⚠ Spam

⚠ Offensive

&$!#%

How to remove fake and inappropriate app reviews in the App Store and Google Play

A comprehensive guide on how to identify and remove malicious app reviews that damage your app rating and reputation.

Why is it important to report malicious app reviews?

Stats show that 79% of users check an app's reviews before downloading it.
This means a user's experience with your app starts even before the install. And sometimes, if users are put off by fake or negative reviews, it can finish right there — on your app's page.

Luckily, it's relatively easy to find those sneaky reviews that scare off your potential users. But once you find them, how should you report them? And how can you put in place a strategy to continue tackling malicious reviews head on?

This guide will show you how to do just that, as well as giving you tips and tricks to measure the efficiency of your review management process.

This guide is relevant for anyone managing app reviews, or for anyone involved in protecting their app's reputation. No matter if you're just beginning your review management journey or have been working in the space for years — we hope you'll take away plenty of new learnings to apply to your own review management flow, and help boost your app's bottom line.

> *Our research shows that apps with a rating under 4 stars lose up to half of their potential downloads. Users simply don't click on apps with lower ratings — and inappropriate reviews can have a severe impact on your overall score. But build your review management strategy right, and you can make sure up to 80% of these inappropriate reviews are deleted.*

Anatoly Sharifulin, CEO of AppFollow

What are the benefits of reporting inappropriate reviews?

01 Improve your brand reputation

02 Increase your app rating

03 Increase your conversion rates

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How to identify malicious app reviews

Now that you've decided to report malicious reviews — where do you begin? Let's kick off by understanding how to identify these types of reviews, and what rules to follow when reporting them.

Malicious vs legitimate negative app reviews: how to distinguish the two

First things first: you'll need to identify the root cause of your negative reviews, and the reasons why they appear.

Some of your negative reviews are left by users who are not happy with your app, and are letting you know about bugs, UX issues or missing features. These negative reviews are actually very useful, and if the feedback is implemented, can massively improve your app. However, these reviews need to be addressed and responded to as soon as possible — and should be responded to again once the issue is fixed. As a result, users will likely increase a rating from their original low score.

> *You may receive a sudden increase in reviews if your app was featured online, added to an Apple list, if your UA team bought lots of irrelevant traffic, or your competitors ordered negative reviews.*

Other, less useful negative reviews are left by spammers, haters, and sometimes even by your competitors. In this case, your competitor's goal is to drag your rating down and make your app less appealing to download, so they can profit in your place. These reviews need to be deleted as soon as possible before they do any harm.

Examples of useful and useless negative reviews

Useful

This may sound easy: you find a negative review, you report it. However, not all inappropriate reviews are between 1 and 2 stars — some of them can also be between 3-5 stars. This makes them harder to identify, but will still affect your ratings. Or imagine a flood of spammers leave hundreds of meaningless or negative reviews — that will also affect potential users' perception of your brand. Let's talk about how to fix your reputation (and app rating) by reporting them.

FEATURED #2

nshejshsioshc
★★☆☆☆

👍1 👎1

Multiplayer feature doesn't work As a pay-to-play user, it's so disappointing when you don't get your money's worth. A few years back, I purchased minecraft on my iPad and played with friends and siblings. Enjoyed it so much and even gave it a five-star rating. No doubt it was a top charter all the time. I eventually started playing on java too and invested on it more. But now that I've come back to playing on mobile, I discover that the multiplayer feature doesn't work. I can't join other worlds, servers, and realms.

Chioelnegro
★☆☆☆☆

👍0 👎1

Poop Poop

[Report a Concern] [Reply via Console] [Note] [Find user] [Translate] [Tweet] [Mail] [#] [+ Add Tag...]   Popular tags: Offensive language

Semantic Analysis tags:
[Negative ⌄]

[Reply to this review]

Useless

3 Types of inappropriate reviews

Understandably, brands can't delete these reviews by themselves, and instead need to report their concerns to app stores' moderators. But once the moderators are satisfied with your reasons for reporting those reviews, they are often deleted in no time. If, on the other hand, they decide that the reported review does not violate their rules, it will be left in your app's Ratings & Reviews section.

To increase the chances of certain reviews being deleted, you need to carefully examine Apple's and Google's guidelines. This will help match your reasoning to the stores' policies There are 3 types of reviews you can report:

- Spam reviews
- Aggressive and offensive reviews
- Off-topic and fake reviews

Let's take a closer look at each of these buckets.

This is how the process looks like if your request is satisfied:

Negative review received

Review violates store policy
Is offensive or off-topic

Report a concern about that review
Manually or via auto-reply

Store looks into the violation
Takes 3-10 days

Review is deleted

Spam reviews

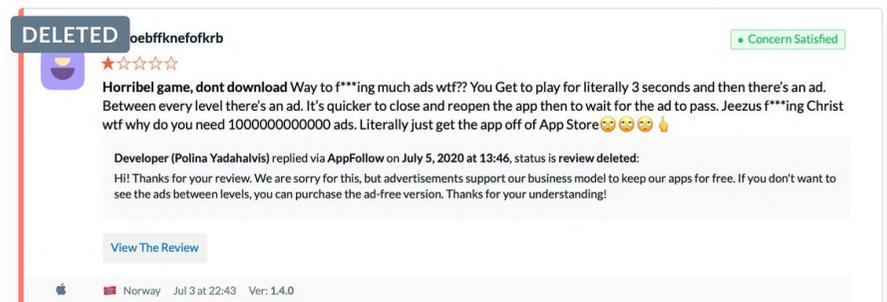**Tell-tale signs of spam reviews include:**

- Copy-pasted reviews (where the text of the review is identical to those used for other apps)

- Ads for another service

- Offers of money for reviews

- Reviews with no text in them

- Reviews with links to websites, phone numbers, or email addresses

- Reviews with no meaningful words, just letters (eg "ghghghg").
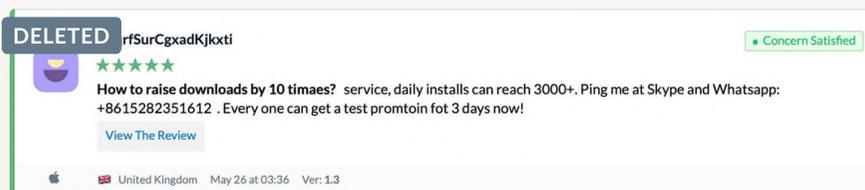
Aggressive and offensive reviews

Offensive reviews will usually contain:

- Hate speech

- Uncensored words

- Bullying

- Harassment

- Sexual context

- Violence and promotion of violence

- Any discrimination against others

- Reviews with aggressive emojis

DELETED rfSurCgxadKjkxti

★★★★★ • Concern Satisfied

How to raise downloads by 10 timaes? service, daily installs can reach 3000+. Ping me at Skype and Whatsapp: +8615282351612 . Every one can get a test promtoin fot 3 days now!

View The Review

 United Kingdom   May 26 at 03:36   Ver: 1.3

DELETED oebffknefofkrb

★☆☆☆☆ • Concern Satisfied

Horribel game, dont download Way to f***ing much ads wtf?? You Get to play for literally 3 seconds and then there's an ad. Between every level there's an ad. It's quicker to close and reopen the app then to wait for the ad to pass. Jeezus f***ing Christ wtf why do you need 1000000000000 ads. Literally just get the app off of App Store😳😳😳🖕

Developer (Polina Yadahalvis) replied via **AppFollow** on **July 5, 2020 at 13:46**, status is **review deleted**:

Hi! Thanks for your review. We are sorry for this, but advertisements support our business model to keep our apps for free. If you don't want to see the ads between levels, you can purchase the ad-free version. Thanks for your understanding!

View The Review

 Norway   Jul 3 at 22:43   Ver: 1.4.0

Off-topic and fake reviews

Tell-tale signs of fake reviews include:

- Anything that is irrelevant to the content, service, or experience you're reviewing, such as complaints about pricing or ads in the app

- Solicitations, political or social commentary

- One-word reviews, or several reviews with the same text in them. Most of the time, these are paid reviews left by people who have never used your app and might have been paid to leave poor feedback by your competitors.

- 👉 Here is a more detailed list of Apple's Guidelines and Google's Guidelines
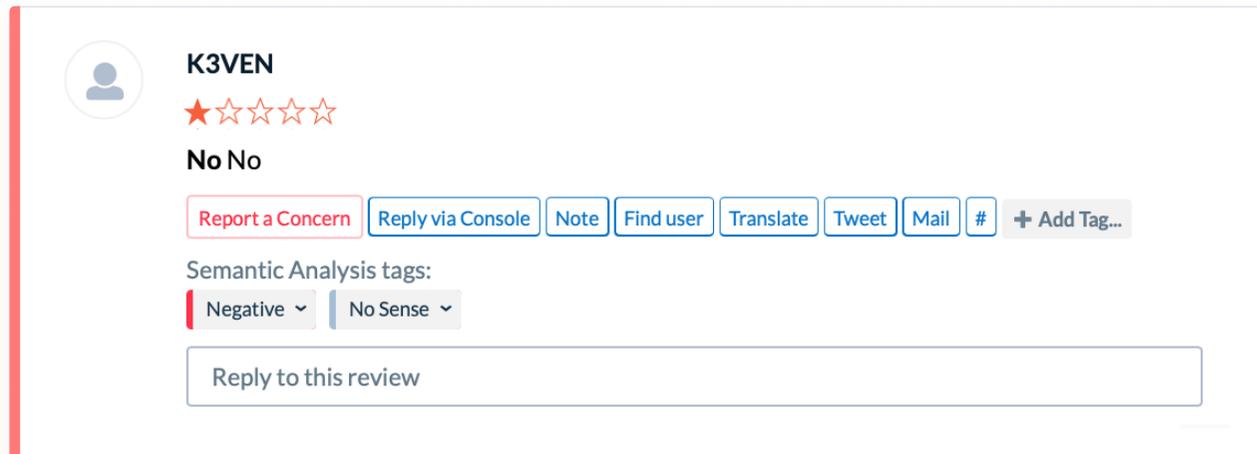
How to remove malicious reviews

While some reviews won't even make it through app stores' policies and be posted, the majority will still appear in your app's Ratings & Reviews section. Once you've identified inappropriate, spammy, or malicious app reviews, there are a few ways to report them — either in the store itself or using third-party tools.
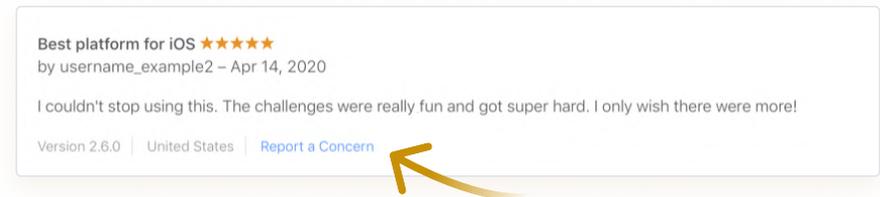
How to remove reviews in the App Store and Google Play

The process is fairly similar for both the App Store and Google Play, and you'll have to manually report each review for each app.

How to delete reviews in the App Store

1. Go to your console and choose the app with the reviews you want to report;

2. Click "Activity" > iOS app;

3. Find the review you want to report, and click "Report a concern" on the bottom right of the comment box;

4. Choose a concern in the pop-up menu, and enter a description with the reason why you want to report it;

5. Click "Submit".

> Best platform for iOS ★★★★★
> by username_example2 – Apr 14, 2020
>
> I couldn't stop using this. The challenges were really fun and got super hard. I only wish there were more!
>
> Version 2.6.0   United States   Report a Concern

Source: Apple.com

How to delete reviews in Google Play

1. Choose the app with the offensive review and go to the "Reviews" page;

2. Find the review you want to report, click on the flag icon, then select "Report";

3. You'll then see a sign above the review that the report is under moderation.

If moderators at Google Play agree that the reported review violates its rules, it will be deleted. Otherwise, you'll see a sign above the review that it will remain there. However, as soon as the review receives several similar reports, Google Play will delete it or cut its rating — meaning it won't be visible for new users.

How to automate review reporting

Reporting reviews manually takes up a lot of time and resources — which could be better directed towards more meaningful tasks, or helping users solve more pressing problems. Of course, you could hire someone part-time to report reviews. But this will come at an additional cost, which you'll need to factor into your budget and ROI. And because monitoring reviews is a routine job, you'll likely also have a high rotation of staff — leading to an endless merry-go-round of hiring and training new staff.

That's where automation comes in handy. Third-party services such as AppFollow can automate the process by identifying and reporting inappropriate reviews automatically, without you needing to sort through them on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Let's take a look at how you can use AppFollow's tools to save time and improve your app's reputation.

How to set up AppFollow's "Report-a-Concern" workflow:

1. Navigate to the "Reply to Reviews" section within the AppFollow dashboard, then to the "Auto-replies" section;

2. Add a new rule and choose conditions a review should meet to be deleted;

3. Hit "Save" and make the most of your new found time!
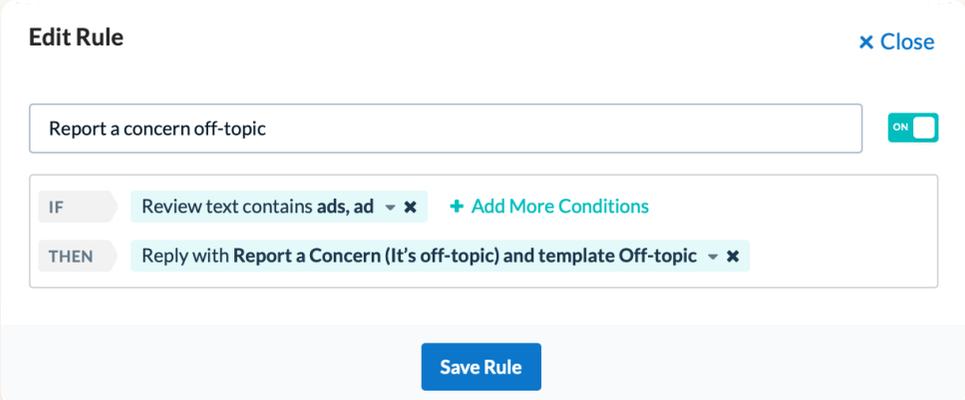
Edit Rule   ✕ Close

Report a concern off-topic   ON

IF   Review text contains **ads, ad** ✕   **+ Add More Conditions**

THEN   Reply with **Report a Concern (It's off-topic) and template Off-topic** ✕

Save Rule

The beauty of AppFollow's solution is that you can add as many rules as you want, and can keep on updating them as your app grows. When creating rules, we recommend going through previous reviews and checking for repeated keywords used by spammers or bots, so that you catch as many cases as possible.

Example of rules you can set up:

If a review contains **"wtf, f*****g"** Then Reply with Report a concern (offensive) and template **Offensive material**

If a review **rating is 1** ⭐ and **it contains <1 word** Then Reply to it with Report a concern (spam) and template **Spam**

If a review contains **"ads, ad, advertisement"** and **rating is 1** ⭐ Then Reply with Report a concern (off-topic) and template **Off-topic**

If a review contains **racist word** and **rating is <2** ⭐ Then Reply to it with Report a concern (offensive) and template **Hatred speech**

> *Bear in mind that there is a limit to how many reviews you can report per day. Unfortunately, neither Apple nor Google have shared what that exact number is — but if you report too many reviews manually, the stores can consider this as abusive.*
> *There's no risk of this when using AppFollow's auto-Report-a-concern feature: our system will automatically queue all requests, submitting no more than 15 reviews per app per day.*

If you aren't sure about what rules to set up, start off by trying our manual review reporting for both stores. This lets you set up tags and quick views for reviews with specific ratings and words. You'll be able to access them quicker, and still save yourself a good chunk of time and money.

How to report reviews in the App Store and Google Play at the same time

If your apps feature across both the App Store and Google Play, you may want to report reviews in both apps from one place. While you can't link the consoles yourself, this can be done in third-party platforms like AppFollow.

To set this up, you'll need to:

1. Go the "Reply to Review" section and choose your app;

2. Filter reviews with the necessary parameters — for example, short with a review rating of 1 star;

3. Find the reviews you want to report and click "Report a concern".

Case study: How Viber removed 60% of its spam reviews using AppFollow

> *AppFollow's "Report a concern" feature has been an effective tool in helping us achieve a tidy app page where users can get the information they are looking for by going through reviews by other users. The beauty is that we additionally can manage and respond to reviews and comments using AppFollow as a one-stop-shop.*
>
> **Rina Hamati, Customer Support Representative at Viber**

The challenge

Viber is one of the world's leading messaging and voice call apps, currently counting over 1 billion registered users. A key task for Viber's Customer Support team is ensuring its app page is clean and free of any offensive or inappropriate reviews. Viber was looking for a solution that would empower its Customer Support team to track, respond to mobile app reviews and report reviews violating the app stores' commenting policies.

The solution

In February 2020, Viber started using AppFollow as the platform was perfectly placed to cover all the Customer Support team's needs. Right from the start, the team began to process, review and respond to thousands of reviews.

AppFollow's quick and easy set-up means Viber has achieved noticeable results in a short space of time, and AppFollow's "Report a concern" feature has been key to removing inappropriate, spammy and offensive reviews.

Rakuten Viber

1,100
reviews

660
reviews

60%

Concern Submitted

Concern Satisfied
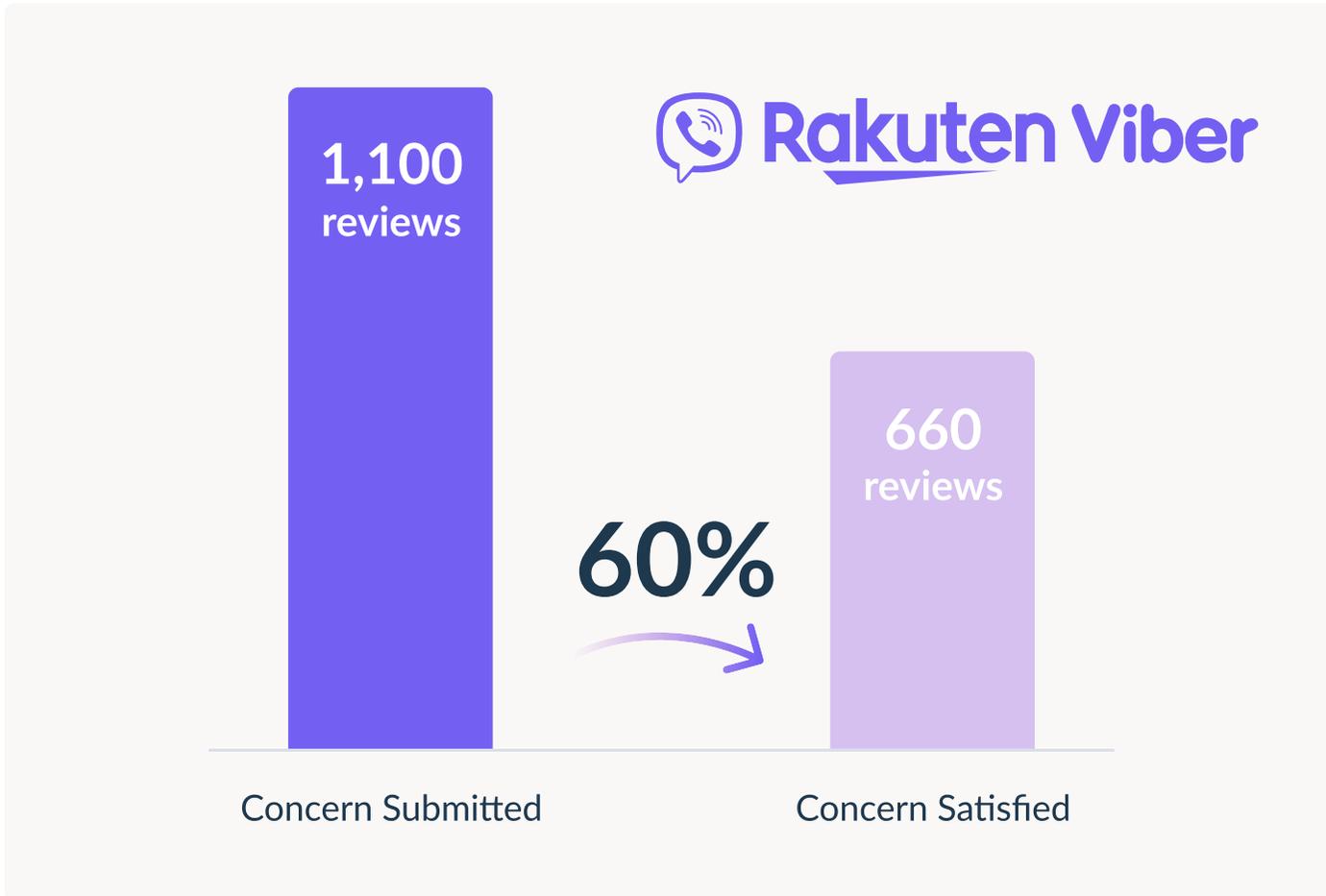
The result

With AppFollow, the Viber team managed to report 1,100 reviews within 6 months, in both the App Store and Google Play combined. **60% of these reviews were approved by app store moderators and thus removed from Viber's app pages.**

# How to evaluate the efficiency of your Report-a-concern strategy

Now that you've set everything up to report fake reviews, the final piece of the puzzle is to understand how many of your requests are being fulfilled by the app stores.

> *As we mentioned earlier in the guide, not all inappropriate reviews will be deleted by the stores' moderators. To improve your chances, you'll need to understand what exact wording will help get these reviews removed. You can do this by checking which reviews have already been deleted, and what reasons you used when reporting them.*

The only way to do this in the consoles is to save links to the reviews you've reported, together with the explanations, and remember to check back in a week or two once your requests have been processed. But AppFollow makes it much easier to check back on concerns, right from your dashboard. You can see what this looks like below:

Once it's clear what requests have been satisfied, it will become much easier for you to find similar reviews and report them, too. You can try to delete as many as you can, adjusting your strategy once you understand when reviews are considered spammy, off-topic, and/or offensive.
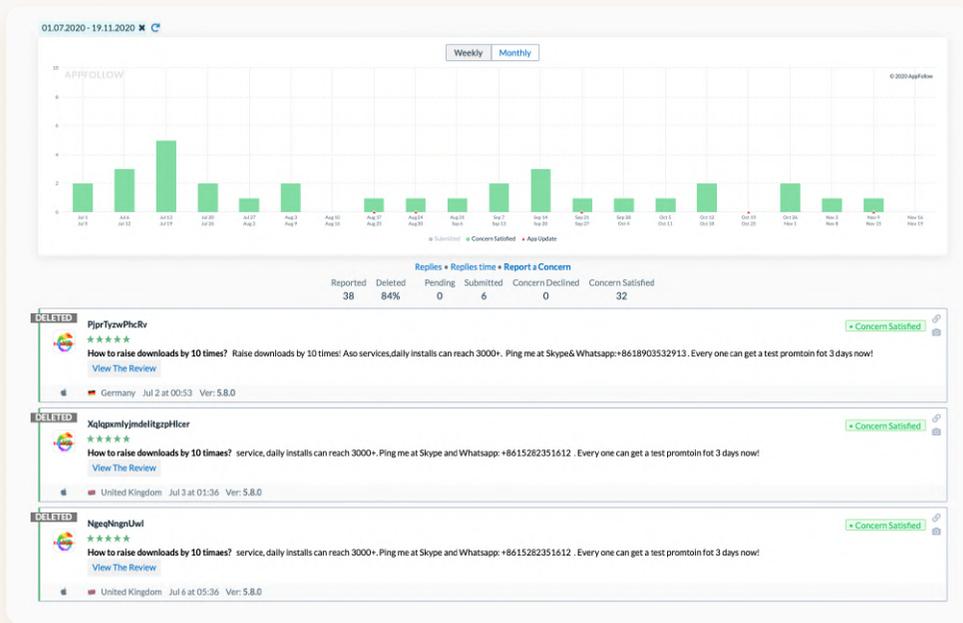
Generally, it takes several days for moderators to review your request — but in rare cases, it may take up to 2 weeks.

Of course, it might happen that your report isn't satisfied — and the review isn't deleted. But if the reported review really does go against app stores' guidelines, try reporting it again further down the line. Be careful though — we don't recommend doing so more than once or twice.

Our clients shared their tips on what to do if your concern was declined:

> **"**
>
> *For the Google Play Store, make sure you collect all the declined reviews with links to them in a spreadsheet and send it to Google Play's support. For the App Store, try reporting concerns another one to two times. This means you'll be able to delete up to another 15% of re-reported reviews.*
>
> **Vera Rabkina, Head of Product**

Summary

Monitoring your app reviews is critical to your success. Think of your app listing as your shop window: you'll want to ensure all your best reviews are right at the front, enticing potential customers — or users — to download your app.

Above all, make sure that malicious or fake reviews aren't making their way in. As we've seen above, these can seriously harm your brand's image and app store rating, eventually leading to a loss in installs and revenue. By applying the tips and tricks you've learned in this guide, you'll ensure a watertight strategy to prevent these sorts of reviews affecting your app.

Looking to streamline your review management, boost your app ratings, and increase installs? Request and see how AppFollow can help you reach your goals.

Request a demo

APPFOLLOW

AppFollow is an app management platform for app monitoring, ASO, and review management. The platform enables you to keep track of app performance, enhance the conversion to install rate, boost your app rankings, streamline your work with users and automate daily routine.

With AppFollow, you will be able to keep up-to-date with the trends for your own app as well as get a bird's eye view on your competition.

AppFollow's Review Management Tools help 70,000 teams worldwide to save time and resources and automate work with user reviews.

AppFollow integrates with over 30 services like Zendesk, Salesforce, Zapier, Slack to enable seamless customer and community support from the tools that you already use.

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