



Facebook Information - Beginners

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Against all odds, you likely know someone who still hasn't succumbed to the lure of Facebook. Maybe you're a beginner yourself. Or perhaps you just haven't had the gosh darn time to explore every last corner of the world's most expansive social network.

Below, we offer a refresher course for those eager to learn more about the basics of Facebook. Let's take a social stroll through the network's main features, policies and culture norms.

Even if you're a pro, it's fun to look at the platform through a beginner's eyes. If you were a Facebook virgin, what would you think of the social network?

1. Timeline

Before you begin searching for friends, it's important to complete your Timeline (aka your personal profile), which includes everything from uploading a profile picture and cover photo to outlining your employment history to determining your relationship status (OK, that's optional). It's called a timeline because you can include information, important milestones and memories spanning your entire life. Timeline is incredibly nuanced, and encourages you to include as much detail as possible, and many, many people do — so, don't be shy!

2. Friends

Once you've filled out a healthy portion of your Timeline, start searching for and adding "friends." Trust us, you won't be at a loss. Chances are, many of your co-workers, family members, classmates and neighbors are already on the network. Search for them in the search box that appears on the top of the site.

As you accumulate friends, Facebook will be able to suggest additional contacts as its algorithm generates connections among your growing network. You'll see a list of suggested friends on Facebook's homepage, in the "People You May Know" sidebar.

3. News Feed

Finding friends on Facebook is incredibly important, not simply to connect for connection's sake, but to stay up to date on their latest news, thoughts, activities, whereabouts and tastes. And the place to access that information is the News Feed.

Once you've logged into Facebook, the first thing you'll see is the News Feed. There you'll view friends' status updates, new photos, links to articles, etc. One of the most recent changes Facebook made to its News Feed is the order in which updates appear. Facebook's algorithm and your own activity determine what "news" is most important, and thus, whether it makes the top of your News Feed. Think of it like the front page of a newspaper, determined by an algorithm rather than an editor.

Therefore, you won't necessarily see updates in the order they're posted, but in order of timeliness and "importance."

If you prefer to see things in chronological order, simply click the "Sort" option at the top of your feed and select "Most Recent."

4. The Status Update

A status update is anything important to you at a particular moment in time that you deem shareable with Facebook friends. Through a status update, you can communicate your present activity or whereabouts (via a "check-in"), post a link to an interesting article or site, share photos and videos, and even create a poll.

Create a status update either from the News Feed or from the top of your Timeline.

However, I recommend first taking a look at many of your friends' status updates before launching into your own. Each person has his or her own style and frequency, but many newbies aren't aware of typical Facebook "etiquette" when it comes to updates. In general, Facebook users resent "spammy" updates — in other words, sharing every single activity on your schedule and thought in your brain ("I just boarded the 6:05 train"). Boring. These days, Facebook is a space for sharing valuable information and fostering conversation. It's not a platform for minutiae.

5. Brands

Although a major part of Facebook, friends are not the only entities with whom you can interact. Most major brands and a growing number of small businesses use Facebook to engage with, share deals and seek feedback from consumers and fans. Companies like Coca-Cola and Disney have tens of millions of fans interested in the latest company news and culture.

Take stock of the brands you'd like to follow, search for their timelines and "like" them on Facebook. You'll start seeing their updates appear in the News Feed right alongside those of your friends. Feel free to interact with brand updates.

6. The "Like" Button

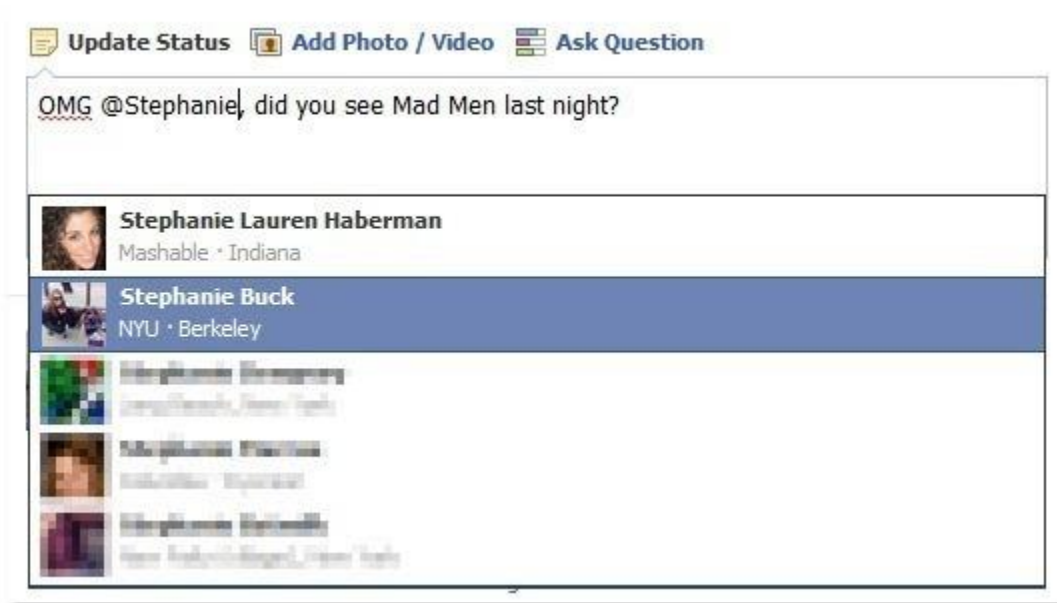
One of the most powerful tools on Facebook, the "like" button not only communicates your support of activities, brands, articles and products to fellow users, but also to Facebook and third parties. The "like" button lives on nearly every piece of Facebook content: status updates, photos, comments, brands timelines, apps and even ads.

However, you've probably also seen Facebook "like" and share buttons on external sites: shopping, news publications, mobile and social apps, and ads. These sites are utilizing Facebook's social plugins. When you "like" something outside of Facebook.com, it appears on your timeline, where friends can comment on the activity.

When Facebook expanded this functionality outside of Facebook.com, it opened up a rich social layer that most social networks had never before imagined. On the other hand, keep in mind that Facebook keeps track of your "like" activity and uses it to "improve the quality" of ads on the site. If sharing that

kind of data makes you nervous, you're not alone. Just be mindful that Facebook can share this behavioral data with third parties. For more information, see Facebook's full data use policy.

7. Tagging



Facebook tagging means you can mention and directly link to another Facebook user, whether in photos, status updates, check-ins or comments. For instance, when you tag someone in a photo, that user will receive a notification, and the tagged photo will appear on his timeline — that is, unless he has disabled the tagging feature.

The tagging tool fosters conversation and creates additional connections among users. If I want my mother to see an article I posted on Facebook, I'll tag her in the update by typing her name — Facebook autofills with friend suggestions for easier tagging (see above). "Hey **Anne Warber**(a.k.a. mom), I thought you'd like this article about pandas!"

Check-in and photo tagging work a little differently. When you check in at a location, you can add Facebook friends who are with you by searching for their names, and thus, tagging them. Tag friends in photos by selecting the "tag photo" option at the bottom of the selected image.



It's important to remember that everyone has a different preference when it comes to tagging. Some people will instantly view content they've been tagged in and subsequently remove it, for any number of reasons: They don't like how they look in a photo, they don't like people knowing where they are, etc. Be aware of their concerns for privacy and your own.

Head to **Privacy Settings > Timeline and Tagging** to adjust your own settings, should you wish to review tags before they're posted or control who can see your tags.

8. Privacy

Frankly, we could write an entire book on Facebook privacy. But in the interest of time, we'll mention the major types of privacy you need to be aware of as a Facebook user. Inter-user privacy: Friends with your boss on Facebook? Consider adding him or her to a "list." Then you can choose what updates they can view. You may also choose to limit certain lists from viewing posts other people tag you in by visiting the basic privacy settings. Public profile: You can control the information non-friends can see on your public profile. Almost every feature of your profile has an edit option, which allows you to select who can view that information (public, friends only, only you, etc.). Third-party access: In order to use Facebook Open Graph apps like Spotify and Pinterest, those companies need to access certain information on your profile. They'll ask for permissions before you begin using the app. Be aware that each app has different privacy risks. If you don't want that information to be accessible through Facebook's APIs, learn how to turn off access. Similarly, you can also opt out of Facebook social ads — the ads that appear to you based on brands your friends like.

9. Facebook Apps

Built on the social network's Open Graph (a collection of your preferences, likes, interests and activity on Facebook and from around the web), Facebook apps allow you to personalize and enhance your participation on the social network. They can add anything from games (FarmVille) to photo albums to quizzes to music (Spotify). Most of Facebook's apps come from outside developers that use Facebook's API. Many represent strong partnerships and add additional social layers, like Washington Post Social Reader and Foursquare. Enabling each Facebook app means granting that app permission to access data on your profile and post on your behalf. This often means sharing on your Timeline how you interact with that app. For example, when you use the Spotify app, the company will share songs you listen to on your Timeline for your friends to see and interact with — unless you choose to hide that activity. (Keep in mind many of these sharing options can be customized.) A word of caution: Well-made apps can add a fun and engaging layer to your Facebook experience, but using too many of them or requesting others to join might annoy your friends (and in the worst cases, compromise their privacy). You should only use apps recommended by friends you trust, or provided by reputable companies.

10. Subscribe

When enabled, Facebook Subscribe reveals certain features and updates on your Timeline to the public. (Don't worry, you can control what information people see.) The feature is especially useful for celebrities and journalists and other public figures who wish to interact with fans or followers without granting them access to their private profiles. It's similar to Twitter's very public and transparent nature. If a person has enabled Subscribe, you'll see the button on the top-right of his or her Timeline. Many users opt out of Subscribe, choosing simply to interact with approved friends. But keep in mind that the tool may be useful for specific cases, such as making yourself a little more transparent when applying for a job (assuming everything is appropriate). You're automatically subscribed to all your friends, but try searching for celebs or personalities who have enabled the feature — more are participating every day.