App Store Review Process Checklist

The App Store is the official platform for all things iOS, trusted by millions of loyal users. It is also the right place to be if you want to reach a wider audience and start selling your app. But rumor has it that submitting an app to the App Store is often a daunting feat.

In reality, all iOS apps must pass a strict review process before they can be published on the App Store. This includes guidelines, rules, and requirements designed to guarantee app quality and security and ensure accurate listings. Don't fret—this checklist is made to help.

Pre-Submission Preparations

First things first: let's get your iOS app ready for submission to the App Store. Before you do anything else, take a moment to sift through the [App Review Guidelines](#) and [Human Interface Guidelines](#). They are iOS developers' Bible, so have them bookmarked for later.

App Name and Metadata

There are several requirements for choosing the acceptable app name and metadata for the App Store, but the most important is - accuracy. Every bit of information you plan to include in your listing must be up-to-date and faithful to your app's core experience.

- All app names in the App Store are limited to 30 characters.

- Be unique and avoid names that are too similar to other apps.

- The app name should always be relevant to the app category.

- Metadata should not include prices or competitor mentions.

- Apple recommends using 4+ age rating content in metadata.

App Icon and Screenshots

The App Store has stylistic guidelines related to the font, color scheme, and other visual elements of the app (more on that later). That includes the icon and promotional material: screenshots. Your design should adhere to these tips and requirements:

- The icon should be a square, full-bleed, 1024x1024 graphical image.

- It must look clear on all iOS devices, including macOS and watchOS.

- App screenshots must be submitted in PNG, JPEG, or video format.

- Screenshots must be captured directly from the app (no external pics).

- Size and language must be adjusted to all iOS devices and local listings.

Privacy Policy and Terms of Use

Apple requires all iOS apps to have a privacy policy, even when they don't collect data. If your app doesn't include a link to your privacy policy (in the App Store Connect metadata field) and within the app itself, you will not be able to publish it on the App Store.

- Detail what user data the app collects, how it collects it, and for what end.

- Prove the legitimacy of any third party with whom your app shares user data.

- Explain your data retention/deletion policies and if users can revoke consent.

- If your app provides access to third-party content, ensure that it is permitted.

- Apple encourages app developers to include Terms of Use whenever applicable.

Technical Requirements

Apple famously prioritizes its users' convenience. Unsurprisingly, the technical requirements for the App Store apps reflect this in several aspects. Your app's compatibility, performance, and size will be reviewed based on non-negotiable quality standards.

Compatibility

Don't submit an app to the App Store without testing it first. The app should work flawlessly on all intended devices and iOS versions and work with the latest iOS features.

- All iOS apps admitted to the App Store must function across iOS devices.
- iPhone apps should run on iPad and other iOS devices whenever possible.

Performance

You should know that the App Store doesn't accept demos, betas, or trial versions. In addition to build completeness, you must also pay attention to your app's overall performance and how it operates in the environment (the app's resource requirements and limits).

- A submitted build must be the final version that is fully functional and stable.

- Opt for power efficiency and don't put unneeded strain on device resources.

- Apps should not require a device restart or modification of system settings.

- Test your app to eliminate crashes and bugs before you file a submission.

- Make sure your app's performance doesn't get in the way of smooth UX.

App Size

The total uncompressed size of the iOS app must be [less than 4GB](#) in order to be accepted to the App Store. The same app size rule applies to tvOS apps, while Apple Watch apps must not exceed 75MB. The executable file for iOS 9.0 and later must be under 500MB.

- Follow the App Store's size guidelines for the intended iOS version.

- Reduce the app size for faster downloads using asset compression.

Content and Functionality

Apple's "Minimum Functionality" requirement states that the app's features, content, and UI "must elevate it beyond a repackaged website," be useful or provide entertainment value. Otherwise, the app might get rejected. Here's what else to pay attention to:

Compliance with the App Store Guidelines

The App Review Guidelines provide detailed information on what is allowed, permissible, and strictly forbidden on the App Store. Not taking the time to study these requirements or failing to comply with them are among the top reasons why iOS apps get rejected.

- Apps with illegal, offensive, or harmful content don't belong in the App Store.

- App submissions with false information and fake features are not considered.

User Interface (UI)

Apple is adamant about design consistency and intuitive navigation: that much is apparent from its famous Human Interface Guidelines. As a precious resource for all app developers, this rulebook features extensive guidance and best practices for iOS UX design.

- An app for a specific iOS device must run on every screen size for that device.

- The layout should be clear, intuitive, and help users find what they need quickly.

- Use fonts and colors recommended by Apple to achieve an appealing design.

- Perfect user experience by adding gestures and animations approved by Apple.

- The App Store prefers professional-looking, user-friendly, and engaging apps.

In-App Purchases (IAPs)

Most apps make a profit from in-app purchases (IAPs). According to Apple's guidelines, the IAP system allows users to purchase subscriptions, features, or additional content within an app. Understanding the dos and don'ts of this system is crucial for app success.

- Read the In-App Purchase guidelines carefully (under Business > Payments).

- Make sure you understand exactly what you can and can't sell within your app.

- Ideally, you should let people experience your app before making a purchase.

- An app should provide a transparent and easy-to-complete purchasing process.

- Include accurate and up-to-date pricing information for each in-app purchase.

- Create a help system for users who struggle to understand or make a purchase.

- Test all in-app purchase flows before submitting an app to make sure they work.

Submission Process

You've checked all the boxes and made sure your app is eligible for getting published in the App Store? It's time for the big step, then - app submission. Here's what to do next:

App Store Connect

To submit an app to the App Store, you need access to App Store Connect, for which you need an Apple Developer Account. You can open one and get your own Apple ID by enrolling in the Apple Developer Program as an individual or organization for $99 per year.

- Create a Developer Account to get to the App Store Connect and add a new app.

- Fill in the New App form and provide the required information for the Product Page.

- Define roles and permissions for your app and upload certificates and identifiers.

- If you're submitting a paid app, sign a contract that covers the terms of payment.

App Review Information

In addition to the Product Page information, which includes the app name, language, bundle ID, SKU, pricing, and more, each submission must have an accurately filled App Review Information form with a detailed overview of your app's features and functionalities.

- Provide test account credentials if your app requires users to sign in.

- Include your contact in case the App Review Team needs to contact you.

Build Submission

Finally, we arrive at the most exciting part of this journey - the actual app build submission. Thanks to Xcode, this is also the easiest step to completing the process:

- Add your Apple Developer Account to [Xcode](#) to get started.

- Follow Xcode's submission guidelines to distribute the app.

- Wait for Xcode to scan your app for errors and to upload it.

- Return to Apple Store Connect and submit the app for review.

Post-Submission

Now that your submission has been filed, you can finally relax and wait for the App Store Review Team to get back to you. On average, 90% of apps are reviewed within 48 hours, but complex builds often take longer. What next? Here's what to do post-submission:

Responding to Review Feedback

Apple famously rejected [1.7 million app submissions](#) in 2022, so don't take it the wrong way if your app doesn't get accepted upon the first review. Instead, contact the App Store Review Team via the Resolution Center and find out how to improve and resubmit the app.

- Address any issues the App Store Review Team has with your app.

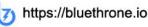- Improve, test, and resubmit your app build as soon as possible.

App Updates

The App Review Guidelines don't leave any room for doubt when it comes to app updates: your app will be removed from the App Store if it offers a degraded user experience. Update your app regularly to keep it functional and engaging to new and existing consumers.

- Both functional (fixes) and qualitative (new features) updates are welcome.

- Ensure compliance with the latest App Store guidelines for each new update.

- Inform users about new features and app changes in the What's New section.

Check All the Boxes

The App Store review process is definitely not a walk in the park but listen: there's a good reason why Apple is the most influential tech company on the planet. Having your app published gets you more than visibility. If Apple vouches for your app, that's because it's good.

iOS users know that, and that makes this arduous process worth it. Besides, you can pave a smoother review path for your app if you follow the guidelines and use a checklist. And that guarantees other benefits, too, such as beating your competition to the market.

Sounds good? If you want to keep this checklist for easy reference, get it here.