

Troubleshooting a Problem with the Mac App Store, 03-22-2021

Note: This discussion is based on macOS, 10.14.6 (Mojave). Some illustrations may differ when using other versions of macOS or OS X. Most illustrations are from screenshots on my iMac.

[Update: I've updated this presentation to show some additional detail/screenshots for the Mac App Store.]

The **Mac App Store** is a great resource for a variety of apps to use on your Mac. However, on occasion you might have a problem using it. I did recently, and that's the focus of this presentation: **Troubleshooting a Problem with the Mac App Store**. *Note: This isn't a comprehensive troubleshooting discussion, just one that worked for me.*

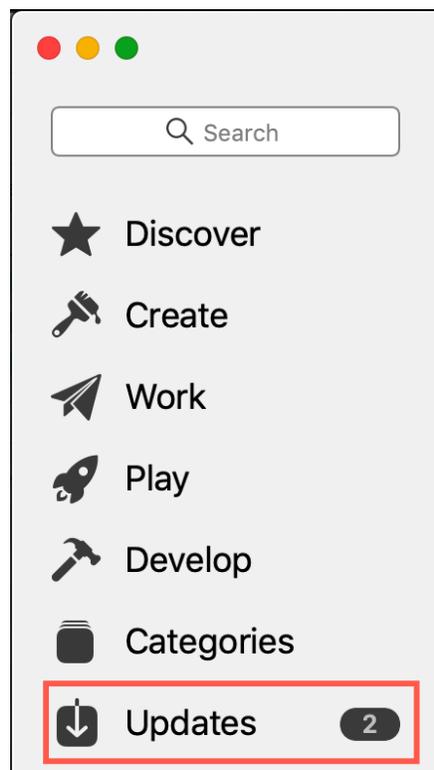
Trouble Updating an App. Recently, I started to notice a problem with updating apps that I had obtained from the Mac App Store (everything: those from Apple, free ones and ones I had purchased).

First, I would receive a notification that an update was available. Sometimes, I noticed a red badge on the App Store icon in the Dock:



App Store icon (Badge: Update Available)

Then I would open the App Store, select the **Updates** section and click on the app (or apps) to be updated:

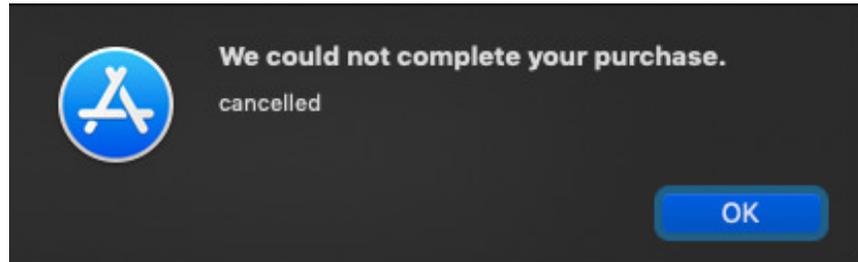


App Store – Updates Section

If I hadn't already signed in to my account, I would then be prompted to do so. So far, so good.

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Download Problem. However, after signing in (or just clicking on the icon of the app to be updated if already signed in), an alert message would appear stating that the **Download Could Not Be Completed** (or words to that effect as I didn't think to do a screen grab of the message). I recall also getting another message stating, **We could not complete your purchase.** I didn't get a screen grab of this one either, but while searching the web for App Store error messages I found this one:



Mac App Store Error Message

No Help. That's all! There was no explanation about what happened or how to resolve the problem!

Clicking on the app icon again in an attempt to download it just brought up the same error alert.

The "Spinner." On occasion, I wouldn't get the download error message, the "spinner arrow" would start circling and filling in, but nothing would get downloaded.



Mac App Store – Download Spinner

The download simply wouldn't start, and again the App Store didn't give any indication about what was wrong.

Logging out of the App Store app and logging in again didn't help, either.

Workaround (for a while). For a brief time, I was able to use a workaround by searching for the app and then clicking the **Update** button at the top of the app's page. After a while, even that didn't work. Now what to do?

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Troubleshooting Options. There are lots of troubleshooting options available. Here are the ones that I tried:

Restart. Just to make sure that I didn't have some sort of system problem, I resorted to a generic solution and did a **Restart** on my iMac. Nope, that didn't solve the problem.

Force Quit Mac App Store. Sometimes, a brute force option (Force Quitting) can be a solution to a problem with an app, but that didn't help either.

Maybe It's My VPN. I use the Nord VPN service, and on occasion, disabling it will resolve a connection problem. So, I disabled it and tried downloading from the App Store again. No joy; the download problem persisted.

Is the App Store Down? Maybe the problem isn't on my end. Checking Apple's **System Status Page** (<https://www.apple.com/in/support/systemstatus/>) didn't show any problem.

Searching for App Store Help (disappointing). Clicking on the App Store's **Help** menu didn't provide any help. Searches for topics like "download" or "problem" didn't reveal anything since these typically just search for items in one of the app's menus.

Choosing **App Store Help** from the **Help** menu brought up the **App Store User Guide**. Searching here for the same topics also didn't provide anything to troubleshoot the problem. Overall, I was disappointed over the lack of help.

Search the Web for Help. Beginning a search for the phrase **mac app store download** led me to a possible topic: **mac app store download fail**. Numerous websites offered suggestions. Here's what I tried first:

Clear the App Store Cache. A couple of websites recommended using the **Terminal** app and the following command to locate the App Store's temporary download cache folder and then delete its contents:

```
open $TMPDIR../C/com.apple.appstore/
```

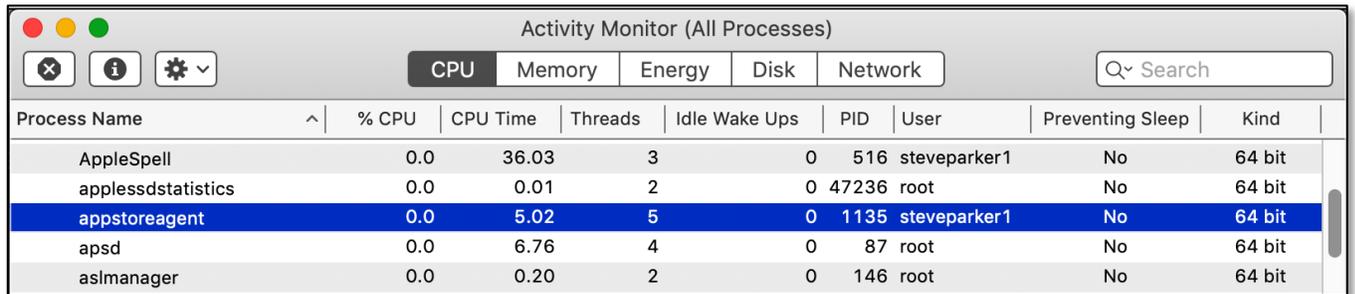
This command opened a hidden Finder window deep within the macOS that contains the **Mac App Store temporary download cache folder**. Guidance suggested that deleting the contents of this folder *should* clear up the download problem. Also recommended was to first copy the contents of this folder to a safe location (always a good practice in case it might be need to be used again).

Next, I quit the App Store app and followed the open/copy/delete procedure to clear the App Store temporary cache. Unfortunately, this solution still didn't solve my problem. After I opened the Mac App Store, downloads still would not start.

Note: Feel free to give this procedure to clear the Mac App Store cache a try as it might well work for you.

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The Solution! Force-Quit the **appstoreagent** Process. One website (<https://apple.stackexchange.com>) offered a solution that worked: using the **Activity Monitor** app and force-quitting the **appstoreagent** process.

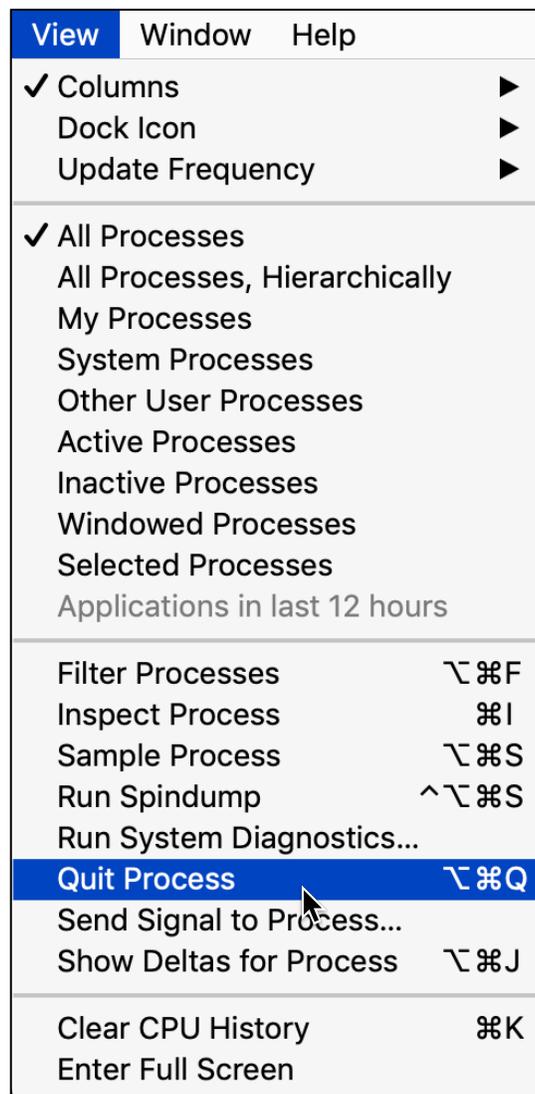


The screenshot shows the Activity Monitor window with the 'CPU' tab selected. The 'appstoreagent' process is highlighted in blue. The table below represents the data shown in the screenshot.

Process Name	% CPU	CPU Time	Threads	Idle Wake Ups	PID	User	Preventing Sleep	Kind
AppleSpell	0.0	36.03	3	0	516	steveparker1	No	64 bit
applesdsstatistics	0.0	0.01	2	0	47236	root	No	64 bit
appstoreagent	0.0	5.02	5	0	1135	steveparker1	No	64 bit
apsd	0.0	6.76	4	0	87	root	No	64 bit
aslmanager	0.0	0.20	2	0	146	root	No	64 bit

Activity Monitor – appstoreagent Process

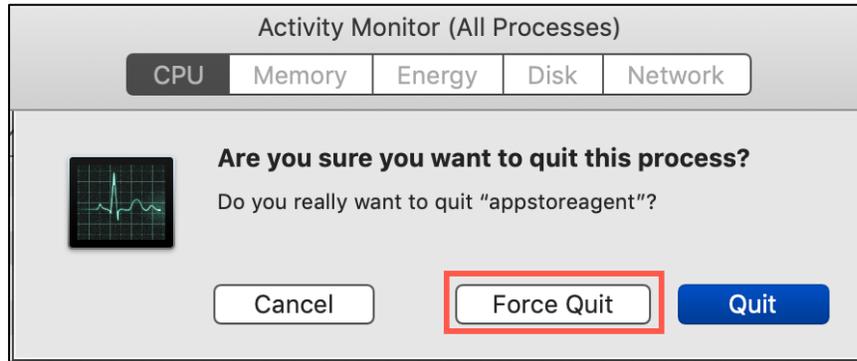
To Force Quit, first select the **appstoreagent** process. Then go to the **View** menu and choose **Quit Process**. (See the image on the next page.)



Activity Monitor – Quit Process

Next, a **Quit** dialog box will appear. Choose **Force Quit**:

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Activity Monitor – Quit Process

Once this was done, my app download started immediately! There was no need to even log out and log in again in the App Store.

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Summary

Occasionally, you might encounter a problem with the Mac App Store when trying to download or update an app. That was my problem recently. I would get a generic message saying that my download or purchase couldn't be completed but with no further explanation.

After trying several general troubleshooting methods (Restarting my Mac, Force-Quitting the App Store app, temporarily turning off my VPN, checking to see if the App Store was down, and searching the App Store User Guide), I decided to do a search on the web. I found several articles.

One solution was to clear the App Store temporary cache folder using a Terminal command to locate the folder. Once located, guidance (after copying the folder contents to a safe place) was to delete the cache folder's contents. Unfortunately, this didn't solve my problem.

The solution that worked for me was to use the Activity Monitor app to locate the [appstoreagent](#) process and then to Force Quit it. After this action, my app downloads worked again.

Next Presentation

For the next presentation, we'll explore another Mac Basics topic.

Have a favorite Mac Tip or utility? Please feel free to pass it along, and I'll see if I can work it into a future presentation.

If you have any suggestions for presentation topics, including macOS utilities, please contact me at slp4668@gmail.com.

-Steve Parker

Credits & Reference:

- Mac App Store: Downloads just don't start (Mojave)
(<https://apple.stackexchange.com/questions/345857/mac-app-store-downloads-just-dont-start-mojave>)