

# In app purchases and trial runs?

Asked 13 years, 2 months ago   Modified 5 years, 7 months ago

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I am building an app for a client that will have 30 days of content for free, thereafter you are required to buy a subscription via in app store purchases.



However, I have read that you will get rejected if you have trials.



Don't set time limits on any of the functionality of your app, either for run times or life times.

Applications that only run for a set number of minutes per session, or that expire altogether after some period of time, don't recruit customers so much as leave a bad taste in their mouths.

Finally, they also say "your app will be returned to you by the App Review Team for modification if it is found to have time limits".

This seems odd because I know the Guardian and all major newspaper apps have limited functionality.

- The Guardian app is free but you get limited functionality?

- The Daily app is free, but you have to pay for daily subscriptions and has limited functionality for the period of your subscription.
- The Times app is free, but is a free trial (of sorts) (plenty of complaints about it)

There are other examples which seem to differ from Apple's policies.

Lets say you have an app that is free, but then you have to pay for subscriptions to gain access; however according to the rules this is considered limited functionality -- yet there are lots of newspaper apps that do exactly that.

I'm confused.

Can someone clarify the situation? Can apps have trials?

Thanks

iphone

in-app-purchase

subscriptions

trial

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edited Oct 23, 2011 at 13:49

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asked Oct 23, 2011 at 10:46



[zardon](#)

2,920 ● 6 ● 38 ● 58


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Would it not be easier to instead permanently give away "piece of content #1" for free when someone downloads your app, than worrying about 30 days of everything for free? The newspaper apps are basically the first step towards purchasing and accessing their premium content, so they tend to not bundle in anything. – [Luke](#) Oct 23, 2011 at 10:52

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Is giving away "content #1" but not the rest not considered "limited functionality"? That is what is confusing me  
– [zardon](#) Oct 23, 2011 at 13:46

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This question is off-topic because it is about App Store rules, not a coding issue. Please see [Are developer-centric questions about application stores on topic for Stack Overflow?](#) – [jscs](#) Dec 26, 2013 at 6:56 

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This question appears to be off-topic because it is about guidelines/policies – [bummi](#) Jan 10, 2015 at 16:19

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## 5 Answers

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2

It is difficult to clarify the situation because unfortunately the guidelines are not necessarily set in stone. They can and do vary on an app and publisher basis.



In the case of The Times and The Daily, both apps are produced by News Corp. It is perhaps safe to say that News Corp has a good deal more influence with Apple than a one-man development shop producing an iPhone game. Apple would be loath to admit it, but there are clear cases of popular apps on the store that don't conform to the guidelines, where they have tacitly made an exception.

So what I would say to you is this: be sensible. Don't have an app that quits automatically when your trial runs out. Think about what would be acceptable to users. It's very much a case of nothing ventured, nothing gained. Take a risk, submit your app with your limited trial, and see what happens.

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answered Oct 23, 2011 at 11:29

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[lxt](#)

31.3k ● 5 ● 80 ● 83

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The app is for a client, not for me. I guess I could make the app make a free purchase of a subscription which then runs out, is this what you mean? – [zardon](#) Oct 23, 2011 at 13:51

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That's what I'd do - give the user a 'free' 30 day subscription, say. Like you say, it's what many newspaper apps do right now. – [lxt](#) Oct 23, 2011 at 14:36 ✎

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Okay, I'll try it and see what happens – [zardon](#) Oct 24, 2011 at 12:31

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2



With the Guardian app, we had to deliver an app where you always got at least some fresh content if you were using the free version. Subscribing opens up more content to the user.

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answered Oct 24, 2011 at 10:33

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[Martin Belam](#)

21 ● 2





2



I think, you are mixing up "content" and "functionality".

You can deliver content items (i.e. an magazine issue) for free or user has to pay for it — so the first n issues, or all issues in a certain timeframe, can be free, while the others need to be paid. But if an user purchased an content item before, you have to re-deliver it for free.

You can sell functionalities (i.e a search in the magazine's archive) as-well. But you cannot give it to the user for free for a certain time and them make him pay.

So the general rule is: What ever the user got from you — you cannot take it back from them and make them purchase it again.

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edited May 26, 2019 at 11:43



Zoe - Save the data dump ♦

28.1k ● 22 ● 127 ● 158

answered Oct 23, 2011 at 14:08



vikingosegundo

52.2k ● 14 ● 139 ● 183

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Ah, this makes sense. No wonder I was getting confused.

Silly me. — [zardon](#) Oct 24, 2011 at 12:32

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There are plenty of free apps which provide limited functionality. They don't provide time limits though (or at least they shouldn't). I'm guessing it won't be as clear cut

1



as accept or reject for Apple, because I did encounter an app which closes itself after 10 minutes, opening a web page to purchase it (closing an app is also against the Apple Human Interface Guidelines, as an app should never terminate itself).

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answered Oct 23, 2011 at 11:20

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oranething

740 ● 5 ● 16

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I don't intend to terminate the app after a time limit. Just a message will be fine. – [zardon](#) Oct 23, 2011 at 13:47

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The [guidelines](#) mention this is only allowed for specific types of content:

11.9 Apps containing content or services that expire after a limited time will be rejected, except for specific approved content (e.g. films, television programs, music, books)

11.15 Apps may only use auto-renewing subscriptions for periodicals (newspapers, magazines), business Apps (enterprise, productivity, professional creative, cloud storage), and media Apps (video, audio, voice), or the App will be rejected

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edited Nov 6, 2015 at 4:52

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answered Nov 6, 2015 at 4:47



**Patrick Pijnappel**

**7,617** ● 3 ● 42 ● 39

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