FREE CHECKLIST

The app notification checklist.

Sixteen things to get right before your app sends its first notification, drawn from how Uber, Duolingo, LinkedIn and Netflix build theirs. Use the checklist to brief a developer, or to check an app you are building yourself.

Before you build.

- [ ] **List every notification your app will send.**
  For each one, decide whether it is a push on the lock screen or an item that waits inside the app.
- [ ] **Push only the notifications that are about now.**
  A person is waiting on the user, or it is time for the user to do something, such as a workout or a lesson. Every other notification can wait in a list inside the app.
- [ ] **Give each kind of notification its own switch.**
  Add one switch that turns all of them off.
- [ ] **Make sure the app works with notifications switched off.**
  Nearly half of iPhone users never allow notifications.
- [ ] **Ask for permission once, at the right moment.**
  An iPhone shows the permission question a single time, so ask after a screen that explains what the user will get.

When you build.

- [ ] **Save every notification in your database before you send it.**
  The saved row is your record, your retry list and the list users see in the app.
- [ ] **Give each saved notification a key that can exist only once.**
  The same notification can then never be sent twice.
- [ ] **Check the notification is still true just before it is sent.**
  Never notify a user about something that user has already done.

When you build. CONTINUED

- [ ] **Send instant and scheduled notifications on separate paths.**
  A batch of reminders should never hold up a reply.
- [ ] **Put an expiry on every push.**
  Without an expiry, a push can wait up to four weeks for a phone that is switched off.
- [ ] **Store each user's time zone, and send at that user's local time.**
  A reminder set for 18:30 should arrive at 18:30 where the user is.
- [ ] **Tie each phone to one account at a time.**
  Move the phone to the new account on sign-in and remove it on sign-out, or the next person receives the last person's notifications.
- [ ] **Keep personal details out of the notification text.**
  The lock screen is public. Show the details after the app opens.

After launch.

- [ ] **Record why each notification was or was not sent.**
  "Why didn't I get it?" then has an answer.
- [ ] **Watch how many users switch notifications off.**
  That number matters more than how many users tap.
- [ ] **Add quiet hours, daily limits and bundling when real users show the need.**
  None of them matters until the basics work.