Recommended volume and file or LUN configuration combinations

ONTAP 9

NetApp
February 12, 2026

Table of Contents

Recommended volume and file or LUN configuration combinations

Recommended volume and file or LUN configuration combinations overview

There are specific combinations of FlexVol volume and file or LUN configurations you can use, depending on your application and administration requirements. Understanding the benefits and costs of these combinations can help you determine the right volume and LUN configuration combination for your environment.

The following volume and LUN configuration combinations are recommended:

- Space-reserved files or LUNs with thick volume provisioning
- Non-space-reserved files or LUNs with thin volume provisioning
- Space-reserved files or LUNs with semi-thick volume provisioning

You can use SCSI thin provisioning on your LUNs in conjunction with any of these configuration combinations.

Space-reserved files or LUNs with thick volume provisioning

Benefits:

- All write operations within space-reserved files are guaranteed; they will not fail due to insufficient space.
- There are no restrictions on storage efficiency and data protection technologies on the volume.

Costs and limitations:

- Enough space must be set aside from the aggregate up front to support the thickly provisioned volume.
- Space equal to twice the size of the LUN is allocated from the volume at LUN creation time.

Non-space-reserved files or LUNs with thin volume provisioning

Benefits:

- There are no restrictions on storage efficiency and data protection technologies on the volume.
- Space is allocated only as it is used.

Costs and restrictions:

- Write operations are not guaranteed; they can fail if the volume runs out of free space.
- You must manage the free space in the aggregate effectively to prevent the aggregate from running out of free space.

Space-reserved files or LUNs with semi-thick volume provisioning

Benefits:

Less space is reserved up front than for thick volume provisioning, and a best-effort write guarantee is still provided.

Costs and restrictions:

- Write operations can fail with this option.

  You can mitigate this risk by properly balancing free space in the volume against data volatility.

- You cannot rely on retention of data protection objects such as snapshots and FlexClone files and LUNs.
- You cannot use ONTAP block-sharing storage efficiency capabilities that cannot be automatically deleted, including deduplication, compression, and ODX/Copy Offload.

Determine the correct volume and LUN configuration combination for your environment

Answering a few basic questions about your environment can help you determine the best FlexVol volume and LUN configuration for your environment.

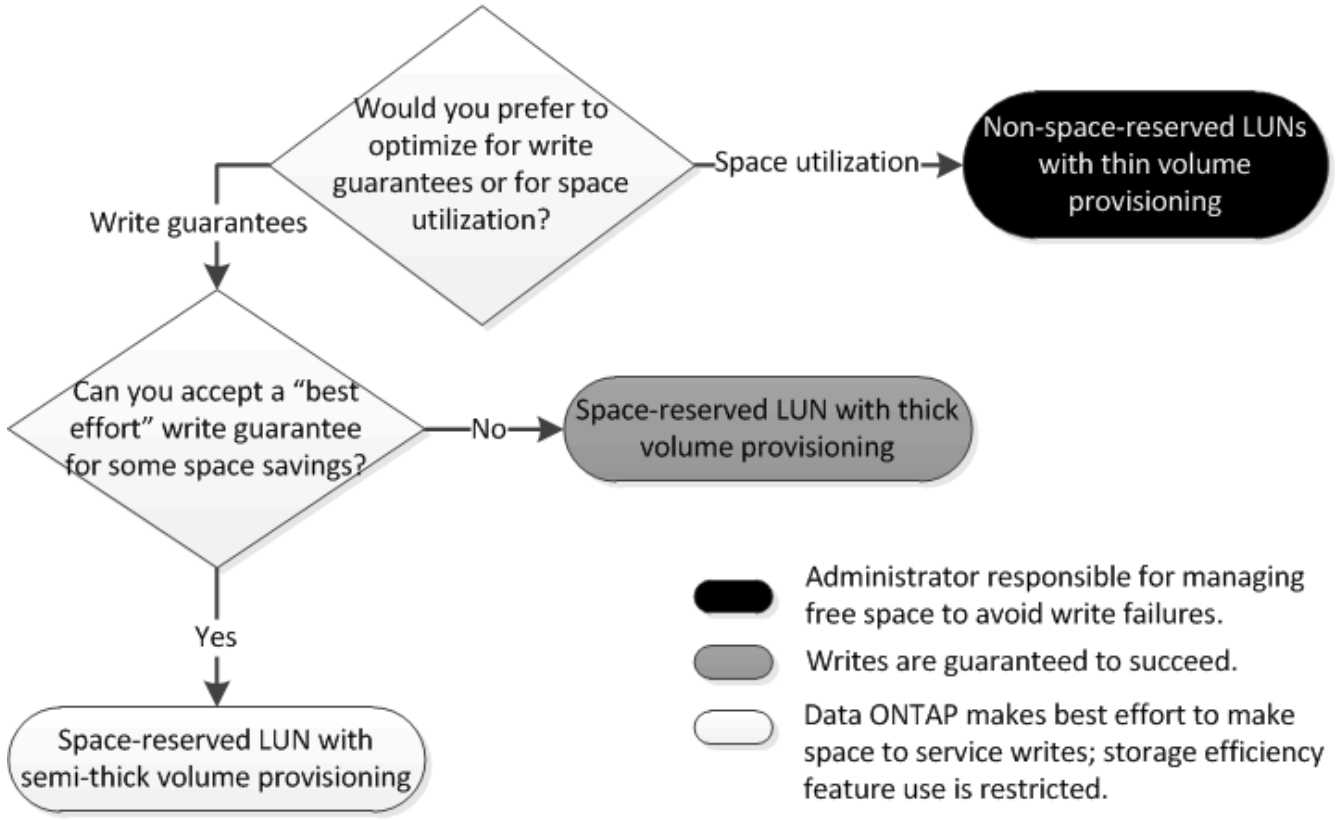
About this task

You can optimize your LUN and volume configurations for maximum storage utilization or for the security of write guarantees. Based on your requirements for storage utilization and your ability to monitor and replenish free space quickly, you must determine the FlexVol volume and LUN volumes appropriate for your installation.

You do not need a separate volume for each LUN.

Step

1. Use the following decision tree to determine the best volume and LUN configuration combination for your environment:



Calculate rate of data growth for LUNs

You need to know the rate at which your LUN data is growing over time to determine whether you should use space-reserved LUNs or non-space-reserved LUNs.

About this task

If you have a consistently high rate of data growth, then space-reserved LUNs might be a better option for you. If you have a low rate of data growth, then you should consider non-space-reserved LUNs.

You can use tools such as OnCommand Insight to calculate your rate of data growth or you can calculate it manually. The following steps are for manual calculation.

Steps

1. Set up a space-reserved LUN.
2. Monitor the data on the LUN for a set period of time, such as one week.

   Make sure that your monitoring period is long enough to form a representative sample of regularly occurring increases in data growth. For instance, you might consistently have a large amount of data growth at the end of each month.

3. Each day, record in GB how much your data grows.
4. At the end of your monitoring period, add the totals for each day together, and then divide by the number of days in your monitoring period.

   This calculation yields your average rate of growth.

Example

In this example, you need a 200 GB LUN. You decide to monitor the LUN for a week and record the following daily data changes:

- Sunday: 20 GB
- Monday: 18 GB
- Tuesday: 17 GB
- Wednesday: 20 GB
- Thursday: 20 GB
- Friday: 23 GB
- Saturday: 22 GB

In this example, your rate of growth is (20+18+17+20+20+23+22) / 7 = 20 GB per day.

Configuration settings for space-reserved files or LUNs with thick-provisioned volumes

This FlexVol volume and file or LUN configuration combination provides the ability to use storage efficiency technologies and does not require you to actively monitor your free space, because sufficient space is allocated up front.

The following settings are required to configure a space-reserved file or LUN in a volume using thick provisioning:

Volume setting	Value
Guarantee	Volume
Fractional reserve	100
Snapshot reserve	Any
Snapshot autodelete	Optional
Autogrow	Optional; if enabled, aggregate free space must be actively monitored.

File or LUN setting	Value
Space reservation	Enabled

Configuration settings for non-space-reserved files or LUNs with thin-provisioned volumes

This FlexVol volume and file or LUN configuration combination requires the smallest amount of storage to be allocated up front, but requires active free space management to

prevent errors due to lack of space.

The following settings are required to configure a non-space-reserved files or LUN in a thin-provisioned volume:

Volume setting	Value
Guarantee	None
Fractional reserve	0
Snapshot reserve	Any
Snapshot autodelete	Optional
Autogrow	Optional

File or LUN setting	Value
Space reservation	Disabled

Additional considerations

When the volume or aggregate runs out of space, write operations to the file or LUN can fail.

If you do not want to actively monitor free space for both the volume and the aggregate, you should enable Autogrow for the volume and set the maximum size for the volume to the size of the aggregate. In this configuration, you must monitor aggregate free space actively, but you do not need to monitor the free space in the volume.

Configuration settings for space-reserved files or LUNs with semi-thick volume provisioning

This FlexVol volume and file or LUN configuration combination requires less storage to be allocated up front than the fully provisioned combination, but places restrictions on the efficiency technologies you can use for the volume. Overwrites are fulfilled on a best-effort basis for this configuration combination.

The following settings are required to configure a space-reserved LUN in a volume using semi-thick provisioning:

Volume setting	Value
Guarantee	Volume
Fractional reserve	0

Volume setting	Value
Snapshot reserve	0
Snapshot autodelete	On, with a commitment level of destroy, a destroy list that includes all objects, the trigger set to volume, and all FlexClone LUNs and FlexClone files enabled for automatic deletion.
Autogrow	Optional; if enabled, aggregate free space must be actively monitored.

File or LUN setting	Value
Space reservation	Enabled

Technology restrictions

You cannot use the following volume storage efficiency technologies for this configuration combination:

- Compression
- Deduplication
- ODX and FlexClone Copy Offload
- FlexClone LUNs and FlexClone files not marked for automatic deletion (active clones)
- FlexClone subfiles
- ODX/Copy Offload

Additional considerations

The following facts must be considered when employing this configuration combination:

- When the volume that supports that LUN runs low on space, protection data (FlexClone LUNs and files, snapshots) is destroyed.
- Write operations can time out and fail when the volume runs out of free space.

Compression is enabled by default for AFF platforms. You must explicitly disable compression for any volume for which you want to use semi-thick provisioning on an AFF platform.

Copyright information

Trademark information