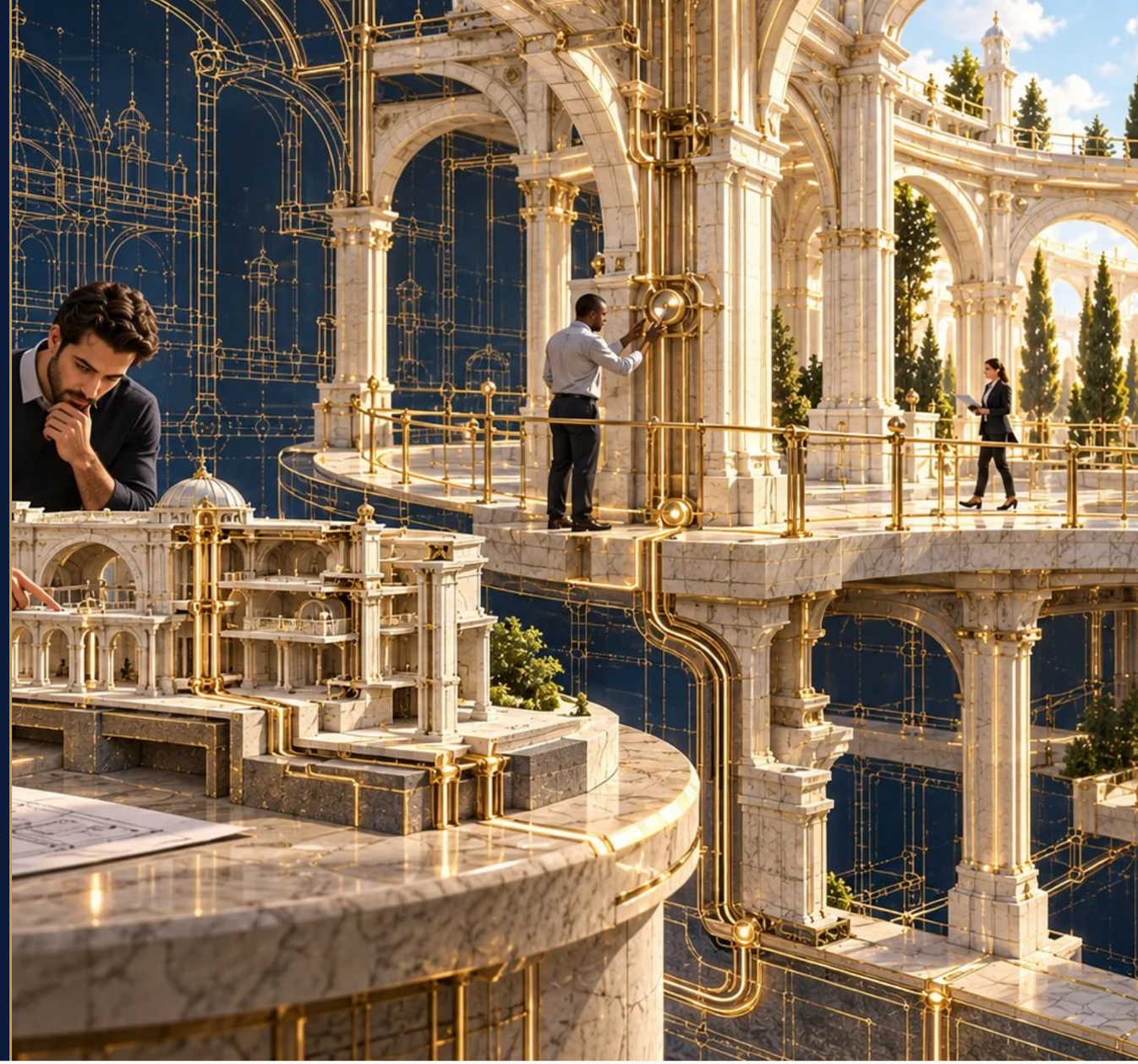
OPENAI ARCHITECTURE PRIMER

OpenAI API Data Controls

Retention, residency, processing, and encryption

A visual guide to the controls that govern what persists, where data resides, and how application state is protected.

FIRST-PARTY DOCUMENTATION / INDEPENDENT LUMINITY SYNTHESIS



Four layers govern what persists

A visual primer on API training use, retention controls, regional storage and processing, and customer-managed encryption.

AT A GLANCE

2
stored-data categories: abuse logs + application state

30
days: default abuse-monitoring retention, at most

2
approved reduced-retention controls: MAM + ZDR

0
training use unless you explicitly opt in

Retention controls 01

Default monitoring, Modified Abuse Monitoring, Zero Data Retention, and feature-specific application state.

Residency + encryption 02

Regional storage and processing are separate decisions. Enterprise Key Management applies to application state.

IN THIS SET

Three chapters

01 **Retention controls**
What OpenAI stores, how default monitoring works, and what MAM or ZDR changes.

02 **Residency + encryption**
Separate regional storage, regional processing, and externally managed encryption keys.

03 **Choosing a posture**
A decision path that starts with endpoint behavior and ends with a verified configuration.

Endpoint, feature, model, tool, and region support can change. Recheck the live OpenAI documentation before deployment.

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Source: https://developers.openai.com/api/docs/guides/your-data · verified Oct 26, 2026

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OpenAI API data controls

Retention is the combination of abuse-monitoring logs, application state, and endpoint-specific behavior.

01

What may be stored?

✓ Abuse-monitoring logs	DEFAULT: UP TO 30 DAYS
✓ Application state	FEATURE DEPENDENT
! API data used for training	NO — UNLESS OPT IN
✓ MAM or ZDR enabled	OPENAI APPROVAL
! Third-party tools and services	THEIR OWN POLICIES

Organization control → **Project may inherit or override**

02

How a request is governed

Input · customer content + metadata | **Policy · org + project settings** | **Feature · endpoint behavior**

1. **Send** — Prompt, files, audio, or images
2. **Monitor** — Abuse detection under selected posture
3. **Persist** — Only when a feature creates state
4. **Expire** — Delete or retain by endpoint rules

CONTROL	STATE	LIMIT
Default, MAM, or ZDR	**Endpoint and feature decide**	**ZDR does not make every feature stateless**

03

Control postures

Default — BASELINE

Customer content may appear in abuse-monitoring logs, retained for up to 30 days.

Modified Abuse Monitoring — APPROVAL

Excludes customer content from abuse-monitoring logs, subject to documented exceptions.

Zero Data Retention — APPROVAL

MAM protections plus store=false enforcement for Responses and Chat Completions.

ZDR + Private Safety Processing — SPECIAL

Automated safety monitoring under ZDR protections; customer-controlled storage is required.

LIMITS TO CHECK

- Image/file safety exception
- Prompt cache
- Hosted containers
- Remote MCP policies
- Persistent resources

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Regional storage, regional processing, and customer-managed encryption are related—but not interchangeable.

01

Can the project use regional controls?

✓ Configure when creating a new project	PROJECT LEVEL
✓ Use a region-prefixed API domain	REQUEST ROUTING
✓ Non-US region requirements	MAM/ZDR + AMENDMENT
! Regional processing	ONLY WHERE SUPPORTED
! System data within selected region	NOT GUARANTEED

Choose project region → **Verify endpoint + model support**

02

How regional controls apply

Project · selected region | **Domain · us / eu / other supported prefix** | **Support · endpoint + model + mode**

1 **Create** — New project in selected region

2 **Route** — Call the region-prefixed domain

3 **Store** — Customer content at rest, where state exists

4 **Process** — In-region inference only when listed

STORAGE	PROCESSING	BOUNDARY
Applies to customer content at rest	**Separate capability; region dependent**	**System data and third-party services remain outside the promise**

03

Four distinct controls

Regional storage — AT REST

Keeps customer content at rest in the selected region when an endpoint must persist it.

Regional processing — INFERENCE

Runs inference in the selected region only for supported services, models, and modes.

Enterprise Key Management — BYOK

Encrypts OpenAI application state with keys managed through an external supported KMS.

External-service boundary — VERIFY

Remote MCP and other third parties remain subject to their own retention and residency policies.

DO NOT ASSUME

- Storage = processing
- All models are supported
- System data is regional
- Third parties inherit controls
- EKM covers every product

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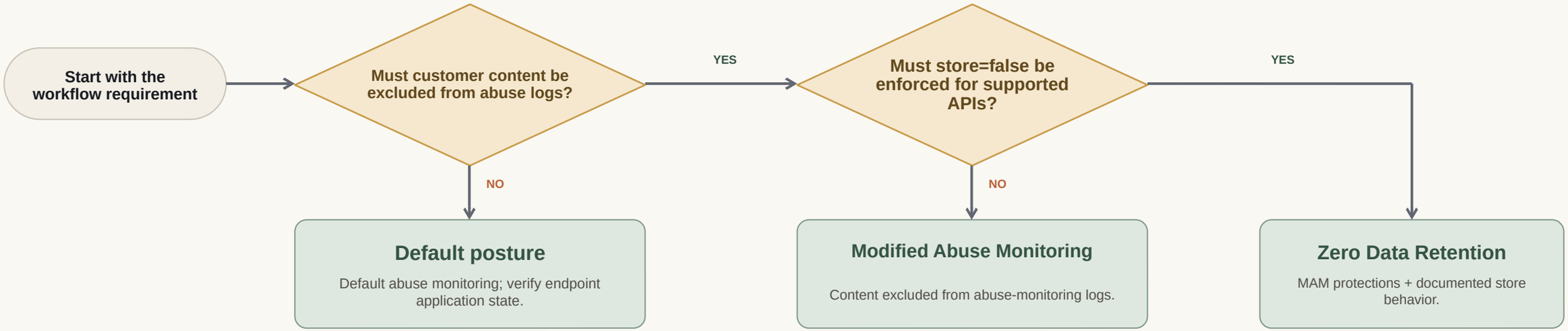
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Choose a posture from the workflow's persistence, monitoring, geography, and encryption requirements.



OVERLAYS APPLY AFTER THE RETENTION POSTURE

Application state required? STATE

Choose a stateful endpoint or feature; define deletion, expiry, and resource ownership.

Regional controls required? RESIDENCY

Create the project in a supported region and verify endpoint, model, and mode support.

Managed encryption required EKM

Enable Enterprise Key Management for supported application state and verify exclusions.

Final verification REVIEW

Check endpoints, tools, models, regions, external services, safety exceptions, and live documentation.

ARCHITECTURE RULE

- Retention posture does not replace endpoint design
- Residency does not imply processing
- EKM does not remove lifecycle duties

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