

Chapter 1

The Many Faces of Facebook

In This Chapter

- ▶ Discovering Facebook
 - ▶ Knowing what you can and can't do on Facebook
 - ▶ Finding out how Facebook is different from other social sites
 - ▶ Seeing how different people use Facebook . . . differently
-

Think about the people you interacted with throughout the past day. In the morning, you may have gone to get the paper and chatted with the neighbor. You may have asked your kids what time they'd be home and negotiated with your partner about whose turn it is to cook dinner. Perhaps you spent the day at the office, chatting, joking, and (heaven forbid) getting things done with your co-workers. In the midst of it all, you may have sent an e-mail to all the people in your book club, asking them what book should be next, and what date works for the most people. Maybe while you sat on the bus you read the newspaper, or called your mom to wish her a happy birthday, or searched on your phone for a good restaurant to go to for drinks with friends. This is your world, as it revolves around you.

Each of us has our own version of the world, and as we interact with each other, those worlds intertwine, interplay, and interlock. Maybe your best friend from college was the one to introduce you to the book club, and then someone from the book club recommended a good restaurant. This network of people you interact with — your friends, acquaintances, and loved ones — exists online. Facebook is the online representation of the web of connections between people in the real world. Facebook (and other Internet companies) like to call this network the *social graph*.

Now, you may be asking, if this graph or network exists in the real world, why do I need it online, too? Good question (gold stars all around). The answer is that having it online facilitates and improves all your social relationships. In other words, Facebook makes your life easier and your friendships better. It can help with very practical things like remembering a friend's birthday or coordinating a party. It can also help with the more abstract aspects of relationships, things like staying close with family you aren't physically near or talking about your day with friends.

Getting set up and familiar with Facebook does take a little work (which you know, or else you wouldn't be starting out on this book-length journey). It may feel a little overwhelming at times, but the reward is worth it — I promise you.

So . . . What Is Facebook, Exactly?

“Yes, Carolyn,” you’re saying. “I know it’s going to help me stay in touch with my friends and communicate with the people in my life, but what *is* it?”

Well, at its most basic, Facebook is a website. You’ll find it through a web browser like Safari, Google Chrome, Firefox, or Internet Explorer, the same way you might navigate to a search engine like Google or to an airline’s website to book tickets. Figure 1-1 shows what you will probably see when you navigate to `www.facebook.com`.

Facebook is a website where you go to accomplish certain tasks. These tasks usually fall under the umbrella category of *social maintenance*. For example, you may go to Facebook to

- ✓ Check out what your friends are up to today.
- ✓ Tell your friends and family about your recent successes, show them your photos, or let them know you’re thinking of them.
- ✓ Show off the pictures from your latest vacation.

Figure 1-1:
Welcome to
Facebook.
Would you
like fries
with that?

Connect with friends and the world around you on Facebook.



News Feed See what's up with friends, family and anything you're into.



Timeline Tell your story — from where you grew up to what you're doing now.



Graph Search Find more of what you're looking for through your friends and connections.



Messages Chat and send private messages with the important people in your life.

Sign Up
It's free and always will be.

First Name
 Last Name

Your Email

Re-enter Email

New Password

Birthday:

Month:
 Day:
 Year:
 Why do I need to provide my birthday?

☐ Female
 ☐ Male

By clicking Sign Up, you agree to our Terms and that you have read our Data Use Policy, including our Cookie Use.

Create a Page for a celebrity, band or business.

- ✓ Make a contact in a city you're moving to or at a company where you're applying for a job.
- ✓ Plan an event.
- ✓ Get in touch with an old friend.
- ✓ Garner support for a cause.
- ✓ Get recommendations from friends for movies, books, music, and restaurants.
- ✓ Remember everyone's birthday.

So what Facebook *is*, exactly, is a website built to help you represent yourself online and share with your real-world friends online. The rest of it — how that's accomplished, what people typically share on Facebook, and how it all works — is what this book is all about.

Discovering What You Can Do on Facebook

Now that you know Facebook is a means by which you can connect with people who matter to you, your next question may be, “How?” More gold stars for you! In the next few sections, I give you an overview.

Establish a Timeline

When you sign up for Facebook, one of the first things you do is establish your *Timeline*, originally referred to as Profile. The reason Facebook calls this a Timeline and not a profile (other than to be a bit confusing) is because Timelines are much more than just an at-a-glance bio. Timelines become an ongoing history of your life on Facebook. When you (or your friends) are feeling nostalgic, you can explore your history the same way you might flip through an old photo album.

At first, the thought of putting a photo album of your entire life online may feel sort of scary or daunting. After all, that stuff is personal. But one of the things you'll discover about Facebook is that it's a place to be personal. The people who will see your Timeline are, for the most part, the people you'd show a photo album to in real life. They are your friends and family members.



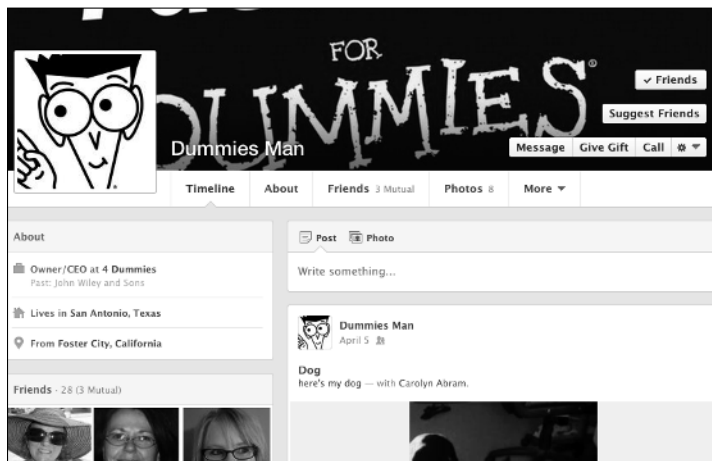
That “for the most part” is an important part of Facebook, too. You will encounter other people on Facebook, including potential employers or professional contacts, more distant friends, and casual acquaintances. This distinction — between your close friends and everyone else — is an important one to be aware of.

Fundamentally, you create a Timeline on Facebook because it’s required. But Timelines have this funny habit of starting out as a bare-bones regulation and then becoming something more. They become your home on the Internet, with the same comfort of walking into your own bedroom. As you start to collect posts, photos, and interactions with friends there, your Timeline becomes an indispensable record of what’s going on with you, both now and in the past. You can even use your Facebook info to log in to other websites on the Internet — meaning your profile picture and name are transferred with the click of a button, no need to create a new profile. In other words, the Timeline is the only website profile you’ll need.

The Timeline, shown in Figure 1-2, is set up with all kinds of privacy controls to specify *who* you want to see *which* information. Many people find great value in adding to their Timeline just about every piece of information and then unveiling each particular piece cautiously. The safest rule here is to share on your Timeline any piece of information you’d share with someone in real life. The corollary applies, too: Don’t share on your Timeline any information that you wouldn’t share with someone in real life.

Chapter 2 provides lots of detail about the Timeline and what you might choose to share there. For now, think of it as a personal web page that Facebook helps you create to facilitate sharing with friends and represent yourself online.

Figure 1-2:
An example
of a
Facebook
Timeline.



Connect with friends

Now that you know about Timelines, you should also know about ways to connect your Timeline to the Timelines of your acquaintances. These connections are called *friendships*. On Facebook, it's pretty common to refer to *friending* people you know. This just means establishing the virtual connection. Friending people enables you to communicate and share with them more easily. Friends are basically the reason Facebook can be so powerful and useful to people. After all, you can sit and stare at your own Timeline for only so long. Facebook offers the following tools to help you find your friends:

- ✓ **Facebook Friend Finder:** Enables you to scan the e-mail addresses in your e-mail address book to find whether those people are already on Facebook. Selectively choose among those with whom you'd like to connect.
- ✓ **People You May Know:** Shows you the names and pictures of people you likely know. These people are selected for you based on commonalities like where you live or work or how many friends you have in common.
- ✓ **Search:** Helps you find the people who are most likely already using Facebook.

After you establish a few connections, use those connections to find other people you know by searching through their connections for familiar names. I explain how to find people you know on Facebook in Chapter 6.

Communicate with Facebook friends

As Facebook grows, it becomes more likely that anyone with whom you're trying to communicate can be reached. These days it's a fairly safe assumption that you'll be able to find that person you just met at a dinner party, an old professor from college, or the childhood friend you've been meaning to catch up with. Digging up a person's contact information could require calls to mutual friends, a trip to the white pages (provided you know enough about that person to identify the right contact information), or an e-mail sent to a potentially outdated e-mail address. Facebook streamlines finding and contacting people in one place. If the friend you're reaching out to is active on Facebook, no matter where she lives or how many times she's changed her e-mail address, you can reach one another.

And Facebook isn't just about looking up old friends to say hi. Its messaging system is designed to make it easy to dash a quick note off to friends and get their reply just as fast. The comments people leave on each other's photos, status updates, and posts are real conversations that you will find yourself taking part in.

Share your thoughts

You have something to say. I can just tell by the look on your face. Maybe you're proud of the home team, maybe you're excited for Friday, or maybe you can't believe what you saw on the way to work this morning. All day long, things are happening to all of us that make us just want to turn to our friends and say, "You know what? . . . That's what." Facebook gives you the stage and an eager audience. In Chapter 7, I explain how you can make short or long posts about the things happening around you and how they're distributed to your friends in an easy way.

Share your pictures

Since the invention of the modern-day camera, people have been all too eager to yell, "Cheese!" Photographs can make great tour guides on trips down memory lane, but only if you actually remember to develop, upload, or scrapbook them. Many memories fade away when the smiling faces are stuffed into an old shoe box, remain on undeveloped rolls of film, or are forgotten in some folder on a hard drive.

Facebook offers three great incentives for uploading, organizing, and editing your photos:

- ✓ **Facebook provides one easy-to-access location for all your photos.** Directing any interested person to your Facebook Timeline is easier than e-mailing pictures individually, sending a complicated link to a photo site, or waiting until the family reunion to show off the my-how-the-kids-have-grown pics.
- ✓ **Every photo you upload can be linked to the Timelines of the people in the photo.** For example, you upload pictures of you and your sister and link them to her Timeline. Whenever someone visits her Timeline, he sees those pictures; he doesn't even have to know you. This is great because it introduces longevity to photos. As long as people are visiting your sister's Timeline, they can see those pictures. Photo albums no longer have to be something people look at right after the event and maybe then again years later.
- ✓ **Facebook gives you the power to control exactly who has access to your photos.** Every time you upload a photo or create a new photo album on Facebook, you can decide whether you want everyone on Facebook to see it, just your friends, or even just a subset of your friends based on your comfort level. You may choose to show your wedding photos to all your friends, but perhaps only some friends see the honeymoon. This control enables you to tailor your audience to those friends who might be most interested. All your friends might enjoy your baby photos, but maybe only your co-workers will care about photos from the recent company party.

Plan Events, join Groups

Facebook isn't meant to be a replacement for face-to-face interaction; it's meant to facilitate interactions when face time isn't possible or to facilitate the planning of face time. Two of the greatest tools for this are Events and Groups.

Events are just what they sound like: a system for creating events, inviting people to them, sending out messages about them, and so on. Your friends and other guests RSVP to events, which allows the event organizers to plan accordingly and allows attendees to receive event reminders. Facebook Events can be used for something as small as a lunch date or something as big as a march on Washington, D.C. Sometimes events are abstract rather than physical. For example, someone could create an event for Ride Your Bike to Work Day and hope the invitation spreads far and wide (through friends and friends of friends) to promote awareness. I use Events to plan barbecues for my friends as well as to put together a larger reading series. I cover Events in detail in Chapter 11.

Groups are also what they sound like: groups of people organized around a common topic or real-world organization. One group may be intimate, such as five best friends who plan several activities together. Another group could be practical — for example, PTA Members of Denver Schools. Within a group, all members can share relevant information, photos, or discussions. My groups include one for my family where we might post photos we don't want to share with the world at large, one for my *For Dummies* editorial team so we can update each other on how the writing is going, and one for a group of friends who are all planning to take a trip together next year. Groups are covered in detail in Chapter 9.

Facebook and the web

Facebook Photos, Groups, and Events are only a small sampling of how you can use Facebook to connect with the people you know. Throughout this book, you find information about how Facebook interacts with the greater Internet. You might see articles recommended by friends when you go to *The New York Times* website, or information about what music your friends like when you use Spotify, an Internet radio website. Additionally, in Chapter 14, I explain in detail the games, apps, and websites that you can use with your Facebook information.

Many of these websites and applications have been built by outside developers who don't work for Facebook. They include tools to help you edit your photos; create slideshows; play games with friends across the globe; divvy up bills among people who live or hang out together; and exchange information about good movies, music, books, and restaurants. After you become

a little more comfortable with the Facebook basics, you can try some of the thousands of applications and websites whose services allow you to interact with your Facebook friends.

Promote a cause or business

In addition to your friends and family, you interact with tons of other things or entities every day. These may be a newspaper or magazine, a celebrity whose marriage travails you can't help but be fascinated by, a television show that has you on the edge of your seat, or a cause that's near and dear to your heart. All these entities can be represented on Facebook through Pages (with a capital P). These Pages look almost exactly like Timelines, just for the not-quite-people among us. Instead of becoming friends with Pages, you can like them. So when you like a television show (say, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*), you'll start to see updates from that Page (*The Daily Show*) on your Home page. Liking Pages for businesses or causes helps you stay up-to-date with news from them.

If you're the one managing something like a small business, a cause, or a newsletter, you can also create a page. After you've created that page, your users/customers/fans can like it, and then you can update them with news about whatever's going on in the world of your store/cause/thing. I talk about all the ins and outs of Pages in Chapter 13.

Keeping in Mind What You Can't Do on Facebook

Facebook is meant to represent real people and real associations; it's also meant to be safe. Many of the rules of participation on Facebook exist to uphold those two goals.



There are things you can't do on Facebook other than what's listed here. For example, you can't send multiple unsolicited messages to people you're not friends with; you can't look at the photos of someone who has really tight privacy settings; you can't spin straw into gold. These rules may change how you use Facebook, but probably won't change *whether* you use it. The following four rules are highlighted in this section because, if any are a problem for you, you probably won't get to the rest of the book.

You can't lie

Okay, you can, but you shouldn't, especially not about your basic information. Lying about your identity is a violation of the Statement of Rights and Responsibilities and grounds for your Timeline being disabled. Although many people try, Facebook doesn't let anyone sign up with an obviously fake name like Marilyn Manson or Fakey McFakerson. Those who do make it past the name checks will likely find their account flagged and disabled.

You can't be twelve

Or younger. Seriously. Facebook takes very seriously the U.S. law that prohibits minors under the age of 13 from creating an online Timeline for themselves. This rule is in place for the safety of minors, and it's a particular safety rule that Facebook does enforce. If you or someone you know on Facebook is under 13, deactivate (or make him deactivate) the account now. If you're reported to the Facebook User Operations team and they confirm that you're underage, your account will be disabled.

You can't troll or spam

On the Internet, *trolling* refers to posting deliberately offensive material to websites in order to get people upset. *Spamming* refers to sending out bulk promotional messages. If you do either of these things on Facebook, there's a good chance your account will be shut down.

The logic for this is that Facebook is about real people and real connections. It's one thing to message a mutual friend or the occasional stranger whose Timeline implies being open to meeting new people if the two of you have matching interests. However, between Facebook's automatic detection systems and user-generated reports, sending too many unsolicited messages is likely to get your account flagged and disabled.

Similarly, Facebook aims to be a "trusted" environment for people to exchange ideas and information. If people deliberately disturb the peace with pornographic, hateful, or bullying content, that trust is pretty much broken.

Chances are that you have no intention of spamming or trolling, so keep in mind that if you see either of these things happening, you can report the content or person to Facebook (you can find out how to report a photo, for example, in Chapter 10), and its User Operations team investigates the report. If you're getting warnings about things like spamming, chances are

you just need to tweak *how* you're using Facebook. For example, you may need to create a Page instead of using your personal account for mass messaging. You can find out how to promote your business (or yourself) in Chapter 13.

You can't upload illegal content

Facebook users live in virtually every country in the world, so Facebook is often obligated to respect the local laws for its users. Respecting these laws is something Facebook has to do regardless of its own position on pornography (where minors can see it), copyrighted material, hate speech, depictions of crimes, and other offensive content. However, doing so is also in line with Facebook's value of being a safe, happy place for people 13 and older. Don't confuse this with censorship; Facebook is all about freedom of speech and self-expression, but the moment that compromises anyone's safety or breaks any law, disciplinary action is taken.

Realizing How Facebook Is Different from Other Social Sites

Lots of social sites besides Facebook try to help people connect. Some popular sites are Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, Tumblr, and many others.

I'll start with the biggest reason Facebook is different. Literally, the biggest: Facebook has over one *billion* users across the world (yes, billion with a *b*). Other social sites might be popular in one country or another, but Facebook is popular pretty much everywhere.



If you're going to use only one social networking site, choose Facebook — everyone you want to interact with is already there.

You'll see a lot of similar functionality across different sites: establishing connections, creating Timelines, liking content, and so on. However, each site brings a slightly different emphasis in terms of what is important. LinkedIn, for example, helps people with career networking, so it puts emphasis on professional information and connections. Match.com, on the other hand, is about matchmaking, so it's not exactly meant for those of us who aren't looking to get a date. Twitter encourages its members to share short *tweets*, 140-character posts with their connections; and Instagram (which is actually owned by Facebook) encourages its members to share cool photos taken with mobile phones.

You might find some or all of these sites useful at different points in time, but Facebook wants to be the one that is always useful in one way or another — so it tries to offer all the functionality I just mentioned . . . *and more*.

How You Can Use Facebook

Now that you know what you can do, generally, on Facebook, it's time to consider some of the specific ways you may find yourself using Facebook in the future. The following list is by no means comprehensive, and I've left out some of the things already mentioned in this chapter (things like sharing photos and events and groups). These are more specific-use cases than an advertisement for Facebook's features.



One billion people use Facebook, but not all of them can see your whole Timeline. You can share as much or as little with as many or as few people as you so desire. Put under lock and key the posts or parts of your Timeline you *don't* want to share with everyone. Chapter 5 goes into much greater detail on how to protect yourself and your information.

Getting information

At any age, you may need to find someone's phone number or connect with a friend of a friend to organize something. Facebook can make these very practical tasks a little bit easier. As long as you can search for someone's name, you should be able to find her on Facebook and find the information you're looking for.

Keeping up with long-distance friends

These days, families and friends are often spread far and wide across state or country lines. Children go to college; grandparents move to Florida; people move for their job or because they want a change of scenery. These distances make it hard for people to interact in any more significant way than gathering together once per year to share some turkey and pie (pecan, preferably). Facebook offers a place where you can virtually meet and interact. Upload photos of the kids for everyone to see; write posts about what everyone is up to. Even the more mundane information about your life ("I'm at jury duty") can make someone across the world feel like, just for a second, she's sitting next to you and commiserating with you about your jury summons.

Am I signing up for a dating site?

Throughout this book, you read about ways to communicate: messages, chatting, poking, liking, and commenting. These fairly neutral activities can take on a whole new meaning and spark when they happen between two people interested in each other.

Although Facebook is not technically a dating site, plenty of people do take advantage of its social nature to boost their dating lives in different ways:

- ✓ You can inform people through your Timeline whom you're looking to meet (women, men, or both).
- ✓ You can certainly use Facebook's systems to flirt, get to know, and yes, do a little background research on dating prospects.
- ✓ If you're happily ensconced in couple-dom, listing your relationship status and linking to your partner's Timeline is an easy way to broadcast, "Move along; I'm taken."

Moving to a new city

Landing in a new city with all your worldly belongings and an upside-down map can be hugely intimidating. Having some open arms or at least numbers to call when you arrive can greatly ease the transition. Although you may already know some people who live in your new city, Facebook can help connect with all the old friends and acquaintances you either forgot live there or have moved there since you last heard from them. These people can help you find doctors, apartments, hair stylists, Frisbee leagues, and restaurants.

As you meet more and more new friends, you can connect with them on Facebook. Sooner than you thought possible, when someone posts about construction slowing down his commute, you know exactly the street he means, and you may realize, *I'm home*.

Getting a job

Plenty of people use Facebook as a tool for managing their careers as well as their social lives. If you're looking at a particular company, find people who already work there to get the inside scoop or to land an interview. If you're thinking about moving into a particular industry, browse your friends by past jobs and interests to find someone to connect with. If you go to a conference for professional development, you can keep track of the other people you meet there as your Facebook friends.

Reunions

Thanks to life's curveballs, your friends at any given time may not be the people in your life at another. The memories of people you consider to be most important in your life fade over the years so that even trying to recall a last name may give you pause. The primary reason for this lapse is a legitimate one: There are only so many hours in a day. While we make new, close friends, others drift away because it's impossible to maintain many intense relationships. Facebook is an extremely powerful tool; however, it hasn't yet found a way to extend the number of hours in a day, so it can't exactly fix the problem of growing apart. Facebook can, however, lessen the finality and inevitability of the distance.

Because Facebook is less than ten years old (and because you're reading this book), you probably don't have your entire social history mapped out. Some may find it a daunting task to create connections with everyone they've ever known, which I don't recommend. Instead, build your graph as you need to or as opportunity presents. Perhaps you want to upload a photo taken from your high school graduation. Search for the people in the photo on Facebook; form the friend connection; and then *tag*, or mark, them as being in the photo. Maybe you're thinking about opening a restaurant, and you'd like to contact a friend from college who was headed into the restaurant business after graduation. Perhaps you never told your true feelings to the one who got away. For all these reasons, you may find yourself using the Facebook Search box.



Frequently, I receive reports from adopted children who connect with their biological parents or estranged siblings who find each other on Facebook. I once heard from my sixth-grade bully, who found me on Facebook and apologized for his behavior as a kid. I, in turn, used it to apologize to someone I treated terribly around the same time.

Organizing movements

If you kept up on the news of the “Arab Spring” uprisings in the early part of 2011, you couldn't avoid hearing about the role Facebook played. Young people used Facebook as an organizing tool, letting each other know about protest locations and times. People in geographically distant regions could share ideas about their countries and what they wanted to see outside of the watchful eye of oppressive regimes.

And as the drama unfolded, plenty of people with family in the affected areas turned to Facebook to make sure their loved ones were okay. People unrelated but concerned offered their support through their own status updates and more.

The birth of the 'Book

In the old days, say, ten years ago, most college freshmen would receive a thinly bound book containing the names and faces of everyone in their matriculating class. These *face books* were useful for matching names to the students seen around campus or for pointing out particular people to friends. There were several problems with these face books. If someone didn't send his picture in, the books were incomplete. They were outdated by junior year because many people looked drastically different, and the books didn't reflect the students who had transferred in or who were from any other class. Finally, they had little information about each person.

In February 2004, Mark Zuckerberg, a sophomore at Harvard, launched an online "book" to which people could upload their photos and personal information, a service that solved many of these problems. Within a month, more

than one-half the Harvard undergraduates had signed up.

Zuckerberg was then joined by others to help expand the site into other schools. I was the first Stanford student to receive an account. During the summer of the same year, Facebook moved to Palo Alto, California, where the site and the company kept growing. By December 2004, the site had grown to one million college students. Every time Facebook opened to a new demographic — high school, then work users, then everyone — the rate at which people joined the site continued to increase.

At the end of 2006, the site had more than 10 million users; 2007 closed out with more than 50 million active users. At the time of this book's publication in 2013, that final count has grown to in excess of one billion people across the globe using Facebook to stay in touch.

The term *movement*, here, can apply to anything. Whether it's a campaign to raise awareness about gay teen suicides or a campaign to raise money for victims of a natural disaster, Facebook can be used to bring support and spread the word.