

A Choice of Privacy.

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I wrote this while I was brainstorming for an operating system concept (at the time called MSC):

On Android, if I want to give an app a permission, it has complete control over what I give it permission for. Android gives you the ability to control what apps can do, but why do we need to trust every single app that needs permissions to use the power you give it reasonably?

Here's an example: If I want to add a contact in WhatsApp to a group or change someone's name, I have to allow it permission to access every single contact I have ever added on my phone (which is a brilliant ploy by Meta to make a profile on you). If I want an app to save something to my device, I have to let it see every non-system file on the entire device (i.e. the personal stuff I've added) unless I put it in a virtual password-protected vault. Why?! The answer is the Google Play Store. The apps there can be taken down if they are suspicious, and the assumption is that you are "safe" using the huge "reputable" companies' apps because it is highly monitored despite them routinely abusing these permissions to mine data out of you. The only protection you have when using the small niche apps is something called "Google Play Protect" which scans them for malware.

Furthermore, there are some permissions that are automatically granted without a prompt! You can't disable apps vibrating or controlling the volume and many more things you might not have known like access to your device orientation and volume button detection. You can't stop it doing that. I've heard¹ Snapchat can track if people take screenshots and report it to the person whose message was taken a picture of through the default Android screenshot option.

There's things they won't let you change and things that you can't set limits on: if you want to give someone your name, you have to give the address of everyone you ever knew. And now it's not even our choice! Schools are requiring that people install spyware that can do anything it wants on *their* personal devices. Why!?

It's become commonplace that people automatically share other people's info with companies without their consent, so even if you choose not to participate, your existence, like society, means that you agree to the endless terms and conditions allowing companies to do every legal thing under the sun.

Now our devices are cameras, phones, internet connectors and calculators. It's good to have everything in the one place, but we can't let companies have our lives in the one place as well. We shouldn't have to make a choice to sell our soul to rename a contact or edit a picture. We should have a choice to allow apps to save a picture, or allow us to share one

¹ [Insider - How to screenshot on Snapchat without someone knowing](#), Updated Jan 10, 2023

contact with an app or to have different contacts for every app. That way, you can trust that useful niche company to do what they said they would do, because that's all you let them do.

With technology, nothing is impossible. A lot of these things can be worked around even within the limited unrooted Android framework. So why can't the average technology user, which is most of the Western world to live in a society where they are safe and they *know* that they're not being watched and they *know* exactly what sites are doing when they hit "Allow".

So let's make privacy easy. Let's make a fundamental part of our lives a safe place to live. Privacy can only be dead if we kill it. Rather than being simply a "user", we could be owners.

And if the corporations object to freedom, then we'll all see what sense of entitlement they had to our information when we gave it unwillingly and unknowingly by the people who didn't know we had any other option.

Those who say privacy is already dead say so as they slowly kill it.

We can allow people to make the choice.
Will we?