - Register
 - Remove
 - Unregister
- Interaction
 - Backup operation on virtual machine
 - Configure CD media
 - Configure floppy media
 - Connect devices
 - Console interaction
 - Guest operating system management by VIX API
 - Power off
 - Power on
 - Reset
 - Suspend
- Provisioning
 - Allow disk access
 - Clone template
 - Customize guest
 - Deploy template
 - Modify customization specification
 - Read customization specifications
- Snapshot management
 - Create snapshot
 - Remove snapshot
 - Rename snapshot
 - Revert to snapshot

There are three predefined roles as described below.

NetApp ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere Administrator

Provides all the native vCenter Server privileges and ONTAP tools-specific privileges required to perform core ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere administrator tasks.

NetApp ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere Read Only

Provides read-only access to ONTAP tools. These users cannot perform any ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere actions that are access-controlled.

NetApp ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere Provision

Provides some of the native vCenter Server privileges and ONTAP tools-specific privileges that are required to provision storage. You can perform the following tasks:

- Create new datastores
- Manage datastores

vSphere objects and ONTAP storage backends

The two RBAC environments work together. When performing a task in the vSphere client interface, the ONTAP tools roles defined to vCenter Server are checked first. If the operation is permitted by vSphere, then the ONTAP role privileges are examined. This second step is performed based on the ONTAP role assigned to the user when the storage backend was created and configured.

Working with vCenter Server RBAC

There are a few things to consider when working with the vCenter Server privileges and permissions.

Required privileges

To access the ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10 user interface, you need to have the ONTAP tools-specific *View* privilege. If you sign in to vSphere without this privilege and click the NetApp icon, ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere displays an error message and prevents you from accessing the user interface.

The assignment level in the vSphere object hierarchy determines which portions of the user interface you can access. Assigning the View privilege to the root object enables you to access ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere by clicking the NetApp icon.

You can instead assign the View privilege to another lower vSphere object level. However, this will limit the ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere menus that you can access and use.

Assigning permissions

You need to use vCenter Server permissions if you want to limit access to the vSphere objects and tasks. Where you assign permission in the vSphere object hierarchy determines the ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10 tasks users can perform.



Unless you need to define more restrictive access, it's generally a good practice to assign permissions at the root object or root folder level.

The permissions available with ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10 apply to custom non-vSphere objects, such as storage systems. If possible, you should assign these permissions to ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere root object because there is no vSphere object you can assign it to. For example, any permission that includes an ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere "Add/Modify/Remove storage systems" privilege should be assigned at the root object level.

When defining a permission at a higher level in the object hierarchy, you can configure the permission so it is passed down and inherited by the child objects. If needed you can assign additional permissions to the child objects that override the permissions inherited from the parent.

You can modify a permission at any time. If you change any of the privileges within a permission, users associated with the permission need to log out of vSphere and log back in to enable the change.

RBAC with ONTAP

How ONTAP RBAC works with ONTAP tools

ONTAP provides a robust and extensible RBAC environment. You can use the RBAC capability to control access to the storage and system operations as exposed through the REST API and CLI. It's helpful to be familiar with the environment before using it with an ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10 deployment.

Overview of the administrative options

There are several options available when using ONTAP RBAC depending on your environment and goals. An overview of the major administrative decisions is presented below. Also see [ONTAP Automation: Overview of RBAC security](#) for more information.



ONTAP RBAC is tailored to a storage environment and is simpler than the RBAC implementation provided with vCenter Server. With ONTAP, you assign a role directly to the user. Configuring explicit permissions, such as those used with vCenter Server, aren't needed with ONTAP RBAC.

Types of roles and privileges

An ONTAP role is required when defining an ONTAP user. There are two types of ONTAP roles:

- REST

The REST roles were introduced with ONTAP 9.6 and are generally applied to users accessing ONTAP through the REST API. The privileges included in these roles are defined in terms of access to the ONTAP REST API endpoints and the associated actions.

- Traditional

These are the legacy roles that existed prior to ONTAP 9.6. They continue to be a foundational aspect of RBAC. The privileges are defined in terms of access to the ONTAP CLI commands.

While the REST roles were introduced more recently, the traditional roles offer some advantages. For example, additional query parameters can be included to let privileges more precisely define the objects to which they apply.

Scope

ONTAP roles can be defined with one of two different scopes. They can be applied to a specific data SVM (SVM level) or to the entire ONTAP cluster (cluster level).

Role definitions

ONTAP provides a set of pre-defined roles at both the cluster and SVM level. You can also define custom roles.

Working with ONTAP REST roles

There are several considerations when using the ONTAP REST roles included with ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10.

Role mapping

Whether using a traditional or REST role, all ONTAP access decisions are made based on the underlying CLI command. But because the privileges in a REST role are defined in terms of the REST API endpoints, ONTAP needs to create a *mapped* traditional role for each of the REST roles. Therefore each REST role maps to an underlying traditional role. This allows ONTAP to make access control decisions in a consistent way regardless of the role type. You cannot modify the parallel mapped roles.

Defining a REST role using CLI privileges

Because ONTAP always uses the CLI commands to determine access at a base level, it's possible to express a REST role using CLI command privileges instead of REST endpoints. One benefit of this approach is the additional granularity available with the traditional roles.

Administrative interface when defining ONTAP roles

You can create users and roles with the ONTAP CLI and REST API. However, it's more convenient to use the System Manager interface along with the JSON file available through the ONTAP tools Manager. See [Use ONTAP RBAC with ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10](#) for more information.

ONTAP RBAC considerations for ONTAP tools

There are several aspects of the ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere 10 RBAC implementation with ONTAP you should consider before using it in a production environment.

Overview of the configuration process

ONTAP tools for VMware vSphere includes support for creating an ONTAP user with a custom role. The definitions are packaged in a JSON file that you can upload to the ONTAP cluster. You can create the user and tailor the role for your environment and security needs.

The major configuration steps are described at a high level below. Refer to [Configure ONTAP user roles and privileges](#) for more details.

1. Prepare

You need to have administrative credentials for both the ONTAP tools Manager and the ONTAP cluster.

2. Download the JSON definition file

After signing in to the ONTAP tools Manager user interface, you can download the JSON file containing the RBAC definitions.

3. Create an ONTAP user with a role

After signing in to System Manager, you can create the user and role:

- a. Select **Cluster** on the left and then **Settings**.
- b. Scroll down to **Users and roles** and click **→**.
- c. Select **Add** under **Users** and select **Virtualization products**.
- d. Select the JSON file on your local workstation and upload it.

4. Configure the role

As part of defining the role, you need to make several administrative decisions. See [Configure the role using System Manager](#) for more details.

Configure the role using System Manager

After you begin creating a new user and role with System Manager and you have uploaded the JSON file, you can customize the role based on your environment and needs.

Core user and role configuration

The RBAC definitions are packaged as several product capabilities, including combinations of VSC, VASA Provider, and SRA. You should select the environment or environments where you need RBAC support. For example, if you want roles to support the remote plug-in capability, select VSC. You also need to choose the user name and associated password.

Privileges

The role privileges are arranged in four sets based on the level of access needed for ONTAP storage. The privileges which the roles are based on include:

- Discovery

This role enables you to add storage systems.

- Create storage

This role enables you to create storage. It also includes all the privileges associated with the discovery role.

- Modify storage

This role enables you to modify storage. It also includes all the privileges associated with the discovery and create storage roles.

- Destroy storage

This role enables you to destroy storage. It also includes all the privileges associated with the discovery, create storage, and modify storage roles.

Generate the user with a role

After you've selected the configuration options for your environment, click **Add** and ONTAP creates the user and role. The name of the generated role is a concatenation of the following values:

- Constant prefix value defined in the JSON file (for example "OTV_10")
- Product capability you selected
- List of the privilege sets.

Example

OTV_10_VSC_Discovery_Create

The new user will be added to the list on the 'Users and roles' page. Note that both HTTP and ONTAPI user login methods are supported.

Copyright information

Copyright © 2026 NetApp, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Printed in the U.S. No part of this document covered by copyright may be reproduced in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or storage in an electronic retrieval system—without prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Software derived from copyrighted NetApp material is subject to the following license and disclaimer:

THIS SOFTWARE IS PROVIDED BY NETAPP “AS IS” AND WITHOUT ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, WHICH ARE HEREBY DISCLAIMED. IN NO EVENT SHALL NETAPP BE LIABLE FOR ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, INCIDENTAL, SPECIAL, EXEMPLARY, OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, PROCUREMENT OF SUBSTITUTE GOODS OR SERVICES; LOSS OF USE, DATA, OR PROFITS; OR BUSINESS INTERRUPTION) HOWEVER CAUSED AND ON ANY THEORY OF LIABILITY, WHETHER IN CONTRACT, STRICT LIABILITY, OR TORT (INCLUDING NEGLIGENCE OR OTHERWISE) ARISING IN ANY WAY OUT OF THE USE OF THIS SOFTWARE, EVEN IF ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

NetApp reserves the right to change any products described herein at any time, and without notice. NetApp assumes no responsibility or liability arising from the use of products described herein, except as expressly agreed to in writing by NetApp. The use or purchase of this product does not convey a license under any patent rights, trademark rights, or any other intellectual property rights of NetApp.

The product described in this manual may be protected by one or more U.S. patents, foreign patents, or pending applications.

LIMITED RIGHTS LEGEND: Use, duplication, or disclosure by the government is subject to restrictions as set forth in subparagraph (b)(3) of the Rights in Technical Data -Noncommercial Items at DFARS 252.227-7013 (FEB 2014) and FAR 52.227-19 (DEC 2007).

Data contained herein pertains to a commercial product and/or commercial service (as defined in FAR 2.101) and is proprietary to NetApp, Inc. All NetApp technical data and computer software provided under this Agreement is commercial in nature and developed solely at private expense. The U.S. Government has a non-exclusive, non-transferrable, nonsublicensable, worldwide, limited irrevocable license to use the Data only in connection with and in support of the U.S. Government contract under which the Data was delivered. Except as provided herein, the Data may not be used, disclosed, reproduced, modified, performed, or displayed without the prior written approval of NetApp, Inc. United States Government license rights for the Department of Defense are limited to those rights identified in DFARS clause 252.227-7015(b) (FEB 2014).

Trademark information

NETAPP, the NETAPP logo, and the marks listed at <http://www.netapp.com/TM> are trademarks of NetApp, Inc. Other company and product names may be trademarks of their respective owners.