

A timeline: How we got here



2007

The iPhone launches

And there's no question it was a game changer. At first, Apple does not allow outside apps. But they soon realize that this approach is a non-starter if they want to sell more and more phones and really excite users.

2008

And then comes the App Store

Apple decides to open up the App Store to outside app developers and lures them in by the hundreds. They ask users — want to order a pizza, find your nearest florist, or look up how to do the Soulja Boy dance? “There’s an app for that.”

There’s an app for that.



2008

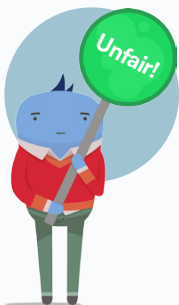
Hello world! Spotify launches

Spotify launches on desktop at the end of 2008, bringing music streaming to the masses.

2009

Spotify is available on the App Store

It wasn't long before we launched the Spotify iPhone app, giving our fans all the world's music — wherever and whenever they wanted.



2010–2011

Apple starts changing its App Store Guidelines

When Apple introduced the Guidelines we thought, “Yep. Makes total sense to have rules for security, safety, privacy, and quality.” But Apple not only has unilaterally changed the rules themselves time and again, but also frequently decides to interpret (and re-interpret) them in ways to disadvantage rivals like us.

So those totally legit things we did which were fully in compliance just a few months ago? Now apparently not so much.

Since Feb. 2011

Apple eliminates payment system choice and imposes a 30% fee on content-based apps like Spotify. . . . But at the same time, Apple prohibits us from showing customers how to upgrade any other way

For Spotify to use Apple's billing system (IAP) — giving our fans the opportunity to upgrade to Premium — Spotify and others now have to pay 30% of any subscription fees. Apple now prohibits buttons or links to any other external ways to pay. This is the first of many moves from Apple that would make it harder and harder for our fans to upgrade to Premium.





2011

We deem the 30% charge as too expensive for our fans and our business

We elect not to use IAP for a bunch of reasons, including the fact that giving up 30% was too much for us to keep our prices low for our fans. Unfortunately, the end result is that you can no longer upgrade to Premium through the app.

2011 (Oct)

Siri launches on the iPhone, but won't play Spotify

"Siri, can you play that awesome Spotify playlist?"
Siri says no. And Siri still won't talk to us today.

Siri Says no!



2011–2014

For the next three years, we continue to face intense pressure from Apple to adopt their payment system

From 2011 to 2014, Apple puts us under constant pressure to adopt IAP.

2014 (June)

So, we give IAP a try. That means we are now charged Apple's 30% tax and sadly have to increase our price for our fans

Our users will finally be able to buy a Premium subscription directly through our iOS app. But it also means we have to raise our prices to €12.99 a month. And you guys were rightly none too happy about this.



2015 (Apr)

Us: "Hey Apple, we love your watch; can we make an app for that?"

Apple: "nah"

When Apple launches their new Apple Watch, they dismiss our proposals and won't work with us to develop an app for it. However, they allow other apps to be on it.

2015 (June)

Apple Music launches at a price all too familiar to Spotify

Late to the streaming party, Apple buys Beats, rebrands it, and then launches Apple Music. Because Apple Music doesn't have to pay the 30% IAP charge, they are able to hugely undercut us and charge €9.99. To our fans, this just looked like we were ripping you off.



2016 (May)

We opt out of Apple's payment system and the artificially uncompetitive price we had to charge for using it

Because we turn off IAP, it means you can no longer upgrade to Premium through the App Store *sigh*.



2016 (May)

Apple starts its intensified pattern of Spotify iOS app rejections — and threatens to remove us from the App Store

Now that Apple has Apple Music, rejections of the Spotify app start becoming more and more common, and they even go as far as threatening to remove us from the App Store. Those rejections seem to coincide with our promotional campaign seasons.

2016 (June)

Apple tightens the App Store Guidelines . . . again

While we haven't been able to include any buttons or external links to pages containing product info, discounts, promotions, etc. since Feb. 2011 (even if they don't link directly to a payment system!), this time a "call to action" restriction is added.

2016 (Sep)

Apple rejects Spotify's proposal for an Apple Watch app yet again

We submit a new proposal for a streaming app directly on the Apple Watch. Apple declines.



2016 (Nov) – 2017 (June)

Apple continues to make more frequent, unexpected, and unjustified rejections of our app updates

Now just having a "Learn More" button is enough to upset the Apple cart, even though this is the first time we've heard of such a rule. All we can do is focus on ensuring compliance, but that's not easy when the definitions of what we can and can't do change from one day to the next.

2017 (June)

App Store Guidelines are tightened once again

This app update means that rival apps have to agree not to "directly or indirectly target iOS users to use a purchasing method other than IAP or discourage the use of IAP."

2017 (Sep)

Apple continues to create obstacles around the Apple Watch

With WatchOS 4, Apple continues to make it challenging for us to deliver a workable streaming solution for the Apple Watch.

2017 (Nov)

Apple rejects Spotify's app again

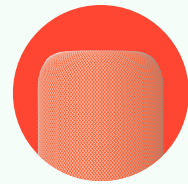
This time, we are rejected because of a campaign that makes reference to a Spotify Premium promotion ("get 3 months now for €0.99"), despite only directing users to a landing page with no info on where or how to purchase Premium (which Apple had allowed only a few months prior). In fact, Apple's chief lawyer told us a year earlier that such a landing page was OK, but that didn't stop the App Store from blocking our app for this reason.



2018 (Feb)

Apple HomePod launches without Spotify support

Apple launches HomePod — the smart speaker that, like Siri, will do loads of cool stuff in response to voice commands. Well, lots of cool stuff except playing music through Spotify. And remember what we said about other apps being allowed on the Apple Watch, but not ours? Same goes for the HomePod. Apple welcomes other apps to play on it, but shuts the door on competitive music streaming apps like Spotify.



2018 (May)

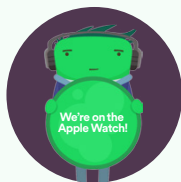
Apple rejects Spotify's app yet again

Rejected this time because we showed the word "Free" in Spotify's app screenshots on the App Store. And apparently that's prohibited. . . .?!

2018 (July)

And the rejections keep on coming!

At this point, it's hard to know how Apple will interpret anything that we do. This time, the phrase "Get in, Get Premium" is prohibited.



2018 (September)

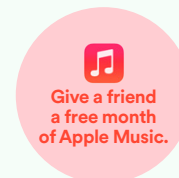
Apple finally allows enhanced functionality for the Spotify app on the Apple Watch

With Watch OS 5, Apple allows the Spotify team to start developing offline functionality.

2019 (Feb)

Apple Music disregards its own rules

Apple Music sends the very type of promotional push notifications that it forbids its rivals to send.



2019 (Feb)

Next up on Apple's restriction list — podcast recommendations

So we announce two podcast acquisitions we are super excited about, and all of a sudden Apple arbitrarily decides to prohibit use of its API to recommend podcasts to users.

2019 (March)

Spotify asks the European Commission to ensure a level playing field

When competition is fair, consumers and companies win.

Apple,
Play Fair.



www.TimeToPlayFair.com

