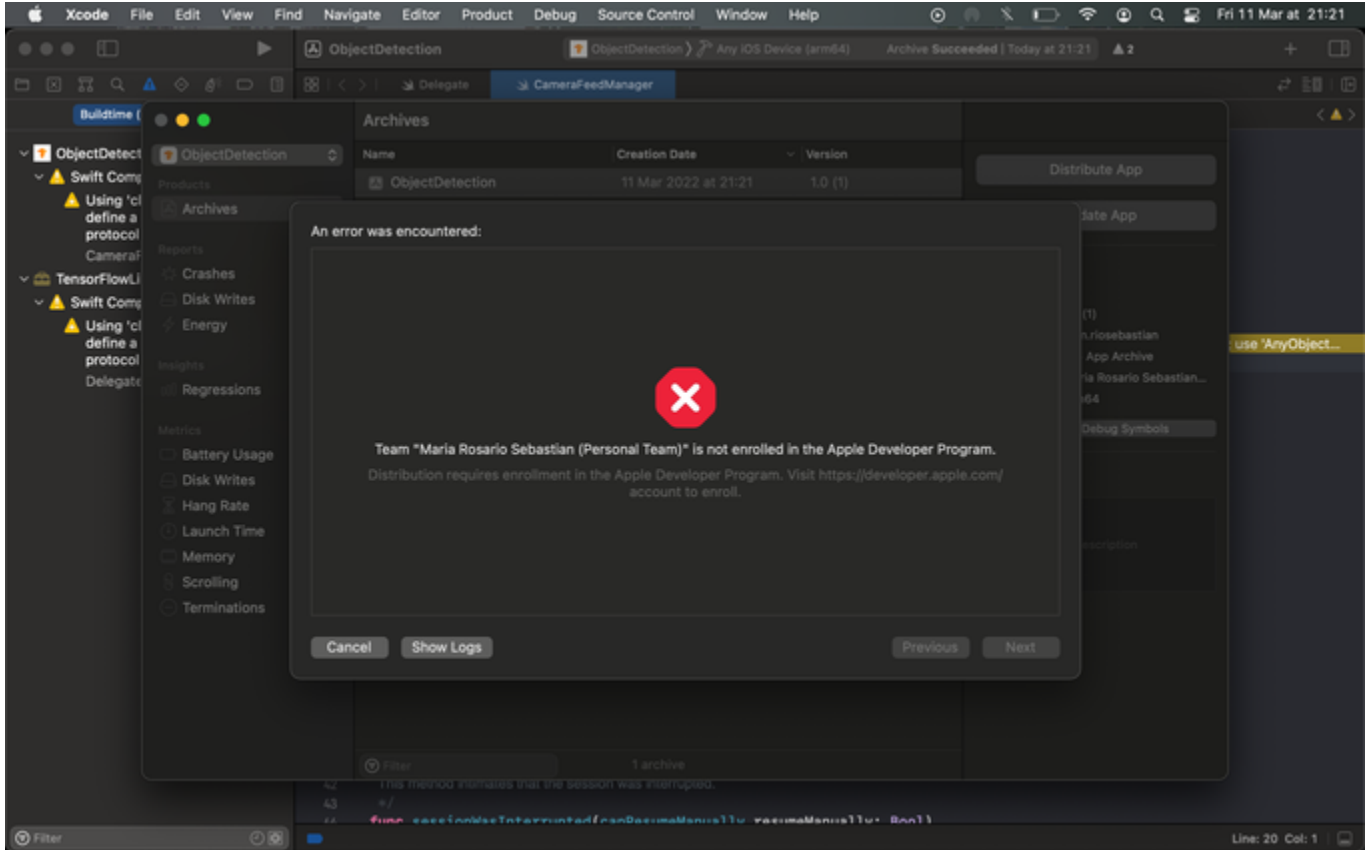


Distribution of IPA file for iOS App

You can learn how to develop apps for Apple platforms for free without enrolling. With just an Apple ID, you can access Xcode, software downloads, documentation, sample code, forums, and Feedback Assistant, as well as test your apps on devices. If you don't already have an Apple ID, you can [create one now](https://developer.apple.com/support/compare-memberships/). To distribute apps, join the Apple Developer Program. (source: <https://developer.apple.com/support/compare-memberships/>)

Distribution Overview: <https://help.apple.com/xcode/mac/current/#/devac02c5ab8>

I have created an **IPA** file for distribution and sharing the app on other mobile devices, but I get an error when I click on Distribute:



It looks like I can't distribute the app without signing up for Developer Program. Here are the options for distribution: <https://help.apple.com/xcode/mac/current/#/dev31de635e5>

Distribution methods

Choose a distribution method that best suits your purpose.

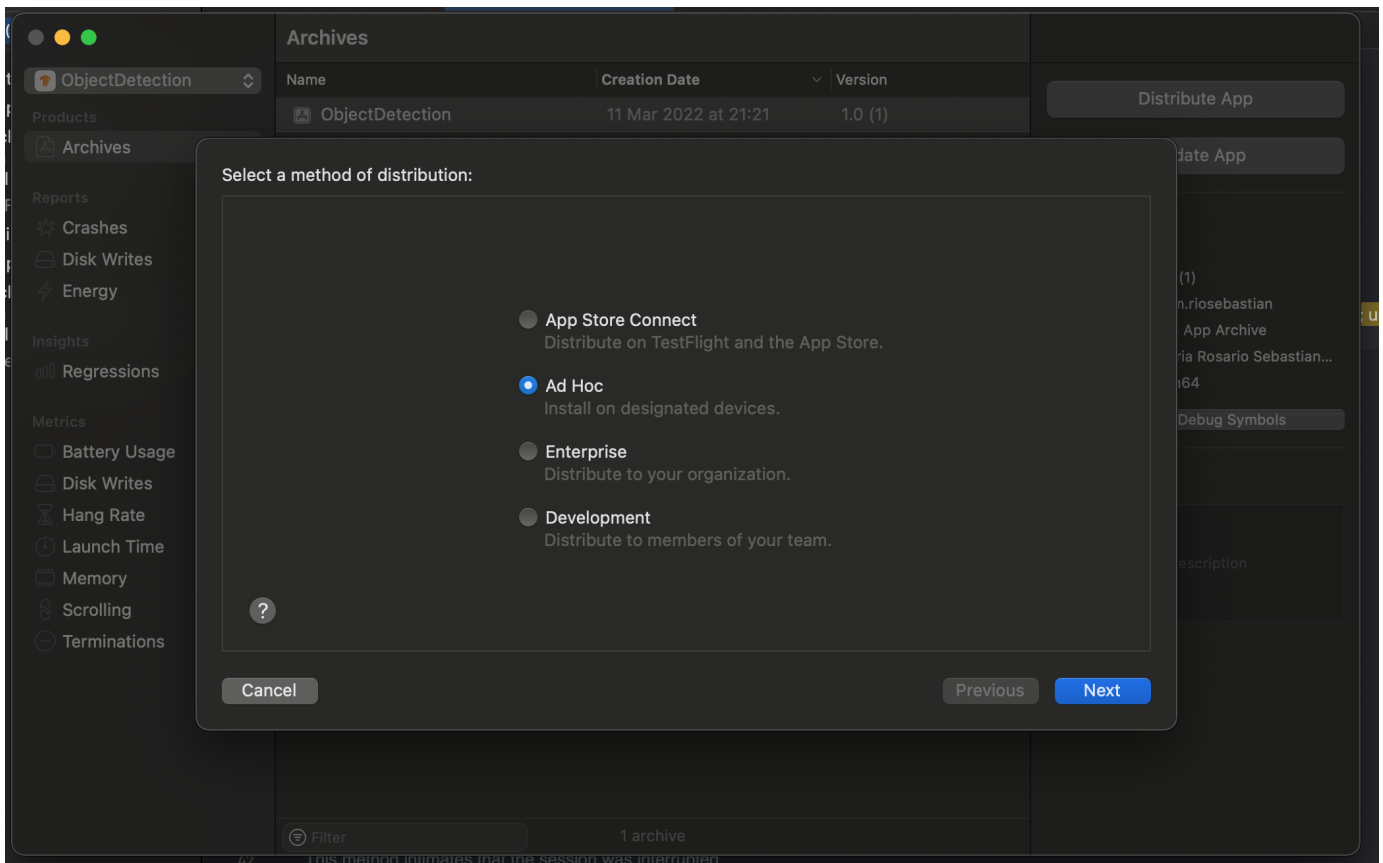
Method	Description
App Store Connect	Distributes your app through TestFlight or the App Store, signed with an Apple Developer Program distribution provisioning profile .
Ad Hoc	<p>Distributes your app to testers with registered devices, signed with an ad hoc provisioning profile.</p> <p>The devices need to be registered in your developer account and are limited per product family per year. If you don't want to use a portion of these development devices for testing, distribute your app using TestFlight instead.</p> <p>If you are a member of the Apple Developer Program or Apple Developer Enterprise Program, choose this option to test your app.</p>
Enterprise	<p>Distributes your app to users in your organization, signed with an Apple Developer Enterprise Program distribution provisioning profile.</p> <p>If you are a member of the Apple Developer Enterprise Program and are ready to release your app to users in your organization, choose this option.</p>
Copy App	For macOS apps, exports the app without code signing it.
Development	<p>Distributes your app to testers with registered devices, signed with a development provisioning profile.</p> <p>To distribute your app to just your Apple Developer Program team, choose this option. For macOS apps, this is the only option to distribute an Apple Developer Program-signed app for testing.</p>
Developer ID	For macOS apps, distributes an app outside the Mac App Store that is notarized by Apple, or just signed with a Developer ID certificate, to assure users that you're a trusted developer.

I'm not sure why, but I did not see these options while trying to distribute the IPA file:

Copy App

Developer ID

These are the ONLY OPTIONS I saw while trying to distribute the IPA file:



The *Enterprise* and *App Store Connect* are not applicable for us. So we're only left with the following:

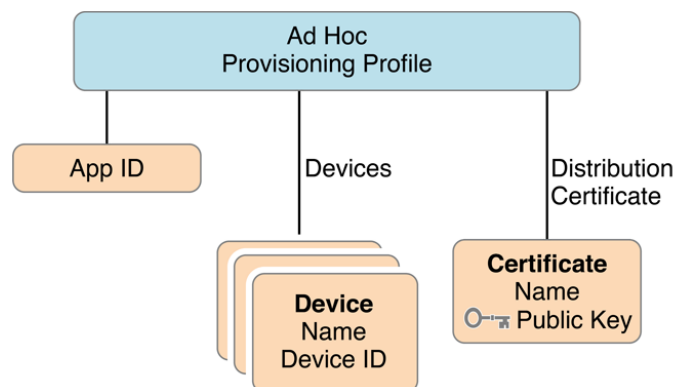
Ad Hoc:

For this, we need an ad hoc provisioning profile:

ad hoc provisioning profile

An *ad hoc provisioning profile* is a distribution provisioning profile that allows your app to be installed on designated devices and to use app services without the assistance of Xcode. It's one of the two types of distribution provisioning profiles that you can create for apps. (You use the other type of distribution provisioning profile to upload your app to App Store Connect.) An ad hoc provisioning profile ensures that test versions of your app aren't copied and distributed without your knowledge.

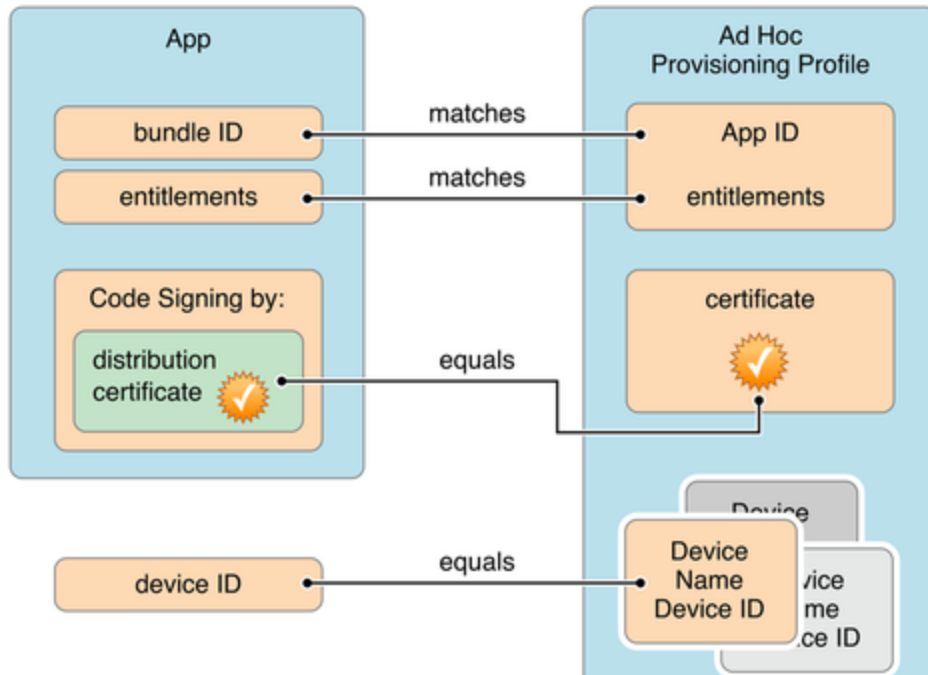
When you're ready to distribute your app to testers, you create an ad hoc provisioning profile specifying an App ID that matches one or more of your apps, a set of test devices, and a single distribution certificate.



Each device in an ad hoc provisioning profile is identified by its unique device ID (UDID). The devices you register and add to a provisioning profile are stored in your developer account. Each individual or organization can register a limited number of devices per product family per year for development and testing.

When you export your app using an ad hoc provisioning profile, the ad hoc provisioning profile is included in the app bundle and the iOS App (IPA) file is signed with the distribution certificate. The app launches on a device if the app's bundle ID matches the App ID, the signature matches the distribution certificate, and the device is in the device list of the ad hoc provisioning profile.

Your app launches on a device if:



And we have to note:

The devices need to be registered in your [developer account](#) and are limited per product family per year.

If you are a member of the [Apple Developer Program](#) or [Apple Developer Enterprise Program](#), choose this option to test your app.

Development:

Distributes the app to testers with registered devices, signed with a [development provisioning profile](#).

development provisioning profile

A *development provisioning profile* allows your app to launch on devices and use certain app services during development. For an individual, a development provisioning profile allows apps signed by you to run on your registered devices. For an organization, a development provisioning profile allows apps developed by a team to be signed by any member of the team and installed on their devices.

The development provisioning profile contains:

- A *wildcard App ID* that matches all your team's apps or an *explicit App ID* that matches a single app
- Specified devices associated with the team
- Specified development certificates associated with the team

Close

To distribute the app to just your **Apple Developer Program team**, choose this option. For macOS apps, this is the only option to distribute an Apple Developer Program-signed app for testing.

I actually tried to send the IPA file to another iPhone via airdrop but it did not install.

Joining the Apple Developer Program

I tried to do this step, but I'm currently hesitating because I saw that I'd have to pay 99 euros per year to join:

Complete your purchase.



Once you complete your purchase, you'll receive a purchase acknowledgement and a membership confirmation email.

Membership Type

Apple Developer Program

Enrollment ID

[REDACTED]

Cost

€99

Duration

1 year

I have asked somebody who codes with XCODE professionally, and was told that there's no way out of this. But I'm still looking for something else that might be an option to avoid payment. Otherwise, I think I'll go on ahead with it since I can use it anyway to practice building apps.