

# Facebook and Social Networking Security

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## Introduction

For those who are not familiar with social networking as a phenomenon, I will describe how Facebook (whose 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary is this year) works for its more than a billion active users. A social network is a platform that allows members to create and update a personal profile and then share it with other members or with the public at large. Popular social networks include Twitter, Tumblr, and Google+, and there are many others that operate regionally or by interest group. LinkedIn is a popular social network site for professionals. Social networks are ubiquitous and pervasive on the web and on mobile devices: for example, while visiting any website, you can “Like” it on Facebook without visiting Facebook.com; you can “tweet” a newspaper headline without visiting Twitter.com, and you can share a photo of your latest meal with the world by simply taking a picture with your smartphone or tablet, which can automatically upload it to Instagram, Flickr, Facebook, Twitter, Imgur or any other social network(s) of your choice.

## What is Facebook?

Facebook is a dynamic electronic diary, scrapbook, communications tool and much more. When you set up an account (which is free), you have access to several main elements of the platform, including:

- **Timeline** – your online profile including your cover and profile photos (both of which are public), basic personal information including birthdate, travel plans or history, stories about yourself, activity (such as what applications you are running as a Facebook user, for example games, which you can play with other Facebook users). Once you connect with other Facebook users they become your “friends” (a misleading term), and friends can post their own observations and photos on your Timeline.
- **Pages** – as a Facebook user you have the option of creating Pages. They can look like personal Timelines but are designed to attract friends or “followers” to a particular cause, organization, business, or event. For example, as a user I can set up a page called “Courtroom Technology” and post interesting news, photos, and links to that page, hoping to attract like-minded followers.

The whole point of having a Timeline and Pages is to share your life and interests with others. There is no point to Facebook if your Timeline is not open to others, and therein lies its major privacy issue. It should also be noted that Facebook is advertising supported, and Facebook makes money by selling user information to advertisers who can target them based on the content of their Facebook posts and activities.<sup>1</sup>

One of the key security issues with Facebook is that its very popularity, and the fact that it contains so much personal information, make it an attractive target to hackers and unscrupulous marketers. There are viruses and worms designed specifically to breach Facebook security, and many companies and government organizations have banned or consider banning access to social networking through business networks.

## Privacy Settings

Your use of Facebook and all its linked applications and activities can be traced throughout your web browsing whether you are logged into Facebook or not. Depending on the default configuration of Facebook at any given time (and it changes regularly), and depending on how diligent you are at setting and managing the multitude of privacy settings available, your information may be shared with one or more of the following:

1. only yourself (i.e., not shared)
2. selected individual Facebook friends
3. all your Facebook friends (i.e. only people whose invitation you have accepted or who have accepted your invitation to connect)
4. friends of your Facebook friends
5. all Facebook users
6. anyone on the Internet

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<sup>1</sup> In 2010, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg was quoted as saying that “if he were to create Facebook again today, user information would by default be public, not private as it was for years until the company changed dramatically in December.” <http://goo.gl/v30yis>.

Maintaining your privacy on Facebook requires vigilance and attention to detail, and an understanding of how it works. The Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario has developed a helpful (but now out of date) guide to privacy settings on Facebook: <http://www.ipc.on.ca/english/Resources/Educational-Material/Educational-Material-Summary/?id=615>.

It is essential for any Facebook user concerned about privacy to read the current Facebook help files on privacy settings and tools. You can control, to a greater or lesser extent, the following items:

- when you post a comment or photo to your Timeline, you can limit sharing to friends only, or a customized list of “close friends”
- note that anyone can see whatever public information you chose to provide, including your name, profile picture, cover photo (if you uploaded one), gender, username, user ID (account number), and networks
- only you and your friends can post items on your Timeline, and you have some control over who sees your Timeline

One of the most helpful tools available is the “View As” tool, which allows you to see what your Timeline looks like to the public, to friends, or even to a specific person. This can be a big help in tailoring your privacy settings. Below is the “privacy settings and tools” screen from which most of the critical settings can be adjusted.



### Making your settings easier to find



Now your privacy, timeline, and tagging settings are closer to your account settings. The setting for who can friend you is next to your friend requests, and your new inbox filters are right where you check your messages. Dig into the details.

## Privacy Settings and Tools

<b>Who can see my stuff?</b>	Who can see your future posts?	<b>Friends</b>	<a href="#">Edit</a>
	Review all your posts and things you're tagged in		<a href="#">Use Activity Log</a>
	Limit the audience for posts you've shared with friends of friends or Public?		<a href="#">Limit Past Posts</a>
<b>Who can contact me?</b>	Who can send you friend requests?	<b>Everyone</b>	<a href="#">Edit</a>
	Who can send you Facebook messages?	<b>Friends of Friends</b>	<a href="#">Edit</a>
<b>Who can look me up?</b>	Who can look you up using the email address you provided?	<b>Friends</b>	<a href="#">Edit</a>
	Who can look you up using the phone number you provided?	<b>Friends</b>	<a href="#">Edit</a>
	Who can look up your timeline by name?	<b>Friends</b>	<a href="#">Edit</a>
	Do you want other search engines to link to your timeline?	<b>Off</b>	<a href="#">Edit</a>

## Friends

If you think of it, there is a great convenience in posting a message on your Timeline say, that you won the lottery, rather than emailing each of your contacts in a mass email or one by one. So, you enter “I just won the lottery” as a status update, and all your friends are notified at once. At the same time, however, because of the openness of the network, this type of announcement could also attract unwanted attention.

Part of the concern with Facebook lies in the definition of “friend”. A Facebook friend is merely someone with whom you have chosen to share certain information about yourself, and about your other friends. A woman complained bitterly about her boss on Facebook, not remembering that her boss was a “friend”. The “friend” ended up firing her:



Be careful who your fiends are

## Applications

One of the key privacy issues with Facebook is the integration of third party applications. This is the feature that inspired Canada's Privacy Commissioner to successfully negotiate changes in Facebook's approach.<sup>2</sup> The concern of the Privacy Commissioner was that Facebook shares personal information with the providers of applications, without sufficient controls on what is shared or how it is managed.

How do applications work? You can run many applications through Facebook ("apps"). Games and music are popular application types. Rather than playing Scrabble on your iPad by yourself, why not invite a Facebook friend to join you? Apps, which are developed by third parties and approved by Facebook, are given access to your friend list, as well as to your public information. When you add an app, it is by default given certain rights with respect to your account. For example an app might be able to make posts to your Timeline on your behalf, or invite your friends to play a game without your knowledge. Before adding any app to your Facebook account, you should carefully review what permissions it seeks, and adjust permissions if possible using the app settings function.

## Twitter

Twitter, which has been used in Canadian trials on a live or real time basis, is hugely popular, with almost 650 million active users publishing some 58 million tweets daily. It is public forum for issuing short web log ("blog") entries, an online diary. As a child, I had a diary and one of the things that differentiated my diary from any other notebook was the lock and key that protected

<sup>2</sup> See "Facebook agrees to address Privacy Commissioner's concerns," August 27, 2009, [http://www.priv.gc.ca/media/nr-c/2009/nr-c\\_090827\\_e.cfm](http://www.priv.gc.ca/media/nr-c/2009/nr-c_090827_e.cfm).

its contents. Today's diaries are not only public, but broadcast to the world through news feeds and search engines. Why use Twitter?

Twitter allows members to keep their followers posted on what is new to a maximum of 140 characters per entry or "tweet". If you want to know what Harry is up to, you follow him – which is like being a friend on Facebook or a connection on LinkedIn. When you go to Twitter you can see all the tweets, search for any text or person, and choose to follow anyone, and see if you yourself are being followed.

Twitter is not just for finding out when someone is having a nap or going to a restaurant. It is a powerful source of breaking news, current awareness, political and consumer activism, worldwide. It provides a constant stream of professional and amateur views on any range of subjects, including many about law and justice.

Here is what my Twitter page looks like to the public:

The screenshot displays the Twitter profile of Martin Felsky (@mfelsky). The profile header includes a profile picture, the name 'Martin Felsky', the handle '@mfelsky', and a bio: 'Law, technology, literature, photography and Hawaii, but not in that order. Canada · felsky.com'. Below the bio are statistics: 667 TWEETS, 202 FOLLOWING, and 201 FOLLOWERS, along with a 'Follow' button.

The 'Tweets' section shows several recent posts:

- Jan 13:** Martin Felsky (@mfelsky) mentions @thurrott, @CanLawMag, and @DanPinnington, stating: 'Wearing my Google Glass, I give my thermostat a dirty look and it turns up the heat.' This tweet includes interaction options like 'View conversation', 'Reply', 'Retweet', 'Favorite', 'Buffer', and 'More'.
- Jan 12:** Martin Felsky (@mfelsky) writes: 'Regulator requests digital files instead of paper, allegedly without thinking through implications. goo.gl/hMi7Dr (via CTV News)'. It also includes interaction options.
- Jan 9:** David Whelan (@davidpwhelan) posts: 'Good post by @DWHoulihan on legal research commoditization bit.ly/legalRe "good enough" is affordable || via @EJWalters'. This tweet is noted as 'Retweeted by Martin Felsky' and includes interaction options.
- Jan 9:** John D. Gregory (@johndgregory) asks: 'What happens to your online assets when you are dead or disabled? Does the law need to change? slaw.ca/2014/01/09/tid...'. This tweet is also 'Retweeted by Martin Felsky' and includes interaction options.
- Jan 9:** Ralph Losey (@RalphLosey) shares: 'Interesting article on systematic random sampling by Catalyst's CEO, John Tredennick. bit.ly/1ikOyY4'. This tweet is 'Retweeted by Martin Felsky' and includes interaction options.

On the left sidebar, there are navigation links for 'Tweets', 'Following', 'Followers', 'Favorites', and 'Lists'. Below these is a 'Follow Martin Felsky' section with input fields for 'Full name', 'Email', and 'Password', and a 'Sign up' button. Further down is a 'Photos and videos' section with a grid of image thumbnails. At the bottom of the sidebar is a 'Worldwide Trends' section with a list of hashtags such as #G2BNeverSayDie, #HappyKanginDay, #TelekulakçıSuçüstüYakalanınca, #RIPTrigger, #TemasPerfectos, RIP Roger Lloyd-Pack, AsaletinRengi San Lacivert, DışMihrakParalelYolsuzluk ErdoğanSorulur, Oreo Nutella Sandwich, and AI or EI.

Like Facebook, default security and privacy settings on Twitter change regularly, and it is important to keep up to date. The security and privacy settings are available here:



**Martin Felsky**  
View my profile page

- Account >
- Security and privacy >**
- Password >
- Mobile >
- Email notifications >
- Profile >
- Design >
- Apps >
- Widgets >

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[Jobs](#) [Advertise](#) [Media](#) [Developers](#)


## Security and privacy

Change your security and privacy settings.

### Security

- Login verification**  Don't verify login requests  
 Send login verification requests to my phone  
You need to [add a phone](#) to your Twitter account to enable this feature on the web.
- Send login verification requests to the Twitter app  
Approve requests with one tap when you enroll in login verification on Twitter for iPhone or Twitter for Android. [Learn more](#)
- Password reset**  Require personal information to reset my password  
By default, you can initiate a password reset by entering only your @username. If you check this box, you will be prompted to enter your email address or phone number if you forget your password.

### Privacy

- Tweet privacy**  Protect my Tweets  
If selected, only those you approve will receive your Tweets. Your future Tweets will not be available publicly. Tweets posted previously may still be publicly visible in some places. [Learn more](#)
- Tweet location**  Add a location to my Tweets  
When you tweet with a location, Twitter stores that location. You can switch location on/off before each Tweet. [Learn more](#)
- [Delete all location information](#)
- This will delete all location information from past Tweets. This may take up to 30 minutes.
- Discoverability**  Let others find me by my email address
- Personalization**  Tailor Twitter based on my recent website visits  
[Preview](#) suggestions tailored for you (not currently available to all users). [Learn more](#) about how this works and your additional privacy controls.
- Do Not Track**    
While you have Do Not Track turned on, your visits to sites that feature Twitter are not available to personalize your experience.
- Promoted content**  Tailor ads based on information shared by ad partners.  
This lets Twitter display ads about things you've already shown interest in. [Learn more](#) about how this works and your additional privacy controls.

Save changes



Best practices for Twitter security are:

1. Set a strong password and change it regularly
2. Consider setting up two factor authentication
3. Protect your tweets (i.e. from public) if you wish
4. Turn off the location setting to your tweets (otherwise when you post from a mobile device, your location is included automatically)
5. Do not let others find you by phone number or email
6. Uncheck “tailor ads based on information shared by ad partners”
7. Enable “do not track” (otherwise websites with a twitter button can track you)
8. Profile – keep your bio as impersonal as possible
9. Keep your profile location very general or vague – I use “Canada”
10. Check the apps list occasionally, and if you don’t recognize an app, revoke its access to your Twitter account
11. Check the list of widgets, and don’t use any unless you know exactly what you are doing

## Should I Use Facebook?

Privacy and security aside, there are ethical issues about judicial use of Facebook and social media, and a lot has been written about the appropriateness of judges connecting with lawyers, for example, or expressing personal views publicly. For more information, see Social Media and the Courts,<sup>3</sup> “Should judges disclose Facebook friends?”<sup>4</sup> Tweet Justice: Should judges be using social media?”<sup>5</sup> “Florida Supreme Court To Decide Who Judges Can ‘Friend’ On Facebook”<sup>6</sup> and many others.

Facebook is not only for the young or the hip. It can also be quite enjoyable for a judge who wants to connect with family members, see photos of children or grandchildren and keep up with classmates from high school. But Facebook must be used with caution. One of the key dangers of Facebook is that while you have a fair bit of control over your own account, you have very little control over what others say or do. For example, people can upload a photograph of you and then tag it so your name is searchable. (Unless you take steps to stop it – if you can figure out how). Another danger is hacking. People do hack into Facebook and so the information that you thought was shared only by your carefully selected group of insiders is now in the hands of an attacker.

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<sup>3</sup> National Center for State Courts, <http://www.ncsc.org/Topics/Media/Social-Media-and-the-Courts/State-Links.aspx?cat=Judicial%20Ethics%20Advisory%20Opinions%20on%20Social%20Media>.

<sup>4</sup> ABA Journal, [http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/should\\_judges\\_disclose\\_facebook\\_friends\\_context\\_is\\_significant\\_aba\\_ethics\\_o/](http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/should_judges_disclose_facebook_friends_context_is_significant_aba_ethics_o/).

<sup>5</sup> Slate, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/jurisprudence/2010/04/tweet\\_justice.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2010/04/tweet_justice.html).

<sup>6</sup> Huffington Post, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/05/judge-florida-facebook\\_n\\_2619612.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/05/judge-florida-facebook_n_2619612.html).

To some extent judges in Canada already have a social network – it’s called JUDICOM. Though it lacks many of the features commonly associated with social networks, it is a community billboard, post office and best of all it is private and restricted membership. Even on JUDICOM you must be cautious about what you say!