

Facebook Safety – Parents Guide

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Introduction

This document is for the purpose of equipping parents with the information necessary to understand the risks of Facebook and how to use Facebook.

Facebook, the New Diary

Students don't write notes in class or keep diaries as much anymore, instead they use Facebook for their social interactions. Facebook has taken off as one of the most popular websites by teenagers. The area of concern with Facebook is the same concern that your parents had with you passing notes and writing in your diary. "What is my child really saying and doing when I'm not around?"

How to Use Facebook

This is a complex question because Facebook has so much to offer. I would encourage you to create your own account and play around with all of the applications that are available to you. Also, Expert Village offers videos that walk you through how each of the applications work. This site can be found at http://www.expertvillage.com/video-series/1261_Facebook-use.htm. *Note that there is an underscore in the website address.

Levels of Accountability

You have multiple options of keeping your child accountable when it comes to Facebook use.

- **Over the Shoulder** – This is when you simply stand over your child's shoulder when they use Facebook. This has its weakness however, especially if there is more than one computer in the house or if the child has his own computer. While a good over the shoulder look is good to make your student aware that you are watching, I don't believe that it is the best method of keeping your child accountable.
- **Be My Friend** – Another level of accountability is to create your own account and *make* your child be your friend. This would give you general access to what your child is doing and what others are saying to your child, but this doesn't give you full access. Your child can block your access to certain areas and there are other areas that are automatically blocked from others. For example, Messages can be sent from one group/person and never be seen by anyone outside of that group/person.
- **Give Me Your Password** – The best way to monitor all that is going on is to simply have the username and password of your student. This is the only way to have complete access. It is important that you know where to look, that is why the videos from Expert Village would be handy. This is by far the best way to keep your child accountable.

Saddens Me

This may sound bad at first, but I hope you will hear me out. One of the things that I *almost* wish that I wouldn't have done was create a Facebook page. The reason why I say that is because it saddens me what many of these students will say at church and then what they say to their friends. It is a sobering experience. In reality, I am glad that I created a Facebook page, but it has not been easy to know when to say something to a student who is deliberately saying or doing things that are not what God would want from them.

So here you are. It may not be easy to learn how to use Facebook or you might think that you are jeopardizing your child's trust, but it is the duty of a parent to protect and guide his/her child. You might discover some things that you don't want to see, but your child will be better off because of your involvement in the end.