

Ten Questions About Apple iOS17

By John Wordock, Executive Editor/SVP, Cumulus Podcast Network

Question 1: What exactly is Apple doing to my downloads?

A: Apple is throttling down on automatic downloads and how it serves un-played episodes when a listener returns to a show. Prior to iOS17, when listeners would un-pause automatic downloading, Apple would serve all un-played episodes. Now, Apple won't auto-download older previous episodes and will only resume downloading *new* episodes.

Question 2: Is my podcast being singled out because of its genre?

A: No, this change in automatic download policy is impacting the entire industry as Apple looks to address storage issues with its podcast app.

Question 3: Is my audience declining?

A: Your overall audience is still very much alive and listening. Only downloads on Apple have been impacted. Think of this as resetting your Apple data. Your downloads are now aligning more closely with actual listening.

Question 4: Will my downloads ever come back?

A: Unlikely, if you stand by and do nothing. This is a systemic change by Apple. The old way of serving countless back episodes ate up tons of storage on iPhones. But you can work toward rebuilding your downloads by pursuing followers and ramping up audience engagement.

Question 5: As a podcast host, what can I do to build downloads?

A: Promote. Promote. Promote. Mobilize your social media accounts to re-engage with your audience. Ask your listeners to commit the Three R's: Rate, Review and Recommend. Ask your listeners to evangelize on your behalf.

Question 6: Will this impact my back-catalog listening?

A: Yes. Episodes you published weeks and months ago will no longer automatically download on Apple devices if they have iOS17. You will need to tell your fans to actively check out those back episodes. When you follow a show that launched months ago, you will now need to actively download those past episodes.

Question 7: Will this impact if I launch a new show?

A: Yes, potentially, if you don't actively and aggressively promote your new podcast. The automatic download policy still applies eventually. If you launch in September and someone discovers your show in December, your new follower will not automatically get all episodes since the show launched.

Question 8: Will my podcast no longer attract advertisers?

A: No, this Apple change will provide better data and create a more accurate view of your audience. Longer term, this heightened accuracy should appeal to advertisers who have long yearned for better podcast metrics.

Question 9: What else should I monitor?

A: Keep track of your downloads beyond seven days. How many of your downloads are happening beyond a week? Is it 30 percent? 40%? If so, then you need to get your followers to listen more actively in the first week. Use call-to-action messages to activate your followers and turn passive listeners into engaged fans in week one.

Question 10: Besides downloads, what other factors should I look at?

A: Check your followers on Apple. Are they growing? Check your metrics on other platforms like Spotify and Amazon Music. Are your downloads growing there? If your downloads are declining on Apple, Spotify and elsewhere, then you REALLY need to do a better job of engaging your listeners. And look at your completion rates. How long are you retaining your listeners? Strive for 80% or higher. Higher completion rates, adding followers, and growing listening should help you chart better on Apple.