AKS Cost Optimization Checklist (Practical & Actionable)

Use this checklist to systematically review and reduce Azure Kubernetes Service (AKS) costs across Development, Test, and Production environments.

#	Category	Checklist Item	Applies To	Done
1	Visibility	Review AKS costs in Azure Cost Analysis	All	
2	Containers	Optimize Docker image size and image layers	All	
3	Scaling	Enable Horizontal Pod Autoscaler (HPA)	All	
4	Scaling	Enable Kubernetes Cluster Autoscaler	All	
5	Node Pools	Separate system and user node pools	All	
6	Node Pools	Enable autoscaling per user node pool	All	
7	VM Selection	Choose correct virtual machine family and size	All	
8	VM Architecture	Prefer ARM-based virtual machines where supported	All	
9	Scheduling	Stop AKS cluster during non-working hours	Dev/Test	
10	Scheduling	Stop unused user node pools	Dev/Test	
11	Control Plane	Use Free control plane SKU for Dev/Test clusters	Dev/Test	
12	Control Plane	Enable Standard control plane SKU for Production clusters	Prod	
13	Spot VMs	Use Spot node pools for stateless workloads	All	
14	Workloads	Run batch and fault-tolerant jobs on Spot nodes	All	
15	Reservations	Purchase Azure VM Reservations (1-3 years)	Long-term	
16	Savings Plan	Enable Azure Savings Plan for Compute	Long-term	
17	Licensing	Enable Azure Hybrid Benefit for Windows workloads	Windows	
18	Subscriptions	Use Azure Dev/Test subscriptions for non-production environments	Dev/Test	
19	Networking	Review cross-zone and virtual network peering traffic costs	All	
20	Ingress	Validate Application Gateway ingress controller cost	All	
21	Storage	Right-size persistent disks, file shares, and snapshots	All	
22	Monitoring	Optimize Log Analytics workspace and metrics retention	All	
23	Backups	Review AKS backup frequency and retention policies	All	
24	Governance	Audit and remove unused node pools and Azure resources	All	