

Facebook: Friend or Foe



Facebook is undoubtedly the best-known social networking website at the moment. Millions of people worldwide regularly use it to meet their friends online. They send messages, upload private pictures and tell their friends what they feel like via mood messages. However, more and more journalists and media experts are warning of the dangers of Facebook. Does Facebook improve our lives or is it the new version of "Big Brother"?

Despite all the criticism, using Facebook certainly has many advantages. Firstly, it is a free website. That means that nobody has to pay for using it and everybody can join it. The terms of use guarantee this free service. Compared to other websites, Facebook is more trustable and safer, because it is one of the most famous social networking websites.

Secondly, Facebook enables you to stay in contact with other people. Users can quickly send messages, exchange an unlimited amount of pictures and can easily connect to people they have not seen for a long time. In addition to that, it does not matter if these people live far away or just around the corner. Everybody can be contacted within a few seconds.

Thirdly, everybody can decide individually how much he or she wants to tell about him or herself. By adjusting the privacy settings, users can decide who can read which details about themselves.

These are certainly highly positive sides about Facebook. However, using Facebook also has disadvantages. Firstly, its services are not as free as they seem to be. On the one hand, people don't have to pay with money, as was stated above. But on the other hand, they pay with their personal data. All data are stored and used by Facebook for advertising. Every user gets to see the most suitable advertisements for him or her, when he or she opens the website. Furthermore, no one knows if the users' data are really safe. It is not an Austrian or even European website. Consequently, there is no guarantee that personal data are not sold. No one knows who can actually see the information about him or herself.

Secondly, many people get lost in their virtual reality. Instead of meeting their friends in person, they sit in front of their computers. Using websites like Facebook is highly addictive. Thus many users are spending more and more time online and consequently lose their real life contacts. I think it is much better to meet up with your friends outside and talk with them than to chat via the Internet.

Above all, there is no guarantee that someone is the person he or she pretends to be. Everybody can sign up and take up any identity he or she wants to have. Thus it can be a dangerous place especially for younger users who often forget that they should not trust everybody.

All things considered, I think that every Facebook user should be aware of its dangers. Although it has many advantages, such as easy and quick communication, it should be used with care and a certain amount of healthy suspicion. In my opinion it is not as safe as everybody says and unfortunately many people seem to forget that.

I) Reading Comprehension



A. Read the sentences carefully , and then circle the best answer.

1. **The main idea of the text is:**

- a. Facebook is a coin of two sides.
- b. It's dangerous to spend so many hours chatting via Facebook.
- c. Almost everyone uses facebook for different reasons

2. **The best definition of facebook could be:**

- a. Facebook is a famous international website used by many people of all ages.
- b. Facebook is a worldwide website where people can have fun and knowledge.
- c. Facebook is an international social website by which people of all ages can communicate virtually .

3. **Which piece of information is not mentioned in the text? Facebook is used to:**

- a. Be in contact with friends and far-away relatives online
- b. Advertise one's work and productions
- c. Exchange messages
- d. Share private pictures

4. **What can you do when using Facebook?**

5. **What are the positive sides of Facebook?**

6. **What are the negative sides of Facebook or another social network?**

B. Explain the following terms in relation to the text.

a. Privacy Settings:

b. Virtual Reality:

C. Now read the text again and give complete answers to these questions.

1. How can facebook be highly addictive?

2. What are the bad consequences of uploading personal data via the internet?

3. Why do users prefer facebook to other websites? Give at least two reasons.

4. Some users disguise themselves by showing up in fake personalities online. Why do you think they do that? How can users protect themselves from such fake users?

5. After reading the whole selection, does the writer seem with or against using facebook? How can you tell?

D. Match the following words to their correct meanings.

1. trustable

a. to behave as if something is true when you know that it is not

2. adjust

b. knowing that something exists

3. pretend

c. Can be believed

4. aware

d. to change something slightly, especially to make it more suitable