











HIDDEN PHONE APPS

- **Do** periodically check your child’s smart devices to ensure they have not downloaded anything you have not approved.
- **Do** think about using a monitoring service (as discussed in the Keeping Children Safe Online Smartcard) for your child/teen’s 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 compromising photos or videos on their smart devices and make sure they understand the **serious** consequences!
- **Don’t** 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.
- **Don’t** 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.
- **Don’t** allow children to set private passwords without sharing them with you. Always ensure that you can access your child/teen’s phone.

What are Hidden Apps?

“Hidden” apps, “Vault” apps, or “Ghost” apps are apps that look innocuous, perhaps like a calculator, but they 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. Often, these apps require a password to enter 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		iPhone Hidden Apps	
	Gallery Vault – hide photos/videos, strong encryption		Calculator# – hide photos/videos, strong encryption
	LockMyPix – hide photos/videos, AES encryption		Private Photo Vault – hide photos/videos, AES encryption
	Vaulty – hide photos/videos		Secret Calculator Browser – hidden internet browser
	Keepsafe Photo Vault – hide photos/videos		Keepsafe Photo Vault – hide photos/videos
	Secret Calculator Vault – hide photos/videos		Secret Vault – hide photos/videos

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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



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.”



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 Downloading Hidden Apps

- 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. iOS has a built-in feature that can be controlled through the “Settings” of your iPhone. Simply go to the “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.
- 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. Android users can also create a password for authentication to authorize purchases. This feature is in the “User Control” section of your “Google Play Store” settings.