

- » Understanding 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

Chapter **1**

The Many Faces of Facebook

Think about the people you interacted with throughout the past day. In the morning, you may have gone outside to get the paper and chatted with a 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 email 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.

Now, you may be asking, if this network exists in the real world, why do I need it online, too? Good question (gold stars all around). The answer is that having this network online facilitates and improves all your social relationships. In other words, Facebook makes your life easier and your friendships better. It can help with practical things such as remembering a friend's birthday or coordinating a party. It can help also 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 on this book-length journey). It may feel a little overwhelming at times, but the reward is worth it — we promise you.

So What Is Facebook, Exactly?

“Yes,” you’re saying. “I know Facebook is 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 such as Safari, Google Chrome, or Firefox, the same way you might navigate to a search engine like Google or to an airline's website to book tickets. (You can also access it using an app on your smartphone or tablet, but more on Facebook Mobile in Chapter 7.) Figure 1-1 shows what you will probably see when you navigate to `www.facebook.com`.

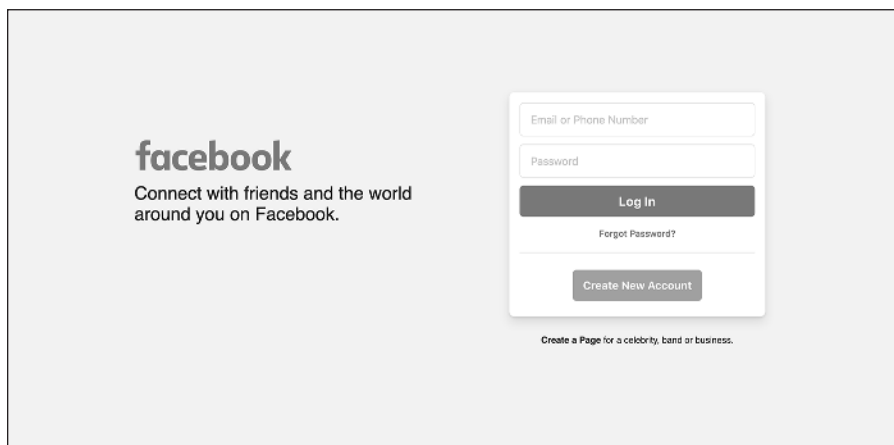
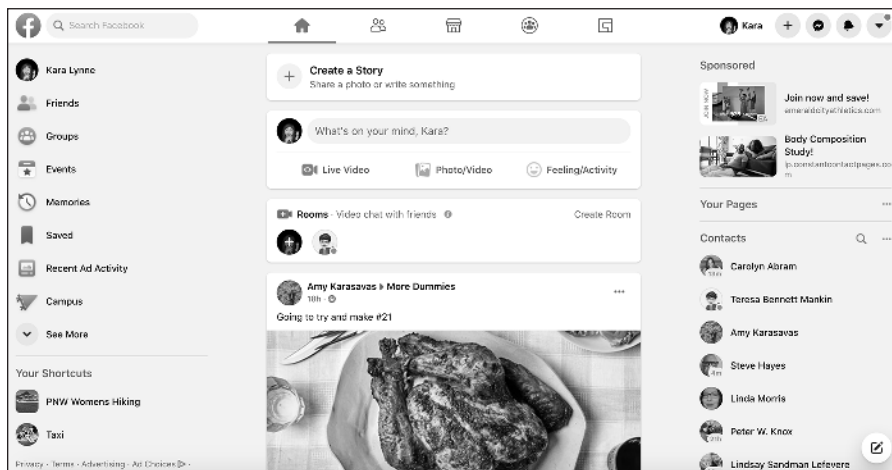


FIGURE 1-1:
Welcome to
Facebook.

If you're already a Facebook user and choose to stay logged in to your computer, www.facebook.com will likely look more like Figure 1-2, which shows an example of your News Feed and Home page.

FIGURE 1-2:
Welcome back to
Facebook, old
friend.



Facebook is a website where you go to connect and share with friends. And just as there are a lot of different ways you interact with friends in the real world, there are a lot of ways to do so on Facebook. For example, you may go to Facebook to

- » Check out what your friends are up to today.
- » Read articles and other news that your friends have posted.
- » Tell your friends and family about your recent successes, show them your photos, or let them know you're thinking of them.
- » Share a tidbit from your day, something you've been thinking about, or an article you found interesting.
- » Show off the pictures from your latest vacation.
- » Share a live video of a concert, an event, or whatever is going on right now.
- » 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.
- » Buy or sell used items.
- » Get recommendations from friends for movies, books, music, and restaurants.
- » Create a special dating profile and find a date.
- » 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 that Facebook is a means by which you can connect with people who matter to you, your next question may be, “How?” Another gold star for you! In the next few sections, you receive an overview.

Connecting with friends

As soon as you sign up for Facebook, you'll start seeing prompts to “Add Friends.” *Friendships* are the digital connections between you and your real-world friends and acquaintances. On Facebook, *friending* just means establishing a 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. Facebook offers the following tools to help you find your friends:

- » **People You May Know:** Displays the names and pictures of people you likely know. These people are selected for you based on commonalities such as where you live or work or how many friends you have in common.
- » **Search:** Helps you find the people in your life by name. Chances are they are already using Facebook.

After you establish a few friendships on Facebook, use those friendships to find other people you know by searching through their connections for familiar names. Chapter 8 explains how to find people you know on Facebook.

Discovering what's going on with your friends

Whenever you log into Facebook, you'll see your News Feed. *News Feed* is the constantly updating list of stories by and about your friends. In less vague terms, every time one of your friends adds something to Facebook — a photo, a post about her day, a link to an article he liked — it creates a story that may appear when you log in. In this way, your News Feed becomes an ongoing update about your friends. News Feed is how you know when your friends have become engaged, moved, or had a baby. It's how you know who had a funny thought while waiting for coffee, and whose kid just said something bizarre and profound. It's how you know that there was a tiny earthquake in your area ten minutes ago (don't worry, everyone's fine) and that people were disappointed by the way your city's basketball team played over the weekend. You can see a snippet of a News Feed in Figure 1-2. Chapter 4 provides much more detail about News Feed.

Establishing a timeline

When you sign up for Facebook, one of the first things you do is establish your profile, or timeline. Facebook (and your authors) use these terms interchangeably. On Facebook, a *profile* is much much more than an at-a-glance bio; it updates every time you add something to Facebook, creating 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 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.

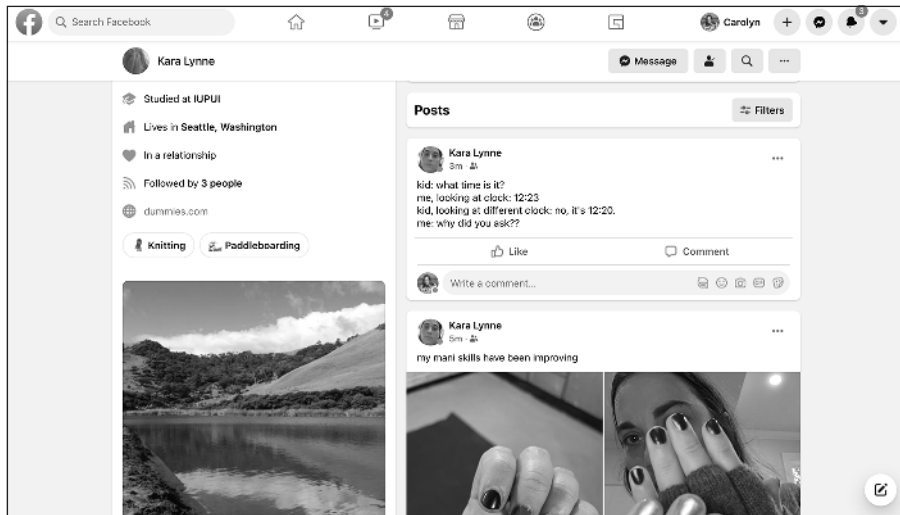


WARNING

That “for the most part” is an important part of Facebook, too. You'll 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.

The timeline, which is shown in Figure 1-3, is set up with all kinds of privacy controls to specify *whom* you want to see *which* information. 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.

FIGURE 1-3:
An example of a
Facebook
timeline.



Chapter 5 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 helps you share with your friends on Facebook.

Communicating with Facebook friends

As Facebook grows, it becomes more likely that anyone with whom you're trying to communicate can be reached. Chances are 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 email sent to a potentially outdated email 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 email address, you can reach each other.

And Facebook isn't just about looking up old friends to say hi. Its messaging system is designed to make it easy to dash off a quick note 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.

Sharing your thoughts

You have something to say. We can just tell by the look on your face. Maybe you're proud of the home team, or you're excited for Friday, or 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. Chapter 4 shows how you can make short or long posts about the things happening around you and how to distribute those posts easily to your friends.

Sharing your pictures and videos

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 remember to develop, upload, or scrapbook them. Many memories fade when the smiling faces are stuffed into an old shoe box, remain on undeveloped rolls of film, or are left to molder in obscurity on your phone’s camera roll.

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

» **Facebook provides one easy-to-access location for all your photos and videos.** Directing any interested person to your Facebook timeline is easier than emailing 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. You can share videos alongside your photos, so people can really get a feel for all parts of your vacation.

» **Every photo and video you upload can be linked to the timelines of the people in the photo or video.** For example, suppose you upload pictures of you and your sister and link them to her timeline. On Facebook, this is called *tagging* someone. Whenever someone visits your sister’s timeline, he sees those pictures; he doesn’t even have to know you. This feature 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 again years later.

Friends may have certain settings that prevent you from tagging them in photos. In general, people leave this feature turned on, but if you’re trying to tag someone and can’t, this might be why.

» **Facebook gives you the power to control exactly who has access to your photos and videos.** Every time you upload a photo or create a new photo album on Facebook, you can decide whether who you want to see it: everyone on Facebook, just your friends, or a subset of your friends based on your comfort level. You may choose to show your wedding photos to all your friends, but those of the honeymoon to only a few friends. This control enables you to tailor your audience to those friends who might be most



WARNING

interested. All your friends might enjoy your baby photos, but maybe only your co-workers will care about photos from the recent company party.

Chapter 11 shows how to share your photos and videos.

Planning events

The Facebook *Events* feature is just what it sounds 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 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. You can use Events to plan barbecues for friends as well as to put together a large reading series. Chapter 13 covers Events in detail.

Joining and creating groups

Facebook *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. Carolyn's groups include one for each kid's classroom at school, one for her *For Dummies* editorial team to update how the writing is going, one for women who like hiking and camping in the Pacific Northwest, and one Buy Nothing group for passing along used items with others in her neighborhood. Groups are covered in detail in Chapter 10.

Whenever you share content on Facebook, you can choose to share it only with members of a certain group. So if you just had a baby and know how much your family is jonesing for new photos, you can share photos with just your family group without inundating the world at large.

Using Facebook around the Internet

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. Chapter 15 explains 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.

Promoting a business

Every day, you interact with your friends and family. You also interact with other people, places and things: a newspaper or magazine, your favorite coffee shop, 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 (or follow) them. So when you like a television show (say, *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*), you'll start to see updates from that Page (*The Daily Show*) in your News Feed. Liking Pages for businesses or causes helps you stay up-to-date with news from them. Chapter 14 covers the ins and outs of Pages.

Fundraising for a cause

One of the things people often do in the world is try to figure out a way to make it better. Every day, people are working on solving lots of hard problems. Facebook fits into this because it can help you spread the word to friends about the causes you're passionate about. And if your friends care about the same things, they in turn might bring along their friends to create a large group of people willing to help out. In addition to simply passing along information, you can create fundraisers where your friends help you reach a charitable goal. Fundraisers are covered in Chapter 12.

THE BIRTH OF THE 'BOOK

In ye olden days, say, the early 2000s, 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. However, these face books had several problems. If someone didn't send in his picture, 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 half of the Harvard undergraduates had signed up.

Zuckerberg was then joined by others to help expand the site into other schools. Carolyn 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 2021, that final count has grown so that now more than two and a half billion people across the globe use Facebook to stay in touch.

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 look at the photos of someone who has tight privacy settings; you can't prevent ads from showing up from time to time; 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. Facebook's community standards include a commitment to use an authentic identity, which means Facebook wants you to create only one timeline for yourself. You don't *have* to use your real name, but we recommend that you do. (A few exceptions to this rule include teachers wanting to keep some professional distance from their students by using an alias.) However, if you create multiple accounts or fake accounts, there's a good chance they will be flagged, disabled, and removed from Facebook.

You can't be 12 or younger

Seriously. A U.S. law prohibits minors under the age of 13 from creating an online timeline for themselves. This rule, which Facebook enforces, is in place for the safety of minors. If you or someone you know on Facebook is under 13, deactivate (or make him or her deactivate) the account now. If you're reported to the Facebook Community Operations team and they confirm that you're underage, your account will be disabled.

You can't troll, spam, or harass

On the Internet, *trolling* refers to posting deliberately offensive material to websites to get people upset. *Spamming* refers to sending out bulk promotional messages. When we talk about *harassment*, we mean deliberately tormenting or bothering another person or group of people. If you do any of these things on Facebook, there's a good chance your posts will be removed and your account can be shut down.

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. While there are many places on Facebook where you can find spirited public discussion of controversial topics, Facebook does respond to reports of offensive material and will take down anything it deems hate speech. (The definition of hate speech is a notoriously difficult needle to thread, so a common complaint against Facebook is that it allows too much hateful material to stay up for too long.)

If you see trolling, spam, harassment, or hate speech taking place, you can report the content or person to Facebook (you see how to report a photo, for example, in Chapter 11). Its Community Operations team will investigate 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 see how to promote your business (or yourself) in Chapter 14.

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 must do regardless of its own position on pornography (where minors can see it), copyrighted material, hate speech, depictions of crimes, and other offensive content. Doing so is also in line with Facebook's value of being a trusted place for people 13 and older.

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, Instagram, Tumblr, Snapchat, and WhatsApp. We start with the biggest reason Facebook is different. Literally, the biggest: Facebook has over *two 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.



REMEMBER

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 emphasizes professional information and connections. Twitter encourages its members to share short *tweets*, 280-character posts with their connections. Instagram (which is owned by Facebook) encourages its members to share cool photos taken with mobile phones. Snapchat allows people to have video chats with friends while applying silly filters to their image in the video.

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

Finding Out 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 we've left out some of the things already mentioned in this chapter (such as sharing photos and events and groups). These are more specific-use cases than an advertisement for Facebook's features.



REMEMBER

Two billion people use Facebook, but not all of them can see your entire timeline. You can share as much or as little with as many or as few people as you desire. Put under lock and key the posts or parts of your timeline you don't want to share with everyone. Chapter 6 goes into much greater detail on how to protect yourself and your information.

Getting information

At some point, you may need to find someone's phone number or connect with a friend of a friend to organize something. Facebook can make these practical tasks easier. If you can search for someone's name, you should be able to find him or 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 a year to share some turkey and pie (pecan, preferably).

Facebook offers a place where you can virtually meet and interact. Create a room where you can hang out virtually with friends; 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, just for a second, as though she's sitting next to you and commiserating with you about your jury summons.

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 considering a job at a 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 people you meet there as your Facebook friends. Facebook has a jobs listing portion of the site you can use to browse for jobs in your desired field or area, putting the "networking" in "social networking."

Throwing a reunion

Thanks to life's curveballs, friends at a given time may not be the people in your life at another. The memories of people you consider to be most important 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 hasn't yet found a way to extend the number of hours in a day, so it can't fix the problem of growing apart. However, Facebook can lessen the finality and inevitability of the distance.

Because Facebook is only about 17 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 we don't recommend. Instead, build your map 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. (You can learn about photo tagging in Chapter 11.) 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.

Finding a happily ever after

Sometimes after hearing a description of Facebook, people worry that it's some sort of dating site. No, no, no, we always reassure them, it's definitely not a dating site . . . except if you want it to be. Facebook Dating is a separate part of the site that people looking for love can opt into. You set up a separate profile for the dating portion of Facebook, but then Facebook uses information about the sorts of groups you've joined and events you've attended to find matches based on your interests. Everything that happens on Facebook Dating stays inside Facebook Dating — your messages with potential matches, your profile, their profiles, and so on. It might just be where you find the one.

Entertaining yourself and playing games

Look, keeping up with friends is great, but lots of people log in to Facebook simply to be entertained. Facebook uses cues from friends to try and find the videos that are most likely to be of interest to you. Additionally, Facebook produces original content that can be found in a section of the site called Facebook Watch. If you enjoy gaming and watching livestreams of esports, there are also lots of ways to have that itch scratched in the Gaming sections of Facebook. You can learn more about gaming in Chapter 15.

Communicating in times of trouble

It's a sad fact of life that sometimes events happen beyond our control. Disasters great and small befall everyone at one time or another. While Facebook tends to be a place for sharing the good stuff, its tools also work very well to help with some of the logistics of recovering from certain types of disasters. *Safety Check* is a feature that gets turned on in certain geographic regions after natural disasters or security attacks. This feature allows people to easily notify their wider Facebook community that they are okay and can even help them coordinate with the services they might need. Facebook's Groups feature was used to help coordinate civilian boat evacuations after a hurricane flooded Houston, Texas, in 2017. Because people live so much of their lives on Facebook, Facebook winds up being there for both the good and the bad.

