

# What is an in-app purchase?



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In-app purchases are hidden or 'not so obvious' paid-for features of an app which has usually been promoted as free - because the app itself is free to download. This practice takes place mainly in game apps, but can also occur in other types of app.

## Key features of in-app purchases

- Designers and producers of apps often allow a download of the basic version of the game, promoting it as free. However, after a player has completed a couple of stages successfully, and in some cases without any clear notification that payment is needed from this point forward, extras start to appear if the player wants to progress to the next stages of the game. The game player will click on a word like 'accept', or a tick without hesitation, because at this stage they are excited and want to continue.
- The words and images of the game app, give the impression that the extras presented are still all part of the free download. The player is not aware, that the action of accepting the item/ feature within the game will result in an actual charge to their credit or debit card.

## Typical wording of an in-app purchase could be

- '50 gold pieces are needed to pay the ferryman to reach the other side of the forbidden river! Take the perilous journey! Move up to expert level! Click on the tick to accept, or click on the X to decline'.
- One gold piece here could equal something like 50p in real money terms.

Lack of awareness of the in-app purchase practice, has resulted in a few news reports about children innocently running up large bills on their parents credit/debit cards. Parents have given their children access to their account passwords in order for them to download and play games, on a smartphone or tablet.

## Here are a few actions you can take to avoid this happening to you

- Use the voucher/gift card system purchasing apps both with Apple and Google Play. You don't have to submit credit/debit card details to buy apps or download free one. WHSmith,

Boots and large supermarket retailers stock the cards by their check-outs. This will enable you to buy a set amount to spend on apps. And no chance of running up a large credit/debit card bill. With the voucher/gift card you are given instructions on how it is used with your Apple or Google Play account.

- Before downloading any apps look at its details and terms of conditions. Try to get yourself and others to do this. As looking at the details of an app before you download it, can alert you to some of the hidden features that it contains. Although some designers still don't make this clear.

## **Follow these instructions to restrict in-app purchases on your tablet or phone**

### ***Google Android***

**Step 1:** Open the **Google Play Store** app and choose **Menu** and then **Settings**.

**Step 2:** Under 'User Controls' you should see the option **Set or Change PIN**. Tap this and Android will ask you to choose a PIN. When you have entered your chosen PIN, tap **OK** and then re-enter the PIN to confirm.

**Step 3:** Tick the box next to **Use PIN for purchases**.

**Step 4:** Now anyone who wants to make an in-app purchase on your device will need to know the PIN and you won't be able to accidentally make purchases.

### ***Apple iOS***

**Step 1:** To prevent in-app purchases on iOS devices like iPads and iPhones, open **Settings** then choose **General** and **Restrictions**.

**Step 2:** Tap **Enable Restrictions**, choose a PIN and enter it a second time to confirm.

**Step 3:** In the 'Allowed Content' menu, slide **In app purchases** to 'Off'.

*Please note these instructions might not work on some of the older versions of Apple or Android operating systems.*

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