

Creating a profile

The first question to ask yourself is “Why am I even here?” Friending... dating... networking... Figuring out why you want a site, and what you’ll use it for, will help you know how you want to manage your site. That being said, you should understand that putting yourself out on these sites means you will be found, sought out, or accidentally stumbled upon. Employers, college admissions officers, and family members are some of the people who could search you out and view your site, so think twice about what you post. Scantily clad people, grotesque but funny jokes, or explicit lyrics are all things you may not want associated with yourself in the world beyond your peers.

Finding friends

The entire idea of the site is to be able to search out and meet people through other friends’ or acquaintances. The whole six degrees idea applies: you might make friends through your friends’ friends. So, no, you’re not a stalker when you search for someone you know through the site. Should you find someone you would like to befriend, send him or her a friend request. If you so choose, you can send a message along with the request as well, which is a nice way to let the person know who you are, and why you want to be their friend.

Approving and denying friends □□

Yay! Someone wants to be your friend! Now the question is, “Who are they?” If this is someone you know (and you wish to), by all means accept them. If you are unsure of who they are, opt to send them a message asking how they know you, or why they are interested in you, and know that this is perfectly acceptable to do. Depending on how you feel about the response, you can choose to accept or deny their request.

Ignoring a friend's request blocks the person from being able to make the request again until you accept or decline the original request. While you don’t need to send an explanation, common courtesy suggests otherwise. For example, “I’m sorry Sally, I’m so glad you want to be my friend, however I make it a rule for myself that I don’t put coworkers up on my site. I hope you can understand.” Whatever your reason, understand that this might cause issues in your off-line relationship with this person.

Communicating with your network of friends

On all these sites, you have the opportunity to interact with your friends, view their sites, post comments about their photos, and send them messages. The biggest “bear in mind” is that what you put out there can be viewed or manipulated. Even a message which, like an e-mail, won’t get posted on your friend’s site, can still be copied and pasted or forwarded. That being said, posting “Happy Birthday,” sending invites, making plans, and catching up are all appropriate ways to communicate with your network of friends.

Dealing with the content of friends’ sites

Technically on friending sites, you are not supposed to post any photos, forwards, emails, or documents without permission from the people involved, but beware, there isn’t anything stopping others from posting such things on their sites. If your friend posts something that involves you that you’re uncomfortable with, politely request that they remove it. “Hey Jim,

some of my coworkers are in my network of friends, I'd appreciate it if you took down the picture of us from 10th Street bar Friday night. Thanks for understanding." **"De-Friending"**

You may find a time when it is necessary to de-friend – your list is too big, you've had a falling-out/break-up, or someone has been harassing or bothering you. It is definitely okay to unfriend someone you no longer feel comfortable being connected with. Most sites don't send a person a message if you unfriend them - their friend count simply goes down by one - but check the FAQs first to be sure that your technology matches your intent.