



# A Complete Guide to Staying Private on Facebook

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## 1. Introduction

In an era where digital footprints are permanent and data is a valuable commodity, maintaining privacy on social media platforms like Facebook is essential. With over 2.9 billion active users, Facebook is a prime target for advertisers, hackers, and even social engineers. Despite this, most users remain unaware of the platform's intricate privacy controls. This guide will walk you through everything you need to know to stay private on Facebook, formatted in a step-by-step instructional style for ease of implementation.

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## 2. Why Facebook Privacy Matters

Your Facebook activity paints a detailed picture of your life—where you live, what you like, who your friends are, and what you do in your spare time. Left unchecked, this information can be exploited in various ways:



- **Identity theft:** Malicious actors can use personal information to impersonate you.
- **Social engineering:** Scammers craft targeted attacks using details from your profile.
- **Data monetization:** Facebook and third-party apps track your behavior to serve targeted ads.
- **Reputation risk:** Embarrassing or controversial content can affect your personal or professional life.

Protecting your privacy on Facebook is not about hiding—it's about controlling your digital narrative.

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### 3. Step-by-Step Guide to Facebook Privacy Settings

#### 3.1 Adjusting Your Profile Visibility

**Steps:**

1. Go to your Facebook profile.
2. Click on the "About" section.
3. For each field (e.g., Work, Education, City, Contact Info), click the edit icon.
4. Select who can see the information (Public, Friends, Only Me, or Custom).

**Recommendation:** Set sensitive info (email, phone number, address) to "Only Me."

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#### 3.2 Controlling Who Can Contact You

**Steps:**

1. Click the down arrow (top right) > Settings & Privacy > Settings.
2. Go to "Privacy."
3. Under "How people find and contact you":
  - Who can send you friend requests? (Change to "Friends of Friends")
  - Who can look you up using your email/phone? (Set to "Only Me")
  - Do you want search engines to link to your profile? (Turn off)

**Tip:** Limiting who can contact you reduces the risk of spam and phishing attempts.



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### 3.3 Managing Friend Requests

#### Steps:

1. Navigate to the "Privacy" section.
2. Under "Who can send you friend requests?" select "Friends of Friends."

**Advice:** Avoid accepting requests from unknown individuals. Check for suspicious or duplicate profiles.

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### 3.4 Limiting Past Posts

#### Steps:

1. Go to Settings > Privacy.
2. Under "Your Activity," click "Limit Past Posts."
3. Confirm to change all past public posts to "Friends."

**Bonus:** Manually review your Activity Log to delete or hide specific posts.

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### 3.5 Customizing Your Timeline and Tagging Options

#### Steps:

1. Go to Settings > Profile and Tagging.
2. Adjust the following settings:
  - Who can post on your timeline? (Set to "Only Me" or "Friends")
  - Who can see posts you're tagged in? (Use "Only Me" or "Friends Except...")
  - Review tags before they appear? (Turn on "Review posts you're tagged in")

**Pro Tip:** This prevents unwanted posts from appearing on your timeline.

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### 3.6 Reviewing Apps and Websites

#### Steps:

1. Go to Settings > Apps and Websites.



2. Review active apps and websites linked to your account.
3. Remove access to any you no longer use or trust.

**Warning:** Third-party apps often harvest more data than they need.

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### 3.7 Controlling Ad Preferences

**Steps:**

1. Go to Settings > Ads > Ad Settings.
2. Turn off “Ads based on data from partners.”
3. Turn off “Ads based on your activity on Facebook Company Products.”
4. Turn off “Ads that include your social actions.”

**Insight:** Disabling these features reduces targeted advertising based on your off-Facebook activity.

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### 3.8 Two-Factor Authentication and Login Alerts

**Steps:**

1. Go to Settings > Security and Login.
2. Enable Two-Factor Authentication (2FA).
3. Choose a secure method (e.g., authenticator app).
4. Turn on login alerts to receive notifications for unrecognized logins.

**Security Tip:** This is your best defense against unauthorized account access.

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## 4. Best Practices for Ongoing Privacy

- **Use strong, unique passwords** and change them periodically.
  - **Avoid public Wi-Fi** when logging into Facebook.
  - **Do not overshare** on your timeline or in Facebook groups.
  - **Regularly audit your friends list** and privacy settings.
  - **Limit location sharing** in posts and via the Facebook app.
  - **Log out of sessions** on shared or public devices.
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## 5. Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them



Mistake	Risk	Solution
Accepting friend requests from strangers	Scams, data scraping	Only accept known contacts
Using Facebook to log into other apps	Cross-platform data exposure	Use email/password combos instead
Not reviewing tagged content	Embarrassment, exposure	Enable timeline review
Sharing sensitive updates (e.g., travel plans)	Burglary, stalking	Keep updates vague or private
Ignoring privacy checkups	Data leak	Run regular privacy audits

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## 6. Tools and Resources

- **Facebook Privacy Checkup Tool:** Guides you through key settings.
  - **Digital Security Tools:**
    - *Have I Been Pwned?*: Check if your data has been leaked.
    - *Password Managers*: Bitwarden, LastPass, 1Password
  - **Educational Resources:**
    - Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF)
    - Privacy Rights Clearinghouse
    - Facebook Help Center
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## 7. Conclusion

Staying private on Facebook requires more than a one-time settings change—it's an ongoing commitment. By following this structured guide, you can drastically reduce your digital exposure, protect your identity, and use the platform more securely. In an age where data is currency, taking control of your Facebook privacy is not just smart—it's necessary.

Take the time to audit your profile today. Future you will thank you.

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