



Facebook's Eroding Privacy Policy: A Timeline

Since its incorporation just over five years ago, Facebook has undergone a remarkable transformation. When it started, it was a private space for communication with a group of your choice. Soon, it transformed into a platform where much of your information is public by default. Today, it has become a platform where you have no choice but to make certain information public, and [this public information may be shared](#) by Facebook with its partner websites and used to [target ads](#).

To help illustrate Facebook's shift away from privacy, we have highlighted some excerpts from Facebook's privacy policies over the years. Watch closely as your privacy disappears, one small change at a time!

Facebook Privacy Policy circa [2005](#):

No personal information that you submit to Thefacebook will be available to any user of the Web Site who does not belong to at least one of the groups specified by you in your privacy settings.

Facebook Privacy Policy circa [2006](#):

We understand you may not want everyone in the world to have the information you share on Facebook; that is why we give you control of your information. Our default privacy settings limit the information displayed in your profile to your school, your specified local area, and other reasonable community limitations that we tell you about.

Facebook Privacy Policy circa [2007](#):

Profile information you submit to Facebook will be available to users of Facebook who belong to at least one of the networks you allow to access the information through your privacy settings (e.g., school, geography, friends of friends). Your name, school name, and profile picture thumbnail will be available in search results across the Facebook network unless you alter your privacy settings.

Facebook Privacy Policy circa [November 2009](#):

Facebook is designed to make it easy for you to share your information with anyone you want. You decide how much information you feel comfortable sharing on Facebook and you control how it is distributed through your privacy settings. You should review the default privacy settings and change them if necessary to reflect your preferences. You should also consider your settings whenever you share information. ...

Information set to “everyone” is publicly available information, may be accessed by everyone on the Internet (including people not logged into Facebook), is subject to indexing by third party search engines, may be associated with you outside of Facebook (such as when you visit other sites on the internet), and may be imported and exported by us and others without privacy limitations. The default privacy setting for certain types of information you post on Facebook is set to “everyone.” You can review and change the default settings in your privacy settings.

Facebook Privacy Policy circa [December 2009](#):

Certain categories of information such as your name, profile photo, list of friends and [pages you are a fan of](#), gender, geographic region, and networks you belong to are considered publicly available to everyone, including Facebook-enhanced applications, and therefore do not have privacy settings. You can, however, limit the ability of others to find this information through search using your search privacy settings.

Current Facebook Privacy Policy, as of [April 2010](#):

When you connect with an application or website it will have access to General Information about you. The term General Information includes your and your friends' names, profile pictures, gender, user IDs, [connections](#), and any content shared using the Everyone privacy setting. ... The default privacy setting for certain types of information you post on Facebook is set to "everyone." ... Because it takes two to connect, your privacy settings only control who can see the connection on your profile page. If you are uncomfortable with the connection being publicly available, you should consider removing (or not making) the connection.

Viewed together, the successive policies tell a clear story. Facebook originally earned its core base of users by offering them simple and powerful controls over their personal information. As Facebook grew larger and became more important, it could have chosen to maintain or improve those controls. Instead, it's slowly but surely helped itself — and its advertising and business partners — to more and more of its users' information, while limiting the users' options to control their own information.

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