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1

Introducing Facebook

*Facebook was launched in
2004, and it is now the
world's most popular social
network.*

- 8** What is Facebook?
- 10** Facebook's key features
- 12** Where Facebook is heading
- 14** Who is Mark Zuckerberg?



You must be aged 13 and over if you want to sign up to Facebook.

What is Facebook?

You will have heard a lot about Facebook in day-to-day conversation, on television and in the news. It may even be the reason why you have picked up this book. But if you are still unsure what Facebook is and what it does, then you are not as alone as you may think.

Although Facebook has close to two billion active monthly users, its large and fast growth over the past decade or so means it has become different things to different people. At its heart, though, Facebook is an online social network, and it allows people to connect with friends old and new.

By signing up, you can share your experiences and thoughts, and hear those of others. You can post funny stories, photos, videos and web links. You can invite people to events and groups; buy and sell items; play games; and host video chats, too. It makes keeping in touch easier than it has ever been.



In many ways, Facebook is like a large, virtual room packed with people whose company you enjoy, and it is a great reflection of life. Indeed, the more friends you connect with, the more enjoyable and useful Facebook becomes. Once you've joined in the fun, you're likely to become hooked very quickly.

You can use Facebook on:

- **A computer:** Visit **facebook.com**
- **A mobile phone:** There are apps available for the most popular platforms.
- **A tablet:** Again, you can install apps for many such devices.
- **Your television:** There are apps available for the likes of Apple TV, allowing you to use parts of Facebook's service.

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Facebook's origins

Facebook was invented by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg and three of his classmates, Andrew McCollum, Chris Hughes and Dustin Moskovitz.



It launched on February 4, 2004 as thefacebook.com with the intention of connecting students around his university campus, and it instantly proved to be popular.

The early network allowed users to create a customized profile. Visitors to those profiles could read anything someone had posted and they could also leave messages. This struck a chord with users, who enjoyed the social aspect of the site. Within months, it was being used by students at other US universities too, and by October 2005 it had found its way to the UK as it expanded to colleges and high schools worldwide. Soon, employees at a select number of companies were also invited to join. Momentum was building fast.

Facebook eventually opened to the general public on September 26, 2006. In that same month a News Feed was introduced, and Facebook truly came into its own. The News Feed showed users a list of their friends' activity on the site, allowing for an at-a-glance view of what their connections were up to. It is a feature that remains central to Facebook today, and it has proven to be a crucial component to the network's success.

Since then lots of other features have been added, including Messenger, live streaming, and the ability to make video calls.

All of this has allowed Facebook to become one of the world's largest internet companies. As if to show Facebook's increased worth, Microsoft snapped up a 1.6 per cent share in 2007; a move which valued the company at \$15 billion. Analysts say it could one day be worth as much as \$1 trillion.

Facebook's key features

When you start using Facebook, you soon realize just how vast and feature-packed it is. It goes beyond simply connecting with your friends and acquaintances, even though it is packed with all the tools you need to find and hook up with others. Facebook also allows you to:

Share photos and videos

Whether you want to share a photo or video you have previously taken, or whether you wish to snap a new image or record fresh footage, Facebook lets you share the results. If the photo contains someone you know, you can associate them with the image in a process known as tagging. You can also create albums and use images to personalize your profile.

Set up and join Pages and Groups

Groups are a perfect way of bringing people together. Perhaps you are part of a football team or you run a society. Maybe you want to host



a reunion or work with others on a fundraising drive. By setting up a Group or joining one which already exists, you can get involved in discussions, kick around some ideas and collaborate with others. If, however, you want to promote a business, a cause or community association, you can set up a Page that anyone can follow. You can then keep them informed of the latest goings-on.

Keep on top of events

Quite aside from being tipped off when it's a friend's birthday, Facebook allows you to send and receive invites to specific events. As well as allowing event hosts to spread the word about an event via posts, photos and videos, it's possible to discover who can and can't attend. Facebook users can also be shown how to buy tickets.

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Create a live broadcast

With Facebook Live, you can stream video footage from wherever you may be to the entire world if you wish. Available on both mobiles and via a webcam on your computer, it has become popular among celebrities, journalists, and anyone who wants to do a quick and sometimes compelling “piece to camera”.

Take messaging to another level

Sure, you can use the messaging service built into your phone, but Facebook Messenger is not only convenient; it lets you contact people even if you don't have their phone number. See who is currently available, create group chats, and even engage with people direct via voice and video calls.

Challenge friends to a game

Messenger also comes with the bonus of being able to play lots of different games with a friend. You can choose from retro classics such as Pac-Man and Space Invaders, or opt to play the likes of Solitaire and Words With Friends. Try to beat their high scores.



Buy and sell items

If you have any items that you need to get rid of or if there is a something that you would love to buy, you can make good use of Facebook's Marketplace. With no fees and the ability to sell to your local community, the service gives you the tools to make and save money. It won't take up much of your time either, since the listings are both quick to create and read.

Catch the latest news

Lots of top news broadcasters and newspapers have Facebook accounts, and they regularly post links to their top stories. Lively debates are often sparked in the comment sections of these posts, and it's a great way not only to keep abreast of the latest news but gauge the mood of the public too.



Don't be afraid of trying these Facebook services. They are all free.

Where Facebook is heading

Facebook is continuing to innovate, ensuring that it will not stand still at any point in the near future. We know this because each year the company holds its F8 developer conference, where it outlines the technology that it is working on.

By getting to grips with Facebook today, you'll be in a position to enjoy whatever Facebook brings tomorrow. Here are some features to look forward to:

An augmented future

It has become clear that Facebook is betting big on augmented reality. This means it will look to enhance the camera on your phone and tablet by superimposing more and more data over the image you see when viewing the world through the lens of your device. Facebook says you'll be able to read restaurant reviews simply by hovering your phone in front of the building or enjoy games layered upon your real-life environment. You will even be able to leave digital objects in the augmented world that could be viewed and enjoyed by others.

A digital version of you

You may have heard of virtual reality (VR). By donning a headset that covers both of your eyes with screens, and by reacting to your head movements, you can be transported into a virtual world that is ready to be explored. Facebook bought VR specialists Oculus Rift for a total of \$2 billion, and it is working on an app called Facebook Spaces. It lets a fake cartoon-like representation of you (called an avatar) interact with others in a virtual world.



Rise of the bots

We are already seeing the use of bots: software applications programmed to automatically perform tasks over the internet. You can chat with them in Messenger and be easily fooled into believing you are conversing with a real person. But because they

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can be used to help you with your everyday tasks, and since they can second guess what you may want (some movie times, for instance), Facebook says you will be seeing a lot more of them.

Less fake news and clickbait

Fake news has become the scourge of social media. It happens when people deliberately create and share information they know to be false. It can be a misleading image, or an entire news article from a rogue website. Sometimes it can be spread by traditional media, and it is often sensationalist since it seeks to influence opinion and get you to click. Fake election news is said to have had an effect on the US presidential elections of 2016.

Facebook now has systems in place to help reduce the amount of fake news shared on its platform. It wants users to report articles that can then be independently checked. At the same time, it is using advanced algorithms to look out for exaggerated information in headlines and for signs that details are being deliberately withheld in order to encourage readers to click to find out more. The upshot is that what you read on Facebook should be much closer to the truth. You'll still have to exercise your own judgment, but it's certainly a step in the right direction.

Privacy and security

Not only does Facebook ask for personal information such as your date of birth and what you like and don't like; the social network also encourages you to share details about your life. As such, many people have raised concerns about privacy and security, and you will sometimes see articles about this in the news.

Back in 2010, Mark Zuckerberg said privacy was no longer "a social norm" and that people have become used to openly sharing information. It is true that the rise of services such as Facebook and Twitter have shifted the boundaries somewhat, yet there has also been a move towards social media that offer greater privacy and security. The likes of WhatsApp and Snapchat use technology such as end-to-end encryption and disappearing messages. These are likely to become more commonplace.

Who is Mark Zuckerberg?

As we mentioned on page 9, Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook with the help of three classmates when he was a student at Harvard University. But he has arguably grown just as fast as the social network he created. Today he is the chairman and chief executive officer of the company, and he is said to be worth an estimated \$58.6 billion. That makes him the fifth richest person in the world.



Zuckerberg's early days

Zuckerberg was born on May 14, 1984 in White Plains, New York, and he began programming computers in middle school. By the time he went to university, he had produced a program that allowed computers to communicate with each other called ZuckNet, as well as games and a media player.

Creating Facemash

In 2003, while at Harvard, he created a version of Am I Hot or Not? called Facemash. It compared many pairs of student faces and asked the user to decide who was the most stunning. Although it got him into some hot water and was pulled, it encouraged him to move on to different projects. He devoted much of his time to creating Facebook instead, eventually moving to Palo Alto, California, which is the heart of Silicon Valley.

The rise of Facebook and Zuckerberg

Zuckerberg has had many opportunities to sell Facebook but he has always turned them down, once being quoted as saying his aim was “making the world open”. His efforts have seen him meeting many presidents and prime ministers as he seeks to get people communicating the world over, and he has become very well known both in and outside tech circles. He voiced himself in an episode of *The Simpsons* and there has also been a movie based on his founding Facebook years, called *The Social Network*.

Zuckerberg's generosity

In 2010, Zuckerberg signed The Giving Pledge, promising that he would, over time, give half of his wealth to charity. On top of that, he has handed far in excess of \$1 billion to good causes and he is keen to help stamp out disease.