

Apple ID Recovery & Subscription Migration

A practical guide for anyone locked out of their Apple ID — especially helpful if you're assisting a family member, client, or someone who needs extra support through the process.

Part 1: Apple ID Account Recovery

Before You Start

- Try every other option first: use a trusted device already signed in, or reset your password through Settings on a device you can access.
- If someone set up an **Account Recovery Contact** in advance, that person can help you regain access faster than the standard waiting period.
- Account recovery should be a last resort — once started, it can take anywhere from a day to several weeks.

How to Start Recovery

1. Go to iforgot.apple.com or apple.com/recover.
2. Enter the Apple ID (email or phone number) you're trying to recover.
3. Choose a recovery method and follow the on-screen steps.
4. You'll receive a confirmation email (or iMessage, if using a phone-only account) within 72 hours, stating the date and time you can expect access to be restored.

Critical: Don't Use the Account During the Wait

- Turn off (or avoid using) **all devices signed into the Apple ID**, including the device that started the recovery request.
- If the account is used/logged into during the waiting period, **the recovery request can be cancelled automatically**, resetting the clock.
- Repeated failed password attempts can also flag Apple's security systems and extend the wait.

What Happens When the Waiting Period Ends

- Apple sends a **text or automated phone call** with instructions to regain access — follow them right away.
- If nothing arrives once the stated time has passed, go directly to apple.com/recover and follow the prompts there.
- **Good to know:** if you can remember your credentials at any point during the wait and successfully sign in, the recovery request cancels automatically and you get in immediately — no need to wait it out.
- Some accounts may be offered a shortcut: verifying a six-digit code sent to a primary email, or confirming identity via credit card details, can speed things up.

Tips If You're Helping Someone Else

- **The recovery window isn't a strict deadline.** If the notification arrives in the morning but you can't help until later, that's generally fine — the account simply becomes eligible for recovery and stays that way. If the original link/prompt seems to have expired, just return to apple.com/recover.
 - **Leave the phone powered ON**, but ask the person not to tap into any Apple ID or password screens. The phone needs to be on to receive the unlock text/call — it's *usage of the account*, not the phone being powered on, that risks cancelling the request.
 - Discourage repeated login attempts or resets in the meantime — this is especially worth flagging if you're supporting someone who may forget and try repeatedly on their own.
 - Apple Support **cannot expedite the wait time** — don't spend time on hold hoping to speed it up. They can, however, help troubleshoot if something seems stuck.
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Part 2: Moving Subscriptions Between Apple IDs

Common scenario: someone gets locked out of their Apple ID, so a family member or caregiver sets up a *new* Apple ID (sometimes tied to a new email) just to get the device usable — and pays for a subscription along the way. Good news: those purchases usually don't have to be lost.

Apple's "Migrate Purchases" Feature

Apple now allows a one-time transfer of purchases — including subscriptions, apps, and payment methods — from a **secondary** Apple Account into a **primary** one.

Steps (once both accounts are accessible):

1. On the device, go to **Settings > [Name] > Media & Purchases**.
2. Select **Migrate Purchases**.
3. Enter the login credentials for *both* accounts (the original "primary" ID and the newer "secondary" one).
4. Review what's being transferred, then confirm.

Eligibility Requirements

Both accounts must meet **all** of the following:

- Same country/region setting
- Two-factor authentication enabled
- A valid payment method on file
- Family Sharing turned **off**
- Neither account can already have been used in a prior migration
- The **primary** account must have some purchase/download history (a completely empty account can't receive a migration)
- Neither account can be locked, disabled, deleted, or deactivated at the time of transfer
- Not available in the EU, UK, or India

What Transfers (and What Doesn't)

Transfers	Does Not Transfer / Notes
Apps, subscriptions, purchased media	Any remaining store credit/gift card balance (spend it first)
Payment methods	Apple Music/Podcasts library data on the primary account gets overwritten by the secondary's — check this first
—	This can only be done once per account pair

If Migration Isn't an Option

Some situations (locked accounts, ineligible regions, prior migrations) won't qualify. In that case:

1. Cancel the subscription on the newer Apple ID.
2. Re-subscribe under the original, now-recovered Apple ID.

There's currently no way to transfer an individual subscription without using the full migration tool — it's all-or-nothing for eligible accounts.

Quick Reference Timeline

Step	What Happens
Day 0	Start recovery at iforgot.apple.com or apple.com/recover
Within 72 hrs	Confirmation email/message arrives with a target date
During the wait	Leave devices powered on but untouched — no login attempts
Target date	Text/call arrives with instructions — or check apple.com/recover directly
After recovery	Consider setting up a Recovery Contact and/or a secure password reminder to prevent a repeat lockout
If subscriptions were made on a separate ID	Use Settings > Media & Purchases > Migrate Purchases to consolidate

This guide reflects Apple's account recovery and purchase migration policies as of mid-2026. Apple's exact process can change — when in doubt, verify current steps at support.apple.com.