Update ARK Survival Evolved mods and diagnose a client mismatch safely

A Workshop update can leave an Evolved server and its players running different mod files. A failed join is not a reason to wipe the map or remove every mod. First distinguish a download failure, an activation error and a genuinely incompatible release.

1. Preserve the first useful evidence

Record the exact client message, UTC time, server build and whether the problem affects everyone or one player. Save the first relevant server error and the ordered Workshop IDs. Note what changed immediately before the incident: game update, mod update, new dependency or startup edit.

Check that the client is Evolved and that the selected storefront supports the modded setup. An Ascended installation cannot validate an Evolved Workshop pack. Browser visibility alone does not establish that the correct content loaded.

2. Compare three separate inventories

Compare the intended IDs in the active configuration, the files actually deployed by the supported updater, and the client content the player has loaded. `ActiveMods` is an ordered activation list; it is not proof that every required download completed. Installer entries can request content without activating it.

Read the updater's completion or failure messages. A folder timestamp can be a clue but is not a reliable release identifier by itself. Compare the affected author's release notes and required items. If the template provides an update check, use its documented workflow instead of running multiple download processes concurrently.

3. Plan one controlled update

Warn players, stop normally and keep a completed recovery checkpoint containing the matching world, player and tribe data, INI files and ordered mod list. Preserve permitted old mod artifacts if available. Workshop may serve only the newest release, so a backup of configuration alone does not guarantee a binary rollback.

Stage the update on a separate copy when the mod changes stored items, creatures or save formats. Keep the production service's active files intact until the test is useful. Do not silently change the map, total-conversion setting and ordinary mod set in the same maintenance window.

4. Interpret the failing stage

If the server fails before readiness, inspect the first missing dependency or initialization error. If only one player fails while matching clients join, have that player close the game, let the intended Workshop downloads finish and relaunch with the documented set. Do not ask them to delete all local saves.

If every client is rejected after an apparent successful update, compare the deployed server artifacts and ordered IDs again. A mod-author regression needs evidence from the author-supported release, not arbitrary changes to server passwords or network ports.

5. Isolate conflicts without saving away content

For a suspected interaction, create a separate test copy and change one dependency group at a time according to the authors' instructions. Keep its world distinct from the recovery copy. Removing a content mod from production and loading the same save can cause losses even if the process starts successfully.

After a correction, join with a normal account, inspect representative mod-owned content and test a normal save/restart cycle. Escalate with the first error, affected IDs, order, versions and the

scope of the failure. If recovery is needed, restore the mutually compatible checkpoint as a whole rather than mixing old saves with unverified new artifacts.

Related CloudExa guides

- Diagnose ARK Survival Evolved startup and joining failures without wiping
- Schedule game server backups and check retention

Official references

- ARK Official Community Wiki: mod activation and installer configuration
- ARK Official Community Wiki: server setup and platform requirements

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