### ASO for App Store and Google Play

A step-by-step ASO guide for beginners.

Based on AppFollow ASO experts' best practice and 100+ accomplished ASO audits.

2019 edition



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### **CHAPTER 1**

### What is ASO

ASO is the process of optimization of app page elements in the app stores to make it more visible for users. To be more specific, it's basically changing the texts, visual material, and other data to increase the installs and conversion-to-install rates.

ASO for apps is pretty much the same as SEO for websites, except for the App Store and Google Play.

### **SEO vs ASO**

### SEARCH ENGINE

Google Search	App Srore & Google Play			
ON-PAGE	ON-APP			
Title Tag	App Name (Title)			
H1, H2, H3	Description (Google Play)			
Keywords Density	Keyword			
Page Speed	Usage Metrics			
Bounce Rate	Uninstall Rate			
OFF-PAGE	OFF-APP			
Links	Downloads			
Anchor Text	Ratings / Reviews			
Social Signals	Social Signals (Google Play)			
GOALS				
Traffic (Visitors)	Dowloads (Users)			

Approaches to ASO for games and apps have much in common. The difference is in the sources of traffic. For example, search of apps is based on a user's need and the solution for that, while games are classified based on titles and genres. The term "app" is also appropriate for mobile games, and hence, we're going to refer to them all as apps.

### ASO key vocabulary

App Page is an app profile in the App Store with the detailed information about it: name, description, icon, screenshots, ratings,

and reviews. This is where users click from the search results, top apps, selections, and direct links.

More about App Page

Metadata are elements of App pages created for a particular country and/or language that affect search results: name, subtitle, keywords, description, icon, screenshots, etc.

More about Metadata

**Keywords** are words or short phrases that best describe the app or its features. These are the words that users enter to search for apps. More about Keywords

**Search results** is the list of apps the search engine shows to the users based on the initial request.

More about Search and traffic

**Impression** is the first value used to calculate the conversion rate. The users see an app icon in the search results, selection, etc., without clicking on the page of the application.

More about Impressions

Page View starts when a user goes to the page of an app.

**Install** is the process of downloading of an app by a user. This is the first key concept. Learn about the difference between <u>Downloads</u> and <u>Installs</u>.

**Install conversion (conversion, CR)** is the ratio of how easy it is to find and install an app. There are three types of conversion:

- 1. Impressions into installs the ratio of the number of impressions to the number of installs (on the App Store only).
- 2. Page view into installs the ratio of the number of app page Page views to the number of installs (on the App Store and Google Play).
- 3. Impressions into Page view the ratio of the number of app page Page views to the number of impressions (on the App Store only).

### More about CR

**Traffic** is the source of how apps are found and installed. There are four kinds of sources, each of which helps to measure conversion-to-install rates and helps optimize the apps:

- 1. **Search** is traffic from the search engine results.
- 2. **Browse and Explore** is app stores traffic, such as top categories, editor's choice, featured apps, or personalized recommendations.
- 3. **Web Referrer** is traffic from the mobile websites, including mobile search engines, e.g. Google, Yandex and others.
- 4. **App Referrer** (the App Store only) works by clicks on links from any app.

More about Traffic channels

### ASO goals:

- 1. Growth in the number of installs.
- 2. Increasing the app's visibility according to the number impressions based on the keywords in app stores.
- 3. Conversion rate optimizations on the selected source of traffic (the most difficult part of ASO).



**CHAPTER 2** 

### Where to begin with ASO

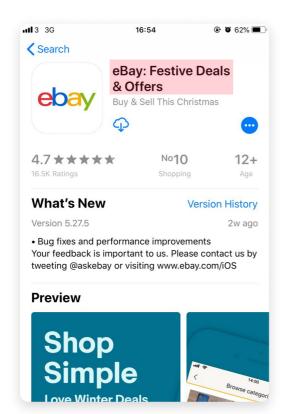
ASO workflow includes preparing keywords and creating titles, subtitles, short and full descriptions, and their localization. You can also improve your app's visibility by working on developer name, bundle name, promo-banner, and the What's New part. Next improve your app's graphics: icon, screenshots, and video. Let's see how to improve all of these aspects.



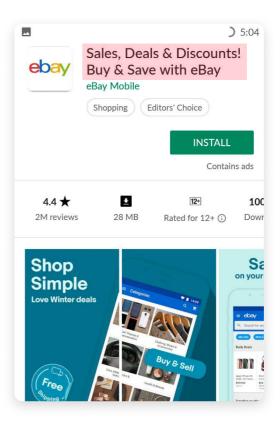
### **Keyword Optimization**

### **Title**

The App Store allows titles of up to 30 characters; Google Play, up to 50. The available space can be used for keywords.



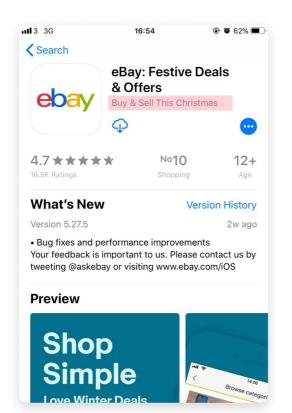
eBay app on App Store and Google Play



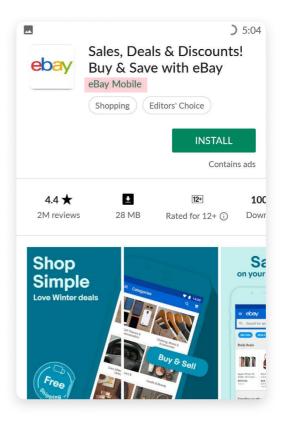
Keywords in the title are the most valuable ones. Popular apps such as Facebook or Instagram don't need other keywords in the name, as users already know their brand and search specifically for these apps. Other apps should use additional keywords, though, especially if there are too many apps in the same category. In the example above, the keywords are "sales", "deals", and "discount".

### **Subtitle**

This can be found only on the App Store right after the name, and consists of 30 characters.



eBay app on App Store and Google Play

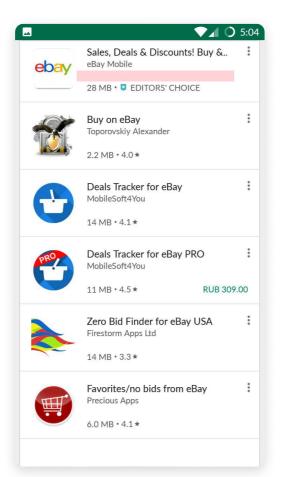


Google Play also has space under the title, but it contains the developer's name that doesn't impact the search results and conversion.

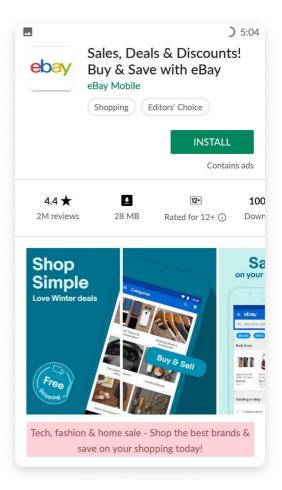
Keywords here are less important for the search algorithms than the keywords from the title. Here in the example, eBay uses keywords "buy" and "sell" combined with a seasonal keyword "Christmas".

### **Short description**

Short description is the same as the Subtitle in Google Play, except it can't be viewed in the search results. Up to 80 characters are available.



eBay app on Google Play



Search Results page vs App page on Google Play. At the end of September, Google made a redesign and short descriptions laid out under the screenshots

With blank space available (10 characters) on eBay's short description, numerous keywords can be added. It's important to keep the number of keywords to a minimum in the subtitle and add a call to action.

### Note

Want to master your texts on the App page? Here's the detailed guide to help you out.

### **Keywords**

A field for adding the keywords is only available on the App Store. There are 100 characters available, and to fit in more words, you can add them with commas or spaces. It's possible to order additional localization to increase the number of keywords, in which case you'll get 100 extra characters for each individual country. We'll talk more about localization below.

### Note

Working with keywords for the first time? Find out how to succeed from the beginning. Here's the ASO case study.

### **Description**

Your app description can be up to 4,000 characters including description of its features, promo, promo codes, and links to websites and social networks. Try to put everything out there that vou can to draw users' attention.

Keywords in the description are indexed in the stores in separate ways:

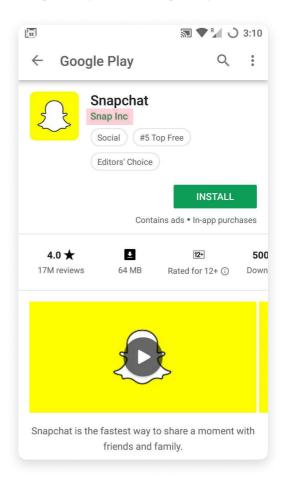
- The App Store doesn't index them, so they don't influence the search results.
- Google Play indexes the keywords, so using them along with various phrases with keywords can improve the search results for specific apps (the same way that SEO works for websites).

### Developer's name

The company name or a developer's name is mentioned when an app is published.



On the left: Instagram on App Store; on the right: Snapchat on Google Play



On Google Play, the developer's name is placed at the top right below the app title. In the App Store the name may appear in the spot of the subtitle (if there is no one) and on the App page after reviews.

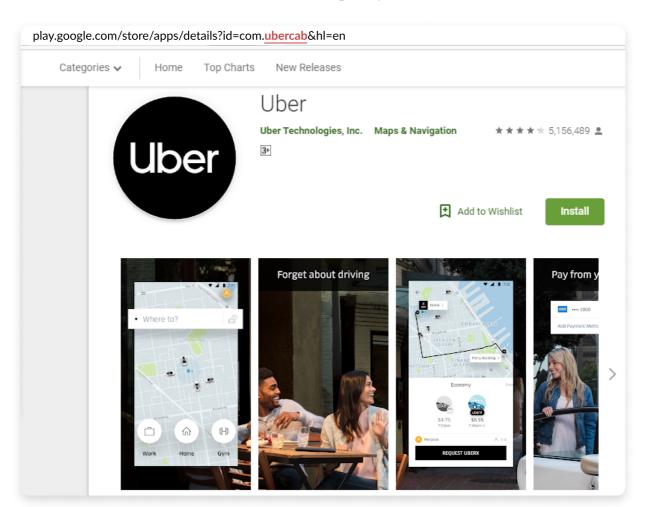
### Note

Developer's name also contains the keywords.

Developer's name influences the conversion when there are multiple apps published under it, and users are searching for several products.

### **Bundle** name

On Google Play, it is possible to add keywords in bundles, which are also going to be indexed.



**Uber on Google Play** 

Uber has two keywords in the bundle on Google Play: uber, cab

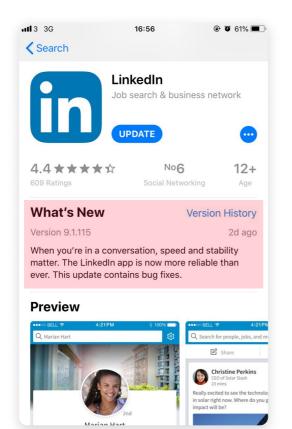
However, after publishing an app, this link can't be changed. The only way is to re-publish the app.

### Promo text

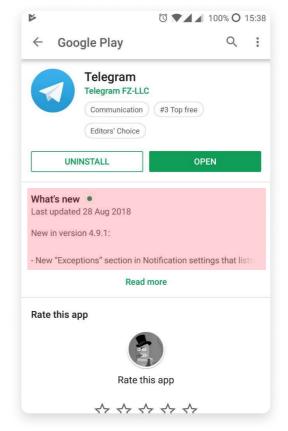
These are the first three lines in the description, which number up to 170 characters and are visible to users without opening the complete description. They do not index, but are used for marketing in order to attract users' attention. They can be updated any time.

### What's new

Here a developer describes everything that has changed in the new release, such as new features, design, fixed bugs, etc. This is handy for current and returning users. If users have installed the app, there will be new release information visible for them.



On the left: LinkedIn on App Store; on the right: Telegram on Google Play



### Localization

Localization helps you to work on the conversion in different countries and languages due to translation of the titles, description and keywords. The conversion differs in various countries according to the categories.

The App Store offers additional languages, e.g. English-UK and English-AU, and can also index in Europe, while in the USA the additional languages can be found such as Spanish-Mexico.

### Note

Each extra localization adds 100 characters for keywords and more characters in the title and subtitle. In December 2018, Apple added support for more languages: Catalan, Croatian, Czech, Hindi, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak, Ukrainian. If you add, for example, the Ukrainian language as an extra localization for Russian apps. This will give you 130 more characters and keywords to promote your app.

Google Play allows you to change metadata at any time, and updates are available in just a couple of minutes (though sometimes hours). The App Store releases changes only after the update of the app, so if you want to experiment with the text, you have to release a new version of the app.

More localization hacks

### **Graphic optimization**

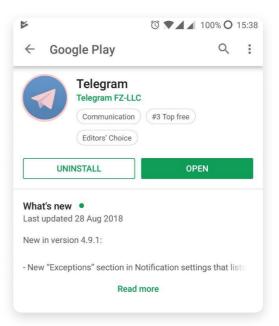
### **Icon**

The icon is the most important element of each app, because it appears everywhere — search results, charts, selection of featured apps, etc.

There are different icon standards for each store: on Google Play the icon resolution is supposed to be  $512 \times 512$  px, with the size not exceeding 1024 KB; the App Store allows use of icons with a resolution of 1024 x 1024 px. Regarding the shape, Google Play makes it possible to use icons of any shape (the most common being the round one), The App Store admits apps with square-shaped icons (without any rounded corners).



Telegram app on App Store and Google Play



The App Store icon should have a non-transparent background. It is still going to have a square-shaped frame, while Google Play is more flexible with this. You can use any shape for your app icon.

There are three main sources when deciding the image for the icon:

1. Using a brand logo This depends on brand popularity and discoverability. E.g., most people would recognize the company logo on the left (see the images below) and would hardly ever be able to name the brand of the logo on the right:





2. If your app is new or as yet undiscovered, try to choose contrasting images:









When the team replaced the left-hand icon with the one on the right, the conversion rate increased three times.

3. Another way is to use the company brand or its key feature. Before entering the new markets, an app can lose its users if they are not familiar with the logo, so it's important to make them identify your brand with the app logo:



After several experiments, Uber chose the most minimalistic icon with the brand title.

### Screenshots

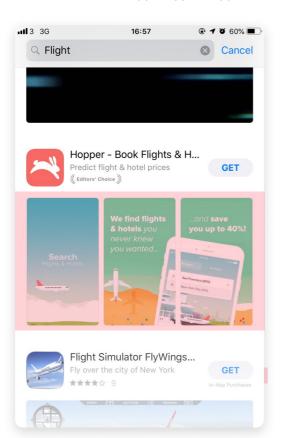
Screenshots show a product in action: its weak points, peculiarities, special features, and many others. It's a great chance to show how your app is different from those of its competitors. The App Store can upload up to 10 screenshots; Google Play, up to 8. Screenshots can have a both vertical and horizontal layout. However, one screenshot with a horizontal layout takes up the space of three with a vertical layout.

Both stores require different images according to device resolution; in this way visual materials look well on each smartphone, e.g., iPhone X and iPhone 8 would need different sizes of screenshots.

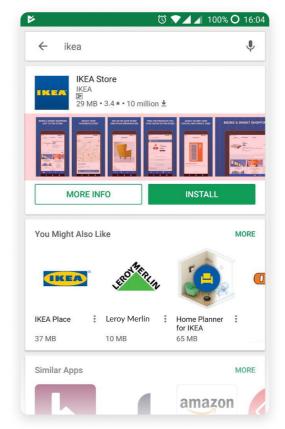
### Note:

Prepare your App page for new Apple devices: XS Max, 8 Plus and iPad Pro. Apple will require them, starting this Spring.

It works really well for conversion rates to add a call to action on the screenshots. This delivers key features that would attract your users straight from the search results page. The updated Google Play shows screenshots if you search for the particular app title. However, they are quite small in size and hardly readable, although it makes it possible to install an app straight from the Search Results page.



On the left: Hopper app on App Store; on the right: Ikea Store app on Google Play

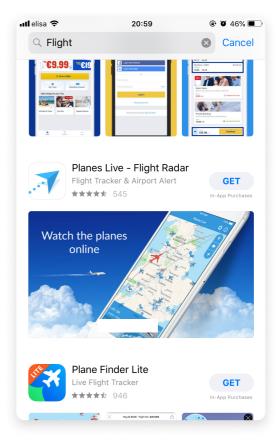


### Note:

Publish in a large-font text with short phrases. A small size with a lengthy text will be unreadable on the Search Results page, and a user might swipe down without checking out the App page.

# Flight Cancel Flight Flightradar24 | Flight Trac... Live plane & flight tracker \*\*\*\* 2.81K Flights neu-time GET In-App Purchases A APP OF THE DAY Jack's Flight Club Cheap Deals

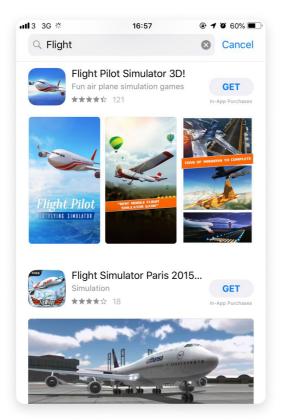
### App Store search results



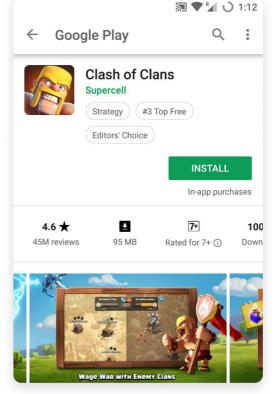
**On the left:** Two lines of the small font size are hard to read in the search results.

**On the right:** A short and catchy phrase is more likely to catch your users' attention.

Screenshots can be united to show more about the opportunities of the app, its design, or its call to action.







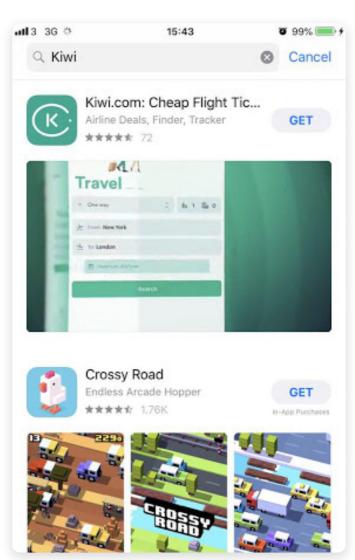
Only by testing can you decide which screenshots work better – horizontal or vertical. Screenshots with a vertical layout provide a more effective conversion-to-installs rate for all traffic sources.

### Video

Video can show how an app works. There are several different requirements for a video in the App store:

• In the App Store, video resolution is supposed to be for three different devices: iPhone, iPhone X, and iPad. Try using different videos for each localized version. Be careful with the layout of the screenshots and the video: Use horizontally laid-out screenshots if you use the same layout for a video. The same goes with the vertical layout.

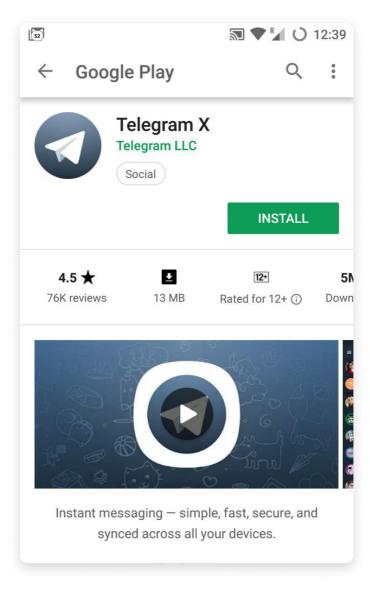
 On Google Play a video is downloaded from YouTube and doesn't play automatically. Use the horizontal resolution to open it in full screen.



Kiwi.com app on App Store

The App Store allows you to download three videos for the current screenshots. They will automatically play muted.

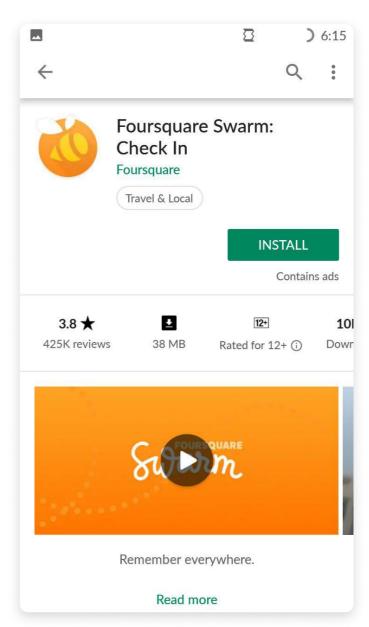
On Google Play, a video opens in full-screen on YouTube. It's difficult to get users back to the app page, though, so be aware of that.



Telegram app on Google Play

### Note:

Work on your video's freeze frame for Android, and make sure that the Play button doesn't overlap the logo or the text.



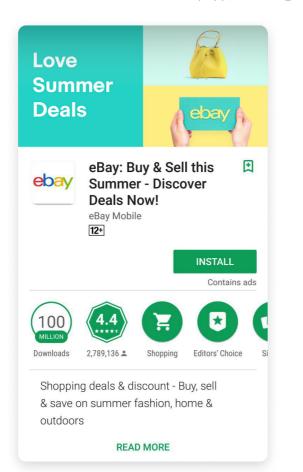
### Foursquare app on Google Play

If you put the text right in the middle of your freeze frame, the Play button will cover a part of it.

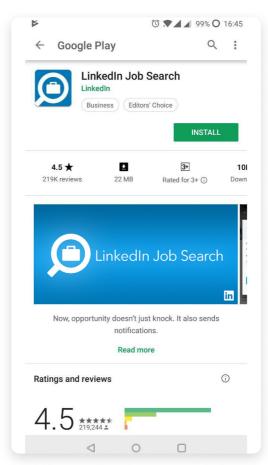
In most cases users watch only 7–15 seconds of the video, so don't overload them with a whole bunch of facts in one video.

### Promo banner

Previously, promo banners were essential for all Android apps, which had a great impact on the conversion rate. Now Google has removed them, leaving us with just screenshots and a video.



On the left: eBay app; on the right: LinkedIn app on Google Play



Before and After updated design on Google Play

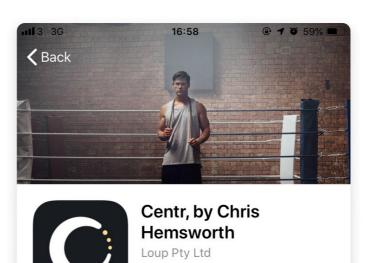
The App Store offers banners starting with iOS 11, but only "selected" apps have them.

Pre-Order

Expected 4 Feb 2019

product may be different.

For those in the making



This content may change without notice and the final

**GET** 

4+

Age

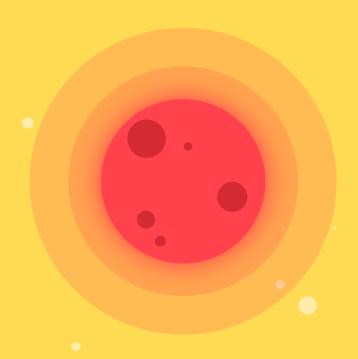
Centr app on App Store

The best versions of the visual promos will help to determine A/B testing. Google Play permits the use of its testing tools, such as Google Experiments. For testing graphics on the App Store it's possible to use side services, e.g. Store Maven and SplitMetrics, or test them one after the other. Recently developers have been able to test various sets of screenshots the same A/B approach on Search Ads.

### **CHAPTER 3**

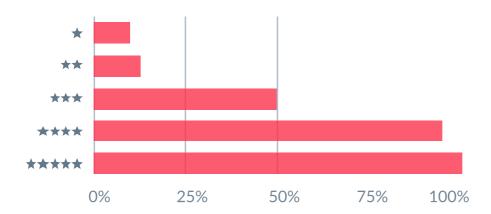
### What influences conversion rate

Besides texts and graphics such elements as average rankings, reviews, badges, app size, and crushes matter for the conversion rate.



### Ranking and Ratings

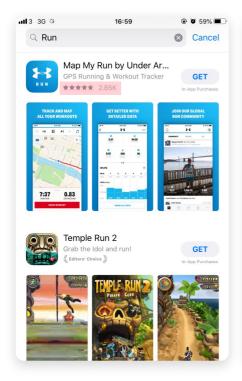
These are stars that users give according to their impressions of using an app. Apps with ranking of less than 4 stars don't attract users, and they lose their possible installs.

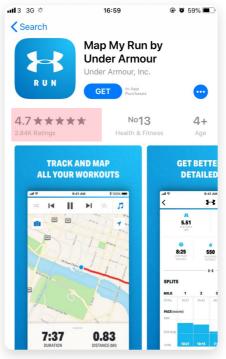


According to Apptentive, an app loses its chances of more installs if its ratings is 3\* and lower.

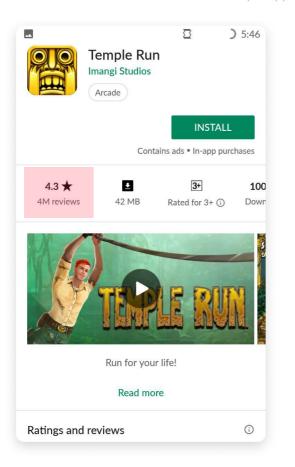
Both the App Store and Google Play show the rating in the search results, and on the App page.



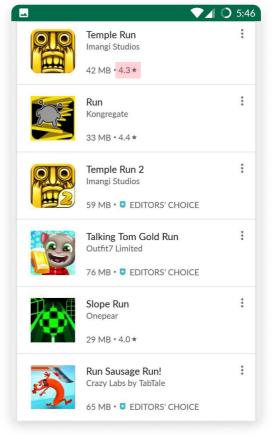




The App Store will show the approximate rating, based only on the number of stars.



Run Temple app on Google Play



Google Play shows the rating instead of the number of stars.

### How to make your app ranking higher:

- 1. Implant requests of iOS ratings and customized rating requests for Android.
- 2. Respond to all app reviews, especially the negative ones. Users tend to change the rating for the higher one if they got help in a short period of time.
- 3. Block any spam or extremely negative reviews.

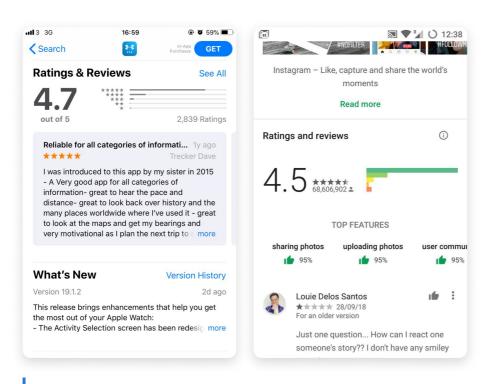
### Note

Want to boost your app rating and get more downloads? Check how to get 30K reviews and make them positive.

### Featured reviews

Featured (or helpful) reviews are available on the App page for other users, although to look through all of the reviews, they would have to open them in a separate page. These reviews are essential for a higher conversion-to-install rate.

Thanks to featured reviews, users already have an impression of your app. It matters especially when they have to choose between several apps, or if there are paid options. Google Play shows three reviews on devices, and four reviews on the Web version, while the App Store shows six reviews on the devices and three reviews on the Web version. It's important that helpful reviews are differentiated according to their location, so it's necessary to work with each country and each language separately.



On the App Store, users must sideswipe to read all the featured reviews. On Google Play, they show up in part as a list.

### Note:

The App Store features reviews that have more likes, and longer ones, so one simple "nice app" won't work. Google Play also features reviews with likes and developers' replies, with the most recent ones coming first.

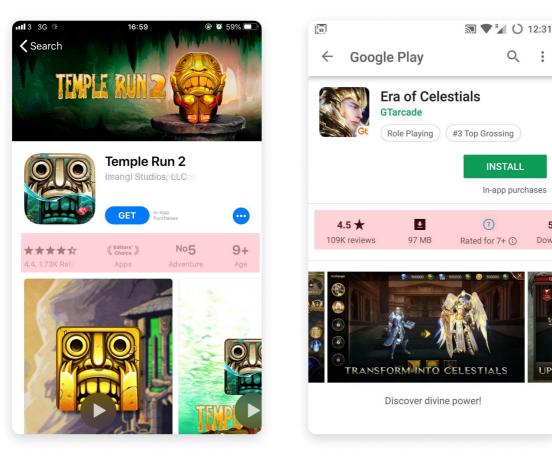
It's important to keep the reviews positive. Looking for ways to quickly boost your work with reviews? Here are four simple strategies that will make your installs grow.

### How to level up your work with featured reviews:

- 1. Respond to all the featured reviews, paying the most attention to the negative ones. This may persuade users to change their ratings.
- 2. Block the spam and any very negative reviews.
- 3. Keep monitoring the featured reviews in the key countries and languages.

### **Badges**

Badges in both stores are used to signify app ratings and rankings, place in a category, age requirements, and notifications of being featured. Google Play offers an additional badge with the app size and the number of installs. They also have something to do with the conversions rate; e.g., an additional badge, "Editor's Choice", or being in the Top 10 in a category, can get more users.



On the left: Temple Run on App Store; on the right: Era of Celestials on Google Play

In the updated version of Google Play, badges move on the App pages. Always fix them into the right spot.

The Search Results page in the App Store will only show the badge with the ranking; on Google Play, its ratings and its size.

### App Size

Both stores have limits on uploading apps via the Internet on cell phones. If an app is too "heavy", users won't be able to install it without Wi-Fi and will easily forget about it or choose something "lighter".

The App Store has a limit of 150 MB, while Android has a 100 MB limit on app sizes. Besides that, conversion also includes internal app metrics:

- 1. Internal errors: bugs, crashes and uninstalls. For example, Google can put the app down due to technical issues. If the structure and logic of an app are too complicated and it's hard to use, they would give lower stars ratings, and hence lower conversion rates.
- 2. Average conversion rate: A higher conversion rate takes the app to higher search results positions. It changes in different countries every month. For example, in August, apps from the Finance category in Russia had a conversion rate of 7.8% while in the USA it was 9.3%. The seasons also influence the conversion rates (e.g. the vacation season increases popularity of travel apps).

### **CHAPTER 4**

### Common mistakes

If you have been doing ASO by yourself, we know you probably might have made these common mistakes. Check them out, as avoiding them will help to improve your current metrics.



### 1. Not using the right semantic core

Using the keywords that are not accurate or don't define your app properly won't bring you the targeted users. It's actually really bad for the conversion.

### 2. Using the same keywords

Don't use the words from the title and subtitle in the keywords field. A better option is to find new ones to fill in the space.

### 3. No additional languages

The English localization UK-Australia will work for attracting users in the European Union and other countries, as there are plenty of them who search for apps in English.

### 4. Poor visual quality

Small details, hardly readable text, or pale backgrounds actually decrease conversion rates.

### 5. Low average ratings and rankings

If your ranking is less than 4.5, you need to think of optimization. The App Store can reload your rating with a new release (although it keeps bad reviews if there are too many of them).

### 6. Negative featured reviews

Not responding to your customers leads to negative feedback on your app page. Visitors trust reviews more than recommendations, So, if users complain about the app, and you don't reassure them, it's a signal for them to install something else.

### 7. Too many uninstalls

Google Play puts apps with this problem lower in the search results. Constant crashes can also cause low positioning in app stores.

### 8. Low activity level

If there are few installs and rankings, the users will delete the app.

### **CHAPTER 5**

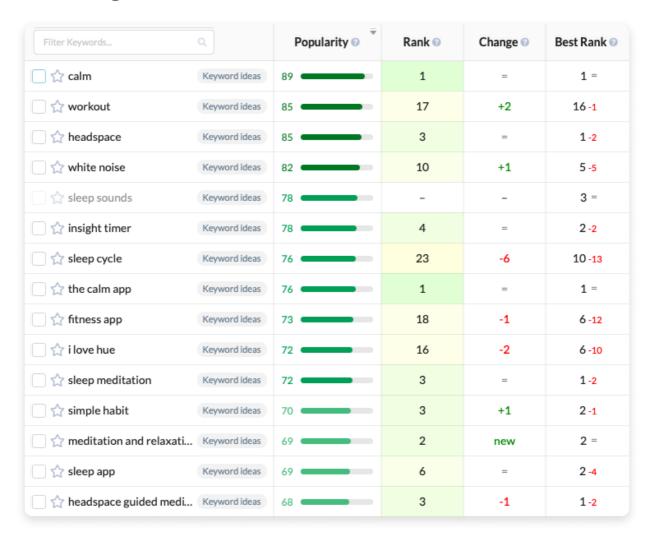
# How to estimate ASO effectiveness

Any changes to optimization have to be analyzed as regards whether they impact the conversion or not. That is why it's important to keep track of key metrics before and after.



### Checklist to estimate ASO effectiveness

1. Compare the metrics before and after ASO. E.g., your app moved from Top 50 to Top 20, or impressions rose. If you noticed failed results, test what visuals or words have gone wrong.



2. Changes in impressions, page Page view, install and conversion rates from different sources of traffic (Search traffic) and in general. This data is available on App Store Connect and Google Play Console.

### Installations

Be	fore	Af	ter	Changes
13.07	1235	20.07	1611	+30%
14.07	1148	21.07	1715	+49%
15.07	1186	22.07	1580	+33%
16.07	1297	23.07	1511	+16%
17.07	1309	24.07	1618	+24%
18.07	1395	25.07	1549	+11%
19.07	1548	26.07	1559	+1%

Example of an ASO report after updating visuals and texts

**CHAPTER 6** 

### What to do when you hit the wall

If install rates or conversion rates have stopped growing and you feel like you've reached your limits, we suggest trying the tricks below to help your conversion rate grow.



- 1. Use ASO localization if your app is available globally, Localize both text and visual materials in various languages.
- 2. **Level up the conversion rate.** Try using new text, do A/B testing for new visual materials, and level up ratings and rankings.
- 3. Work with paid traffic. The App Store has Search Ads available in 13 countries: Australia, Great Britain, Germany, Spain, Italy, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, United States of America, France, Switzerland, South Korea, and Japan. Another option is to use Google Ads, Facebook Ads, and even black-hat ASO (though be careful with using the motivated traffic).
- 4. **Try to get your app featured.** Apps with high ratings, successful monetization, and new OC updates get into Selections quite often.
- 5. Convert mobile traffic to app users, working on SEO for the mobile version of the site.

### **CHAPTER 7**

### Further reading

ASO guide for beginners (iOS app case study)

How to improve your conversion rate (ASO Audit for everyone)

How to improve rating, conversion rates and user retention

How to get more reviews and higher rating

How to work with reviews to improve conversion rate (Hotellook case study)

How to increase app installs (an Android game case study)

How to get into App Store's Today tab (what to improve to get Apple's approval)

We also recommend a really helpful book on ASO that we subscribe to: asostack.com



## May ASO be with you!





