

My Facebook[®] for Seniors



QUE

Michael Miller

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER



SHARE WITH OTHERS

My Facebook[®] *for* Seniors

Michael Miller



que[®]

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My Facebook for Seniors

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About the Author

Michael Miller is a prolific and popular writer of more than 100 non-fiction books, known for his ability to explain complex topics to everyday readers. He writes about a variety of topics, including technology, business, and music. His best-selling books for Que include *My Windows 8 Computer for Seniors*, *Facebook for Grown-Ups*, *Easy Facebook*, *Easy Computer Basics*, *Absolute Beginner's Guide to Computer Basics*, and *My Pinterest*. Worldwide, his books have sold more than 1 million copies.

Find out more at the author's website: www.molehillgroup.com

Follow the author on Twitter: [molehillgroup](https://twitter.com/molehillgroup)

Dedication

To my grandkids, who make my life fun and meaningful—Collin, Alethia, Hayley, Judah, and Lael.

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Sidebar menu Status update box News Feed



In this prologue you find out what social networking is, and how Facebook works.

- What Is Social Networking?
- Who Uses Facebook—and Why?
- How Does Facebook Work?



P

Understanding Facebook and Social Networking

If you want to keep in touch with family and friends, Facebook is the place to do it. Facebook is a social network, a website that enables you to share what you're doing with other people you know on the site.

What Is Social Networking?

A *social network* is a large website that hosts a community of users and makes it easy for those users to communicate with one another. Social networks enable users to share experiences and opinions with one another, and thus keep in touch with friends and family members, no matter where they're located.

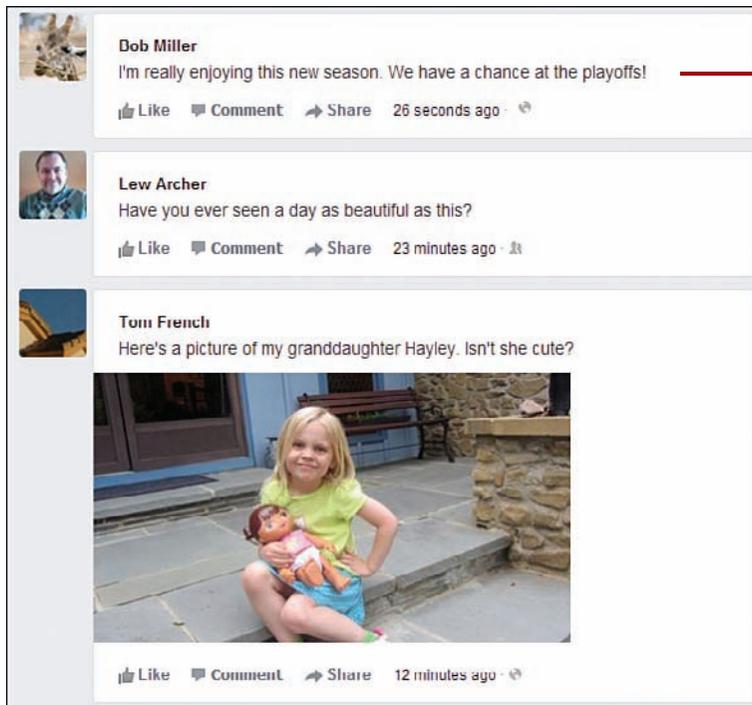
The goal of a social network is to create a network of online “friends,” and then share your activities with them via a series of message posts.

These posts are short text messages, called *status updates*, that can be viewed by all of that person's friends on the site. A status update can be text-only, or contain photos, videos, and links to other web pages.



A typical Facebook status update

All your online friends read your posts, as well as posts from other friends, in a continuously updated News Feed. The News Feed is the one place where you can read updates from all your online friends and family; it's where you find out what's really happening.



Posts in the Facebook News Feed

The biggest social network today is a site called Facebook; chances are many of your friends and family are already using it. Other popular social networks include Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and Pinterest—but Facebook is the biggest, and it's the one where you'll find most of your friends.

Who Uses Facebook—and Why?

Facebook is the brainchild of Mark Zuckerberg, an enterprising young man who came up with the concept while he was a student at Harvard in 2004. Facebook (originally called “thefacebook”) was originally intended as a site where college students could socialize online. Sensing opportunity beyond the college market, Facebook opened its site to high school students in 2005 and then to all users over age 13 in 2006. Today, Facebook boasts more than 1 billion members worldwide.

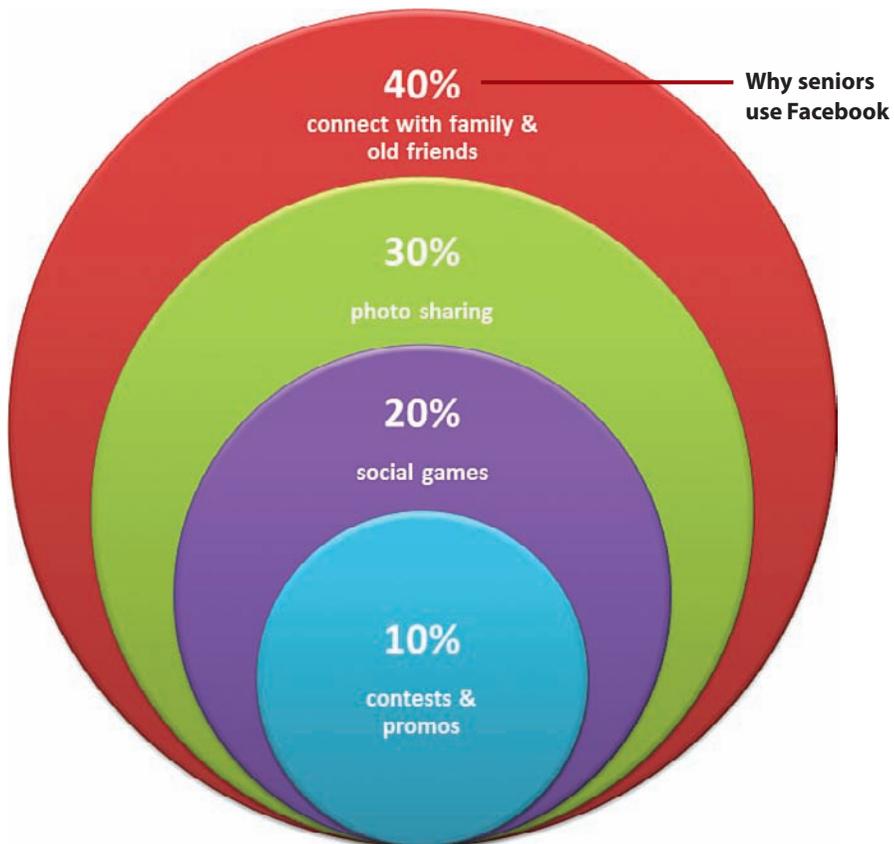
The original Facebook site from 2004



Even though Facebook started out as a social network for college students, it isn't just for kids anymore. Today, fewer than 10% of Facebook users are college aged. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, a higher percentage—14%—of all Facebook users are aged 55 and up.

Facebook is tremendously popular among older users. According to Forrester Research, about half of all online seniors use Facebook on a regular basis. That makes Facebook one of the most popular websites of any type among older users.

Why are seniors using Facebook? Most seniors (40%) use Facebook to connect with family and old friends; 30% use Facebook to share digital photos; and 20% play social games on Facebook. That makes Facebook both useful and fun—a great combination for users of any age.

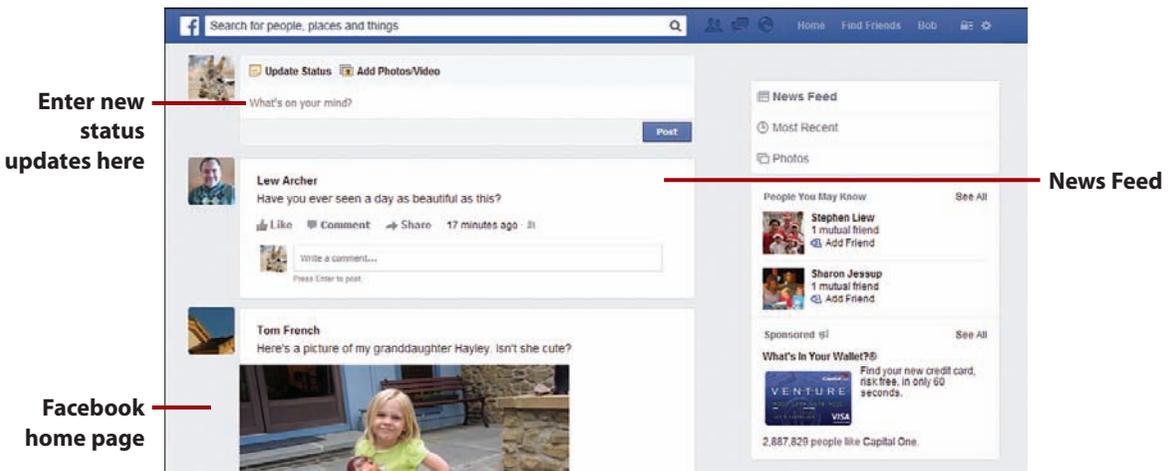


How Does Facebook Work?

Facebook is a website with a variety of features. In fact, Facebook does so many things for so many people, you might not do them all. That's okay; use those features that best suit what you want to accomplish.

Social networking on Facebook is all about making "friends." On Facebook, a friend can be an actual friend, old or new, or just someone you know. Your family members become Facebook friends, as do your neighbors, people you used to work with, and people you used to go to school with.

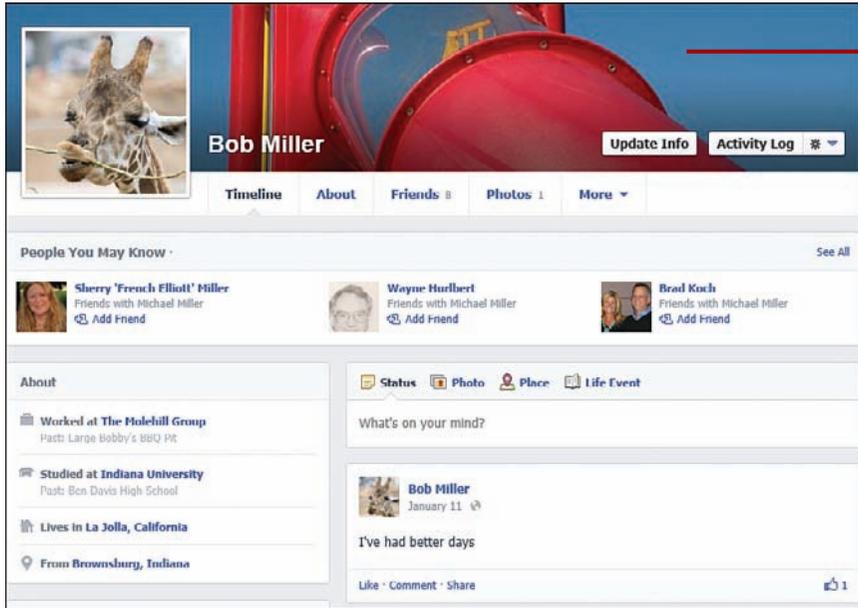
After you make someone a friend on Facebook, all the status updates they make appear in your News Feed. This is a scrolling list of updates from all your friends, consolidated into one place on the Facebook home page.



At the top of the home page is a text box you can use to enter your own status updates. A Facebook status update can contain text, images, videos, and links to other websites. You create new status updates to keep your friends informed as to what you're doing and thinking about.

Every Facebook member has his own personal profile on the site, or what Facebook calls a *Timeline*. Your Timeline page displays all the status updates you've ever made on Facebook, as well as your personal information and links to

those photos and videos you've uploaded. Your friends can view your Timeline page to see what you've been up to, just as you can view theirs for the same reason.



A Facebook Timeline page

In addition to the normal status updates, Facebook enables you to conduct live text-based chat sessions with any of your friends who are online. You can also use Facebook to host video chats, so you can talk face-to-face with distant friends and family.



To get the most out of Facebook, you have to actively participate. That means logging in regularly, at least once a day. That way you can keep tabs on what your friends and family members are up to. And when you post your own status updates on a regular basis, your friends and family will know what you're up to, too.

This page intentionally left blank

Picture posted by grandkids



Michael Richards
We miss you, grandpa!



Like Comment Share about a minute ago · 🌐

 Write a comment...
Press Enter to post.

The image shows a Facebook post by Michael Richards. The post features a profile picture of a young boy, the name 'Michael Richards', and the text 'We miss you, grandpa!'. The main image shows two children on tricycles; the boy on the left is wearing a green helmet and a brown shirt, and the girl on the right is wearing a pink helmet and a white Superman t-shirt. Below the image are interaction buttons for 'Like', 'Comment', and 'Share', along with the text 'about a minute ago'. At the bottom, there is a comment box with a placeholder 'Write a comment...' and a prompt 'Press Enter to post.'.

In this chapter you discover the best ways to use Facebook to get closer to the youngest members of your family.

- How to Engage Your Grandkids on Facebook
- Responding to Your Grandkids' Posts
- Five Things *Not* to Do with Your Grandkids on Facebook

16

Using Facebook to Keep in Touch with Your Grandchildren

As popular as Facebook is among seniors, it's even more popular among younger generations. This makes Facebook an ideal place to meet up with your grandkids, especially those who don't live nearby. There's nothing better than signing into your Facebook account and seeing a new message, photo, or video from your favorite grandchild.

How to Engage Your Grandkids on Facebook

It's likely that your grandchildren are on Facebook. (The older ones, anyway; you have to be 13 years old to sign up.) That means that you can add your grandkids to your Facebook friends list, and see their posts in your News Feed.

Using Facebook to keep in touch with your grandkids isn't as simple as all that, however. That's because younger people tend to use Facebook

differently than do older ones. You need to take care to nurture a comfortable relationship with your grandkids, without stepping over any boundaries they might set up. There are rules to follow.

Make Friends with Your Grandkids

The first step in using Facebook to connect with your grandkids is to add them to your friends list. It shouldn't be too hard to find your grandchildren on Facebook and then send out the necessary friend requests. When your grandkids are on your friends list, every post they make should show up in your News Feed.

It's Not All Good

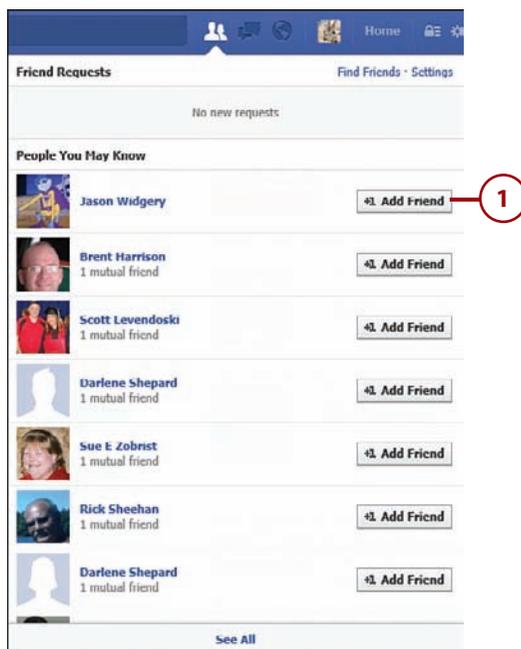
Selected Posts

By default, your grandkid's posts are visible to all their Facebook friends, including you. More tech-savvy youngsters, however, might figure out how to fine-tune their privacy settings and exclude you (and other family members) from some or all of their posts. This means you *don't* see everything they post in your News Feed. There's no way around this.

- 1 Facebook might suggest your grandchildren (and other family members) as friends when you first sign up or when you click the Friend Requests button on the toolbar—especially if you have their addresses in your email contacts list. If so, click the Add Friend button.

Finding Friends

Learn how to find family and friends on Facebook in Chapter 2, "Finding Old (and New) Friends."



- 2 Alternatively, you can do a simple search for your grandkids on the Facebook site. Use the search box in the Facebook toolbar to search for **people named *john doe*** and your grandchild's name should pop up.



It's Not All Good

Rejected

Most grandchildren embrace the opportunity to get closer to their grandparents via Facebook and readily accept a friend request from a grandparent. Some grandkids, though, might be less than thrilled that their grandparents are intruding on what they might view as their personal social network. If this happens to you, don't take it personally; to that child, it just isn't "cool" to have old people as friends on Facebook.

Share Your Posts—Selectively

Just as you can read your grandkids' posts on Facebook, they can also read your status updates in their News Feeds. However, your grandkids might not be interested in everything you post, especially those posts that deal with issues of interest to seniors.

The solution to posting items that might turn off your grandkids is to not send all your posts to the youngsters. You can use Facebook's lists and privacy functions to send only certain posts your grandkids' way—so they'll be spared the embarrassment of having to read about your elder moments.

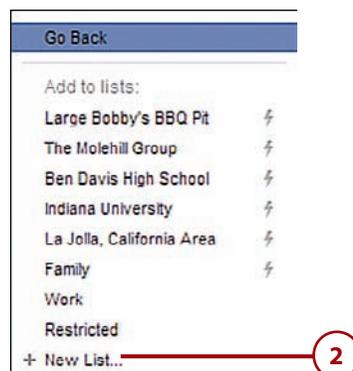
It's Not All Good

They Love You, But...

Depending on what you post on Facebook, your grandkids might find your status updates charming. Or they might find them embarrassing or even totally uninteresting. Let's face it; the kinds of things that interest someone our age aren't likely to be engrossing to the average teenager. Sure, you played a good round of golf today, or got a good deal at the local discount store, but do your grandkids really care about that? For that matter, all those words of wisdom and inspiration that you like to post are likely to be roundly ignored by youngsters with more immediate things on their minds.

In other words, don't expect your grandkids to like and comment on everything you post. At best, they might read your posts and then move on. At worst, they might figure out how to block your posts—or even unfriend you.

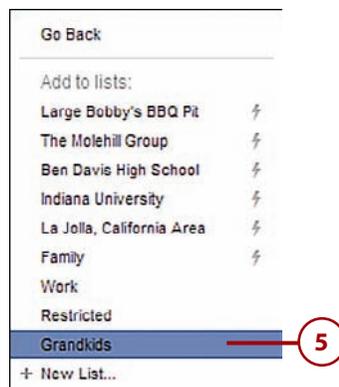
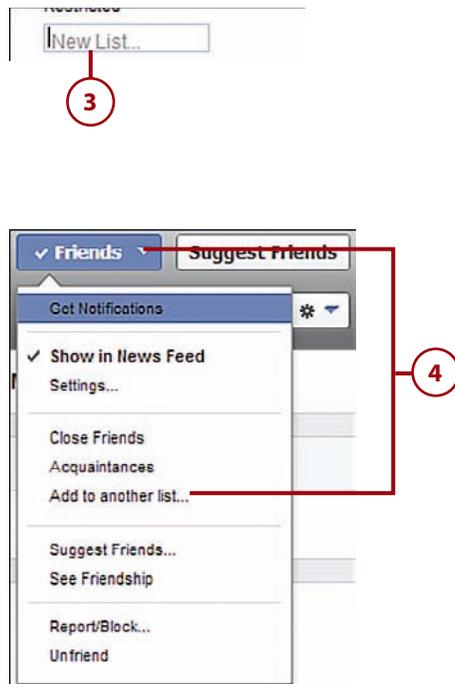
- 1 Start by creating a new Facebook friends list that contains all your grandchildren. Go to the Timeline page for your first grandchild, click the Friends button, and then click Add to Another List.
- 2 Click New List.



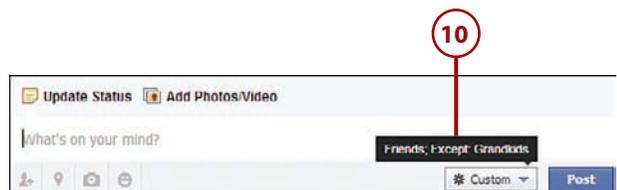
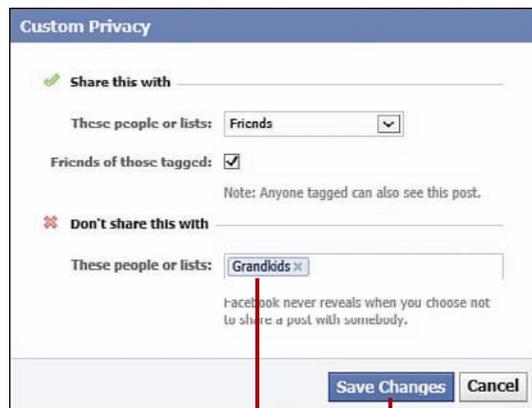
- 3 Enter **Grandkids** into the New List box and press Enter to create the list.
- 4 For each of your other grandchildren, go to his or her Timeline page, click the Friends button, and then click Add to Another List.
- 5 When the menu changes, check Grandkids.

Custom Friends Lists

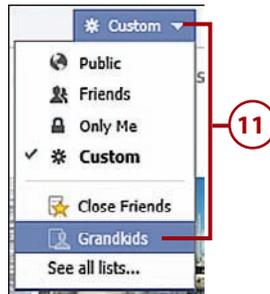
Learn how to create and use custom friends lists in Chapter 8, "Organizing Your Friends into Lists."



- 6 Now you can configure your privacy settings so that your grandkids don't see the bulk of your posts. Click Privacy Shortcuts on the Facebook toolbar, select Who Can See My Stuff?, and then go to the Who Can See My Future Posts? section.
- 7 Click the privacy button and select Custom to display the Custom Privacy dialog box.
- 8 Go to the Don't Share This With section and enter Grandkids into the These People or Lists box.
- 9 Click the Save Changes button.
- 10 By default, all new posts you make are sent to all of your friends *except* your grandkids.



- 11 To send a post to your grandkids only, click the privacy button and select Grandkids.
- 12 To send a post to all your friends, including your grandkids, click the privacy button and select Friends.



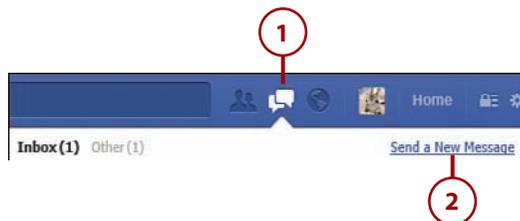
Custom Privacy

Learn about Facebook's privacy settings in Chapter 18, "Keeping Private Things Private."

Send a Private Message

Facebook status updates are public, but sometimes you want to send a more personal message to your grandkids. That's where Facebook's private messaging system comes in. You can easily send a private message to your favorite grandchild, and no one else will see it.

- 1 Click Messages on the Facebook toolbar to display the menu of options.
- 2 Click Send a New Message to display the New Message dialog box.



- 3 Enter the name of your grandchild into the To box.
- 4 Enter your message into the Write a Message box.
- 5 Click Send to send the private message.

Private Messages

Learn how to send and receive private messages in Chapter 9, “Exchanging Private Messages.”

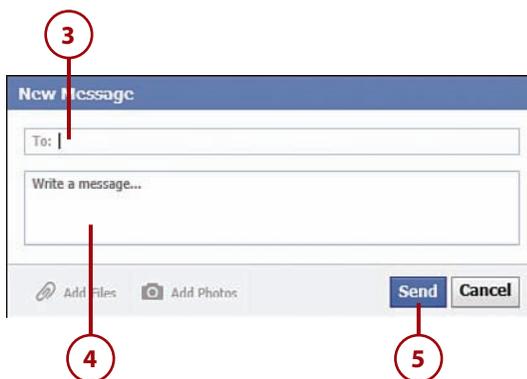
Share Photos and Videos

Just as you can read each other’s status updates, Facebook also lets you share photos and videos with your grandkids.

- 1 Encourage your grandkids (or their parents) to post photos and videos of themselves to Facebook. This provides you a constantly updated photo album of your loved ones.
- 2 Make sure you post the occasional photo or video of yourself, for your grandkids to see. Don’t limit yourself to posed pictures, either; your grandkids will get a big kick out of any crazy or silly picture or video you upload.

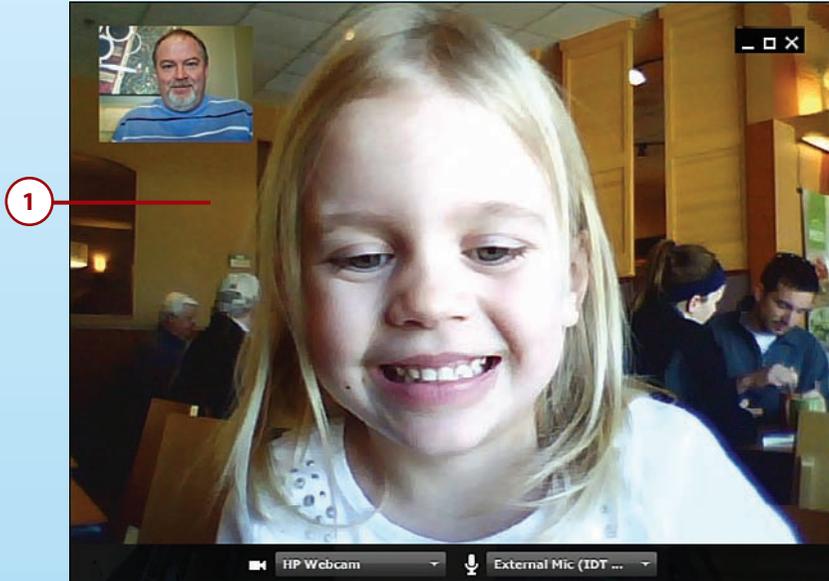
Pictures and Movies

Learn more about sharing photos in Chapter 5, “Viewing and Sharing Family Photos.” Learn more about sharing videos in Chapter 6, “Viewing and Sharing Home Movies.”



Chat via Text and Video

If you're on one side of the country and your grandkids are on the other, or even if you're only a few states away, you might only see your grandkids in person one or two times a year. Now, with Facebook text and video chat you can visit with each other several times a week, if you like. It can truly bring together distant families.



- 1 Schedule time for a weekly video chat with each of your grandchildren. This is especially great for talking to your younger grandkids who are sure to appreciate the one-on-one time with their favorite grandpa or grandma.



- 2 For the teenagers in your family, Facebook’s text chat might be more up their alley. Chatting on Facebook is just like texting on a mobile phone, and you know your grandkids are down with that. Next time you’re on Facebook, check to see if your favorite grandchild is also online (she probably is) and then open a text chat and say hi. If she wants to turn it into a video chat, you always have that option.

Facebook Chat

Learn more about text and video chatting in Chapter 10, “Chatting with Friends and Family in Real Time.”

Play Games Together

Here’s one you might not have thought of. If your grandkids are like mine, they love to play games—board games, card games, video games, you name it. Well, Facebook is chock full of social games that you can play with other Facebook users. That means all you have to do is pick a game and then invite your grandkids to play it with you, online.

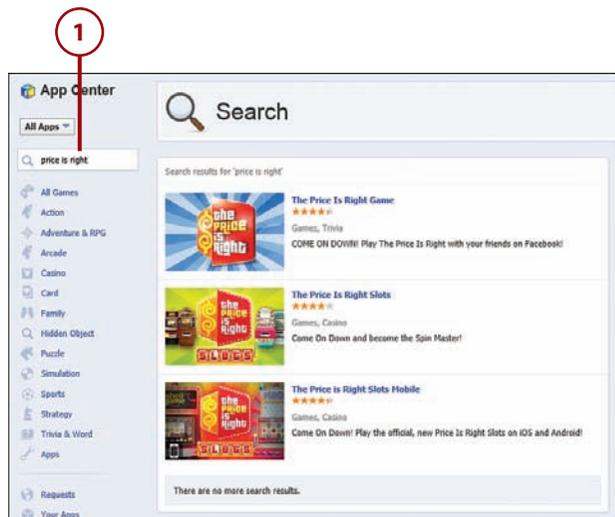
FAMILY GAMES

What games are best for playing with your family online? Here's a list of games to start with:

- Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?
- Backgammon Live
- Chess
- Gin Rummy
- Ludo Playspace
- Monopoly
- Scrabble
- The Price is Right Game
- Who Wants to Be a Millionaire
- Words with Friends
- Yahtzee!

Just go to the App Center page and search for any or all of these games by name.

- 1 Go to Facebook's App Center and search for social games you think your grandkids will like.



- 2 Open the game and then invite your grandchildren to play with you, in real time.

Facebook Games

Learn more about finding and playing Facebook games in Chapter 14, “Using Apps and Playing Games.”

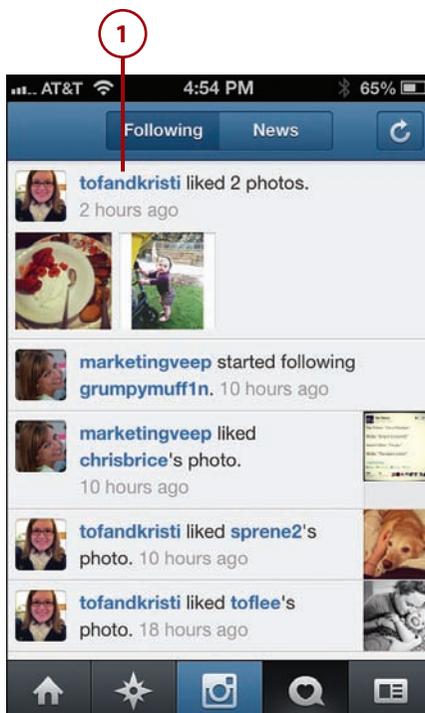
Consider Using Other Social Media

Facebook used to be the cool place for kids to hang out online. Things change, however, and Facebook is less cool than it used to be—especially now that everybody’s grandparents are also signing up. (It’s a double-edged sword!) This means that some teenagers are migrating away from Facebook to other social media, so you might need to look elsewhere to connect with your grandkids online.

Seniors on Twitter?

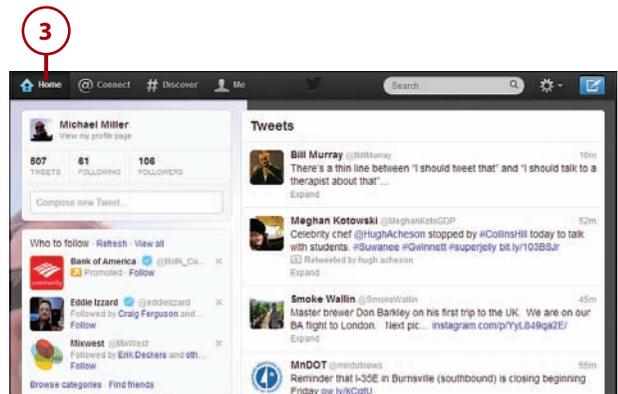
I’ll be honest. You won’t find a lot of seniors on most of these newer social networks—which is why they’re so appealing to younger users. Still, if you know your grandkids are big on Twitter or Tumblr and you want to stay in touch, you might want to investigate.

- 1 Instagram (www.instagram.com) is a photo-sharing smartphone app that’s very popular among the high school crowd. Kids use Instagram as a kind of mobile visual social network.



2 Tumblr (www.tumblr.com) is a microblogging network, where users create their own personal blogs, and post short text messages or photos there. Teens like Tumblr because they can personalize their blogs much more than they can with their Facebook Timeline pages.

3 Twitter (www.twitter.com) is a social medium that is especially popular among older teens and people in their twenties. Users post short “tweets” (140 characters or less) that are then viewed by their online “followers.” It’s more like text messaging than posting on Facebook, which makes it more suited for mobile use.



BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP

I find it fascinating that technology is helping to bring together families that, up until recently, were increasingly drifting apart.

Baby boomers and Gen X'ers alike are more mobile than preceding generations, resulting in families spread over larger distances. The days of multiple generations cohabitating in the same town (or under the same roof!) are long gone, which has led to a splintering of the extended family.

That's changed, however, thanks to the Internet in general and social networks in particular. Today physical distance matters less, because we can use Facebook and other Internet-based technologies to keep in touch with family members, no matter where they live. Facebook has been particularly effective in bringing generations together; when there's news to spread, it's easier to post a single Facebook status update than it is to make a dozen phone calls to family members here and there.

In addition, Facebook lets you communicate with your grandchildren in a way that's familiar and comfortable to them. Instead of forcing the youngsters to sit down for a physical visit or endure a boring phone call, you instead engage them on their own terms, via short Facebook status updates. That's how they like to communicate, and now you can do it, too.

It's true; Facebook is helping our generation reconnect with our younger relatives—including those sons and daughters who moved away many years ago. A status update can never replace a hug, but I know that grandparents on Facebook are closer to their children and grandchildren than they were just a few short years ago, before social networking.

Responding to Your Grandkids' Posts

Most communication on Facebook is via status updates, displayed in users' News Feeds. That's true of communication with your grandchildren, as well—which means you need to learn how to deal with what they post.

The reality is that younger people, teenagers especially, are prone to publicly posting whatever is currently on their minds. This results in a lot of angry, revealing, embarrassing status updates. (And photos!) If you're a teenager, you're used to seeing this sort of thing from your friends. But if you're a grandparent

(which you are), you might be shocked or dismayed by what your teenaged grandkids post on Facebook. How you respond will determine whether you stay your grandkids' "friend" on Facebook, or whether you get silently unfriended.

Don't Criticize

One of the things that younger people hate about older people (their parents and grandparents, especially), is their tendency to criticize. Teens don't like adults coming down on them, even inadvertently or in a well-intentioned way.

So if your grandson posts that he blew off class today, resist the temptation to admonish him. If your granddaughter posts a photo of her new outfit, don't leave a negative comment about how the color doesn't flatter her eyes, or that the skirt is too short. There will be plenty of other opportunities in life to get in your little digs; don't spoil the social connection by incessantly offering your opinions on what your grandkids are doing.

Don't Hijack the Conversation

You also don't want to jump in the middle of an ongoing conversation between your grandchild and her friends. Teenagers view Facebook as kind of a private forum (although we all know it's not) and thrive on the comments that friends leave to their posts. You'll see a lot of back and forth between a handful of friends, resulting in a thread of messages and comments.

The worst thing you can do is interrupt this sort of conversation in process. Resist the urge to chime in with your two cents' worth, which could completely disrupt the flow of messages. Feel free to read, but don't hijack the conversation for your own means.

If nothing else, your jumping into the middle of a conversation could severely embarrass your grandchild. Don't expect your comments to be in sync with what her peers are saying, and don't expect your humor to translate to the younger generation. Chances are your comment will stick out like a sore thumb, and teenagers do not like to stand out like that. Just avoid commenting and you'll avoid embarrassing your grandkids.

Don't Respond at All

In fact, the best way to comment on your grandkids' Facebook posts is not to comment at all. While it's great to read their posts to see what they're up to, you don't necessarily want to remind them that you're looking in. You don't want your grandkids to feel as if you're monitoring them; they want to be free to post whatever it is they want to post, without worrying about whether or not grandma is watching.

What you want to do, then, is read your grandchildren's status updates and view their photos, but not "like" them or comment on them. Most young people on Facebook, for whatever reason, are surprisingly open about what they post; you get to see who your child is hanging out with, hear about her latest fight with her boyfriend, read about how much she hates her classes this semester or likes her new job or is creeped out by the guy who works at the pizza stand at the mall. They won't be near as open if they think they're being watched.

That means that when it comes to reading your grandkids' posts, you need to keep your Facebook presence muted. That is, you don't want to remind your grandchildren that you're reading what they write—which means not commenting on their posts. You need to stay pretty much invisible, as far as your grandkids are concerned, so they don't know that you're there.

Don't Stop Your Own Posting

Just because you shouldn't comment on your grandkids' status updates doesn't mean that you can't post your own status updates. Chances are the kids won't equate your occasional post showing up in their News Feeds with the fact that you're eyeballing everything they post online.

If you can't resist the urge and do post a comment to one of your grandkids' status updates, let me tell you what is likely to happen. First, your grandchild will become much less open on Facebook; the number of posts she makes will drop dramatically. Then she'll get smart and figure out how to configure Facebook so that you—and you alone—can't read her status updates. Then she'll go back to posting frequently, but you'll never know because you won't be able to see a thing she posts. You'll be locked out, which is not what you want.

This is why you want to remain a silent observer, as far as your grandkids are concerned. Yes, you'll be listed as one of their Facebook friends, but you'll be one of those silent friends they soon forget about. You can watch, but you shouldn't be heard.

Ignore What You See

The good thing about viewing your grandchild's status updates is you'll see what she's doing and what she's thinking. It's a great way to get closer to a distant grandchild, just by observing her activities online.

The bad thing about this is that you get exposed to *everything* your grandkids are doing. You don't see only what's important, you also see the most mundane posts (maybe she's having a bad hair day, or a fight with one of her friends). Even worse, you might be exposed to some information or behavior that you'd rather not know about. It's a matter of TMI (too much information), which teenagers in particular are prone to post. If you want to keep intact that vision of your grandchild as a starry-eyed angel, maybe it's better *not* to connect on Facebook.

To be fair, your younger grandkids' posts probably won't be too shocking; they're just kids, after all. But with older teenagers, prepare to be shocked. Teens today tend to post anything and everything that goes through their minds, and that might be a lot of stuff you might not want to know.

This means you need to steel yourself for both mundane and profane posts from your grandkids. You have to resolve not to get upset by anything you might see in their feeds. Remember, you shouldn't be commenting on or criticizing what they post; that's not your role, and could drive them away from participating in Facebook.

So if you see something offensive or disturbing in your grandkids' posts, just ignore it. On the other hand, if you find something particularly worrisome, such as suicidal threats or signs of bullying, you have an obligation to respond—but not publicly on Facebook. Send your grandchild a private message, or pick up the phone and give her a call. But don't jump in publicly; reserve advice for a more private conversation.

Five Things **Not** to Do with Your Grandkids on Facebook

Facebook can be a wonderful way to keep in touch with your grandchildren, but only if you avoid some common missteps.

Don't Do These Things

With that in mind, here are some important things not to do when posting and responding to your grandkids.

- 1.** Don't friend your grandkids' friends. Your grandkids like to keep their friends and family separate, so a family member getting friendly with one of their peers is a big social no-no. Resist the urge to send a friend request to one of your grandchildren's Facebook friends. It's okay for you to accept a friend request if one of her friends invites you, but it's not okay for you to initiate the contact. In general, you should keep your circle of friends to your friends and immediate family, not to your grandchildren's friends.
- 2.** Don't post unflattering photos of your grandkids. Family photos that you think are funny might not seem so funny to your grandkids—especially when their friends see them. The problem comes if you upload an embarrassing photo to Facebook and tag a grandchild in it. Thus tagged, all her Facebook friends will see the photo, with the resulting mortification. Think twice before you post those “cute” photos of your grandkids, especially as they get older. And if you must post the photos, don't tag your grandchildren by name. If they're not tagged, their friends probably won't see the photos—which is best for all concerned.
- 3.** Don't use your grandchild's photo as your profile picture. I know you're really proud of your grandkids, but you shouldn't appropriate their photos as your own. Many grandparents use photos of their grandkids as their own profile pictures, or as the cover images on their Timeline pages. That's not fair to your grandkids—and, to be fair, looks kind of weird. Post your own photo as your profile picture, and be done with it.

4. Don't post too much personal information. Facebook is a great forum for keeping friends and family up-to-date on what's happening in your life, but that doesn't mean you need to post every little detail about what's happening. Your grandkids, especially, will be embarrassed or even grossed out if you post all the fiddly details about your latest medical exam or (God forbid) romantic interlude. There's just some stuff that kids don't want to know, and you need to know that.
5. Don't try to be cool. I know, you want to fit in with the young generation today, but let's face it—you're not that young, and you're not that cool. Don't embarrass yourself by trying to use today's hip lingo, or even common Facebook abbreviations, such as LOL (laughing out loud). No matter how hip you think you might be, you'll still come off as an old fogey trying to act younger than you really are. Bottom line, when you're posting on Facebook, act your age. You've earned the privilege.

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