

## Facebook & social networking

**Topic:** Social networking websites

**Aims:**

- To help students talk about Facebook and other social networking websites
- To develop students' reading skills
- To develop students' question formation skills
- To develop students' communication skills

**Level:** Low intermediate B1/B2

**Introduction**

How many friends have you got on Facebook? What's the friend limit on Facebook? This lesson takes a look at trends in online social networking. It gives students chance to create an imaginary online 'wall' where they can interact with each other.

**Procedure**

**Tip:** Cut out the **task 3** profiles before the lesson.

- Write *Facebook, Twitter* on the board and ask students what they know about these social networking websites. (They are the most popular international social networking websites.) Do your students know any similar websites? Are your students on Facebook? Do they know any people who are famous for social networking?
- Give students a time limit of two minutes to scan the text in **task 1** and answer the question.

**Answers task 1:** *Ivy Bean was famous for being the oldest Facebook user at the age of 102.*

**1. Read the text quickly. Why was Ivy Bean famous?**

**Friends**

Research by a British anthropologist shows that the optimum number of friendships that the human brain can maintain is about 150. But that's in the real world. What happens on Facebook where the maximum number of 'friends' permitted is 5000? According to social networking statistics, the average Facebook user has 130 friends. Some people have a lot more.

Ivy Bean from Bradford in the north of England became Facebook's oldest known user at the age of 102 in 2008. She quickly started making friends and became an online celebrity. When she maxed out her 5000 friend count on Facebook Ms. Bean joined the Twitter website and continued her social networking. At the time of her death in July 2010, she had 4,962 friends on Facebook and more than 56,000 followers (including the Prime Minister's wife) on Twitter. Ms. Bean's last tweet was July 6 2010. It read, "Going to have my lunch now will be back later."

**2. Read the text again and find these numbers. What do the numbers refer to?**

150 - *the optimum number of friendships*  
 130  
 2008  
 2010  
 5000  
 4962  
 56000

- In **task 2** students read the text again in more detail. They could work in pairs to underline the numbers and say each one refers to. You may need to explain the difference between *optimum* and *maximum*.

**Answers task 2:**

150 - *the optimum number of friendships*  
 130 – *the average Facebook user has 130 ‘friends’*  
 2008 – *Ivy Bean joined Facebook*  
 2010 – *Ivy died in 2010*  
 5000 - *the maximum number of ‘friends’ permitted on Facebook*  
 4962 – *Ivy had 4,962 friends on Facebook*  
 56000 – *Ivy had 56000 followers on Twitter*

- Tell the students to imagine that they want to join an imaginary social networking website called FriendPage. Display **task 3** in the classroom (or copy it onto the board) and do an example profile as class. Elicit or feed in useful language e.g.,  
*interested in: sports, languages, travel, music, films, computers*  
*personality: sporty, artistic, unconventional, chatty, quiet, studious, musical*  
*right now I feel: relaxed, stressed, tired, bored, energetic*
- Hand out the **task 3** profiles and ask student to use their imagination to complete the profile. Set a time limit to keep things snappy.
- Collect in the completed forms then redistribute them so that each student now has a different profile.

**3. Imagine you want to join FriendPage. Fill in your profile**

FriendPage profile. Basic information:	
name:	
age:	
gender	
location:	
hometown:	
interested in:	
personality:	
right now I feel:	

- Tell the students that they are going to use their profile information in a moment but first they need to look at the FriendPage house rules in **task 4**. Ask students to complete the rules in pairs.

**4. Complete the FriendPage house rules with *must/mustn't*.**

- 1 You \_\_\_\_\_ write in English.
- 2 You \_\_\_\_\_ be rude or nasty.
- 3 You \_\_\_\_\_ be boring.
- 4 You \_\_\_\_\_ be under 18.

**Answers task 4:** 1 must, 2 mustn't, 3 mustn't, must

**Tip:** For **task 5** to work smoothly the students need to follow your instructions step by step.

**5. The wall**

1 Introduce yourself.

*Hi I'm .....*

.....Fold the paper.....

2 Write a question:

3 Answer the question:

..... Fold the paper.....

4 Write a question:

5 Answer the question:

..... Fold the paper.....

6 Write a question:

7 Answer the question:

..... Fold the paper.....

8 Write a question:

9 Answer the question:

..... Fold the paper.....

10 Write a question:

11 Answer the question:

- Display or hand out **task 5** and tell students that they have to listen carefully and follow your instructions. They shouldn't write anything yet. This task works like a game of 'consequences' and mimics a Facebook wall.
- Ask students to complete part 1 of task 5. They should introduce themselves using the information from the FriendPage profile (task 3). Demonstrate with an example on the board if necessary, e.g., *Hi I'm Ruby. I'm 14 and I'm a girl. I live in London but my hometown is.....*
- When everyone has completed their introduction, ask students to fold over the paper on the dotted line and then write a question next to '2 Write a question.'
- Now everyone passes their paper to the person on their left. If students can sit in a circle that's great. If not – set up a figure of 8 passing system.
- Students write a reply next to '3 Answer the question:' and again fold the paper. They now write another (different) question. Next to '4 Write a question.'
- Everyone passes their paper to the person on their left.
- Continue like this until finished. Students can now unfold their paper and read what's on their 'wall'. You could display the 'walls' in the classroom for everyone to read.
- To follow up – collect some common errors from students' questions and answers for a class correction activity. Write up extracts containing errors on the board and have students correct them in pairs.

**Tip:** Help a weaker class with **task 5** by writing up some topics on the board and eliciting questions that students could ask each other about these topics. Here are some suggestions:

<i>Mobile phones</i>	<i>Do you like...?</i>
<i>Sport</i>	<i>What's your favourite....?</i>
<i>School</i>	<i>Where do you....?</i>
<i>Friends</i>	<i>Where did you....?</i>
<i>TV</i>	<i>When do you.....?</i>
<i>Games</i>	<i>Do you ever....?</i>
<i>The future</i>	<i>Are you.....?</i>
<i>Family</i>	<i>Would you like to.....?</i>
<i>Holidays</i>	
<i>Football</i>	