

SOCIAL NETWORKING



1 Reading

Read the text about social networking and complete the definitions on the next page with the words in bold:

Social networking

A social network is a website where people connect with 'friends' – people they know **online** and people they know in real life.

The beginnings of social networking date back to the 1980s. Small computer networks that used telephone lines allowed users to **log in**, share data, and send private messages. However, connections were very slow and long distance calls were very expensive.

In the 1990s the internet started to become popular and social networking websites such as Classmates.com and the **dating site** Match.com were created for specific audiences.

The modern age of social networking began in 2002, when Jonathon Abrams **launched** Friendster. He wanted to create a website like Match.com, but didn't want it to be about dating. Google offered \$30 million to buy Friendster, which was rejected. This turned out to be a big mistake.

In 2003, a few employees of a marketing company called InterMix Media copied the idea of Friendster and launched MySpace. MySpace focused on music and allowed users to customize their profiles. It had a much cooler image than Friendster and quickly became more popular.

Then, in October 2003, a student at Harvard University called Mark Zuckerberg **hacked into** the university ID database and created Facemash, a site that let students compare ID photos. He then created 'The Facebook', a social network that started as an exclusive site for students. In 2006, anyone with an email address could **sign up**. Two years later, Facebook **overtook** MySpace and became the world's most popular social network.

- _____ 1.: a website where people can meet in order to start a romantic relationship
- _____ 2.: connect to a computer system by typing your name and password
- _____ 3.: performed better than someone or something else
- _____ 4.: entered a computer system without permission
- _____ 5.: register on a website
- _____ 6.: via the internet
- _____ 7.: started (a new business or product)

2 Facebook features

What can you do on Facebook? Match the features on the left with the functions on the right:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. send a friend request | a. chat with someone using text |
| 2. receive a friend request | b. display a public message for your friends to read |
| 3. send a message | c. give positive feedback about a comment |
| 4. tag someone | d. label another person in a photo or post |
| 5. post a status update | e. receive an invitation to be someone's friend |
| 6. browse your news feed | f. remove a friend from your friends list |
| 7. like a comment | g. see what your friends are doing on their profiles |
| 8. unfriend somebody | h. start a personal page (where you can include your pictures, information about you, etc.) |
| 9. create a profile | i. try to connect with someone who is not on your friends list |

Now complete the dialogue below using the phrases above in the correct grammatical form.

Paul: Do you use Facebook?

Julie: Yes, everyday.

Paul: What do you use it for?

Julie: Well, I like to know what my friends are doing all the time so I often _____¹.
How about you?

Paul: I only _____² about a year ago, and I haven't used the site very much.

Julie: Why not?

Paul: Well, I _____³ lots of _____³ from people I hardly know. I just don't see the point of it.

Julie: Really? You don't have to accept all of them. It's great when you travel and you meet someone new. If you want to stay in touch, you can go on Facebook and _____⁴. Of course, if the person becomes really annoying, you can always decide to _____⁵ them.

Paul: Perhaps you're right. But I also don't like the idea that everybody knows what I'm doing in my life.

Julie: Well, you don't have to _____⁶ all the time. That way, your friends won't see what you are doing on their profile walls. But if you want to contact one of your friends, you can always _____⁷. Only that friend will see your message.

Paul: I see.

Julie: Personally, I like it when my friends _____ my _____⁸. The comment appears in friends' news feeds.

Paul: Do you post pictures?

Julie: Yes, I always add new photos to my profile. And my friends often _____⁹ me in their pictures. It's great.

Which Facebook features do you use or not use? Why/why not?

3 Uses of social networks

There are many different reasons why people use social networks. Study the list below. Ask your teacher to explain any unfamiliar words. Can you think of any examples of websites which specialize in each of these areas?

1. Getting in touch with old classmates.
2. Friendship and dating.
3. Professional networking, job hunting, and headhunting.
4. Learning foreign languages.
5. Photo sharing and commenting.
6. Organizing and sharing things on an online bulletin board.
7. Connecting with travelers and local communities.

Do you or your friends use any of the websites? Which ones?

4 Talking point

Discuss any of the questions below:

1. What are the advantages of social networking?
2. What are the disadvantages of social networking?
3. What kind of information are you comfortable displaying to the public?
4. What kind of information are you uncomfortable displaying to the public?