

# INTRODUCTION TO APP STORE OPTIMIZATION

THE BASICS OF BOOSTING YOUR  
APP'S VISIBILITY AND  
DOWNLOADS



BY MATTEO SPADA

# Introduction to App Store Optimization

The Basics of Boosting Your App's Visibility and Downloads

A special thanks to [Davide Benini](#) for reviewing the text.

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# Introduction

If you're reading this book, you're probably well aware of how essential App Store Optimization (ASO) is for the success of an app. I've been interested in this topic for a while, and I've learned two very important things:

1. Most developers overlook this aspect of app marketing.
2. There is a lot of fragmented information on the subject, and it can be difficult to determine what is truly useful.

The good news is that, if most developers overlook ASO, then learning the basics will give you a competitive edge over your competitors. Additionally, while there may be a lot of fragmented information out there, ASO is not as complicated as marketing gurus describe it. With a basic understanding of the subject, you can start optimizing your app's presence on the app store right away.

Over the past year, I've devoted a lot of time and energy to learning as much as I can about ASO. I've developed a tool called Astro to help other developers improve their app rankings on the App Store, and I'm excited to share what I've learned with you.

The first thing I realized about ASO is that it's the secret to your app success. If we sell products online, we might use Google or Facebook ads, or offer infoproducts in exchange for email addresses. If we sell luxury products, we might advertise online, on TV, or in specialized magazines. But if we sell apps, our main marketing tool is ASO. That's because 65% of app downloads come from app store searches.

Sixty-five percent is a significant number that highlights just how important it is to focus on ASO. If we don't, our app risks losing thousands of potential customers. In fact, the best time to promote our app to a potential customer is when they need it, and app store searches give us the opportunity to be noticed by users who are actively looking for apps.

Now that we understand the importance of ASO, let's dive into how it works. This book won't be an exhaustive guide to App Store Optimization, but it will provide you with all the basic information you need to get started. Once you know the basics, you can start experimenting and become an ASO expert.

If you have any questions while reading this book, feel free to reach out to me on [Twitter](#). I'm always happy to help.

## What is App Store Optimization

The term "App Store Optimization" was born with the launch of the Apple and Google app stores. As soon as the two companies introduced their platforms, many people immediately recognized the potential of this revolution and the impact that optimization techniques could have on app revenue.

You may be familiar with the term "SEO" (Search Engine Optimization), which refers to the practices used to optimize a web page for search engines. In the same way, "ASO" (App Store Optimization) refers to optimizing an app for the Apple and Google app stores.

Today It's no longer enough to simply publish an app and expect thousands of downloads. The competition is fierce, with thousands of developers publishing new apps every day. But here's some good news: many of these developers have no idea what ASO is. By the end of this book, you'll be one step ahead of them.

## The elements of App Store Optimization

Below is a list of the fundamental elements that can be optimized to improve App Store Optimization:

- Icon
- App name
- Subtitle
- Screenshots
- Video preview
- Reviews
- Description
- Keywords
- Other metadata

Now let's take a closer look at each of these elements.

### Icon

The icon is the first thing your potential customers will see. A poorly designed icon won't inspire users to download your app. While you can use your creativity when designing an icon, you don't need to be an artist to create beautiful and elegant icons.

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I recommend reading [Apple's HIGs page](#) carefully and following some simple guidelines:

- Try to maintain a style for your icon that is consistent with the operating system.
- Embrace simplicity.
- Get inspired by the icons of other apps. You can find a gallery of icons on [this site](#) that will inspire you to create your own masterpiece.

If graphic design isn't your strong suit and you have the budget to invest, you can also hire an icon designer to create your icon for you. The cost for this can range from \$500 to \$1000 for a single icon, but if your app is already generating revenue, it might be worth considering.

**Pro tip:** Sometimes you can gain an edge over your competitors by simply playing with colors. Before choosing the colors for your icon, do a search on the app store and see what colors your competitors are using. You might find that they all use green or red, for example, and using a different color like blue could help you stand out in search results.

## Title and Subtitle

Title and subtitle are the first two fields where we can enter keywords, so it's important to make the most of them.

An effective title is usually composed of a short name for your app, followed by a series of relevant keywords separated by a space. The



keywords you include in the title should be the most relevant to your app (we'll talk more about relevance later in the book).

The subtitle is an additional field where you can enter keywords. This field is less important to the algorithm than the title, but the keywords in the subtitle are still more relevant than those in the keyword field.

So, make sure to use all the available characters in both the title and the subtitle, without repeating any keywords.

Here's an example of how to make the most of these fields:



## Screenshots

The first three screenshots are crucial because they are the first ones the user will see before entering your app page. These screenshots should quickly and clearly show what your app does and the problems it can solve.

Think of the screenshots as a shop window: if the user likes what they see, they will press the "GET" button; if not, they will move on to the next app.

To create good screenshots, you can read [this thread](#) by Zach Shakked, which has some great advice on the subject.

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However, creating high-quality screenshots can be time-consuming - you may need to create multiple versions to see which ones work best.

To save time, you can use Fastlane to automate the creation of screenshots. It only takes a day or so to learn how to use Fastlane, but it can save you a lot of time in the long run.

Here are some ideas for enhancing your screenshots:

- Use bright, eye-catching colors to draw the user's attention. You can also use color to make certain parts of the text stand out, like in this example.
- Make sure the text in your app's interface is large enough to be easily readable.
- If you add text outside the frame, make sure it is legible when the user searches the App Store.
- Keep the same style for all your screenshots to create a consistent look.
- When a new iPhone model is released, update your screenshots to give your app a modern look.
- Localize your screenshots in as many languages as possible.
- Upload all the screenshot sizes required by Apple - you can find out more about this here.

## Video Preview

Inserting a video preview is a simple and effective way to showcase your app in action. Just like with screenshots, it's important to create high-quality videos that highlight the main features of your app.

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The goal is to convince the viewer that your app is exactly what they are looking for.

If you don't know how to create a video preview, you can use iMovie for this purpose. You can learn more about it at [this link](#).

## Description

Unlike the Google Play Store, where the algorithm searches for keywords within the app description, the Apple App Store does not do this.

Although only 2% of users read the app description, this field is still useful for explaining the features of your app in detail.

My advice is to concisely and clearly list all the strengths of your product without getting bogged down in technicalities. Remember, the goal is to convince the reader that your app is exactly what they were looking for.

## Reviews

The number of stars that your app has can have a huge impact on the user's decision to download it or not.

For this reason, it's important to try to keep this number above 4.3.

Unfortunately, users rarely leave reviews, so we need to do everything we can to include logic in our app that asks users for a review at the right time.

Avoid asking for a review when the user first starts the app - this is a surefire way to get a one-star review. Instead, you could implement logic like this:

Let's say we have developed an app that helps people cultivate new habits.

Every day, the user can open the app and confirm that he has completed a certain habit. After 3 days of using the app, we could ask for a review because at that point:

1. We know that the user likes our app or at least finds it helpful
2. He has experienced how our app works and has a good idea of what it does
3. He has just reached an important milestone (3 days in a row of a new habit)

Here's how we could do it:

1. Congratulate the user on reaching the 3-day milestone
2. Ask him what he thinks of your app, giving him four choices: Amazing, Good, Nothing Special, Bad.
3. If the user selects Good, Nothing Special, or Bad, tell him you're sorry and send him to a page where he can leave feedback
4. If the user selects Amazing, send him to the App Store page

This way, if the user isn't satisfied, we can avoid a bad review and potentially get some good feedback to improve our app.

If he is satisfied, we have a good chance of getting a 5-star review.

Remember, any review below 5 stars is not a good review. If your average rating is 4.8, a 4-star review will lower your average.

**Pro tip:** If your average rating has dropped too much, you can always reset the review count on Apple Store Connect and restart from 0. However, this will reset the rating on all stores.

## Keywords

The keyword field is important because it allows us to enter up to 100 characters of keywords that we want to use to index our app.

Here are some rules to follow when using the keyword field:

- Enter the most relevant keywords for your app first.
- Separate keywords with commas, even if they form a single keyword. For example, if you want to be indexed for the keyword "book tracker," you would write it like this:  
"book,tracker."
- Don't use spaces in the keyword field - only use commas to separate keywords.
- Don't repeat the same keywords in the title, subtitle, or keyword field.
- Use singular keywords if you want to be indexed for both the singular and plural forms of a word. For example, if you want to be indexed for "habits" and "habit," just write "habit."
- Typos can also be keywords. If your app isn't popular enough to compete with similar apps, you can use typos to find keywords with good popularity but low difficulty. We will discuss this in more detail later.

- To be indexed for "relaxing sound" and "rain sound," you would write "sound,relaxing,rain". Apple's search algorithm will automatically create all the combinations for you.

## Other metadata

So far, we have seen that you can enter keywords in three places:

- Title
- Subtitle
- Keyword field

These are the most popular places to add keywords, but there are other fields that can also be used for this purpose, including:

- In-app purchase names
- In-app event names
- Category name

When it comes to the category, it's important to note that the keywords in the category name will automatically be adopted by your app, so there's no need to add them in the keyword field. For example, if your app is in the Developer Tools category, it doesn't make sense to enter the keywords "Developer tools" in another field.

# How to increase your brand credibility: some small tricks

Here are some other small tricks you can use to improve the credibility of your app in the eyes of users.

## Privacy Policy

You can add information about privacy to your App Store page to show users that you are sensitive to these issues. This can be especially important for users who are concerned about their privacy. Here are some guidelines for writing a good privacy policy

- Include a section that explains what personal data your app collects and how it is used. Be transparent and clear about this.
- If your app includes any third-party services or integrations, mention this and provide links to their privacy policies.
- If your app includes any security measures, such as encryption or authentication, mention this to show that you are committed to protecting user data.

By adding this information to your Privacy policy, you can show users that you value their privacy and are committed to protecting their personal data. This can help build trust and make them more willing to pay for your app.

## Website

You don't need a complex website to promote your app. A simple landing page will suffice. In fact, you don't even need to create a

separate website for each of your apps. You can simply add a page to your personal website to promote your app.

Your landing page should include some key information about your app, such as its features, benefits, and how to download it. You can also include screenshots, videos, customer reviews, and any other relevant information to help convince users to download your app.

## Support Address

Including information about how users can contact you for support on your App Store page can help build trust and show that you are committed to providing a good user experience. This can be especially important if your app is paid or includes in-app purchases, as users will want to know that they can get help if they encounter any issues.

In addition to providing contact information, you can also include information about the type of support you offer, such as whether you provide live chat, phone support, or email support. This can help users understand what to expect when they contact you for help.

Overall, including information about how users can contact you for support on your App Store page can help build trust and improve the user experience. It can also help prevent negative reviews and improve the overall rating of your app.

## Filling out privacy info

There's nothing worse than finding an app without privacy information. Adding this information only takes a few minutes, and if users can't find it, they might think that you're not being completely transparent.



This can damage their trust in your brand and discourage them from downloading your app.

Overall, including information about privacy on your App Store page can help build trust with users and improve their experience with your app. You can find more information on this topic at [this link](#).

## How to find a good keyword

In the previous paragraphs, we discussed where to enter keywords for your app. Now, let's go into more detail about how to find effective keywords for your app.

To find effective keywords, you should start by brainstorming a list of potential keywords that are relevant to your app. You can use tools like **Google's Keyword Planner** or **Apple's Search Ads** to help you identify popular keywords and see how competitive they are.

Once you have a list of potential keywords, you can use tools like [Astro](#) to see how well these keywords are performing for other apps in your category. This can help you identify keywords that have a good search volume and a low level of competition, which can be more effective for your app.

Another important factor to consider when choosing keywords is relevance. Your keywords should accurately reflect the content and functionality of your app, as this can improve its visibility in search results and make it more appealing to users.

Finding effective keywords for your app requires some research and experimentation. By using the right tools and focusing on relevance and competition, you can identify keywords that can help improve the visibility and appeal of your app.

## Anatomy of a keyword

When choosing keywords for your app, there are three main factors to consider: popularity, difficulty, and relevance. These factors can help you identify keywords that are effective for your app and improve its visibility in search results.

Popularity or traffic, refers to the number of people who are searching for a particular keyword. The more popular a keyword is, the more likely it is that users will find your app when they search for that keyword.

Difficulty, also known as competitiveness, refers to how hard it is to rank for a particular keyword. The higher the difficulty, the more competition there is for that keyword, and the harder it will be for your app to rank for it.

Relevance refers to how well a particular keyword matches the content and functionality of your app. The more relevant a keyword is, the more likely it is that users who search for that keyword will be interested in your app.

When choosing keywords for your app, it's important to consider all three of these factors to find keywords that are popular, relevant, and not too difficult to rank for.

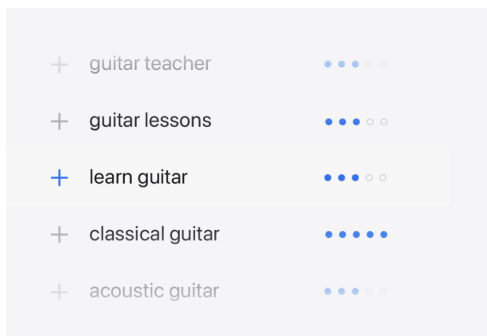
# Popularity

Popularity is a value ranging from 0 to 100 that tells you how much a keyword is being searched for in the App Store. A highly popular keyword will have a high score and can generate more downloads for your app. To access this information, you can create an account on Apple Search Ads, Apple's advertising service.

To use Apple Search Ads, you need to have at least one app published on the App Store. If your country is not listed when you create your account, you can select the United States as the country. You don't need to activate a campaign or do anything else, you just need access to the service to see the popularity of keywords.

On Apple Search Ads, you can see the popularity of keywords on a scale of 0 to 5 dots. This is a good way to get an idea of keyword popularity, but to get more precise values, you can use App Store Optimization (ASO) tools like [Astro](#).

To learn more about how to find the best keywords for your app, you can visit this [Apple page](#).



# Difficulty

Difficulty is a value that tells you how difficult it is to rank among the top positions for a specific keyword. Unlike popularity, there is no reliable source for this information because Apple does not provide it.

App Store Optimization (ASO) tools use proprietary algorithms to calculate keyword difficulty. For example, Astro has its own algorithm to calculate how difficult it is to rank in the top 10 positions for a keyword.

It's important to note that different ASO tools may use different algorithms and have different ways of measuring keyword difficulty. This means that the difficulty scores for the same keyword may vary between different tools.

Overall, keyword difficulty is an important factor to consider when choosing keywords for your app. A keyword with a low difficulty score is more likely to be effective for your app and can help improve its visibility in search results.

## How to calculate keyword difficulty

Many people believe that it's not possible to get the keyword difficulty value unless you purchase an App Store Optimization (ASO) service. However, this is not true. It is possible to understand how difficult a keyword is on your own, even without using an ASO service.

First, it's important to remember that there is no right or wrong keyword difficulty value. As we mentioned earlier, Apple does not

provide this information, so no one can confirm that the values provided by ASO tools are correct or not.

What we do know is that all ASO tools are based on a series of factors that help them determine keyword difficulty. These factors include:

- The number of apps that are using the keyword
- The number of reviews and ratings for apps that are using the keyword
- The average rating for apps that are using the keyword
- How often the keyword appears in the metadata of the app

By considering these factors, ASO tools can provide an estimate of keyword difficulty. However, it's important to remember that different tools may use different algorithms and have different ways of measuring difficulty, so the values may vary between different tools.

By considering the factors mentioned above, you can get a rough idea of how difficult a keyword is, and use this information to help you choose effective keywords for your app.

## Reviews

The number of reviews for an app can be a useful indicator of its success and popularity.

In general, apps with more reviews are likely to have more downloads as well. This means that the number of reviews for the top 10 apps for a particular keyword can give us a rough idea of the level of difficulty for that keyword.

To check the number of reviews for the top 10 apps for a particular keyword, you can use a tool called Store Switcher. This app allows you to change the App Store that your iPhone is using, so you can search for a keyword in any App Store in the world.

Once you've found the top 10 apps for your keyword, you can check the number of reviews for each app. If the top 10 apps have a large number of reviews, it's likely that the keyword is competitive and difficult to rank for. On the other hand, if the top 10 apps have a small number of reviews, it's likely that the keyword is less competitive and may be easier to rank for.

## Keywords in the title and subtitle.

Apple's algorithm tends to favor apps that are highly relevant to a user's search query. This is evident when searching for the keyword "Youtube Counter" on the App Store. Despite the Youtube app having significantly more reviews than the other apps in the top 10, it still ranks lower because it is not as relevant to the search query.

To determine the relevance of a keyword, you can check if it appears in the titles and subtitles of the top 10 apps for that keyword. If the keyword appears in the titles and subtitles of most of the top 10 apps, it's likely that it's a relevant keyword. On the other hand, if the keyword does not appear in the titles and subtitles of most of the top 10 apps, it may not be as relevant.

## Average evaluation

The average rating of the top 10 apps for a particular keyword can be a useful indicator of the keyword's difficulty. If the average rating of the

top 10 apps is high, it's likely that the keyword is competitive and difficult to rank for.

On the other hand, if the average rating of the top 10 apps is low, it's likely that the keyword is less competitive and may be easier to rank for.

To determine the average rating of the top 10 apps for a particular keyword, you can use the same Store Switcher tool mentioned earlier. Once you've found the top 10 apps for your keyword, you can check the average rating by looking at the star ratings for each app.

By comparing your app with the average values for apps in the top 10 positions, you can determine if a keyword is within your reach or not.

If you want to know more about app store research, I suggest you take a look at this page [on the Apple site](#).

Now let's talk about Relevance.

## Relevance

Relevance refers to how closely a keyword matches the content and purpose of our app. In other words, it is the likelihood that a user searching for an app like ours would use that keyword.

When selecting keywords, we often focus on popularity and difficulty, but we often neglect relevance. If we find a keyword with high popularity and low difficulty, we may think "here it is, I found it". However, we should do a deeper analysis to determine if the keyword is truly relevant to our app.

Choosing keywords with high popularity but low relevance can be counterproductive for several reasons:

- It may increase impressions, but impressions are not always a positive indicator. If impressions rise but conversion rates drop, it could be a sign that we are using the wrong keywords.
- There is a risk of negative reviews. If someone downloads your app expecting one thing and finds something else, they are more likely to leave a negative review.
- Negative reviews can cause your app ranking to drop.
- If your app has an average rating below 4, downloads and conversion rates will also decrease.

As we can see, everything is interconnected. If we choose our keywords poorly, it will affect all our data.



# Checklist for choosing a good keyword.

Here is a checklist for choosing a good keyword:

- Does this keyword have a popularity value of at least 20 or higher?
- Is the difficulty level of this keyword accessible for my app?
- Are there any apps in the top 10 for this keyword that I feel I can compete with?
- Is this keyword truly relevant to my app?
- Will my target users use this keyword to search for my app?

These are all important considerations that can help us identify the best keyword for our app. Initially, this process may be time-consuming and challenging. To make things easier, we can use an app store optimization tool like Astro to help us with keyword analysis and selection.

## Conclusions

In this book, I wanted to condense all the basics of App Store Optimization into a brief introduction to this fascinating world. While this book is not intended to be a comprehensive guide, it should provide a good starting point for those interested in app store optimization.

As with our applications, this book also needs updates and feedback. If you have any suggestions or advice, feel free to email me at [hello@tryastro.app](mailto:hello@tryastro.app). I am always happy to talk to other developers, and you can also send me a direct message on Twitter.

@matteo\_spada

I hope this book can help you achieve all of your goals.

Matteo