

Why Social Networking?

Through social networking, people can use networks of online friends and group memberships to keep in touch with current friends, reconnect with old friends or create real-life friendships through similar interests or groups. Besides establishing important social relationships, social networking members can share their interests with other like-minded members by joining groups and forums. Some networking can also help members find a job or establish business contacts.

Most social networking websites also offer additional features. In addition to blogs and forums, members can express themselves by designing their profile page to reflect their personality. The most popular extra features include music and video sections. Members can read bios of their favorite music artists from the artist's profile page as well as listen to their favorite songs and watch music videos. The video section can include everything from member-generated videos from hundreds of subjects to TV clips and movie trailers.

What to Look for in Social Networking

The phenomenon of online social networking—made extremely popular by MySpace.com, has evolved to include more than the teenage stereotype looking to expand his/her network of online friends. People of all ages and backgrounds have discovered that they can enrich their lives through the contacts they make on a social networking website. Below are the criteria TopTenREVIEWS used to evaluate Social Networking websites.

- **Profiles-** The heart and soul of social networking sites are user's personal profiles. It's like their own Internet sanctuary, a place where they can express their thoughts and feelings, post photographs and show off their network of friends. The most popular social network websites put a strong emphasis on the user's profile, making it easy to use yet still reflective of the user's personality.
- **Security-** The Internet can be a dangerous place to post personal information. All social networks should provide the ability to set profiles to private in some way or another. Additionally they should have the ability to report and block users.
- **Networking Features** – A good social network goes above and beyond just allowing users to post profiles and update pictures. Additional features should include music sections, video uploads, groups and more.
- **Search-** The object of a social network is to find friends and expand relationships. Top social networking websites allows members to search for other members in a safe and easy to use environment. Common search functions include search by name, city, school and email address.
- **Help/Support-** Most social network sites are self-explanatory. However, in the off-chance a user needs help there needs to be some way to contact the webmaster or answers in an FAQ section.
- **Legitimate Friend Focus-** The growing trend for social networks is to communicate and keep in touch with people you already know. No one wants to be inundated with unsolicited spam friend requests. The best social network sites keep profiles and search options private enough that the only people that can find you are the ones actually looking for users in their own school or neighborhood networks. Even with a completely public profile, users shouldn't be bothered with more than a couple of unsolicited comments or messages.