



## The App Maker's Guide to Ensuring a Successful App Launch



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When you are developing an app, there are many steps involved from designing and testing to eventually getting your app approved for release on the platform of your choice. But what if launching your app doesn't go as planned? Various speedbumps can delay your app's acceptance or continued availability in an app store. This document helps you avoid or resolve the most common issues, including conflicting revenue flows, the use of undocumented or unauthorised application programming interfaces (APIs), and conflicts between the platform's privacy protections and the functionality of the app. We hope that it can contribute to a successful launch of your app. Please keep in mind that ACT | The App Association does not provide legal advice, and none of the information provided in this document should be construed as legal advice.



# BEFORE YOU SUBMIT

## **Consult the review guidelines from the beginning.**

Before launching your app on a platform, it will go through a review process, so the very first thing you should do when you start thinking about your app is familiarise yourself with the guidelines provided by each platform. While many factors can determine the decision to invest in the development of an app (such as market size, competitors' activities, potential revenue, the business model), all of these should be checked against the review guidelines. Considering the guidelines from the very beginning helps immensely in figuring out the feasibility of your app and helps avoid obvious pitfalls – such as being ready to provide documentation of any licensed content you may have in your app when you submit the app to avoid copyright violations. Wondering what those guidelines look like? You can find Google's [here](#) and Apple's [here](#), but there are also other helpful resources on platforms' websites like the [Android Launch Checklist](#) and [quality guidelines](#) or Apple's [launch insights](#).

## **Talk to other developers.**

If, based on the guidelines, you're aware you're breaking new ground with a novel, innovative app, you may know ahead of time that there's a chance the app won't get immediate approval. Whether or not that's a calculated risk you're willing to take, checking in with other developers' experiences can be useful in any case. Many people document their process in developer forums (like the [Apple Developer Forum](#), or the [Android Developer Forum](#)) and other communities, or you can simply reach out to other developers you know personally. You can also always reach out to your membership team at the App Association. We can share our insights and connect you with other members who've dealt with issues that are similar to your situation.

## **Include the review process in your timeline and have a contingency plan.**

The review process may take some time, and it's important to build that into your overall timeline. Don't plan your app launch assuming a quick review process. If you're unsure your app will be approved, have a contingency plan (e.g., having an earlier version of your app approved, planning workarounds or redesigns).



## **Be transparent about all features of your app.**

It is in your best interest not to hide certain things when you are not sure they will pass the review from the app store team. Withholding information during the review process signals that you may be dishonest with users as well. The platform cares about the user experience and the trustworthiness of your app.

# IF YOUR SUBMISSION GETS REJECTED

Generally, developers have a good idea of what apps, content, and APIs are acceptable, and how to work with platforms' developer relations staff to find a solution. If your app gets rejected, you can take the following steps to find a practical resolution:

## **Understand and analyse the reason for rejection.**

Take a look at the most common reasons why apps get rejected. The platform will usually point to a section of their terms and conditions. Typically, the reason for rejection is pretty straightforward. If the issue is easily identified based on the rejection email, you'll need to fix it to get your app approved. Oftentimes, these changes can be as small as a change in language, removing a commercial link, or adjusting screenshots. To determine next steps, it may be helpful to think through a few questions like:

- Why, specifically, was your app denied?
- If you know why your app was denied, is this an essential feature of your app?
- Can you solve the problem yourself by making changes to the app with a reasonable amount of time and effort?
- If your app was already published, did you recently update or add new features? Did those cause problems?
- Do you think you are following all the guidelines correctly?
- Is there a misunderstanding or do you think the reviewer's judgement is wrong?
- Are you able to understand the platform's point of view for the hold up?

## **If you don't immediately understand why your app was rejected, do additional research and read up on other people's experiences.**

Although you are pointed to the sections of the terms and conditions that your app violated, it may require some additional research to figure out the exact reason for rejection. If, in terms of your specific app, the review guidelines seem too broad to determine what's wrong, it can be helpful to talk to other developers. Many developers likely already faced and resolved similar issues and might have documented their process in developer forums and communities. There are many great resources for practical guidance for both [Android](#) and [iOS](#) developers.





## IF YOUR SUBMISSION GETS REJECTED

**If you determine that your app was rejected in error, contact the developer relations team. Consider the issue from their point of view.**

Communicating with the developer relations teams can be effective and productive. It's important that you understand the intention of the platforms' rules, which is to protect the user experience and trust that people have in the online marketplace. While you're not one of them, there are bad actors that try to take advantage of users, and it is essential that each platform puts rules in to place to prevent bad actors from exploiting users. Ask yourself if your app could be used by someone with malicious intentions to take advantage of people. If you think that's possible, it may be worth considering if there's a way to accomplish the same goal differently. If you feel confident about your app's functionality, you can ultimately *dispute* or *appeal* the platform's decision to reject your app.

**If you cannot find a solution with the developer relations team, it may be time to consider mediation.**

With the European Union's Platform-to-Business (P2B) regulation about to enter into force in July, there has been a renewed interest in the practice of mediation. The P2B regulation requires the 'online intermediation services provider' (also known as a platform) to identify at least two mediators in their terms and conditions with whom the platform providers are willing to engage to reach agreements with business users in cases of dispute. These mediators are impartial and independent entities with a sufficient understanding of the general business-to-business (B2B) commercial relations that assist the negotiations between the two parties. In contrast, arbitration is more similar to a court process, where the arbitrator hears evidence and then makes a decision. Mediation in accordance with the P2B regulation is voluntary and does not prevent the two parties from finding other ways to resolve their dispute.

Mediation, however, can be a long, complicated, and costly process. Specialised mediators are hard to find. While the P2B regulation addresses this by specifying that guidance must be provided in a timely manner, it does not specify what 'timely' means, and a quick resolution cannot be guaranteed. Mediators are also in charge of determining a 'reasonable' proportion of the cost for each party, which in many cases may still be too expensive for small businesses.

Before entering into mediation, it is important to take note of how essential the issue in question is to your business and your product. Oftentimes, it can be easier and less costly to find a workaround. Even while a mediation process is on-going, a temporary workaround may still be worthwhile so your app can continue to be available online and acquire new users during the mediation.

# SUMMARY

Most problems can be avoided in advance. The best plan for success is prevention. Remaining pragmatic will help you take care of your business interests while exploring a practical solution. Mediation and legal action can be final options when all other resources have been exhausted. App makers and platforms have strong incentives to find a practical solution, and in most cases, they do.

