

Social Networking Safety

Social networking is changing the way we initiate social interaction. The upside is students can provide a lot of information about themselves to share with others quickly; the downside is students provide a lot of information about themselves.

Unfortunately social networking has made it too easy to stalk, harass, or bully potential victims. The key to safely interacting within a social network environment is to take some simple precautionary measures. Unfortunately many are oblivious to the fact that by posting so much personal data, they are placing themselves at risk.

- Use privacy settings to determine who can view your profile and contact information. A large number of students allow anyone to view their site, which is a big mistake. Limit to individuals listed as friends.
- Never give out your password. To anyone!
- Do not provide personal information such as social security number, phone number, address, birth date, place of employment or any place that you could easily be singled out.
- Do not provide any links on your website that would provide the aforementioned information.
- Do not use your main e-mail account. Facebook requires you to use your college e-mail address ending in .edu, but other sites permit any e-mail address. You should use a free e-mail service; for example, hotmail or yahoo.
- Do not show inappropriate pictures; nudity, sexual activity, intoxication, drug use or better yet don't show any pictures to the general public. You can share pictures with subscribers after you've accepted them as friends. It should be noted that the display of inappropriate pictures may lead to criminal or civil liability.
- Don't believe everything you read. If that guy or girl sounds too good to be real, he/she probably isn't. It may merely be someone trying to make them self more appealing, or you may have come in contact with a predator.
- If you decide you want to meet someone you've met online begin by talking to them on the phone.

Never meet someone you don't know without taking a friend and meet in a public place. If you ever feel like you're in real danger from someone online, let someone know and then contact University Police at 437-8444. Keep the message, not just a printout. Police will need the actual electronic message to trace the sender or poster.

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