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## 10 Facebook Safety Tips- How To Protect Yourself

Whether you are new to Facebook or a long time user, you should be diligent in protecting yourself, your family, and your friends while using Facebook. Here are 10 tips to keep your Facebook experience both enjoyable and safe.

1. Do not place your personal information on your Facebook profile. Items such as your residential address, your phone number, your cell phone number, your date of birth will all become very public information instantly and it will come back to haunt you in many ways. Check your profile constantly to ensure that you are not displaying personal information. The risk of identity theft or being tracked down by others is too great. If your friend really needs your contact information, then have them give you a call or send a private email outside of Facebook. Nothing is scarier than your ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend calling you out of the blue or finding out that a new credit card was taken out in your name on the other side of the country by an ex-con.
2. Be careful when placing photographs of you or your children on Facebook. Please ensure that you have all your privacy settings set to maximum. There was a reported instance of a family photo being "snapped up" and used for commercial purposes. One family was surprised to find their Facebook family photo on a billboard in Europe.
3. Do not ever think that your Facebook page is private amongst only your friends and family. Job interviewers, lawyers, investigators, the police, and the entire world will be searching for information on your Facebook site at some point. Most people will need a lawyer whether it is for a divorce, a speeding ticket, a personal injury lawsuit or a work-related injury. We have personally seen instances where parties to a lawsuit and witnesses have posted items on their Facebook site which was subsequently used later in a job interview or a deposition or even in court. Do not think for one second that anything you post will ever be kept private. Your whole life is up for dissection and a simple Google search on your name will pull up your Facebook profile. Try it.
4. Do not accept all Friend Requests. Of course the purpose of Facebook is to socially connect with people you know. However, not every Friend Request is legitimate. There have been reported instances of private investigators, police officers, sex offenders and the like creating fake accounts to gain access to

you online. If you do not know the person, then do not add them to your accepted friends. Again, as soon as they gain access, they will be searching your personal information, your postings, and viewing all of your photos. Keep your list of accepted friends and family close as you would in the non-digital world. The cute guy or girl that emails a Friend Request to you may just be the private investigator that has been hired to dig up dirt on you.

5. Be sure to keep your house clean. Most people who use Facebook, including myself, have run into the situation where their Facebook is clean and professional. Only then have a friend or family member post a photo of you in a bar when you were in college, or smoking when you were not supposed, or running down the street with the stolen street sign when you were in high school. These scenarios are often not done to harm you but they can be quite damaging to your professional and personal life. Be sure to monitor and clean your house for these skeletons in your closet. Notify any friends or family members immediately when an item is posted to take it down.
6. Be sure to watch what you place on your Wall. The Wall is exactly that, a wall such as the bulletin board at work or in school. When you make postings to your wall, the post is placed prominently on your Facebook site and also copied to all your friends and family as an update of what you are doing. It is the equivalent of hitting the Reply All in an email. Do not place postings regarding your late night out or your latest fling unless you want your friends, coworkers, and family to know of your escapades. If you really need to detail your latest rant against your boss or how you acted during the football game last week, do it in a private email outside of Facebook. There are now Web sites designed to post embarrassing Wall postings. Do not be the person that millions of Internet users are now laughing at.
7. Do not leave your computer on with your Facebook account open. Leaving access to your Facebook account is the equivalent of leaving your wallet or cell phone in public on the picnic table. Anyone can sit down and start making posts to your Wall, redesigning your site, or even entice friends to play the greatest prank on you in your life. Be sure to sign out.
8. Be sure to have virus software for your computer and keep it updated. There are several viruses out there that attack your email address library. The viruses then send out posts to everyone in your library asking them to become your friend in Facebook while giving them the same virus. This has happened to several prominent attorneys I know and there is no stopping it once it has begun.
9. Spend time checking your spelling and grammar. We are all busy people with busy lives. However, not checking your spelling and grammar on your postings in Facebook can lead to several unwanted consequences. First, you can mistakenly type a word that is offensive or leads to a direct contradiction in your intended message. Checking spelling on the front end when posting can save you hours of time in trying to correct a mistake that offends your employer, significant others or your family.
10. Be careful not to provide too much information. Facebook is intended to be a social network. However, you do not need to go into every detail about your wisdom tooth being pulled or how your latest hot date ended. People do like

details but only in an appropriate environment. If you feel the need to share then do it in person or over the phone. This also includes your family and friends. You may feel the need to speak about your friend's latest date or their ongoing medical treatment but they may not want this information known to the world. They may have gone at great lengths to keep their medical treatment private and there is nothing worse than a non-family member knowing more than the immediate family members. Respect their privacy and you will be better for it.

Paying attention and following these 10 tips will ensure your experience with Facebook will be positive and safe

**Source:** by Robert Wilson and William Turley published on the Personal Injury Lawyer Manhattan blog.

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