

Social Media Etiquette and Privacy
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This is one of a series of articles provided by the Oakmont Technology Learning Center on the use of technology by seniors.

There are many social media sites, but two of the most-used in Oakmont are Facebook and Nextdoor. Facebook is most often for extended family/friends who may be anywhere in the world, though there are local “groups” to join, such as Oakmont Buzz. Nextdoor is touted as one’s local neighborhood. Both apps have “groups” for special interests, and each group may have its own “rules”. Social media has upsides (communication) and downsides (security, privacy, unkindness).

Etiquette “do”: read your post before hitting “send”; comment on or promote another’s posts; consider your audience; be kind; post correct information. What you post affects your reputation.

Etiquette “don’t”: send when tired, angry, or drinking; post embarrassing photos/videos; gang up on other posts; feel obligated to “friend” or “follow” someone; post private information; over-share; post misinformation; misrepresent yourself.

It should also be noted that using social media in a browser may operate differently than in a mobile app. What to do about those people whose obnoxious posts you don’t want to see? On Facebook, friends can be “unfriended”, though this is unkind since they will eventually find out; a kinder way is to “unfollow” or “snooze for 30 days”; they remain friends but you don’t see their posts. On Nextdoor you can “mute” people and not see their posts.

Facebook privacy. Look into your privacy settings carefully. Set posts so that only friends can see them; individual posts can be made public if needed. Set friends list so that only friends can see it. We’ve all seen friend requests from someone who’s already a friend. Most people incorrectly assume they’ve been “hacked”; this is called “cloning”, where the attacker copies a profile photo, birth date, interests, and other public information on a Facebook account. By cloning, the attacker can phish friends. Keeping friends list private eliminates this risk. Beware of Facebook Messenger mobile app - it is a separate app from the Facebook mobile app and is prone to cloning too. If you don’t want people tagging you without your permission, you can set tags to be approved first. Don’t answer meme questions such as “who was your 3rd grade teacher” or “what is your favorite color” - they are phishing attempts. Consider posting vacation pics after you return home, not while you are gone.

Nextdoor privacy. Once you’ve joined Nextdoor, do **not** assume that your posts will only be seen by your neighborhood and/or region. If you Google Nextdoor <another city>, you can select neighborhoods there and see all their posts, unless they are “private” group posts. Nextdoor has 275,000 neighborhoods across 11 countries! Nextdoor makes changes all the time that make it more difficult to post/view/select neighborhoods. When posting, always select specific neighborhoods; letting it default to “anyone” posts to thousands of people in Santa Rosa and Sonoma County. Do you really want to post Oakmont “dirty laundry” to all of Sonoma County? Don’t post “need pet sitter for xx/xx/xx dates” - it lets everyone know when you will be gone. And do you really want your location (address) on your post?

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