



Facebook - Privacy settings

Facebook is one of the most popular online social tools on the Internet with more than 68 million active users and over 55,000 regional, work-related, collegiate and secondary school networks. The UK has the most users outside of the USA, with more than 8 million active users and the fastest growing demographic is those 25 years old and older.*

In short, if you're reading this on the Teacher Support Network [website](#), there's a good chance that you could be a teacher with a Facebook profile. Facebook has all sorts of social tools that people find valuable, and even Teacher Support Network has a [Facebook fan page](#) and [discussion group](#).**

Nevertheless, a little sharing can go a long way and it's likely you don't want your students seeing photos from your holiday in Ibiza or night out at the pub.

Whether you're using [Myspace](#), [Facebook](#), [Bebo](#) or another social networking site, take the time to look over the privacy settings. Nearly all social network websites allow you to control who can see your information.

Here are some privacy pointers from Teacher Support Network to help you keep your personal life from being searched by your students on Facebook:

- **Don't add your students as your Facebook friends.** Your off time is your own. Teacher Support Network urges teachers to keep their personal lives personal because we think it promotes better well being for teachers. Furthermore, keeping an appropriate level of personal separation between you and your students makes professional sense as well.

If you are going to interact with your students through Facebook, consider the following suggestions:

- **Set up an invitation-only discussion group for your class.** Facebook offers easily managed discussion groups to be set up for free. You can keep prying eyes out by setting the privacy to allow only invited members to join. This way, students can converse online and you can monitor the discussion.
- **Create a classroom fan page.** Separate from your own profile, you can create a fan page for your classroom and again, set the privacy controls to allow only those you want to join. Students can share photos here, add comments and use discussion boards which you can monitor.
- **Increase the privacy settings for your own profile.** Click on the privacy link at the top right corner of the page. Through the privacy settings, you can be as visible or as invisible on Facebook as you want. You can make elements of your profile visible to no one, just a few friends, all your friends, your friends and their friends, everyone in your city, or everyone on the planet.



Check the following four control areas to limit what your pupils can see about you:

- 1) **Profile:** Control who can see your profile and personal information. Where you live, your contact details, online status, age, and more are listed here, as well as photos that you have posted and photos others have posted that are tagged with your name.
- 2) **Search:** Limit who can search for you and how you can be contacted. This controls whether someone you don't have listed in your friends list can see your photo, send you a message, 'poke' you, add you as a friend or view your list of friends.
- 3) **News Feed and Mini Feed:** Nearly every element of your activity on Facebook generates an entry which is sent out to your friends and posted in your profile. You can control which stories about you get published to your profile and to your friends' News Feeds.
- 4) **Applications:** There are more than 20,000 applications and roughly 140 new applications are created each day.*Applications are tools that extend what Facebook is capable of and are used by over 95 per cent of Facebook users. You can control what information is available to applications you use on Facebook and what other people know about the applications you use. Set the privacy settings appropriately so your students can't see what your 'Hot or Not' rating is.

Block People

Finally, you can block specific Facebook members from seeing anything about you. Facebook say 'If you block someone, they will not be able to search for you, see your profile, or contact you on Facebook. Any ties you currently have with a person you block will be broken (friendship connections, relationships, etc).'

* Facebook statistics (as of 1 April, 2008): <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>

** Teacher Support Network on Facebook:

Fan page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Teacher-Support-Network/8348473439>

Discussion Group: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2385602766>

Where can I find out more?

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has released new guidance on cyberbullying (April 2009) called 'Cyberbullying. Supporting School Staff'. Teacher Support Network contributed to this important guidance. Download a pdf copy [here](#).

The following factsheets may also be useful:

- [MySpace privacy settings](#)