

Moms Internet Guide

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Rekindle Best Friendships

Hi, I'm Sarah. Welcome to Moms Internet Guide—the place to find straightforward answers to all your questions about the Web. I love to meet new people and stay connected with my friends. But as a busy mom, there are months when it's hard for me to carve out enough time to keep up with everyone. That's why I was so intrigued when I first started hearing about social networking. I thought the Internet might be the perfect place for me to keep in touch with everyone and even make a new friend or two. After doing a little research, I discovered how easy it is to participate. You just find a social networking website you like and put up a profile—it can be as simple as posting a photo of yourself and a few sentences about your interests. Then you'll have all kinds of online options for connecting with your real-world friends and even meeting new people. It's like a virtual block party.

It's a lot easier to understand social networking once you check out a few popular sites. If you're like me, you'll be surprised to find people of all ages—this isn't just for teenagers.

Two of the most popular social networking sites are www.myspace.com and www.facebook.com. They're general-interest places where you can connect with all kinds of people. There are also more specialized sites. For business networking, you can put up a profile at www.linkedin.com. Other sites bring people together with a common interest. I like www.goodreads.com—because it lets me recommend my favorite novels to other book lovers. Health Expressions offers an online community of health-focused moms like me. So I started an online group for my son's soccer team on www.myhealthexpressions.com.

It's free to participate in most social networking sites. You can put up a basic profile in less than half an hour. Each site guides you through the process with a series of online forms—it's not much harder than ordering a new pair of shoes online. You're likely to be asked to provide a short description of yourself along with a picture. From there, you can fill in as much or as little information as you want. Typically, there are places for you to list everything from your favorite movies to where you went to high school. Most sites even let you decorate your page with fun colors and designs—think of it as an online scrapbook page.

Once you have a basic profile, it's time to connect with other people. Start by searching for your real-world friends on the site. Then you can click a few buttons to invite them to become your online friends. I sent an invitation to my sister, and once she approved it, our pages were linked. Now, it's simpler to keep track of updates she makes to her profile. I like to check out her page whenever she posts a new family photo. You can also search for people who went to the same college as you—or like the same music—and ask them to connect. You might even strike up an online friendship through the site's internal email service.

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It doesn't take long to get the hang of things. Many sites let you post announcements for your friends and even keep a basic blog or journal. You can also add photos, music, and even videos. If you're a little nervous at first, you might try setting your profile to private. Then, only the people you choose can see your page. I've met lots of other moms on social networking sites and managed to stay in closer touch with my family. Once you check it out, I think you'll love it as much as I do.

Sites to Try:

www.myspace.com

www.facebook.com

www.linkedin.com

www.goodreads.com

www.myhealthexpressions.com