

Social Networks

Samples of What - Not - To Share



1: Anything You Don't Want Shared

You can select all the privacy settings you want on social networking sites, but the fact is, if you post it, it has the potential to be seen by someone you don't want seeing it. You know all those fun [REDACTED] applications, quizzes and polls you can't help but fill out? A study performed by the [REDACTED] found that of the top 150 applications on [REDACTED], 90 percent were given access to information they didn't need in order for the app to function. So when you sign up to find out what sitcom star you most identify with, the makers of that poll now have access to your personal information. It's anybody's guess where it goes from there. Social networking is all about sharing, so something you think is in confidence can easily be shared and then shared again, and before you know it, someone you don't even know has access to something private. "When in doubt, leave it out" is a good motto to follow. And always remember that anything you share has the potential to be leaked in some way.

2: Password Hints

Most Web sites that contain secure personal information require a password also have at least one password hint in case you forget. It typically goes like this: You sign up for something like online banking and you get a login and password and then choose a security question for when you forget your password. What's the name of your first pet? What's your mother's maiden name? What was your high school mascot? What's the name of the first street you lived on? Including any of these details on a [REDACTED] wall or status update may not seem like a big deal, but it could provide an identity thief with the last piece of the puzzle needed to hack into your bank account. Think before you post anything that could compromise this information.

3: Your Password

This one really seems like a no-brainer, but if it didn't happen, then [REDACTED] probably wouldn't feel the need to list it in the No. 1 slot on its list of things you shouldn't share. Even sharing the password with a friend so he or she can log on and check something for you can be a risk. This is especially true with couples who feel like there's enough trust to share these kinds of things. Here's another scenario for you: You give your boyfriend your [REDACTED] password because he wants to help you upload some vacation photos. A couple of months later, the relationship sours, he turns into a not-so-nice guy and then there's a person out there who doesn't like you and has your login information. Time to cancel your account and get a new one. If you'd have kept that information private to begin with, you could simply move on with your life. Now you have a compromised profile, and if you link to other sites or profiles, all that information is at risk as well. Keep your password to yourself, no matter what, and you never have to worry about it.

4: Personal Finance Information

You would think that nobody would share things like where they do their banking or what their stock portfolio looks like, but it happens. Especially with all the headlines of banks going bankrupt and stock prices plummeting during the [REDACTED] recession, it's easy for an innocent [REDACTED] comment to reveal too much about your personal finances. Consider this scenario: You're posting to a long thread on a friend's wall about the bank crisis. You say something along the lines of, "We don't need to worry because we bank with a teacher's credit union," or even, "We put all our money into blue chip stocks and plan to ride it out." Again, if you're one of the 40 percent who allow open access to your profile, then suddenly identity thieves know where you bank and where you have the bulk of your investments. It's easy to forget that what may seem like a harmless comment on a [REDACTED] wall could reveal a great deal about your personal finances. It's best to avoid that kind of talk altogether.

5: Your Address and Phone Number

File this one under security risk. If you share your address and phone number on a social networking site, you open yourself up to threats of identity theft and other personal dangers like burglaries. If you post that you're going on vacation and you have your address posted, then everyone knows you have an empty house. Identity thieves could pay a visit to your mailbox and open up a credit card in your name. Burglars could rid your home of anything of value. Even just posting your phone number gives people with Internet savvy easy access to your address. Reverse lookup services can supply anyone with your home address if you can provide the phone number.

6: Photos of Your Kids

Social networking sites are a common place for people to share pictures of their families, but if you're one of the 40 percent of users who don't restrict access to your profile, then those pictures are there for everyone to see. It's a sad fact, but there are a lot of predators who use the Internet to stalk their prey. If you post pictures of your family and couple that with information like, "my husband is out of town this weekend" or "little Johnny is old enough to stay at home by himself now," then your children's safety could be at risk. Nobody ever thinks it will happen to them until it does, so safety first is a good default mode when using social networking sites. Just like with other private matters, send family photos only to a select group of trusted friends and colleagues who you know won't share them.

7: Company Information

You may be dying to tell the world about your new work promotion, but if it's news that could be advantageous to one of your company's competitors, then it's not something you should share. News of a planned expansion or a big project role and anything else about your workplace should be kept private.

███████████, a security software company, found that 63 percent of companies were afraid of what their employees were choosing to share on social networking sites. If you want to message it out, be selective and send private e-mails. Many companies are so serious about not being included in social networking sites that they forbid employees from using sites like ██████████ at work. Some IT departments even filter the URLs and block access to these sites altogether so employees aren't tempted to log on.

8: Linking Sites

With 51 percent of social network users taking advantage of more than one site, there's bound to be some crossover from one to the other, especially if you have the sites linked. You may post something you find innocuous on ██████████, but then it's linked to your ██████████ work profile and you've put your job at risk. If you link your various profiles together, be aware that what you post in one world is available to the others. In ██████████, a case of an employee caught lying on ██████████ hit the news. The employee asked off for a weekend shift because he was ill and then posted pictures on his ██████████ profile of himself at a party that same weekend. The news got back to his employer easily enough and he was fired. So if you choose to link your profiles, it's no longer a "personal life" and "work life" scenario.

9: Social Plans

Sharing your social plans for everybody to see isn't a good idea. Unless you're planning a big party and inviting all the users you're connected to, it will only make your other friends feel left out. There are also some security issues at stake here. Imagine a scenario where a jealous ex-boyfriend knows that you're meeting a new date out that night. What's to keep the ex from showing up and causing a scene or even potentially getting upset or violent? Nothing, that's what. If you're planning a party or an outing with a group of friends, send a personal "e-vite" for their eyes only and nobody is the wiser. If you're trying to cast a wide net by throwing out an idea for a social outing, just remember that anyone who has access to your profile sees it.

10: Personal Conversations

On ██████████, users can send personal messages or post notes, images or videos to another user's wall. The wall is there for all to see, while messages are between the sender and the receiver, just like an e-mail. Personal and private matters should never be shared on your wall. You wouldn't go around with a bullhorn announcing a private issue to the world, and the same thing goes on the Internet. This falls under the nebulous world of social networking etiquette. There is no official handbook for this sort of thing, but use your best judgment. If it's not something you'd feel comfortable sharing in person with extended family, acquaintances, work colleagues or strangers, then you shouldn't share it on your ██████████ wall.

Or Better Yet, Ask Yourself This Question. Will My Post Effect Possible Employment / Other?

Think About Your Social Networking Pre and Post Hired

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