

Ways Facebook has changed the world

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

- Think of five English words that are commonly used in your language.
- Has the number increased since the invention of social media and the internet?
- Have any of the words been adapted for use in your language, for example their spelling or pronunciation?
- Are you on Facebook?
- If not, why not?
- If so, roughly how many friends do you and your friends have on Facebook, on average? Is the number higher or lower than 150?

2 Key words

Find the key words in the article and write them next to the definitions below. The section numbers are given to help you.

1. end the rule of unfair and strict governments _____
(two words, introduction)
2. ending a relationship in a sudden and possibly unkind way _____
(section 1)
3. someone you know a little, who is not really a friend _____
(two words, section 1)
4. a list of updates on your own Facebook home page _____ (section 1)
5. no longer needed _____ (section 1)
6. an occasion when a group of men celebrate together because one of them is soon to be married
_____ (two words, section 1)
7. is the best possible example of a particular idea, quality or principle, especially a good one
_____ (section 2)
8. give something to someone _____ (two words, section 2)
9. the method of separating things into their parts in order to examine and understand them
_____ (section 3)
10. a situation or process with many possible problems or dangers _____
(section 3)
11. becoming publicly known _____ (section 5)
12. learn small pieces of information by watching, reading or listening carefully
_____ (section 5)
13. been replaced by something, especially something newer or better _____
(three words, section 6)
14. selected items from among a large number of possibilities for other people to consume and enjoy _____
_____ (section 6)

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From relationships to revolutions: ways Facebook has changed the world

One in seven people worldwide used the social network on one day in August 2015, says Mark Zuckerberg. Here is how it has changed our lives – for better or worse

Jessica Elgot

28 August, 2015

On one day in August, one in seven people on Earth, 1 billion people, used Facebook, according to founder Mark Zuckerberg. In a decade, the social network has transformed people's relationships, privacy, their businesses, news media, helped topple regimes and even changed the meanings of everyday words.

"A more open and connected world is a better world. It brings stronger relationships with those you love, a stronger economy with more opportunities and a stronger society that reflects all of our values," wrote Zuckerberg in the post announcing the numbers.

These are just some of the ways his company changed everything – for better or worse.

1 Facebook has changed the definition of "friend"

"To friend" is now a verb. And, unlike in real life, when the ending of a friendship can be deeply traumatic, it is easy to "unfriend", a word invented to describe ditching a casual acquaintance when they are no longer enhancing your Facebook newsfeed.

Although the meanings of the words "share" and "like" are essentially the same, Facebook has brought an entirely new weight to the terms.

School and university reunions have become redundant – you already know whose career is going well, whether the perfect pair have split and you've seen endless pictures of your schoolmates' babies. You won't be surprised by an ex in the street with a new girlfriend or boyfriend: you already know they're dating someone else from the romantic selfies.

But, unlike in real life, Facebook has no hierarchy of friendships. A classmate from one project at university who you haven't seen in 15 years, a friend-of-a-friend from a stag do or a colleague you've never actually spoken to in person – they are all Facebook friends in the same way as your closest mate or your spouse or your mum.

It doesn't necessarily mean we see them the same way. Professor Robin Dunbar is famous for his research that suggests a person can only have

roughly 150 people as a social group. Facebook hasn't changed that yet, he believes, but, in an interview with the *New Yorker*, Dunbar said he feared it was so easy simply to end friendships on Facebook that, eventually, there may no longer be any need to learn to get along.

2 We care less about privacy

There's a wise saying: if you're not paying for it, you're the product. Facebook embodies that philosophy and created an entire industry from it. The astonishing thing is that users know that and they willingly hand over that information.

Pew Research Center found that most young people are more than willing to hand over their details. An overwhelming majority of 91% post a photo of themselves, 71% post the city or town where they live, up from 61%, more than half give email addresses and a fifth give their phone number.

But, as so much of a person's life is shared online, Facebook gives a platform for everyone to cultivate an image and a fanbase. In an article for the journal *Frontiers in Psychology*, academics described a new phenomenon, the emergence of the "Facebook self".

More than 80% list their interests, allowing brands to target them most effectively. But most younger users do restrict their profiles, with 60% allowing friends only.

3 Facebook has created millions of jobs – but not in its own offices

Facebook has essentially created an entire sector, including indirect employment for people whose job it is to make the platform work for their brand.

"It is a tool like no other," said Michael Tinmouth, a social media strategist who has worked with brands such as Vodafone and Microsoft. "Marketers have an understanding of a brand's consumers like they have never had before. The data and analytics available to you are extraordinary. You know who your customers are, who they are friends with and how they engage with your brand."

And advertisers pay a lot for that. Facebook reported ad revenue was up 46%, reaching \$3.32bn.

Facebook is also a minefield for brands. Suddenly, rather than complaint conversations taking place over the phone with a customer service representative or on a small specialist internet forum, angry customers can post their complaints for hundreds of their friends to see or even on the page where all loyal fans of the brand have been carefully cultivated. And an injustice can go viral.

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4 Facebook has been the tool to organize revolutions

Though the Arab Spring was dubbed the Twitter revolution, organizing demonstrations and direct action has been revolutionized by Facebook.

Manchester University's Olga Onuch found Facebook had been the key medium for reaching half of all the Euromaidan protesters in Ukraine.

Facebook posts signalled the start of the Maidan protests during the hours after it was announced that Ukraine would not sign a free trade and association agreement with the EU, Onuch found. The posts organized live action, not just online anger. Mustafa Nayyem, the Ukraine activist, posted: "If you really want to do something, don't just 'like' this post. Let's meet near the monument to independence in the middle of the Maidan."

Many of those interviewed in Onuch's research said they relied on Facebook for the truth about what was happening – unable to trust traditional media.

5 Facebook makes news, breaks news and decides what is news

Roughly 71% of 18- to 24-year-olds say the internet is their main news source and 63% of users overall, according to the Pew Research Center. About a third of Facebook users post about politics and government.

Most people will first encounter a piece of journalism or an item of breaking news via Facebook or other social media, and most of those encounters will be on mobiles.

Users might never have to leave the site to get their news: Instant Articles will see stories run within Facebook. It allows news companies to sell ads around their articles, gaining them 100% of

that revenue, while Facebook can also sell ads around that article, with 70% of the revenue from the social network's advertising also going to the news companies.

Facebook has also changed the ways journalists write stories. It is a resource many reporters cannot now live without. For better or (often) worse, it is a directory to find, contact and glean information for almost any ordinary person, who might suddenly find themselves at the centre of the day's biggest news story. Facebook has its own newswire, sharing the most useful user reaction to breaking stories, including pictures and videos.

6 Users are changing Facebook

It used to be a site to get students connected, with only elite US universities allowed access.

In 2014, a decade after its launch, 56% of internet users aged 65 and older have a Facebook account. And 39% are connected to people they have never met in person.

Groups have given way to pages, writing on each other's walls is passé and carefully curated albums have given way to instant mobile uploads. More than ever, the site is a gateway not just to your friends but to the rest of the internet.

We may as well get used to it, said David Kirkpatrick, author of *The Facebook Effect*. "It might very well go away further down the road but something this big takes a long time to disappear," he told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme. "Facebook has proven its ability to change and it will continue to be a very, very major player."

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3 Comprehension check

Answer the questions using the information from the article.

1. What is the 'Facebook self'?
2. What is Instant Articles?
3. When was Facebook started and who were its intended users?
4. What does Professor Dunbar's famous research suggest?
5. What did Olga Onuch find out from the people she interviewed?
6. What part did Facebook play in the Maidan protests in Ukraine?
7. How has Facebook changed jobs in marketing?
8. What negative effects might Facebook have for a brand?

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4 Expressions

a. Put these words in the correct order to make two expressions from the article. What do they mean?

down or further worse for road better the

b. Find the following expressions in the article. What words come before and after them? What were they used to talk about?

more than willing to (section 2)

may as well (section 6)

might very well (section 6)

c. Use all five expressions in sentences of your own.

5 Pros and cons

Make a note of five positive and five negative things about Facebook. Then, discuss what you've written.

Five positive things about Facebook	

Five negative things about Facebook	

6 Hint and tips

- Compile a list of privacy tips for Facebook users.
- Create a list of helpful hints about using Facebook for new start-up companies.

7 Discussion

Has Facebook changed the way you ...

- ... arrange to meet friends?
- ... stay in contact with your family?
- ... work?
- ... choose your holiday destination?
- ... find out what's happening where you live?

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KEY

2 Key words

1. topple regimes
2. ditching
3. casual acquaintance
4. newsfeed
5. redundant
6. stag do
7. embodies
8. hand over
9. analytics
10. minefield
11. breaking
12. glean
13. given way to
14. curated

3 Comprehension check

1. a cultivated image that people create for themselves on Facebook
2. a section of Facebook that allows users to read news stories within the site instead of visiting different sites
3. in 2004; It was for students at US universities.
4. that a person can only cope with roughly 150 people in their social group
5. that they relied on Facebook rather than traditional media to get trustworthy news
6. People were informed that Ukraine would not sign a free trade agreement with the EU and action in the way of protests were organized via Facebook.
7. Marketers can use Facebook data and analytics to understand and find out about their customers.
8. Customers can post complaints that everyone can see (instead of writing a letter or making a phone call). These complaints might even go viral and be spread all over the internet creating bad publicity for the brand.

4 Expressions

a.

for better or worse – used for showing that you do not know whether an action, situation or change will have good or bad results

further down the road – at an unspecified time in the future

b.

Young people are **more than willing** to hand over their details to Facebook.

We **may as well** get used to Facebook being such an important presence in our lives.

It [Facebook] **might very well** go away further down the road.