

BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO FACEBOOK BASICS

Once you have set up your account, here are the main features of Facebook that you will encounter.

1. Timeline

Before you begin using Facebook, you need to complete your **Timeline** (aka your **personal profile**), which includes everything from uploading a profile picture (the small one) and cover photo (the larger banner) to outlining your employment history and determining your relationship status.

It's called a '**timeline**' because you can include information, important milestones and memories spanning your entire life. Timeline encourages you to include as much detail as possible, and many people do. But most details are optional - you don't have to disclose what you don't want to!

2. Friends

Once you've filled out as much of your Timeline as you want, you can start searching for and adding "friends." You will find that many of your colleagues, family members, friends, old classmates etc are already on Facebook. You can search for them in the search box that appears on the top of the page.

Click on any you are interested in to send them a '**Friend Request**'. Once they have confirmed it, they will be added to your network and vice versa.

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

You can also allow Facebook to look at your own email contacts (gmail, yahoo etc) and show you any they find that are also on Facebook.

3. News Feed

Finding friends and other connections is the key to Facebook. It allows you to connect with them by sending direct **messages** or to **chat** in real time with any that are online at the same time, but most importantly 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 normally the News Feed. Or it is the **'Home'** button at the top right. 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 looks at your own activity to determine what 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. Status Update

A status update is anything important to you at a particular moment in time that you want to **share** 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 **website**, share **photos** and **videos** etc.

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

5. Brands & Businesses

You can also use Facebook to interact with businesses and organisations. Most major brands and a growing number of smaller businesses use Facebook to engage with, share deals and seek feedback from consumers and fans.

You can search for businesses and "like" them, and if you also click **'Follow'**, you'll start seeing their updates appear in your News Feed right alongside those of your friends. Feel free to interact and comment in the same way.

6. Groups

Anyone can set up a Group where people with a common interest post comments and questions and have discussions about a particular subject. Search for subjects of interest to you in the same way as searching for friends. Some groups are **Closed** (ie by invitation only) and others are **Open**, you just click **'Join'** to become a **'Member'**.

7. “Like” Button

The “like” button is one of the key features of Facebook. It not only communicates your support of people, 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.

You’ve probably also seen Facebook “like” and share buttons on other websites. When you “like” something outside of Facebook.com, it also appears on your timeline, where friends can see and comment on it.

This is a very powerful and useful tool. Just be mindful that Facebook can share this behavioural data with third parties, for example to target ads. For more information, see Facebook’s full data use policy ([link at the bottom of this note](#)).

8. 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 their timeline (unless they have disabled the tagging feature).

The tagging tool fosters conversation and creates additional connections among users. Particularly, if you want a specific friend to see an article posted on Facebook, you can tag them in your status update by typing their name (Facebook autofills with friend suggestions for easier tagging). eg "**Joe Bloggs**, I thought you'd like this article about racing cars..."

When you use the "**check in**" feature at a location (see below), you can also add Facebook friends who are with you by searching for their names, and thus, tagging them. And you can 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 and remove content they've been tagged in, for any number of reasons, eg 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.

Go 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.

Facebook recently introduced a **hashtag** system similar to Twitter. A hashtag can be added to any post - a status update, a photo, a link, etc. You can search for posts with specific hashtags by typing the hashtag in the search bar at the top of the page. Just be aware that any status, photos or other Facebook updates that you post with a hashtag will also be visible in searches.

9. Facebook Mobile

Facebook has created a **mobile app** to use on your mobile devices to supplement your desktop browsing. The app presents a scaled-down News Feed and simplified Timeline, but still offers a surprising amount of features. You can chat, use Facebook apps, add photos, view activity by list and, of course, post status updates.

The major distinguishing feature of Facebook mobile is the "**check-in.**" While you still have the capability to check in via desktop, mobile users use Facebook's location feature far more frequently, for obvious reasons. Visiting your favourite restaurant or attending an event, for instance, you can let everyone know your whereabouts, comment on it and even tag friends who are with you.

10. 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 personalise and enhance your participation on the social network. They can add anything from games (eg Farmville) to photo albums to quizzes to music (eg Spotify).

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.

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 may only wish to use apps recommended by friends you trust, or provided by reputable companies.

11. Privacy

This is a big subject and many people are concerned about it! But here are the major types of privacy you need to be aware of as a Facebook user.

- **Inter-user privacy** - Friends on Facebook with your boss, for instance? You might 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 apps like Spotify and Pinterest, those companies need to access certain information on your profile. They'll ask for permission before you begin using the app. Be aware that each app has different privacy policies. If you don't want that information to be accessible through these apps, 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.

Facebook privacy can be complicated. If concerned, you can get details at www.facebook.com/about/privacy/ or search for further advice online.