



# Gooseberry Parent

## Facebook

### What is Facebook?

A free, social media and networking tool. Facebook users create a profile of themselves and add other users as friends. Profiles usually contain a photo of the person, their name, location and information about where they work or attend school. Users can share video, text and other media content, message other users, comment on posts and photos and join groups or create pages on topics of interest.

### Key Features of Facebook to be aware of

- To use Facebook, the creation of an account is required. Registration is free and open to anyone over 13 years of age.
- The Facebook app can be downloaded to digital devices and mobile devices. An email account is required to register and internet access is required to use the app.
- Each user has its own 'timeline', which displays their status updates, photos added, comments or likes on other profiles and groups they have created or joined alongside the date they occurred.
- Registered users can join or create interest pages and groups and invite other users to join them. These interest groups may be centred around a common interest such as a music band, movie, famous person, hobby etc.
- Users can post 'status updates' to their Facebook timeline, upload photos, 'like' and comment on others' updates and photos, and add other users as 'friends'.
- The app sends a notification to a user every time something has been added to their page, such as a comment or a 'like' on their status update.
- Users can decide how much information they want to include in their profiles and who they want to share it with.

### Enjoying Facebook safely and managing the risks

- **Signing Up** - Children should be aged over 13 to register on Facebook. However, there is nothing to prevent a child under 13 from entering a false birthdate when they sign up. Encourage your child to keep login details and passwords secure and share them with you.
- **User Names** – Facebook encourages users to use their real names, rather than create a user name. Encourage your child to set their account to 'private' so that unknown persons cannot access their full profiles unless added as a 'friend'.
- **Location Settings** - Ensure your child turns off location settings in Facebook's settings section to help prevent their location from being available to other users. Explain that this is important because people they do not know in real life could find them through the location feature.
- **Finding Friends** – Encourage your child to select the 'only friends' option in the search section of the app's privacy settings. This will ensure that their page cannot be found by strangers or through Google searches.
- **Adding Friends** – Encourage your child to add only friends who they know and trust in real life, and to check with the friend to ensure it is really their own account. Information about users, such as their names, date of



birth, location and school or work place are not verified and can potentially be untrue. Ensure your child is informed about this - the person they are 'friends' with may not be who they say they are!

- **Messaging** - Friends and non-friends can message each other on Facebook. Encourage your child to block any unwanted users from messaging them by using Facebook's blocking feature.
- **Photos** – Encourage your child to use the privacy settings to ensure only known friends can view their photos. Facebook will automatically delete any inappropriate photos.
- **Sharing Information** – Encourage your child to share only minimal information on Facebook. Remind them to never give out personal information such as their phone number or address.
- **Communicate your expectations** – As a parent, it is your responsibility to make clear what is and is not acceptable online behaviour. You need to accept that allowing your child access to online apps like these, requires trust and clear boundaries, for their own wellbeing.
- **Add your child** – You will not be able to see every message they send or receive, but you can see their status pictures and when they are online. If you don't like what you see, you can then discuss this and advise them accordingly.
- **Model positive and safe online behaviour** – Safe behaviour online starts with us as adults. Following basic safety suggestions and demonstrating these will help your child to follow in your footsteps. You also have a better chance of staying safer online yourself.
- **Do your homework** – Take time to read Privacy Policies and Terms of Use to find out how app developers use personal information. You can also learn about acceptable use of the app and find advice on securing online accounts and set privacy settings on devices.
- **Download and use the app** – Having a go yourself can help you understand how the app works and how to secure an account.
- **Read the reviews** for the app, this will give you an idea what other people are saying about it and what potential risks there may be.
- **Making an informed decision** – You are a parent and you will know your child enough to decide on allowing them to use any social networking app. Facebook is designed to be a fun and appealing app and it is not difficult to see why it is so popular. By following the steps outlined above you have a better opportunity to ensure that your child is protected online.

**Connect with friends, family and others using Facebook...but do it safely!**