

Facebook[®] for Grown-Ups



Michael Miller

Use Facebook
to Reconnect with Old Friends,
Family, and Co-Workers

Facebook[®] *for* Grown-Ups

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que[®]

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Facebook® for Grown-Ups

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Introduction

A confession:

I'm not as young as I used to be.

Back in the day, I used to be known as a young Turk, a whiz kid, a young man with potential. But I'm no longer Turkish, don't have a lot of whiz left, and long ago gave up on realizing that potential thing. I got older.

Somewhere along the line I acquired a big house and a bigger mortgage, got married (to my high school sweetheart), and inherited kids (well, stepkids) and grandkids (also stepped). I look at what all the younger people in my household are doing, and realize that I'm not doing anything remotely like that anymore. I'm an old guy kind of set in his ways—including the way I use technology.

Now, I write a lot of books about technology. To some degree, how a 50 year old person uses Windows is pretty much the same as how a 20 year-old person does; Windows is Windows, after all. I get by.

But there's this new thing called social networking. It's technology related, because you have to use your computer (or, in the case of the youngsters, your cell phone) to do it. And from what I've seen, how the young people use social networking is quite a bit different from how my wife and I do it. There's a definite generational difference here.

Which is where this book comes in. *Facebook for Grown-Ups* focuses on the biggest and most happening social networking site, Facebook, and how people of our generation are

using it. Trust me, we don't use Facebook the same way our kids do. It's a different experience for us, and one that has to be learned.

Did you know, for example, that you can use Facebook to keep in touch with all your family members—including distant relatives? Or that you can find long-lost friends on the Facebook site—including that cute guy you had a crush on back in high school? Or that you can share your family photos with these friends and relatives? And keep them updated on what you're up to these days?

That's right, grown-ups use Facebook to get connected with the people we know today, as well as those we knew in years gone by. We also use Facebook to keep tabs on our kids, to drop them a note from time to time, and to see what mischief they're getting themselves into. (And they are getting themselves into mischief, trust me.)

The key is figuring out how to find all the people you want to find, and to share all the information you want to share—without sharing *too much* personal information about yourself. There's a bit of a trick to doing the social networking thing while still maintaining a semblance of privacy online.

I try to cover all that in this book. My focus is on using Facebook, yes, but as responsible adults—not as carefree kids. Because, let's face it, we haven't been carefree kids for quite some time now. Sad, I know, but true.

How This Book Is Organized

If I did my job right, *Facebook for Grown-Ups* should be a relatively quick but useful read. It contains a lot of information about Facebook's various and sundry features, with an emphasis on how us grown-ups use those features.

To make things a little easier to grasp, this book is organized into six main parts, each focused on a particular major topic:

- **Part I, "Getting Started with Facebook—and Social Networking,"** provides an introduction to this whole social networking thing, and helps you sign up for Facebook and find your way around the site.
- **Part II, "Facebook for Friends and Family,"** is all about finding and communicating with family members and friends on the Facebook site. You learn how to get back in touch with old friends (including that cute high

school crush) and how make new ones online. You even learn how to use Facebook to keep tabs (or spy) on your kids. Really.

- **Part III, “Keeping in Touch with Facebook,”** is about the many ways to communicate with your friends and family. You learn how to post public status updates, exchange private messages, and even chat in real time—which may be the only way to get face time with your kids.
- **Part IV, “Sharing Your Life on Facebook,”** is about all the things you can share with your friends and family on Facebook. You learn how to share photos, home movies, even birthdays and other important events.
- **Part V, “Doing More with Facebook,”** covers some slightly more advanced things you might want to do, including personalizing your Profile page, becoming a “fan” of a performer or company, participating in topic-oriented groups, using Facebook for business networking and job hunting, using Facebook applications and games, accessing Facebook from your mobile phone, and buying and selling merchandise in the Facebook Marketplace.
- **Part VI, “Basic Facebook Housekeeping Chores,”** shows you how to manage your Facebook account—and configure all those privacy settings to keep your personal information private.

Although I recommend reading the book in consecutive order, you don’t have to. Read it in chapter order if you want (I think it flows fairly well as written), or read just those chapters that interest you. It’s okay either way.

Conventions Used in This Book

I hope that this book is easy enough to figure out on its own, without requiring its own instruction manual. As you read through the pages, however, it helps to know precisely how I’ve presented specific types of information.

As you read through this book you’ll note several special elements, presented in what we in the publishing business call “margin notes.” There are different types of margin notes for different types of information, as you see here.

Beyond the main text, I end each chapter with a kind of sidebar observation. These sections aren't necessarily factual, as the rest of the text is supposed to be; they're more opinion, looking at Facebook from my personal viewpoint. Take 'em or leave 'em; that's up to you.

One more thing. Facebook is a website, and websites seem to change the way they look and act on a fairly frequent yet unpredictable basis. (In Facebook's case, they changed their privacy features about a half-dozen times *while I was writing the chapter about privacy*. Thanks a lot, Facebook.) That means that what I describe in these pages might look or act a little different by the time you get around to reading it. So if I talk about a particular button that is now a link located somewhere else on the page, try to be understanding. You still should be able to figure things out.

Get Ready to Facebook

Now that you know how to use this book, it's time to get to the heart of the matter. But when you're ready to take a break from marveling at how old your friends look in their Facebook profiles, browse over to my personal website, located at www.molehillgroup.com. Here you can find more information on this book and other books I've written—including any necessary corrections and clarifications, in the inevitable event that an error or two creeps into this text. (Hey, nobody's perfect!)

In addition, know that I love to hear from readers of my books. If you want to contact me, feel free to email me at facebook4grownups@molehillgroup.com. I can't promise that I'll answer every message, but I do promise that I'll read each one!

But enough with the preliminaries. You want to find out what this Facebook thing is all about? Then turn the page, and start Facebooking!



Note

This is a note that presents some interesting information, even if it isn't wholly relevant to the discussion in the main text.



Tip

This is a tip that might prove useful for whatever it is you're in the process of doing.



Caution

This is a warning that something you might accidentally do might have undesirable results—so take care!

Getting Started with Facebook—and Social Networking

- 1 Welcome to Facebook: It's Not Just for Kids Anymore
- 2 Signing Up and Getting Started
- 3 Getting Around the Facebook Site

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Welcome to Facebook: It's Not Just for Kids Anymore

Facebook is where all the young people hang out online.

Now, I know you're only as young as you feel, but if you're reading a book called *Facebook for Grown-Ups*, you're probably a tad past your school years. In other words, you're not that young anymore. So why should *you* care about Facebook?

There's a simple answer to that question. No matter what your age, Facebook and other social networks help you keep in touch with family, friends, and co-workers. Chances are you'll find lots of friends already on the site—including, it would be fair to wager, all of your children, nieces and nephews, and grandchildren, if you have them.

So if you want to keep in touch with (or keep tabs on) your kids, Facebook is the place to do it. Facebook is also a great place to catch up with old friends, even (and especially) those you haven't seen since you all were a lot younger than you are today. You see, Facebook isn't just for younger users; it's for anyone wanting to keep in touch with anyone else.

What Social Networking Is and How It Works

Let's not get ahead of ourselves. Before we get into what Facebook is and what it does, let's take a look at the whole

social networking phenomenon. That's what Facebook is, after all—a *social network*. (And not just any old social network; Facebook is the world's largest social network. That's why everybody uses it.)

What Is a Social Network?

A social network is a large website that hosts a community of users, and makes it easy for those users to communicate with one another. Social networks enable users to share experiences and opinions with one another via *status updates*, short text messages that are posted for public viewing by all of that person's friends on the site.

There are lots of social networks out there on the Web. Some, such as LinkedIn or Flixster, are devoted to a particular topic or community. Others, such as Facebook and MySpace, are more broad-based. These general social networks make it easy for communities devoted to specific topics to develop within the overall site.

Why Do People Use Social Networks?

Okay, that's a fairly academic description of what a social network is. But what does a social network do—or, more concisely, why do people use a social network?

To my mind, social networks are all about communicating, staying in touch with one another. It's the 21st-century way to let people know what you're up to—and to find out what everyone else is up to, too.

In the old, old days, the only way you found out about what was going on was for someone to write you a letter. That probably sounds quaint today, as letter writing is somewhat out of fashion. But I'm guessing you're old enough to have written a few letters in your time, or at least to have seen your parents do so.

Ah, the joys of receiving a letter from an old friend! I miss seeing a friend's address in the top left corner, opening the envelope, and savoring the words within. Of course, most friends didn't write that often; writing was a lot of work, so you saved up your thoughts and experiences until you had a full letter's worth. But, man, it was great to read what your friends had been doing. It almost made the wait worthwhile.

That was then and this is now. Today, nobody has the time or the patience or the attention span to write or read long letters. At some point, a decade or so ago, email replaced the written letter as our primary means of correspondence. That wasn't necessarily a bad thing; emails were shorter than written letters, but you got them immediately—and you could respond to them immediately, too. With the Internet age came this faster and more direct form of communication, and we adapted to it.

For young people today, however, email is old hat. It's too slow and takes too much time. (They'd never have tolerated the age of the written letter...) Instead, our attention deprived youth prefer immediate communication, via text messages and instant messages and such.

The problem with all these forms of communication is that they're not centralized. If you're text messaging with a dozen friends, that's a dozen different "feeds" of information you have to keep track of. Same thing with instant messaging; there's no central repository where you can read all your friends' messages in one place.

This is where social networking comes in. Instead of writing a dozen (or a hundred) different letters or emails to each of your friends telling them that you just bought a new dress (or car or house or whatever), you make a single post that then those dozen (or hundred) different people can read. Something happens, you write about it, it gets posted on the social networking site, and everyone you know reads about it. It takes all the work out of keeping your friends up-to-date on what you're doing.

Of course, it works in the other direction, too. Instead of waiting for letters or emails or text messages from each of your friends, you just log onto the social networking site. There you find a feed of updates from everyone you know. Read the feed and you're instantly updated on what everyone is up to. That makes it really easy to keep in touch.

Now, social networking lets you do a lot more than just exchange status updates, but that's the most common activity and the reason most of us do the social networking thing. Communications to and from all your friends, all in one place, all done in your Web browser from your personal computer. (Or, if you're a mobile kind of person, from your cell phone.) It's like communications central for everyone you know—close friends or otherwise.

What Other Stuff Does a Social Network Do?

I just mentioned that social networking offers more than simple status updates. What is all that other stuff? Here's a short list:

- **Private communications.** This can take the form of a built-in email system (that is, the email is contained within the social networking site; you don't need separate software to use it) or live instant messaging.
- **Groups and forums.** These are like online clubs built around specific areas of interest. You can find groups for hobbies like woodworking or quilting, for topics like politics or sports, for just about anything you can think of. There are even groups devoted to specific companies, schools, and even entertainers—these last being more like fan clubs than anything else.
- **Photo and video sharing.** That's right, most social networks let you upload your pictures and movies and share them with all your friends on the network.
- **Games and applications.** If you have too much free time on your hands, most social networks include fun games you can play, as well as other applications and utilities that add functionality to the site. (For example, Facebook offers apps that help you track family members, organize your book and music libraries, and such.)
- **Marketplace.** Get enough people congregated on a single website, and there's a lot of things those people can do together—including buy and sell things. Many social networks offer online marketplaces, similar to Craigslist classifieds, so that you can find out what other members have for sale—or are interested in buying.

There's a bit more than even all this, including event scheduling and the like, but you get the general idea. A social network is an online community, and offers many of the same activities that you'd find in a real-world community.

Who Uses Social Networks?

With all that social networks have to offer, it's not surprising that so many people use them day in and day out. As with many new technologies, social networks started out as a thing used by college students. (That's how the Internet itself took off, after all.) But over time social networking spread from

the young generation into the general public, including old farts like you and me.

Today, the audience for social networking is rapidly evolving. In fact, the fastest-growing demographic on the Facebook site are those of us 45 years or older. (Take that, you young whippersnappers!)

In practice, then, social networks are home to all sorts of users, including:

- Friends and family members who want to keep in touch
- People looking for long-lost friends
- Business colleagues who use the site for collaboration and networking
- Singles who want to meet and match up with other singles
- Hobbyists looking for others who share their interests
- Classmates who need study partners and homework advice
- Musicians, actors, and celebrities connecting with their fans

And, of course, college and high school students. (That's until they move onto the next big thing, of course.)

How Did Social Networks Develop?

Interestingly, today's social networks evolved from the earliest dial-up computer networks, bulletin board systems (BBSs), and other online discussion forums. That's right, Facebook and MySpace are only a few steps removed from CompuServe, Prodigy, and The WELL. (I assume you're old enough to remember some of these services—including the original America Online.)

These early proto-communities, most of which predated the formal Internet in the 1970s and 1980s, offered topic-based discussion forums and chat rooms, just like Facebook does today. What they didn't offer was a way to follow friends on the site, or to publicly share status updates. But the seeds of social networking were there.

Other components of social networking developed after the rise of the public Internet. For example, topic-based website communities, like iVillage, Epicurious, and Classmates.com, arose in the mid-1990s. Personal blogs, which let users post short articles of information and opinion,

emerged around the year 2000. And photo-sharing sites, such as Flickr and Photobucket, became a part of the Internet landscape in the early 2000s.

The first site to combine all of these features was Friendster, in 2003. Friendster also introduced the concepts of “friends” and “friending” to the social Web; it all came from the name, not surprisingly.

Friendster enjoyed immediate popularity (more than 3 million users within the first few months of operations), but ran into technical problems associated with that growth and was soon surpassed by MySpace, which launched later the same year. MySpace became the most popular social networking site in June 2006, and remained the top social network for almost two years.

Say Hello to Facebook

The big dog in social networking was part of the second wave. It was 2004 when a site originally known as “Thefacebook” was introduced. What eventually became known as just “Facebook” was originally intended as a site where college students could socialize online. Sensing opportunity beyond the college market, however, Facebook opened its site to high school students in 2005, and to users of all ages (actually, users above the age of 13) in 2006.

This broadening in Facebook’s user base led to a huge increase in both users and pageviews, with Facebook surpassing MySpace in April 2008. Facebook is currently the number-two site on the entire Internet, with more than 500 million users of all ages. That’s a pretty big deal.

So if you want to social network today, Facebook is the place to do it. Facebook is a big honkin’ Web community, a site that offers a lot of different ways to publicly and privately communicate with lots and lots of other people.

Chances are you already know a lot of folks who use Facebook. It goes without saying that your kids and their friends are all Facebook users; it’s a rare youngster, indeed, who doesn’t have Facebook as his or her browser



Note

The phrase “social network” can be either a noun or a verb. In practice, then, Facebook is a social network (noun) that lets you social network (verb) with your friends. Got it?

home page. But it's not just the younger generation. You'll also find neighbors, co-workers, friends, and older family members using the site.

What Facebook offers is a collection of user profile pages. Every user has his or own profile page, where they post their status updates, display their personal information, share photos and videos, and such. When you become a "friend" of a person, you get access to their profile page, and all that's on it. You have to ask people to be their friend; over time, you'll probably assemble a rather large list of such friends.

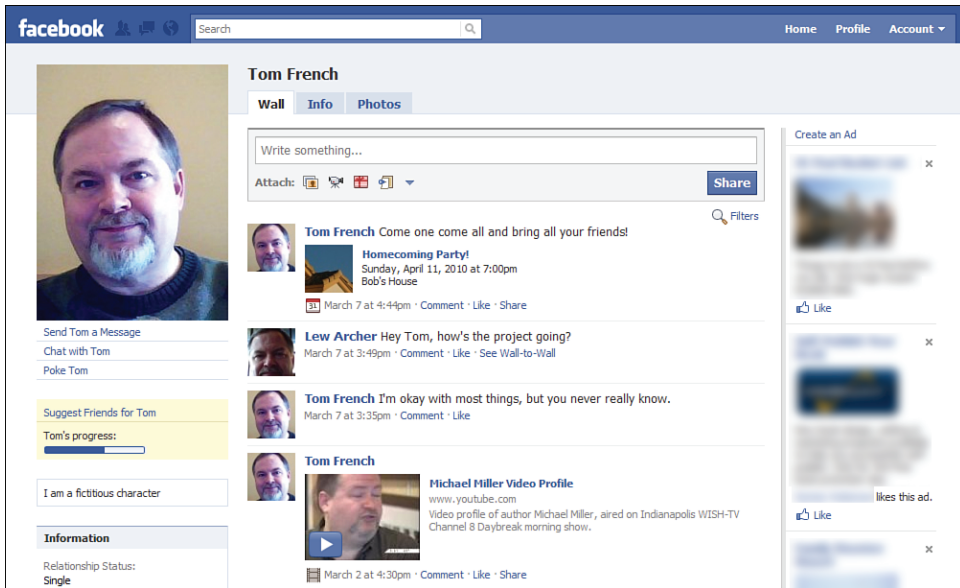


Figure 1.1. *A typical Facebook personal profile page.*

Facebook also offers profile pages for groups. A group can be a charitable organization, a company, or just an online club revolving around a specific topic. Facebook has groups for cat lovers, chess players, gardeners, and the like. There are also groups (more like fan clubs) for musicians, comedians, actors, television shows, movies, and the like. As with personal profile pages, these group pages feature news about the topic at hand, photos, discussions, and such.

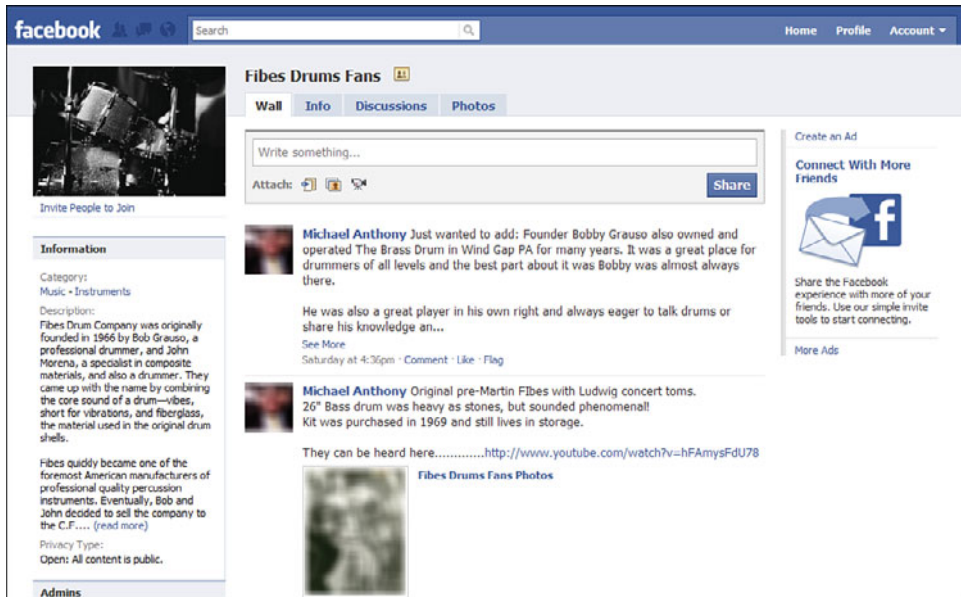


Figure 1.2. A Facebook group page.

News—called status updates—from your friends and the groups you join are displayed in a constantly flowing *news feed* that appears on your Facebook home page. Everything that everybody's doing is listed there; it's how you keep track of all you deem important.

As you'll learn in the next chapter, to use Facebook you have to join the site—become a member, as it were. Facebook membership and use is totally free; all you have to spend is your time.

Things You Can—and Can't—Do on Facebook

Okay, so Facebook is the most popular social network. What does that mean to you—and what can you use it for?

Things to Do

First off, you can use Facebook to let your friends and family know what you're up to. You do this in the form of status updates, short text messages

that appear on both your home page and in the news feed that is displayed on your friends' home pages. It's easy to log on and post a short status update; you can even do it from your cell phone!

Next, you can use Facebook to view all your friends' status updates. As previously noted, all these updates are consolidated into a single news feed on your Facebook home page. Just open the www.facebook.com page, log in, and get updated on what all your friends are doing.



Figure 1.3. *The news feed on Facebook's home page—lots and lots of status updates from all your friends.*

You can also use Facebook to communicate privately with individual friends. Facebook offers a built-in email system for private messages, as well as real-time instant messaging (Facebook calls it “chat”) with online friends. So not everything you do has to be public.

That said, you can also use Facebook to share photos and videos. Just upload the files you want to share and they're displayed on a tab on your profile page. New photos and videos you upload are also displayed as status updates, so your friends receive notice of them in their news feeds.

Facebook also offers a way to announce and track important events, such as parties and gatherings, as well as invite your friends to these events. Of course, you can join any group you find interesting on the site, as well as play games, buy and sell merchandise, and do all sorts of other fun and

marginally useful stuff. It's a fairly robust website, after all—a real community online.

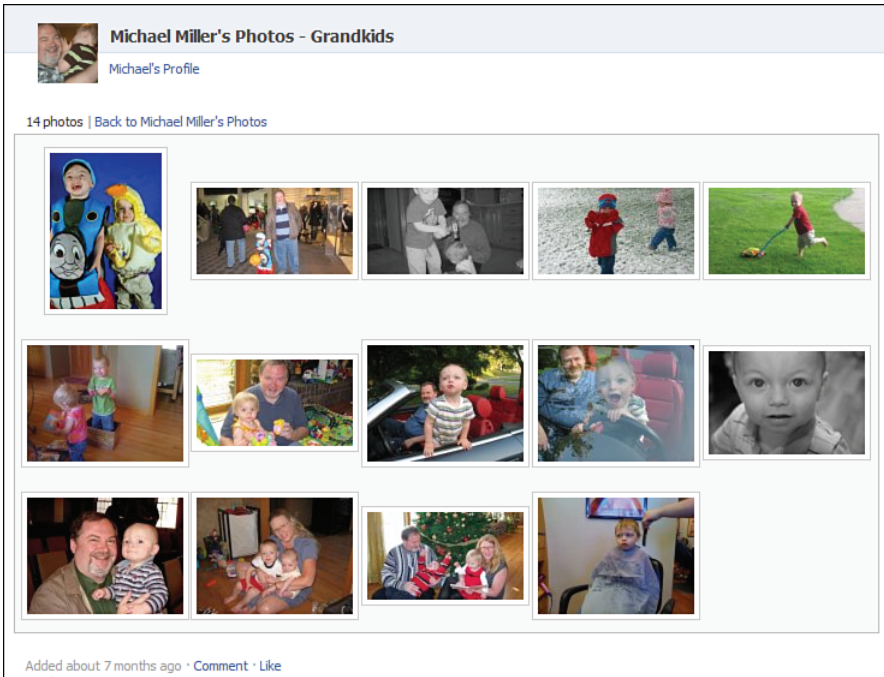


Figure 1.4. A personal photo album, open for sharing on Facebook.

Things *Not* to Do

With all the things you can do on Facebook, what sorts of things *shouldn't* you do? That is, what sorts of things is Facebook just not that suited for?

First off, you have to remember that communicating with people via Facebook is no substitute for face-to-face communication. Those short little status updates you make can't convey the same information as a longer letter, or the emotion of a telephone conversation. Facebook communication is, at best, a kind of shorthand. When you really want to discuss something in depth, you need to do it in person, not on Facebook.

Then there's the whole issue of what constitutes a friend. A person you call a "friend" on Facebook might not be someone you'd even recognize if you ran into them in the grocery store. It's easy to deceive yourself into thinking you're immensely popular because you have a long friends list, but

these folks aren't really friends; they're just people you broadcast to online. They're more like an audience than anything else.

This leads to the issue of whether online social networking is an effective replacement for real-world communication. You may be "talking" to more so-called friends online, but you may actually be talking to fewer real friends in the real world. Physical relationships could suffer if you spend too much time communicating virtually on Facebook; it's a false sort of familiarity that results.

And when you have hundreds of people on your Facebook friends list, how well do you really know any of them? It's possible if not likely that some of the people you call "friends" really aren't the people they present themselves to be. For whatever reason, some people adopt different personas—including fake names and profile pictures—when they're online; it's possible that you're establishing relationships on Facebook that have no basis in reality—which could result in online stalking or worse.

Bottom line, you shouldn't let Facebook replace your real-world friendships. It can supplement your friendships, make some general communication easier, and even help you renew old acquaintances, but it can never replace a good conversation with an old friend. That sort of connection is—and will always be—priceless.

Why Grown-Ups Use Facebook

Many people use social networks such as Facebook as a kind of container for all their online activities. I like to think of Facebook as an operating system. This is particularly the case with teenagers and college kids, who have Facebook open in their browsers all day long. They do almost everything from within Facebook—read status updates, send and receive emails, instant message with other users, share photos and videos, you name it. They never exit the site; it's as constant for them as is Windows.

Older users, however, tend not to be as Facebook-centric as the young'uns are. I don't know of too many people my age who are on Facebook 24/7, like their kids. We might check into Facebook a few times a day, but it doesn't monopolize our lives. Or at least it shouldn't.

Instead, grown-ups use Facebook on a more occasional basis to keep tabs on what friends and family members are up to. We tend not to be as addicted to Facebook as our kids are; we don't have to know what everyone is doing on a minute-by-minute basis. Instead, we can log in once or maybe twice a day and get the general drift of everyone's activities. That's enough information for most of us.

Grown-ups also use Facebook to reconnect with people we haven't seen in a while. A long while, sometimes. Personally, I use Facebook to hook up with old friends from high school and college, and to reconnect with former colleagues and those I might want to work with again. I guarantee you'll find people on Facebook that you haven't thought about for a long time. (Which may not always be a good thing, I suppose...)

Facebook is also a great place for family members—especially extended families—to keep abreast of comings and goings. It might take a lot of effort to write your cousins and aunts and uncles and nieces and nephews and stepchildren and in-laws and all the rest, but a single Facebook status update will do the job of multiple letters and emails. You can also use Facebook to share family photos with the rest of your family, which is tons easier than printing and mailing photos manually.

Speaking of family members, Facebook is a great way to spy on your kids. I don't mean that in a bad way, of course (or do I?); I mean that Facebook lets you see what your children are up to without them actually having to have a conversation with you about it. All you have to do is add your kids to your friends list, and you'll see all their status updates in your Facebook news feed. (That's unless they adjust their privacy settings to exclude you from their most private thoughts, which if they're smart they'll do.)

Of course, there are plenty of ways for adult users to waste time on Facebook, just as our kids do. I know a fair number of supposed grown-ups who get addicted to Farmville and Mafia Wars and other social games, and spend way too much time playing them. So useless Facebook activity isn't the sole province of the young; us oldsters can also spend hours doing essentially nothing useful online.

Bottom line, grown-ups use Facebook for many of the same reasons as younger folks do, but in a smarter and less intrusive fashion. Or so we'd like to think, anyway.

Social Networking Do's and Don'ts

When it comes to using Facebook and other social networks, there are some general guidelines you should adhere to. These guidelines will help you better fit into the community—and protect yourself from any inherent dangers.

Do These Things

In general, a social network like Facebook requires your active participation. Logging in once a month won't do it; that's not near social enough.

If you want to become a Facebook member in good standing, then, follow these tips:

- **Post frequently—but not too frequently.** A social network is a community, and to be a member of that community you have to actively participate in that community. If you wait too long between posts, people will forget that you're there. Conversely, if you post too frequently, that might be perceived as overbearing or annoying. The best frequency is somewhere between once a week and a few times per day—for grown-ups, once every day or two is probably good.
- **Keep your posts short and sweet.** People don't want or expect to read overly long musings on Facebook. Instead, they tend to graze, absorbing the gist of what's posted rather than reading entire missives. On a site like Facebook, that means keeping your posts to no more than a few sentences. If you want to pontificate in more detail, get yourself a blog.
- **Use proper spelling.** While you don't have to use complete and proper grammar and punctuation (see the next tip), blatant misspellings can mark you as less informed than you might actually be. Take the time to spell things correctly; it's literally the least you can do.
- **Take shortcuts.** While you should always use proper spelling, you don't have to use full sentences when posting to a social network. In fact, it's okay to use common abbreviations and acronyms, such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laughing out loud). Casual is good.
- **Link to additional information.** You don't always have space to provide a lot of background information in a status update. Instead, you can link to Web pages or blog posts that offer more details.

- **Be discrete.** Remember, Facebook status updates are public, for all to read. Post only that information that you'd want your friends (or spouse or employer or children) to read.
- **Be cautious.** You don't have to be paranoid about it, but it helps to assume that there are some dangerous people out there. Don't do anything that would put you in harm's way.

Don't Do These Things

Building on that last tip, you should, in general, avoid posting personal information in any public forum, including Facebook. Here are some specific things you should *avoid* when using Facebook:

- **Don't accept every friend request you receive.** You don't have to have a thousand friends. It's better to have a smaller number of true friends than a larger number of people you really don't know.
- **Don't post if you don't have anything interesting to say.** Some of the most annoying people on Facebook are those that post their every action and movement. ("I just woke up." "I'm reading my mail." "I'm thinking about having lunch." "That coffee was delicious.") Post if there's something interesting happening, but avoid posting just to be posting. Think about what you like to read about other people, and post in a similar fashion.
- **Don't assume that everyone online will agree with you.** Some people use social networks like Facebook as a platform for their opinions. While it may be okay to share your opinions with close (i.e., non-Facebook) friends, spouting off in a public forum is not only bad form, it's a way to incite a flame war—an unnecessary online war of words.
- **Don't post anything that could possibly be used against you.** Want to put your job in jeopardy? Then by all means, you should post negative comments about your workplace or employer. And future employment may be denied if a potential employer doesn't like what he or she sees in your Facebook posts. (And they will be looking...) As in most things, with social networking it's better to be safe than sorry; avoid posting overly negative comments that are better kept private.
- **Don't post overly personal information.** Along the same lines, think twice before sharing the intimate details of your private life—including embar-

raising photographs. Discretion is a value us older folks should maintain; there's no reason for posting pictures of you falling down drunk at the holiday office party, or baring it all on the beach during your last vacation. Leave some of the details to imagination.

- **Don't gripe.** Building on that last tip, the last thing I and lots of others want to find in our news feeds are your private gripes. Oh, it's okay to grouse and be grumpy from time to time, but don't use Facebook as your personal forum for petty grievances. If you have a personal problem, deal with it. You don't have to share *everything*, you know. Whining gets old really fast.
- **Don't post personal contact information.** As nice as Facebook is for renewing old acquaintances, it can also put you in contact with people you really don't want to be in contact with. So don't make it easy for disreputable people or unwanted old boyfriends to find you offline; avoid posting your phone number, email address, and home address.
- **Don't post your constant whereabouts.** You don't need to broadcast your every movement; thieves don't need to know when your house is empty. It's okay to post where you were after the fact, but keep your current whereabouts private.

In other words, don't post every little detail and thought about everything you do. Keep your private life private. And make public only the most general information that those distant acquaintances you call Facebook friends want or need to know.

Other Social Media

Social networking is just one form of what the digerati call *social media*. (Who are these digerati, by the way?) Social media encompasses all websites, services, and platforms that people use to share experiences and opinions with each other.

In practice, that covers everything from social networks like Facebook to social bookmarking services, where users share the sites and articles they like. It also includes blogs, microblogs, and other forms of online communities.

Okay, that's a lot of jargon to just throw out there, so I'll give you a bit of background.

A *social bookmarking service*, like Digg or Delicious, lets users share their favorite Web pages with friends and colleagues online. When you join one of these social bookmarking services, you visit a website, Web page, news article, or blog post that you like, then click a button or link to *bookmark* that site. This bookmark then appears in your master list of bookmarks on the social bookmarking service site; you can share any or all bookmarks with anyone you like.

A *blog* (short for “web log”) is a shared online journal consisting of entries from the site's owner or creator. Bloggers create posts of varying length; some posts are just a sentence or two, others several paragraphs long; blog posts can include text, photos, and videos. Most blogs are focused on a specific topic, and some are almost journalistic in their execution. (Others read like personal diaries, so there's a bit of variety out there.)

A *microblogging service* essentially separates the status updates from everything else offered on a social network. Microblogs exist solely to distribute short text posts from individual users to groups of followers. These posts are similar to traditional blog posts but much shorter. The most popular microblogging service is Twitter, which lets you make posts (called *tweets*) of 140 characters or less—but that's all. No groups, no communities, no nothing else, just tweets.

Then we come to social networks, which offer pretty much everything you find in other social media, but all in one site. So while you can keep a separate blog, create social bookmarks, and microblog to your heart's content on Twitter, if you want to do it all in one place, a general social networking site, like Facebook, is the better deal.

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