

personal information should be guarded with the utmost care and should not be shared online.

### **Personal Safety**

Another concern is personal safety. Although most members of the community are harmless, there is not a way to prohibit individuals with malicious intent from joining the site. There's also no way to enforce honesty.

### **Your Identity--- The Bigger Picture**

Although the online community is an easy way to explore new identities, more and more employers are locating profiles on these communities to gain insight into job applicants. An image that you portrayed just for fun may end up hurting you once your college life is over.

### **SAFETY TIPS**

#### **☛ Use the Privacy Settings**

Use the privacy settings within the communities. Although most users don't want to enforce the privacy settings as they do restrict their potential network, members should enable at least some of these settings. Leaving your profile open to anyone could arm a dangerous individual with information about your age, location, regular activities, behaviors, habits, and even ways to locate you.

#### **☛ Be Careful Of Who You Approve**

Think twice before approving every request to add a friend. Remember, you have some control over who views information or interacts with you. It's wise to limit who has access to that information.

#### **☛ Watch What You Post**

Remember, anything you say or do can be

copied and posted elsewhere. Before you post text or pictures, decide if you'd want that content to be shared on the internet with the whole world? With your parents? With your hometown community? When in doubt, don't post it!

#### **☛ Think Ahead**

Understand that what you do now will have an effect down the road. Act now on behalf of the person you will be in 4 or 5 years. Maintain a self image that you can be proud of and one that wouldn't discourage a potential employer from hiring you.

#### **☛ Err On The Side Of Caution**

Harassment and inappropriate content should be reported. If ever you feel that you are in danger or even very uncomfortable by an interaction within the community, please err on the side of caution. Block individuals from accessing your site and alert the authorities if you feel it is necessary.

If at any point you feel like you are in danger, please contact the SMU Police Department:

- ① On Campus- 911
- ① Off Campus- 214-768-3333

### **RESOURCES**

The following resources were used to create this flyer and contain additional information about security and privacy information about online social communities.

- » [myspace.com](http://myspace.com)
- » [facebook.com](http://facebook.com)
- » <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3910777240176719644>
- » [chimprawk.blogspot.com](http://chimprawk.blogspot.com) (Author Fred Stutzman)



**SECURITY STARTS WITH YOU**  
SMU.EDU/INFOSEC

# Are You Safe?

The truth about your privacy and safety on

facebook  
&  
MySpace

Information provided by the Department of Budgets and Information Technology Services.  
214-768-HELP (4357)-[smu.edu/its](http://smu.edu/its)

## ABOUT FACEBOOK AND MYSPACE

Facebook and MySpace are websites providing an online social community. Both services are free and allow users to locate other people with similar interests, locations, or beliefs. These online communities allow users to share photos, blogs, and interact with other members in a non-threatening, convenient and fun environment. Users can try out new identities, express ideas and interact with various social groups which is much more difficult to accomplish in the face-to-face environment.



Over the past few years, these online communities have gained popularity at an incredible rate. As of May 2006, Facebook reports that there are 7.5 million people registered from over 2,200 colleges, 22,000 high schools and 2,000 companies. This is an enormous community. These communities are valuable and these online services are a valuable part of the college experience. However, there are security concerns that must be considered when using any of these online communities.



### WHO IS ON FACEBOOK?

Facebook.com is perhaps the most popular online community among college students. It is reported that 90% of college students have an account on Facebook and 66% of those users update or interact on Facebook regularly. Facebook is also not the largest photo sharing site on the internet with over 1.5 million photos uploaded daily. Membership on Facebook is available to anyone with a valid e-mail address from a supported college, high school or company.

### WHO'S ON MYSPACE?

As of April 2006, it was reported that 80 million profiles on MySpace and over 2 million groups. 78% of the site members are between the ages of 18 and 40. MySpace is available to anyone over the age of 14. Many students using Facebook are also using MySpace as there are slightly different features between the two services. MySpace recently developed their own Instant Messaging applications increasing the ease of communication with others.

### WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

Basically, they're just having fun. Most of the conversation, photos, content etc is posted primarily to get to know other people and make friends. In that light, most of the activ-

ity is rather harmless. Users are simply finding other people with similar interests, backgrounds, and beliefs and getting to know them online. There's a sense of security about the online communities and most users are comfortable sharing quite a lot about themselves online.

### WHAT INFORMATION IS BEING SHARED?

When you sign up for an account, certain information is required. For Facebook, name, e-mail address, Academic classification and school information is required. For MySpace, name, e-mail address, gender, birth date, zip code and country are required fields. With both services there are a range of other items that can be populated in your profile including sexual orientation, political affiliation, favorite movies and books, mobile phone number and even summer plans or income level. Both services offer various privacy settings to control who has the ability to see all of this information, but few users actually take advantage of these.

### WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

#### Privacy—Preventing Identity Theft

The most obvious concern is the privacy of the information that you post.

The privacy agreements for both communities state, "by posting Member Content to any part of the website, you automatically grant...to the Company...license to use, copy, perform, display, reformat, translate, excerpt and distribute such information." Therefore, anything that you post can be transmitted outside of the presumed privacy of the community. With the rapid increase of Identity Theft,

