

What is Facebook? Overview courtesy of gcflearnfree.org

Facebook is the #1 social networking site in the world that allows people to connect and reconnect with family, friends, colleagues, and common interest groups. There are more than 200 million active users. It is estimated that the average user has 120 Friends. These are just a few of the impressive facts about Facebook. It is the largest social networking site in the world with approximately 70% of its users outside of the USA. So what makes so many people sign up for an account and keep coming back? We'll leave that up to you to decide after you learn the basics about using Facebook!

How it Came to be Facebook

The explosive phenomenon known as Facebook is not the product of some huge software company. In fact, it was created by a college student! In 2004, Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg had an idea to start a website based upon the paper "face book" that professors receive at the beginning of the year to help them identify new students. Zuckerberg created an online version of this, added various ways for users to communicate, and before he knew it almost the entire Harvard student body had joined what he named **Thefacebook.com**.

In its formative years, it was very popular amongst other universities, and in 2005 became **Facebook**. With all that popularity, Mark and a friend dropped out of school and began to work on Facebook full time. They opened the site up to high schools, and then later to several companies. By 2006 It had grown into a site that will include anyone over the age of 13 with a valid email address. As of 2009 it is standing strong as the #1 social networking site in the world. Today Facebook has over 175 million users and is reportedly worth billions of dollars!

Interesting Facts

- If there were a Facebook nation, it would be the world's 6th largest country!
- Everyday half a million people join Facebook.
- The fastest growing group on Facebook is people over the age of 30.
- Facebook is the #1 photo sharing site in the world.
- President Barack Obama has the most Friends.

What Can You Do on Facebook?

Applications and Features

Consider Facebook to be a huge database of people. These people, or members, of Facebook use the site for various reasons but mainly as a form of communication. Facebook offers many ways to communicate, with various **applications and features** that can enhance your Facebook experience. You can play games, send gifts, create photo albums, and more. We'll go into each application in detail later, but for now, here are the highlights:

Events

Do you have a birthday party to plan? Need to announce your engagement party?

Want to plan a class reunion? The Events application allows you to plan an event and

invite your Facebook Friends and your friends who are not on Facebook. If you're looking for an Event, Facebook can help with that also! You can search for local or national events to attend. You can keep up with your guest list, view the RSVP list, and even include a map to your event.

Photos

The Photos application makes it easy for users to upload, share, and comment on the pictures you upload. With the Tag feature, there is no need to email your Facebook friends the pictures you took of them. You can simply use the Tag feature to identify a friend and the picture is automatically sent to their wall. If you don't like the idea people being able to tag you and display pictures of you, you can always change your Account Settings (don't worry, we'll get to that in a later lesson).

Gifts

Gifts are icons that you can send to a Friend along with a message. There are thousands of different types of gifts you can send ranging from a cupcake to a puppy. Gifts start at a dollar which buys you 100 credits towards a gift.

Groups

Are you a member of a Fraternity, Sorority, or a national or local organization? Do you feel passionate about a particular cause like breast cancer awareness? It's highly likely that you will find a group to join on Facebook that matches your interests or affiliations. You can search for and join groups or create your own.

Notes

Notes are just another way to blog or communicate with your Friends. Everyone finds different uses for Notes. Some use them to post questions and start a discussion board and some use them to display a subject-based list. For example, recently Facebook users from all over started posting their 25 Random Things list. There were several versions of this but the point of it all was to list 25 things people may or may not know about you. Sharing this note prompted others to start their note and it spread like wildflowers throughout the Facebook community.

Videos

The Video application allows you to upload your mobile videos, YouTube videos, or any other video as long as it is an approved video format.

Chat

If you're not looking for it you may miss the Chat feature. It is another way to communicate with your Friends on Facebook. If you are familiar with other Chat programs like AIM or Yahoo! Messenger, it works the same except you can only chat with other Facebook members.

Wall

The Wall is the center of your profile where all the action takes place. This is the location where your Friends see your updated status, photos, videos, thoughts, and anything else

that is added to your wall. People can post comments to your Wall and you can post comments back to their Wall which is called Wall-to-Wall.