

Protecting Your Privacy Online

Social networking via web based services such as Facebook, Myspace, Nexopia, Linked-In, have become a very common activity for students and adults alike.

Social networking sites are an effective way to communicate and to stay connected to family and friends. It is important when using social networking sites to ensure that you have taken the time to adjust the privacy settings to ensure that you are only sharing what you mean to share. In the electronic world, once information is out there, whether it is in the form of text, images or video, it is almost impossible to delete it or to control who sees it!

Here are a few tips to help you to maintain your privacy and security when using social networking sites:

- Use a secure password with all of your social networking accounts.
- Keep your password private. Tell no one, not even your best friend.
- When you set up your account, be sure to take the time to adjust the privacy settings. Many services have wide open privacy settings by default. You will want to control:
 - Who sees your information
 - Who can find your information
 - What information everyone who uses the site can see, and what information is only available to friends.
 - How can people add you as a friend.
- Be careful with your personal information. Does the service and its users really need to know your credit card information, phone number or physical address?
- Think before you post ... Do not post anything that you would not want your Grandma or boss to see.
- Only accept friend requests from people you know and interact with in person

- Do not share information about your location or activities with people who you do not know.
- Be wary of location services like Facebook or Foursquare – Who sees where and when you ‘check in’?
- If a friend is not friendly online, then you need to un-friend them. Remember that the company we keep reflects on the kind of people we are, even online.
- Report abuse to the people who run/own the site. Most social networking have guidelines that need to be followed by users, they will likely close the accounts of those who are not using the site appropriately.

Maintaining your online identify is increasingly important in the information age. Many employers and organisations now ‘google’ their perspective employees and members, therefore what you do online today will definitely have implications for the future. What do you want people to see when they ‘google’ you?

Resources:

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/download-unofficial-facebook-privacy-guide/>

<http://www.media-awareness.ca> (*The ‘issues’ section has some great information on privacy concerns, and good privacy habit to teach your children*)

<http://www.google.com/educators/digitalliteracy.html>

<http://www.common sense media.org>