POMS RISK CONTROL & INSURANCE
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HIDDEN APPS AND VAULTS: HOW KIDS CAN HIDE CONTENT ON PHONES

How it Works

Vault Apps are applications used to conceal photos, videos, and messages from others who may use your device. A vault app may appear harmless; however, children, particularly teens, use vault apps to conceal inappropriate or unauthorized activities from parents. If this concerns you, you're not alone, and we're here to help.

The first step is knowing what you're looking for. Oftentimes, vault apps appear to be something else. For example, check for duplicate apps, such as multiple calculators, or for apps with unusual names or icons,

The second step is to be proactive. Review app settings, permissions, and storage in your child's phone. This can help uncover hidden applications. Using parental control software, like the app Bark, can provide additional monitoring and alert you to hidden apps.

It's also important to pay attention to behaviors. Turning off a device or hiding the screen when you enter a room or get close is a common red flag. Also, refusing to hand over passwords or let you look through their phones.

Communication is also vital. It's important to regularly discuss your child's online behavior and device use with them and explain why vault apps may be dangerous.

When to Contact Law Enforcement

If a parent discovers hidden apps and suspects extortion, exploitation, or other dangerous online activity, contact local law enforcement immediately.

Potential threats include:

1. Threats, Extortion, or Sextortion
2. Contact with an Adult Posing as a Minor
3. Explicit Images of a Minor Have Been Shared
4. Threats of Physical Harm or Stalking
5. Blackmail, Coercion, or Manipulation

Immediate Steps for Parents

- Stay calm and avoid blaming the child.
- Take screenshots and save all evidence.
- Do not continue communicating with the suspect.
- Report the incident to law enforcement.
- Notify the platform or app where the communication occurred.
- Seek emotional support for the child, as these situations can be extremely traumatic.

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POPULAR VAULT APPS:

Below is a list of popular Vault Apps. If you want to know if your child has downloaded one of these apps, simply visit the app store on your child's phone. When you type the app name, if you see "OPEN" next to it (instead of "GET"), it means the app is already installed on their phone.

Lock Photos Photo Secret Vault

App for iOS devices. Once launched, user must create a password which can't be reset. Used to hide photos and videos, audio files, and files like PDFs. Users can even use a decoy password and send false data.

Gallery Lock

Hides photos. After three failed password attempts, the app captures photo of the intruder. App icon can be disguised or hidden. Free with ads.

Archive Photos on Android

Built-in option on Android. To view archived photos, tap the hamburger menu (three horizontal lines) and select "Archives"

Secret Photo Album

Hides internet browser history and photos. Can be locked with a password, pin, pattern, or facial recognition. Decoy feature shows innocuous photos while hiding private photos.

AppLock

Fingerprint or password locking to secure Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, other apps, and even phone calls. Uses an invisible lock pattern. Can be disguised as an error message or a blank screen.

Secure Folder (Samsung Galaxy only)

Optional "Private Mode" for hiding photos, videos, files, apps, and data. Optional fingerprint lock, pattern, pin, or password. To view, go to Settings > Lock Screen and Security > Secure Folder.

Keepsafe Photo Vault

Fingerprint passcode. The app will lock if user sets the phone facedown. Hides photos, videos, credit card info, ID cards, and passports. Decoy pin. Can be disguised as a calculator. Android and iOS.

Apple's built-in "hide photos" feature

On iPhone, at the bottom of the photos or albums tab go to •1-1idden• and select the photo you want to unhide. On Mac, go to 'View• on the menu bar and select "Show Hidden Photo Album".

Pic Safe - Private Photo Vault

Hides photos and videos. Password, pattern, or PIN lock. Decoy password option to fool others. Provides "reports• if someone tries to access photos, and takes their picture.

Best Secret Folder

Captures photos of anyone who tries to access it. Discreet icon looks like a travel app. Can set a fingerprint password. The app can be shut down by setting the phone face down.

Vault Hide Pics & Videos (Android only)

Can secure internet browsing history, text used to conceal photos, videos, messages, phone calls, photos, videos. Stealth mode hides the app. Can be doubled to seem like a regular photo app.

Below are a few additional vault apps; these apps are constantly increasing and changing, may only be available for a short time, and are then taken off the market, making them even harder to discover.

SPV - Photo Vault
Safe Vault Photos Album

PH: App Locker for your iPhone

LockMyPix Secret Photo Vault

Safe Lock - Hidden Photo Vault

Cloakd: Privacy App Vault

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NMPSIA members may request a free training through Poms and Associates.

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