

Willie's Wonkey Computer Factory

Facebook is a social networking site that allows you to make friends, find friends and share just about anything with anyone. For kids 'Facebook' is an essential part of their life. For parents it's yet another computer screen that doesn't make sense and looks more complicated than the time you have to learn will allow? Not so, one reason why it's so popular is because it's just very easy to use. Adding friends, updating your profile, changing your status message - whatever you do takes just minutes.

To get started, go to www.facebook.com click "Register" and fill out a short online form. Once you're signed up, you will need to build up a profile of yourself. Beside your profile, you can also include photos. It's entirely up to you how much information that you want to be included. Just make sure you include a picture of yourself for your profile - after all it's Facebook and not 'No-Facebook'! Not having a picture of yourself annoys other Facebook users. How are they supposed to know if you're the person with that name if you don't have a picture? So make the effort to upload a clear picture of yourself on the profile page.

Immediately after you sign up and upload a profile picture, go to your security settings and decide how secure you want your Facebook profile to be. Hit the My Privacy tab and get familiar with the options. Limited profile viewing, what can be seen by your friends, what can be seen by everyone – familiarize yourself or don't panic later when a compromising picture of you appears elsewhere on the internet!!

You'll find a lot of 'groups' on Facebook and you should join any that are of interest to you. If you're going to start a group, make sure one doesn't already exist for the same topic, be original or bow down to the person who thought of it first.

For kids - Creating Events - is one of the coolest features. You can create an event, invite who you want, make it public or make it private, Public events are the ones that make 'News at Ten' when some poor couple on holiday in Tenerife get their house trashed by 100 teenagers gatecrashing their daughters party! So be very careful what goes 'public' - it doesn't all go bad though, you can use this to get support for a fundraiser or other charity event. Under the My Events tab, you can also view past events as well as friend's public events.

Now that you have a Facebook account, connecting with people is easy. You can start by using the friend invite feature to broadcast your Facebook invites to all your friends as Facebook supports all popular email providers like Yahoo and Gmail. You can also use the search feature to find friends who are already using Facebook and request to be their friend. You can add just about anyone you can think of. I'm sure many of you will be able to discover and locate your long lost friends or schoolmates. It's also an avenue for them to discover you too.

Once you get started you can upload pictures, video etc and there's a message board called the 'Wall' for leaving messages for others to see.

Go try it, keep safe by not giving home addresses or phone numbers and you will be amazed who is on there, but be warned it is VERY addictive and your kids will moan about not getting on the computer! (then have them teach you everything else facebook can do!)

Willie