Getting Started with In-App Purchase on iOS and OS X

Version 3.1

Getting Started with In-App Purchase Overview

In-App Purchase gives you the flexibility to support a variety of business models in your iOS and OS X apps. With In-App Purchase, you can offer your customers additional digital content, functionality, services and even subscriptions within your paid or free app.

For example, In-App Purchase will allow you to sell:
- Digital books or photos
- Additional game levels
- Access to a turn-by-turn map service
- Subscriptions to digital magazines or newsletters
- Digital content hosted on Apple servers

In-App Purchase is implemented in your app via the Store Kit framework. Store Kit provides the functionality to process payments for items offered in your app via the App Store and Mac App Store. In-App Purchase uses the same business terms used for apps sold on the App Store and Mac App Store. You receive 70% of the purchase price of each item you sell within your app, paid to you on a monthly basis—no credit card fees apply.

This document describes in detail the types of business models supported by In-App Purchase and gives you the information you need to create an In-App Purchase experience that users find compelling, intuitive, and easy to use.

What to Sell

The catalog of items you plan to sell is a primary part of the In-App Purchase user experience. Think carefully about what your business model is and what you want to sell in your application.

There are four supported categories of In-App Purchase items that you may sell:
- Content
- Functionality
- Services
- Subscriptions

Items from the supported categories must fall within one of the following purchase types:
- Consumables
- Non-Consumables
- Auto-Renewable Subscriptions
- Free Subscriptions
- Non-Renewing Subscriptions

There are a handful of important guidelines to keep in mind as you design your application:
- You must deliver your digital good or service within your app. Do not use In-App Purchase to sell real-world goods and services.
- You must make your In-App Purchase items available to all of the devices registered to a user.
- You may sell credits or virtual currency provided they are used within the app and do not have a time limit imposed upon them.

- Items you offer for purchase may not contain, or relate to, pornography, hate speech, defamation, or gambling (simulated gambling is acceptable).
- In-App Purchase items cannot be shared across applications.

In-App Purchase Types

Items offered via In-App Purchase fall within one of the five following purchase types. Make sure to evaluate what the proper purchase type is for your item before you set up your In-App Purchase product in iTunes Connect.

Consumables

Consumables are In-App Purchases that must be purchased each time the user needs that item. Consumable In-App Purchases are available for both iOS and OS X apps.

Some examples of Consumable purchase types are:
- Supplies in a game (ammunition, health points, cheats, extra lives, etc)
- Accelerators used to decrease advancement time within an app

Non-Consumables

Non-Consumables are In-App Purchases that only need to be purchased once by the user and are available to all devices registered to a user. This purchase type is used for services that do not expire. Non-Consumable In-App Purchases are available for both iOS and OS X apps.

Non-Consumable content may be bundled in your app's binary when you submit to the app store, or it may be downloaded after the user makes the purchase. Starting with iOS 6.0 and OS X Mountain Lion 10.8 your content can now be hosted on Apple's servers. This eliminates the need for you to maintain a server to host content. There is no additional charge for using this functionality. After the user makes a purchase, you can use the SKDownload class in Store Kit to download the content to the user's device. Hosted content is built using Xcode and uploaded to iTunes Connect. Hosted content is particularly useful if you have large content to download, but it can be used for any downloadable content. See the iTunes Connect Developer Guide for details on how to configure hosted content in iTunes Connect, and the SKDownload class reference for details on how to download the content using Store Kit.

Some examples of Non-Consumable purchase types are:
- Additional levels within a game
- Access to pro-features such as additional camera lenses or audio effects
- Lifetime subscription to a service
- Books and individual magazine issues

Auto-Renewable Subscriptions

Auto-Renewable Subscriptions allow the user to purchase episodic content or access to dynamic digital content for a set duration time. At the end of each duration, the subscription will renew itself, until a user opts out. The Auto-Renewable Subscription In-App Purchase type is available for both iOS and OS X apps.

Examples of Auto-Renewable Subscription purchase types are:
- Recurring delivery of newspapers or magazine issues
- Monthly subscription to audio or video streaming feed

- Weekly membership to a dating service
- Business app providing cloud storage services

Free Subscriptions
Free Subscriptions are an extension of Auto-Renewable Subscriptions that permit the delivery of free subscription content to Newsstand-enabled applications. The Free Subscription In-App Purchase type is implemented in the same way as an Auto-Renewable Subscription, just without any charges to the user. Free Subscriptions do not have expirations, but the user can turn off the subscription at any time.

Non-Renewing Subscriptions
Non-Renewing Subscription allow the sale of services with a limited duration. Non-Renewing Subscriptions must be used for In-App Purchases that offer time-based access to static content and are only available for both iOS and OS X apps.

Examples of Non-Renewing Subscription purchase types are:
- One week subscription to voice guidance feature within a navigation app
- Annual subscription to online catalog of archived video or audio

In-App Purchase Categories

Content
Content items include digital books, magazines, photos, artwork, game levels, game characters, and other digital content that can be delivered within your application.

Users view the items they purchase as theirs to keep and permanent. Therefore be sure purchased items are available in all instances of your app running on all the devices the user owns, even after your app is deleted from a device, reinstalled, or downloaded to a new device. To restore purchased items on a new device or after your app is reinstalled using the Store Kit framework, your application simply calls the payment queue's `restoreCompletedTransactions` method. A transaction will be created and delivered for each already purchased item which you'll process similarly to that of a new payment request.

Consumable items are the one exception to the requirement that your content be available on all the user's devices. Consumable items are digital items that are used up or disappear after use and can never be reused. Examples of consumable items include virtual poker chips, in-game ammunition, or virtual supplies such as construction materials.

If you offer consumable digital items in your In-App Purchase store, it's required that you mark them as consumable when they are submitted via iTunes Connect and vitally important that you describe the transient nature of these items in your item's description. Consumable items will not be included in the list of transactions returned after the Store Kit restoreCompletedTransactions method is called.

You may choose one of the following ways to deliver digital content to users:
- Package the content with your app binary and enable it when the user makes a purchase.

- Download the content from your servers for use by your app when the user makes a purchase.
- For non-consumable purchases, you may host the content on Apple's server for later downloading to your app.

Digital content is typically Non-Consumable unless the content is expected to be used only once in which case it would be Consumable. Here are some examples of digital content and what purchase type would be applicable:

Example Content	Allowed	Purchase Type
Buy a digital book	✔	Non-Consumable
Buy virtual poker chips for use within a single app	✔	Consumable
VoIP minutes, U.S.A to Germany	✔	Consumable
Buy an item for in-game use	✔	Consumable if single use, otherwise Non-Consumable

Here are additional examples of content that would not be allowed with details about why they are not allowable:

Example Content	Allowed	Why Is This Not Allowed?
Buy a physical book	X	Physical items cannot be purchased
Buy virtual poker chips for use in multiple apps	X	Items can only be used in the app where the purchase is made

Functionality
You may sell and unlock additional functionality within your application using In-App Purchase.

Adding additional functionality to an app should generally be considered Non-Consumable. Here are some examples of allowable additional functionality you might consider offering:

Example Added Functionality	Allowed	Purchase Type
Access to more game levels	✔	Non-Consumable
Ability to save	✔	Non-Consumable
Ability to manage more than one travel itinerary	✔	Non-Consumable

Services
In-App Purchase also gives you a way to sell digital services within your application.

Digital services are usually either Non-Consumable or should be a Non-Renewing Subscription. The differentiation would be whether access to the service is limited to a specific time period. Here are some examples of services you might consider offering, and whether they are allowed:

Example Service	Allowed	Purchase Type
Six month access to business card scan services	✔	Auto-Renewable Subscription
Voice transcription (no time restriction)	✔	Non-Consumable
One year of VoIP telephone service	✔	Non-Renewing Subscription

Here are additional examples of services that would not be allowed with details about why they are not allowable:

Example Service	Allowed	Why Is This Not Allowed?
Plumbing repair service	X	Real-world services cannot be purchased
Courier delivery	X	Real-world services cannot be purchased
Web design services	X	Real-world services cannot be purchased

Subscriptions
Subscriptions and subscription renewals to content or services can be offered to customers for purchase.

Renewal of an Auto-Renewing Subscription is handled automatically by the App Store. The user will be reminded shortly before their subscription is about to renew and all the billing is handled automatically by the App Store. Users can easily change their renewal frequency and can opt-out of the renewal by turning off the Auto-Renew switch at least 24 hours before the end of the current subscription period.

For Non-Renewing Subscriptions, if you want to allow users to renew their subscription, your application must track the expiration manually. If the user chooses to renew their subscription you have to initiate a new Store Kit purchase request. Tracking of the expiration date of initial or renewed subscriptions is not handled by the App Store and is your responsibility. Additionally, your application must include a mechanism to deliver the purchased Non-Renewing Subscription In App Purchase to all iOS devices owned by a single user.

Here are some examples of allowable subscriptions and what purchase type they would be:

Example Subscription	Allowed	Purchase Type
Auto-Renewing Subscription to daily digital newspaper	✔	Auto-Renewable Subscription
Auto-Renewing Subscription to live TV streaming service	✔	Auto-Renewable Subscription
Subscription to monthly voice-guidance service	✔	Non-Renewing Subscription

And some examples of subscriptions that would not be allowed:

Example Subscription	Allowed	Why Is This Not Allowed?
Auto-Renewing subscription to monthly voice-guidance service	X	Content is not episodic in nature (use Non-Renewing instead)
Gym membership renewal	X	Subscription to non-digital service
Free subscription to provide preview of magazine issues	X	Free subscriptions cannot be used to provide previews of full content

Restoring Previous Completed Purchases

As described above, the different In-App Purchase types have different requirements for whether previous purchases must be restored to users devices. This table summarizes the requirements and what support Store Kit provides for tracking the previous purchases:

In-App Purchase Type	Restore Required?	Transaction Restoration Mechanism
Consumable	No	Your server may track purchases and allow user to restore
Non-Consumable	Yes	Use Store Kit's `restoreCompletedTransactions` method
Non-Renewing Subscriptions	Yes	Use iCloud or your own server to track purchases and allow user to restore purchased subscriptions to all iOS devices owned by a single user
Auto-Renewing Subscriptions	Yes	Use Store Kit's `restoreCompletedTransactions` method

In-App Purchase Type	Restore Required?	Transaction Restoration Mechanism
Free Subscriptions	Yes	Use Store Kit's `restoreCompletedTransactions` method

Defining Your In-App Purchase Store

After you have decided what type of items you're going to provide for In-App Purchase, proceed by writing clear item descriptions, picking appropriate pricing, and designing an In-App Purchase store to showcase your items.

Item Descriptions

While the Store Kit framework provides the functionality to process payments via the App Store, it's up to your app to display what's available for purchase. Spend some time crafting item descriptions that accurately describe what each item and how the item is used within your app.

Be clear about:
- How an item can be used
- What's included in the item
- What time period is covered by a subscription, subscription renewal, or service (when applicable)
- Whether an item is consumable or not (unless you specify otherwise, users expect items to be re-usable, re-downloadable, and permanent)
- Use a consistent item-naming convention for readability and differentiation of similar items.

Since your application may be available in App Stores with a region specific currency and language, your item's localized description and pricing information should be pulled from the App Store via Store Kit's products request API. You'll use the information returned from the products request to populate the user interface you present to the customer for item selection and purchase.

Item Pricing

Before you settle on a price for an item, think about how much users might be comfortable paying, considering:
- How frequently they use the item
- How the item is used within your application
- What the non-digital equivalent of the item might cost

Use consistent pricing for similar types of items. In some cases, items might cost more than the initial purchase price of your application. For example, if you sell an app that allows users to subscribe to various digital magazines, a one-year subscription to a magazine might cost more than your app. Users will understand that, for the subscription price, they get:
- A number of issues of their favorite digital magazine
- Reliable delivery of content
- The convenience of digital content that can accompany them wherever they go

Designing Your In-App Purchase Store
Your In-App Purchase store should be attractive, easy to understand, and simple to use.

Follow these design guidelines to help you meet this goal:
- Always display the name and cost of each item.
- Allow users to view a detailed description for each item.
- Group related items according to type.
- Ensure easy navigation through large catalogs of items. Avoid a long single list of items that requires users to scroll and scroll.
- Always indicate when items are consumable.
- Ensure that users have to be very intentional about purchasing an item and that the purchase process can't be started by accident.
- Provide a "Check Inventory" button that allows users to check for items they might be missing or that they've already purchased on another device. Keep in mind that automatically initiating a restore of previous purchases (which will prompt the user for their iTunes Store password) may be confusing to your users.

Submitting Catalog Items to iTunes Connect
Every item that you plan to offer for purchase within your you app must be submitted to the App Store through iTunes Connect. When you submit an item, you specify its name, description, pricing, a preview image, and other details, such as localized versions of the item name and description.

Every item must also have a product identifier that is associated with your application and uniquely identifies an item sold. Your application uses this product id to fetch localized item descriptions and pricing information from the App Store and to request payments.

Your app's rating must take into account the ratings for new or changed items. If your app's rating decreases it must be re-approved for sale on the App Store.

App and Catalog Item Updates
Updates to applications for bug fixes or new functionality, and updates or new items for purchase, are bound by the same guidelines outlined in this article.

Document Revision History

Date	Notes
2014-02-01	Updated subscription types to indicate OS X support.
2013-09-01	Minor clarification of virtual currency usage.
2013-02-18	Added details about hosted content. Updated examples of Auto-Renewable Subscriptions
2012-03-16	Updated to include OS X support. Details about Non-Renewing Subscriptions.

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