

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS FACEBOOK?

Facebook is a social networking site that allows users to connect and share information.

Facebook is an Internet site that allows users to post online profiles (including photos, information about themselves, etc) and then connect to other users who share the same interests, experiences, etc. Founder Mark Zuckerberg thought up Facebook while he was a student at Harvard to provide an online avenue for students to find one another. It has since morphed into a social network for everyone (*Michele Martin, Bamboo Project Blog*).

Facebook is built around groups and is made up of many networks, each based around a company, region, high school, or college. Many nonprofits already have accounts and are reaping the benefits for their organisation and their cause. One reason why it's so popular is because it's very easy to use. Adding friends, updating your profile, changing your status message - whatever you do takes just minutes.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Facebook profile for Ali Hughes. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=637918783>. The page layout includes a top navigation bar with 'facebook' and 'login' links, a search bar, and a 'People' sidebar on the left. The main content area shows the profile of Ali Hughes, who is currently writing a presentation. The profile information includes: Networks: New Zealand; Sex: Female; Relationship Status: Married; Birthday: April 28; Hometown: Christchurch, New Zealand; Political Views: Liberal. The 'Mini-Feed' section displays recent activity, such as 'All is writing a presentation on how to use Facebook' and 'All has activity on FriendFeed'. The 'Friends' section lists 71 friends, including Brooke Chambers, Stephen Powell, and Grant Robertson. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows several open applications, including Firefox, Microsoft Word, and Skype.

HOW TO GET STARTED

1. Sign up and create a Facebook account

To get started, go to Facebook.com, click "Register" and fill out a short online registration form. Once you're signed up, you'll need to have a profile to share information and photos about your organisation with others.

What to include in your organisation's profile? Photos, links to your Web site, and videos can all be added, and remember, when creating your profile, you can include as little or as much information as you feel comfortable.

2. Find friends and connect with your community

Now that you have a Facebook account, connecting to people in your community is easy. Start by using the search feature to find friends who are already using Facebook and request to be their friend. You can add just about anyone you can think of, including your members, supporters, volunteers, staff, and even your board members. Don't worry if you don't have a big list right away. Once you have two or more contacts, you'll be able to expand your social network by locating mutual friends and contacting them.

3. Send and receive messages

Facebook offers a message board feature called "The Wall" that displays member profile pages. You can use it to post all kinds of messages to your network. But beware: Comments can be viewed by all your contacts in your list of Facebook friends.

4. Create a group for your organisation or event

Just like every other social networking site, you can create and join groups on Facebook, and there are a growing number of groups dedicated to social change.

Why create a group? Creating groups allows you to share information about pretty much anything. You can create groups for your organisation or event to make announcements, join discussion groups, or even to share pictures. There are two kinds of groups on Facebook - open and closed. So be sure to create open groups so that people can find it and your members can invite others to join.

5. Upload and share pictures

One of Facebook's most popular features has been the ability to upload and share pictures. Facebook also offers an unlimited quota, with their only restriction being a 60-photos-per-album limit.

The process is very simple. Start by creating an album which you can then assign limitations to (for example, visible to my members only) and upload photos within them. The album is then put into your profile, and other users can see and comment on them. You can also "tag" your photos with the names of people you mention and share the photos via a Web link or by email. What's more, you can order prints online!

6. Promote your events

Facebook is a great place to promote your organisation's events. Simply create the event, add pictures, and invite your contacts to join. In addition to groups, you can post details of events in your profile so people can RSVP. You also have the option to leave the event open to people in your network or open for everyone.

7. Promote your blog or newsletter

Facebook also helps you to promote your blog or newsletter. This feature allows you to share information beyond what's in your profile in two ways. You can either post a note on your page or import your external blog. It is a nice way to communicate with your constituents and update them on your organisation.

You can also integrate an RSS feed into your blog with notes. When you post it, the note is displayed in your profile and every one of your "friends" is notified and other members can add comments.

8. Keep in touch with your members

Facebook has a feature called "News Feed" that allows you to see all kinds of activity within your network. It's very similar to an RSS feed, in that when you log in to Facebook you immediately receive an update of all of the actions your contacts have taken, and if someone posted a new photo album or RSVP'd to an event, you'll be notified right away.

9. Maintain some privacy

On Facebook, you are in control of what information is out there about your organisation and who can see it. You can retain some privacy by blocking certain people from viewing your profile or by creating a limited profile to hide information you might not want to share with your contacts.

10. Help

Facebook has a comprehensive and easy to follow help section which should answer all your questions. This can be found as <http://www.facebook.com/help.php>.

These points are meant to be a starting point for you to get your group on Facebook and into the social networking world. I hope that you find this useful and that your group is successful in its use of Facebook.

HOW TO MAKE A NEW FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

1. Go to **Facebook** (www.facebook.com) and click the green "Sign Up" button.



2. Fill out the registration form displayed; all of the fields must be completed in order to continue.
3. You need to give an email address so that Facebook can contact you for confirmation of your registration and in future send you updates from your profile. Next enter a password of your choice and your birthday. Then enter the weird text you see in the security check into the text box beneath it. Agree to the terms and conditions, and click 'register now'.
4. Confirm your email by clicking the confirmation link within the email that is automatically sent to the address you provided.

5. **Find friends** - You'll now have to go through a series of steps to personalise your profile. First, accept some friend requests if people have previously invited you to Facebook. Then Facebook will offer to check your email

 A screenshot of the Facebook registration process, specifically the "Find Friends Already on Facebook" section, step 2 of 4. The interface includes a progress bar at the top. Below it, the heading "Find friends using your email address book" is displayed. There are two input fields: "Your Email:" with a dropdown menu for domain selection, and "Email Password:". A blue "Find" button is positioned below the password field. A small disclaimer states: "We won't store your login info or contact anyone without your permission." At the bottom, there is a link: "Do you use AIM? Find friends using your Buddy List".

address book for people who are on facebook who you can invite to be your friends. Simply enter your email address and password, and facebook will find your friends. Select the ones you want to add by ticking the boxes to the left of their pictures, and then click 'add to friends' at the bottom. Then you'll be able to choose friends from your email address book who aren't on Facebook and send an email to them inviting them to join up and be your friend. This only works if you are on Yahoo, gmail or hotmail. If you use another package such as Outlook you will have to export a file of contacts from Outlook and upload into this programme instead.

Find workmates - Click on 'search for your co-workers'. Write the name of the company you are looking for and the name of the employee if necessary. Then click 'search for co-workers' to see who Facebook can find.

6. Note: that to use the friend finder you have to provide your password to your email or your AIM username and password. This is completely optional and can be skipped if you feel uncomfortable in giving your password.
7. **Edit profile:** Basic - Next click on 'my profile'. You'll see that all the sections are empty. Click 'edit' and you will be able to enter personal details about yourself. To begin with enter your basic details. Select your gender, your relationship status, and what you are on Facebook for. You can state 'friendship', 'dating', 'a relationship', or leave blank if you want. Next select your birthday, hometown, state and describe your religious and political views (again optional). Once you are happy, click 'save changes'. Don't forget, you can always go back and edit your details whenever you want.

Fill out your Profile Info | step 3 of 4 Skip ▶

City:

State:

Company:
(if any)

Alumni of:
(if any)

Contact - Next click on 'Contact' in the tabs bar. Here you can add a screen name that people will see when they view your profile. If you like, you can enter your phone number. Remember, Facebook is public, so think before you enter certain personal information. Only your friends will be able to view it though. You can also enter your address and city of residence. Also put in your website, if you have one. Then click 'Save changes'.

Personal - Next click on 'Personal' in the tabs bar. Here you can enter activities, interests, favourite music, favourite TV shows, favourite music, favourite books, favourite quotes, and fill out an 'about me' section. Most people enter stuff as a list - but bear in mind, the longer it is, the less likely people are to read it. So if you do want to make your Facebook profile reflect your personality, and you want people to read it, then keep it short and interesting. Irony is widely used in this section, so enter a bit of silliness and have a laugh as you would with your friends. Click 'save changes' when you are done.

Education - If you click on the 'education' tab - you can enter your school or college and the year you graduated. This will help other people from your school find you.

Work - Next click on the 'work' tab and, if you like, enter information about where you work, a description of your job, and the length of time you have worked there. Remember, you don't have to fill out every field. But if you do enter your place of work, it will be easier for people to find you if they search for your workplace.

8. Enter the city you live in to try to join the network for that city. You can also skip this step, but joining a network can help you find your friends. After completing this step, you will be taken to your Facebook homepage. Your homepage displays your news feed, status (right), and added applications (left). Later, it will also display other useful links, such as friends' upcoming birthdays, notifications, invitations, etc.



Join a Network | step 4 of 4 Skip ▶

Type your city to find your network.

City/Town:

US/Canada/UK only - other countries click here.

Once you join, you will be able to see the profiles of other people in the selected network, and they will be able to see yours. You can change your privacy settings on the Privacy page.

Picture - Then click on the 'picture' tab. Here you can upload a picture from your hard drive that other people will be able to see as your profile picture. Click 'browse', find a picture on your hard drive, tick the box to certify that you own the rights to the image, then click 'upload picture'.

TIPS and WARNINGS


- It's a good idea to change your profile settings to prevent people you haven't confirmed as friends from accessing your profile. The link to privacy settings is at the top right and bottom right of the page.
- Be careful when providing personal details, even when you're giving them to your friends.
- Don't upload any pictures that you'll regret later. Anyone can save them and share them with people you dislike or do not know.

HOW TO MAKE A NEW FACEBOOK GROUP

Facebook Groups, communities of friends with similar interests, have become extremely popular. But, why create a Facebook Group??? Well, organisations and bloggers should create Facebook Groups to further promote brand presence, share news/events with their community and stimulate relevant discussion all in one spot. A prime example of an organisation leveraging Facebook Groups is **Contiki** - through their group they share brochures, the trip/video of the week, contests, and polls to their 37,000+ members.

Tips to Grow a Successful Facebook Group:

- **The Right Configuration:** Make sure you select a title, category and description that is relevant to your brand because this will entice people to join your group. I also suggest that you be as transparent as possible and offer information such as contact information, website, phone number and location. This allows group members to associate the group to an actual person rather than any old computer generated content.
- To offer a real community appeal, enable the ability for anyone to post discussions, wall posts, pictures and videos. Initially you should make the group public which allows anyone to join and invite people to the group; remember you do have the ability to remove members if needed.

- **Leverage existing Facebook Friends:** It's important to attract a strong base of members to your Facebook group, so invite existing friends that may find your group valuable and who could become evangelists for your group. This is where the viral part comes into play: your friends' friends will notice that they joined a new group which will spark interest from them to check it out as well. 
- **Use your email contacts:** Don't forget about your friends outside of Facebook because Facebook Groups provides the ability to import and send group invitations to your contacts from Outlook, Yahoo, Gmail and Hotmail.
- **Press Releases/Blog Posts** are other methods which you can use to invite new members to your Facebook Group. Personally, I created a call to action and placed it above the fold which reminds my readers to join my group.
- **Keep the Content Fresh:** Update your group's recent news, photos, videos, events and links regularly so that members have a reason to return. Another simple tactic is deploying a welcome message which greets new members and enforces the 'human factor' of the group.
- **Create relationships with new members:** If you have a group which is open to the general public then you will notice people who are not your 'friends' join your group. These are the types of people are there to get a feel for the quality of the group therefore make it a habit to personally address them.

Tracking Your Group's Success

Here are some metrics and tactics you can use to measure the success of your Facebook Group:

- The number of members you have in your group.
- New members who join per day/week/month.
- Ratio of new members to people who left the group.
- Ratio of members who are your Facebook friends vs. not.
- Engagement: Activity on Wall Posts and Discussion Boards.
- Members who also accepted invitations to join your events.

- Links posted in your group back to your blog/website should have parameters appended to them so that they can be segmented in your analytics separately.

STEPS TO MAKE A NEW FACEBOOK GROUP

1. Come up with an original idea for a group.
2. **Login** to Facebook or create an account if you don't have one yet.
3. Type some key words for your group idea in the "**search**" box in the left hand column. You'll want to see whether or not you've actually had an original idea before you create your group.
4. From the "**news feed**" screen, click "**groups**".
5. **Create a group** - click "create a group" at the top of that page. Give your group a name.
6. Design your group:
 - Choose a network.
 - Will your group be accessible only to those in your region? If so, choose the region from the drop down list of networks to which you belong.
 - Will your group be accessible to everyone on Facebook? If so, choose "global".
7. Describe your group in the "description" area. Be specific, as keyword searches will match anything you have written in this text box.
8. Choose a category and sub-category. Once again, be specific, as those who are browsing will find your group only if it is in the correct category.
9. Fill out the contact information such as a street address, country and website.
10. Choose your privacy settings.
11. Click "create group".
12. Click "browse" to upload a group image. Keep copyright rules in mind when doing this.
13. Click "upload picture" or "skip this step" if you prefer to add a photo later.
14. Invite your friends by selecting them from your current friend list or typing their name into the box that is provided.

TIPS and WARNINGS

- Be original, invite your friends, and have fun!
- Inviting friends to a group is okay once in a while. Beware of "spam-viting" - that is, creating many groups a day and inviting every friend to each one. Instead, take your time and think about who might actually want to join your group before you send them an invitation.
- Groups that maliciously target individuals or groups of people are prohibited on Facebook.
- Avoid putting personal information such as your own address on a group's webpage unless you are prepared to have company!

**The above notes are handouts from a discussion led by Ali Hughes
for the Volunteer Co-ordinators' Network
hosted by Volunteering Canterbury, on 14 May 2008.**