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Professional Facebook privacy in under 10 minutes

by [Leora Maccabee](#) on May 4, 2009

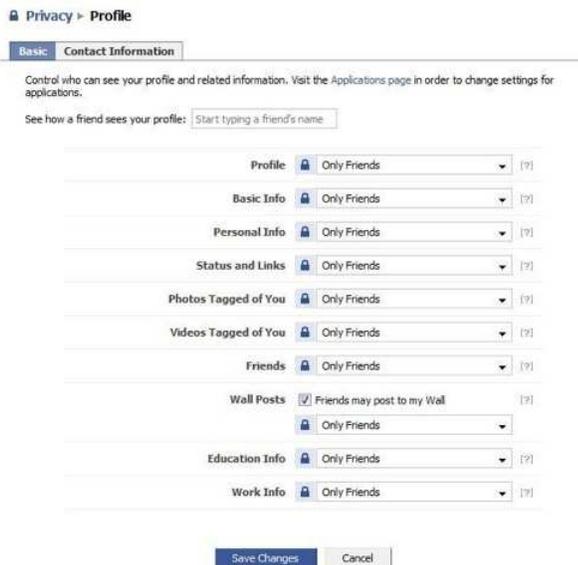


It will take you under ten minutes to tailor Facebook’s privacy settings to your personal and professional needs. Yet Facebook estimates that [only twenty percent of its members use the privacy settings at all](#). This post describes the essential steps you can take on Facebook to protect your identity, your privacy, and your reputation online.

Step One: Start by creating “lists” of your friends (Family, Friends, Professional) in accordance with what information you wish to reveal to them. You can always add people to these lists. For advice on creating your friend lists, read Alison Driscoll’s post on Mashable, [“Facebook Fail: How to Use Facebook Privacy Settings and Avoid Disaster.”](#)

Step Two: Go the “Settings” link in the upper right hand corner of the Facebook main screen and click on “Privacy Settings.” You’ll see four privacy options: “Profile,” “Search,” “News Feed and Wall,” and “Applications.” Click on “Profile.”

Step Three: The default setting for your “Profile” is that everything is visible to “only friends.” Here is where your friend lists come in handy. If you do not want certain information available to a friend list, go to the drop-down menu, click “customize,” specify “only friends” and type into the “except these people” box the friend list you want to exclude.



Step Four: Then go to “Search.” The default for your “Search” setting is a search visibility of “everyone.” Facebook automatically creates a public search listing for you on sites like Google. Uncheck the public search listing box. Restrict your search visibility within Facebook from “everyone” to “only friends” or “friends of friends.” Remove the Pages you are a fan of and your friend list from your search visibility. [Knowing who a person’s friends are can be valuable information](#) to marketers, employers, credit rating agencies, insurers, and spammers.

Privacy > Search

Search Discovery
Use this setting below to control who on Facebook can find you through search. Your Friends will always be able to find you.

Search Visibility Everyone

Search Result Content
Use these checkboxes to control what people can see about you, and how people can contact you after finding you in search.

People who can see me in search can see:

- My profile picture
- My friend list
- A link to add me as a friend
- A link to send me a message
- Pages I am a fan of

Public Search Listing
Use this setting to control whether your search result is available outside of Facebook.

Create a public search listing for me and submit it for search engine indexing (see preview)

Please note that minors do not have public search listings.

Step Five: Now go to “News Feed and Wall.” The default for your “News Feed and Wall” setting is that all of your friends are notified if you change relationship status, post on someone’s wall, comment on a photo, etc. If there is any information that you would not want to disclose to friends, uncheck that box.

Privacy > News Feed and Wall

Actions within Facebook Social Ads

Posting to someone’s Wall may appear in your mutual friends’ News Feeds.

Show Wall posts

The Highlights section on your friends’ home pages can include your Recent Activity. Allow Highlights to show my activity when I...

- Comment on or like a note
- Comment on or like a photo or album
- Comment on or like a video
- Comment on or like a link
- Change relationship status

Recent Activity will appear on your Wall when you edit your profile. Also show Recent Activity when I...

- Remove profile info
- Post on a discussion board
- Add a friend

Recent Activity can be shown in your Chat conversations.

Show Recent Activity in Chat

Recent Activity will **never** be shown about:

- Pokes
- Messages
- Whose profile you view
- Whose photos you view
- Whose notes you read
- Groups and Events you decline to join
- People you reject as friends
- People you remove from your friends
- Notes and photos you delete

Step Six: Then click on the “Social Ads” tab under “News Feed and Wall.” By default, Facebook occasionally uses your name in conjunction with advertisements, as in “Joe is a fan of Diet Coke.” Configure your appearance in social ads to “no one.”

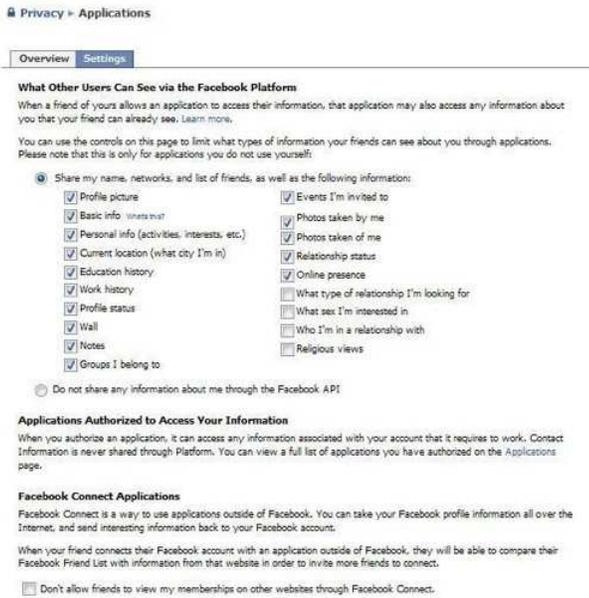
Privacy > News Feed and Wall

Actions within Facebook Social Ads

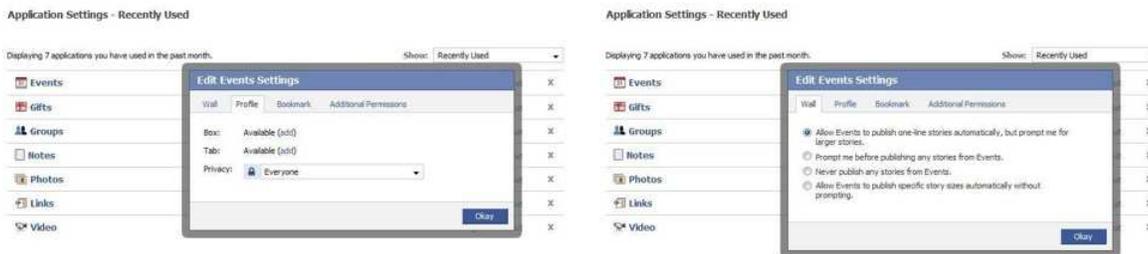
Facebook occasionally pairs advertisements with relevant social actions from a user’s friends to create Social Ads. Social Ads make advertisements more interesting and more tailored to you and your friends. These respect all privacy rules. You may opt out of appearing in your friends’ Social Ads below.

Appearance in Social Ads Only my friends

Step Seven: Now go to “Applications.” Click on “Settings.” Certain Facebook Platform applications data mine the profiles of people’s friends on Facebook for public information. For example, the [Your True Self](#) application searches through public information on your friends’ profiles to guess your political affiliation and give you movie suggestions. Choose what information you want publicly searchable by these Platform applications. The default setting is complete searchability.



Step Eight: Under the “Settings” link in the upper right hand corner of the Facebook main screen click on “Application Settings.” Then go to the drop down menu for “show” and click on “authorized” so that you see a list of all applications that you have authorized to use on Facebook. Facebook automatically authorizes certain applications, like Notes, Photos, and Events, for your profile. For each application, follow these steps. Click on “Edit Settings.” On the “Wall” tab limit which stories can be published by that application on your behalf and without your knowledge. Click “Never publish any stories” or “Prompt me.” On the “Profile” tab, click on the privacy dropdown menu and customize the privacy settings for each application using your friend lists.



You did it. Facebook settings for a professional in (hopefully) under ten minutes.

Before you start posting (more) photos, links and text to your Facebook profile, keep in mind that even with all of the above-mentioned privacy settings, Facebook is not as private or as secure as one would hope.

- Facebook still has occasional, albeit rare, privacy bugs. TechCrunch found one on March 20, 2009, where for a few hours, [users were allowed to gain access to portions of their friends' profiles](#) that they should not have been able to see.
- Content viewed on Facebook may remain viewable in cached or archived pages if users copy or store the content, a situation you acknowledge in [signing off on Facebook's Terms and Conditions](#).
- There are still no privacy controls over comments on Facebook. You will receive a notification if someone posts a comment on a photo but it will have been too late – the comment will have already been published for all of your friends to see.
- Your friends can still post pictures of you on Facebook and “tag” them with your name, even if you change your settings so that your friends do not get a notification when you are tagged (see “Profile” setting defaults above). The photos will still be there unless your friends take the photos down. So stay away from friends with digital cameras at rowdy parties.
- Several courts in the United States and elsewhere have held that [private Facebook profiles are discoverable](#). Be aware if you are involved in civil or criminal legal proceedings that your Facebook profile (as well as any blogs, websites, or other online content) may be fair game for opposing counsel.

Now that you have tailored your Facebook settings for your personal and professional needs, go have fun with it. On your own terms.

Tagged as: [Facebook](#), [Facebook for Lawyers](#), [Marketing](#), [networking](#), [social networking](#)

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