

The Internet Is Going Social

We all started out using the Internet as a communication tool (email). Then we learned what a wonderful research tool it was (*Google*). Now we see references to *YouTube*, *Facebook* and *Twitter* everywhere, on TV, in magazines and even on new consumer electronics like DVD players. These days many people are being asked to join these websites. So what are these websites, and websites like them, all about anyway? In this newsletter I will attempt to give you a general understanding so you can decide for yourself whether you want to get involved with them or not.



Icons for different social websites

Some social websites require that you join and have your own account (*Facebook* and *Twitter* for example) before you can use them and others do not require that you sign up (*YouTube* for example), so some are easier to use than others.

Caution: There is always a danger with putting any information about yourself online. Once online it is impossible to "pull it back". Do not put anything online that you would not mind on a billboard along a highway. There are reports of rogue programs that get into these social websites and "...harvest personal information along the way." See: [A Second Rogue Facebook Application in Just a Week?](#)

So if you like to live dangerously :-) here is a crash course on three of the more popular websites these days.



YouTube (www.youtube.com)
(No account required to view public videos.)

YouTube is a website to share videos. Anyone can "upload" (transfer to) a video clip and share it with just family and friends or the whole world. Some videos are never seen by anyone and others "[go viral](#)" which means that millions of people around the world watch them. Here is an example of a recent video that went viral: [Britain's Got Talent-Susan Boyle](#).

Individuals as well as organizations use YouTube to communicate with their followers. A good example of an organizations YouTube page would be [The White House](#). At The White House YouTube website you can watch the latest videos coming out of The White House. On the other hand if, for example, you just wanted to learn how to build your own PC then you might be interested in this series of videos: [Building a PC and other interesting things](#).

It is really that simple. YouTube is just a website where people and organizations post their own videos for the whole world to watch (or only a select few). You can watch any public video you want without having to create your own YouTube page or put online any information about yourself, so enjoy the videos!

To read more about YouTube, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YouTube>.



Facebook (www.facebook.com)
(Required to have your own Facebook account.)

Facebook started out as a website for Harvard University students to get to know others on campus. It gradually grew to include other Ivy League schools, then high school students and then in 2006 anyone 13 years of age or older.

The main idea of Facebook is for each individual to create their own "profile" (tell people as much or as little about yourself as you wish) and then become "friends" with others. You might become "friends" with your high school classmates or with others in the same city as you. Or you may simply limit your "friends" to just relatives. It is up to you. The creators of Facebook would eventually like everyone in the world to be "friends" with others thus linking us all together.

Once you have completed your main profile you then post little bits of your life as "What's on your mind?" posts, or pictures or videos. Facebook can be either fun (to see what others are up to) or a burden (to keep your Facebook page up-to-date). It is all up to you.

An example of a Facebook page would be [David Gregory's \(moderator of NBC's "Meet the Press"\) Facebook page](#).

To read more about Facebook, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook>.



Twitter (www.twitter.com)

(Required to have your own Twitter account.)

Twitter is a service where you post messages in 140 characters (Tweets) or less. You can post messages about anything from the mundane to the thought provoking. For example emergency agencies use Twitter to get messages out about emergencies and national governments use it to explain policy. You could trade work ideas with colleagues or simply follow your favorite celebrity like [Oprah](#).

Once you have your own Twitter account your followers can then follow your tweets and you follow theirs. You can post your tweets online on the Twitter website or via your cell phone or Blackberry.

To read more about Twitter, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>.

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