

Hidden Phone Apps



What are Hidden Apps?

“Hidden” apps, “Vault” apps and “Ghost” apps, are apps that look innocuous, perhaps like a calculator, but are actually used to hide pictures, videos and messages on a smart device. Teens often use these apps because they want to hide their activity from their parents. Most times, these apps require a password to be entered in order to gain entry into the hidden area of the app. Some Vault apps go a step further and if the password is entered incorrectly, a picture of the individual attempting to gain access will be taken.

Android Hidden Apps (some examples)

	1 Gallery Vault - hide pictures & videos, strong encryption
	LockMyPix - hide photos, videos, AES encryption
	Vaulty - hide pictures and videos
	Keepsafe Photo Vault - hide private photos and videos
	Vault - Hide pics and video

iPhone Hidden Apps (some examples)

	Fake Calculator App - hide photos and videos (many versions)
	Private Photo Vault - picture safe
	Secret Calculator Fake Vault
	Keepsafe Photo Vault - hide private photos and videos
	Secret Vault Hide Photos - private picture safe

Do's and Don'ts

- ◆ **Do** periodically check your child's smart devices to make sure they have not downloaded anything you have not approved.
- ◆ **Do** think about using a monitoring service (as discussed in the Keeping Children Safe Online Smart card) for your child/teens smart devices, especially if you have given them the ability to download apps themselves.
- ◆ **Do** talk to your teens about the dangers of taking and sending nude photos or videos on their smart devices and make sure they understand the serious consequences.
- ◆ Do **not** give your child/teen the password or authorization to download apps in their respective “App Store”. Having them ask you for the password allows you to review any app they might want to put on their device.
- ◆ Do **not** allow your child to use “Messaging Apps” that instantly delete the content they hold. Allowing such apps will take away from your ability to help your kids navigate through smart device social norms.
- ◆ Do **not** allow children to set private passwords without sharing them with you. Always ensure that you can access your child/teen's phone at any time.

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How to find “Hidden Apps”

- ◆ One of the easiest ways to search for hidden apps on a smart device is to visit the devices respective App store (Apple or Google Play Store).
 - ◆ **Android device-** In the “Google Play Store” select “Menu” (3 vertical lines in the “Search” box), then select “My apps & games.” Next, select the “Installed” tab in the middle of your screen. Here you can review all the apps that have been downloaded to the device. Additionally, from your “Account” (under the same “Menu”) you can review “Purchase History” which will provide you an overview of all purchased apps.
 - ◆ **iPhone device-** In the “App Store” find and select the “Account” icon, or “Profile Picture” at the top right of your screen. Then select “Purchased” and the account you want to review purchases from (if you have an “Apple Family Sharing Plan”, more than one account will appear).
- ◆ Another way to review purchase history on a smart device is to find the “App Store” and search for “Hidden Apps.” Once a list of available apps appears on the screen, you can scroll through the list. If any “Hidden Apps” are downloaded on the device, it will be noted to the left side of the screen. This method may return inaccurate results due to some apps being miscategorized.

Red Flag Indicators

- I. If your child seems to have more than one of any kind of app it may indicate that one of those apps is not what it appears to be. Redundancy in apps may indicate that one is a “Hidden App”.
- II. If your child seems to try and hide his / her screen any time you enter the room, it may indicate he / she is trying to hide his / her phone activity from you.

How to Prevent Your Child from Downloading Hidden Apps

- ◆ **On iPhone:** iOS has an “Apple Family Sharing Plan” that allows parents to turn on a feature called “Ask to Buy”. When this feature is enabled, your child will not be able to download any apps without your approval.
- ◆ **On iPhone:** iOS has a built in feature that can be controlled through the “Settings” of your iPhone. Simply go in to your “Settings” section and find “Screen Time”. Select “Turn On Screen Time” > “Continue” > “This is My Child’s iPhone” > “Not Now” > “Not Now”. From there you can go in and set “Content & Privacy Restrictions” as well as a “Use Screen Time Passcode” to make sure that your settings are not changed by anyone who doesn’t have a password.
- ◆ **On Android:** Android users can setup parental controls in the “Google Play Store” by creating a PIN and choosing the maturity levels you want to allow. Go to the “Google Play Store” > “Menu” > “Settings” > under “User Controls”, you will find “Parental Controls”, and other settings you can review to control what your children download. It is also important to note that where many of the “Hidden Apps” are concerned, “Google Play Store” rates them “E” for everyone.
- ◆ **On Android:** Android users can also create a password for authentication to authorize purchases. This feature is located in the “User Control” section of your “Google Play Store” “Settings”.

You can limit the amount of time your child spends on his/her device unsupervised, by ensuring he/she puts it in the kitchen or living room before bed.