

Keeping in touch online

Jargon buster

People have met new friends and like minded people by networking for centuries, through guilds, clubs and of course family and friends. Going online is just one of a few ways where the Internet is helping to carry forward the long tradition of networking. Like everything else, it has developed its own language which can sometimes be confusing. This guide attempts to unravel some of the jargon used for simply keeping in touch online.

Blogs

A blog is an online journal usually maintained by an individual/s where the author is known as a blogger. A blog will have regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog might combine words, pictures, and links to other blogs or web pages related to its topic. A blog gathers a following and readers can leave comments and the process becomes more interactive. See Age UK's blog site as an example of a [blog](http://ageukblog.org.uk/) (<http://ageukblog.org.uk/>)

Facebook

[Facebook](http://www.facebook.com) (www.facebook.com) is a free social networking website which allows users to develop a personal profile that they can choose to share with other people. See definition for 'social networking website'. Facebook provides an easy way for individuals to keep in touch with friends, family and networks online without needing to build a website.

Facebook allows its users to upload pictures and videos and publish this information to the world wide web or to carefully selected friends and networks. Users can decide how they want to present themselves, and to who, and build their profiles by uploading photos, videos, personal information, contact details, interests, as well as post updates, send emails and chat using instant messaging (see definition for instant messaging). Users can manage their profiles so that only authorised friends can view their information. A phrase used for inviting friends and family to get in touch is 'to facebook me'.

Instant Messaging

Instant messaging is also known as 'online chatting' which takes place in real time and involves a direct text based communication between two or more people using computers or other devices. It is more interactive than email because messages are relayed

immediately between individuals. Instant messaging services also include video calling, file sharing and even computer to computer, or computer to phone calling (see Voice Over IP). Instant messaging software makes it easy to switch from "text chat" to "voice chat" online if the user has a headset or microphone and speakers. A popular phrase used for initiating a chat online is to 'IM me'.

Skype

[Skype](http://www.skype.com) (www.skype.com) is a free computer programme that allows users to make voice calls over the internet to another Skype user (see Voice Over IP). The programme allows video calls to be made if a webcam is available. The image of the person you are talking to is transmitted to the computer monitor while you are talking online. You can download Skype to your PC, laptop, or mobile device for free. Calls can be made from computer to computer, computer to landline or mobile phone or between Skype/VoIP enabled devices.

Social networking websites

Social networking websites link people together in friendship groups (like Facebook and MySpace). A common use of social networking website is for sharing photos with family and friends. By "tagging" people in the images you upload, a copy of the photo will appear on that person's profile.

There are many topic specific social networking sites like the [Linkedin](http://www.linkedin.com) (www.linkedin.com) network aimed at creating business and professional links, and hobby based sites Ravelry which has a network of knitters and crocheters in its worldwide social network. [Flickr](http://www.flickr.com) (www.flickr.com) promotes itself as a place to share photos and stay in touch and has 5,000 uploads a minute. You decide who you want to share your photos with and for occasional sharing you can give out "guest passes". A website set up to reunite old friends from past school, work and friendship groups is [Friends Reunited](http://www.friendsreunited.co.uk) (www.friendsreunited.co.uk). Its sister site [Genes Reunited](http://www.genesreunited.co.uk) (www.genesreunited.co.uk) links people collecting family history. Yet another website in the group focuses on [dating](http://www.friendsreuniteddating.co.uk) (www.friendsreuniteddating.co.uk). This is another growing social networking area.

Twitter

[Twitter](http://www.twitter.com) (www.twitter.com) is a free social networking and microblogging website that lets users share short messages, known as 'tweets'. Tweets are short text updates allowing only up to 140 characters per update. You can post an update via a mobile phone text or by going online via a computer. People generally give tweets about their lives and their opinions about things they encounter. Those who sign up to read your tweets are "followers".

Voice over IP (VoIP)

VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) is the technology that allows telephone calls to be transmitted over the Internet. VoIP calls can be made on the Internet using a VoIP service provider (such as Skype). Some service providers also allow ordinary telephones to use

VoIP by using special adaptors to connect the telephone to a computer network. Since calls are made over the Internet, VoIP offers substantial cost savings over traditional long distance telephone calls which are landline to landline.

Youtube

[YouTube \(www.youtube.com\)](http://www.youtube.com) is a video sharing website on which users can upload, share and view videos. The searchable site displays user generated content – film and TV clips and music videos as well as video blogging and amateur videos of anything from a performance by a local choir, to funny pet videos and to how to use Skype. Some media corporations including the BBC offer some of their material on Youtube as part of a partnership programme. Every minute 24 hours of new video content is uploaded to Youtube. Users can post comments about a video below the clip and often engage in quite heated discussions about its merit or otherwise.

NOTE

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