

Social Media *for* Older Adults:

Everything You Need to Know to Get Started



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It started as a movement by college students, but social media has quickly spread to represent a large portion of the population, infiltrating how we receive news, share information, and communicate on a daily basis. At the start of 2014, ***74 percent of adult Internet users*** reported using at least one social media website.

But how do the statistics stack up for older adults on social media? You might be surprised to learn a large percentage of older adults have discovered the benefits of joining Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and more.

Of the ***59 percent*** of adults over 65 who use the Internet, 46 percent use social media. And among the percentage of older adults who go online but don't use social media, 56 percent indicated they simply need help getting started.

If you've been considering joining the social media bandwagon, but don't quite know where to get started, this eBook is for you. In these pages, we show how social media can be a positive addition to your daily routine. We also share tips and tricks to help familiarize you with social media best practices and lingo, so you'll feel more comfortable taking the next step.

Start here, and you'll be accepting friend requests, sending out tweets and joining hangouts before you know it!



Why You Should Join Social Media

Contrary to what some people believe, social media can be more than a way to waste time online. While your motivations might vary, there are several hidden benefits of having an active online social life you may not have considered.



Social Media Can Improve Your Memory

Taking proactive steps to keep your mind sharp and improve memory is vital to maintaining your independence as you age. According to [a study from the University of Arizona's psychology department](#), social media might be a great tool for exercising your brain. The study found that **adults over 65 who used Facebook performed 25 percent better on memory tests.**



Social Media Makes It Easier to Stay in Touch with Loved Ones

Enjoy connecting with your children or grandchildren online but tired of using email? Social media might be the answer to staying connected to your loved ones' lives. In addition to following what they post on social media, you can also comment, respond, or interact in ways that are less of a hassle than sending an email.



Social Media May Be Good for Your Health

Many older adults find that being active online helps to relieve stress and improve their emotional state. Simply spending time on Facebook can actually [reduce your heart](#) rate and even boost your self-esteem.



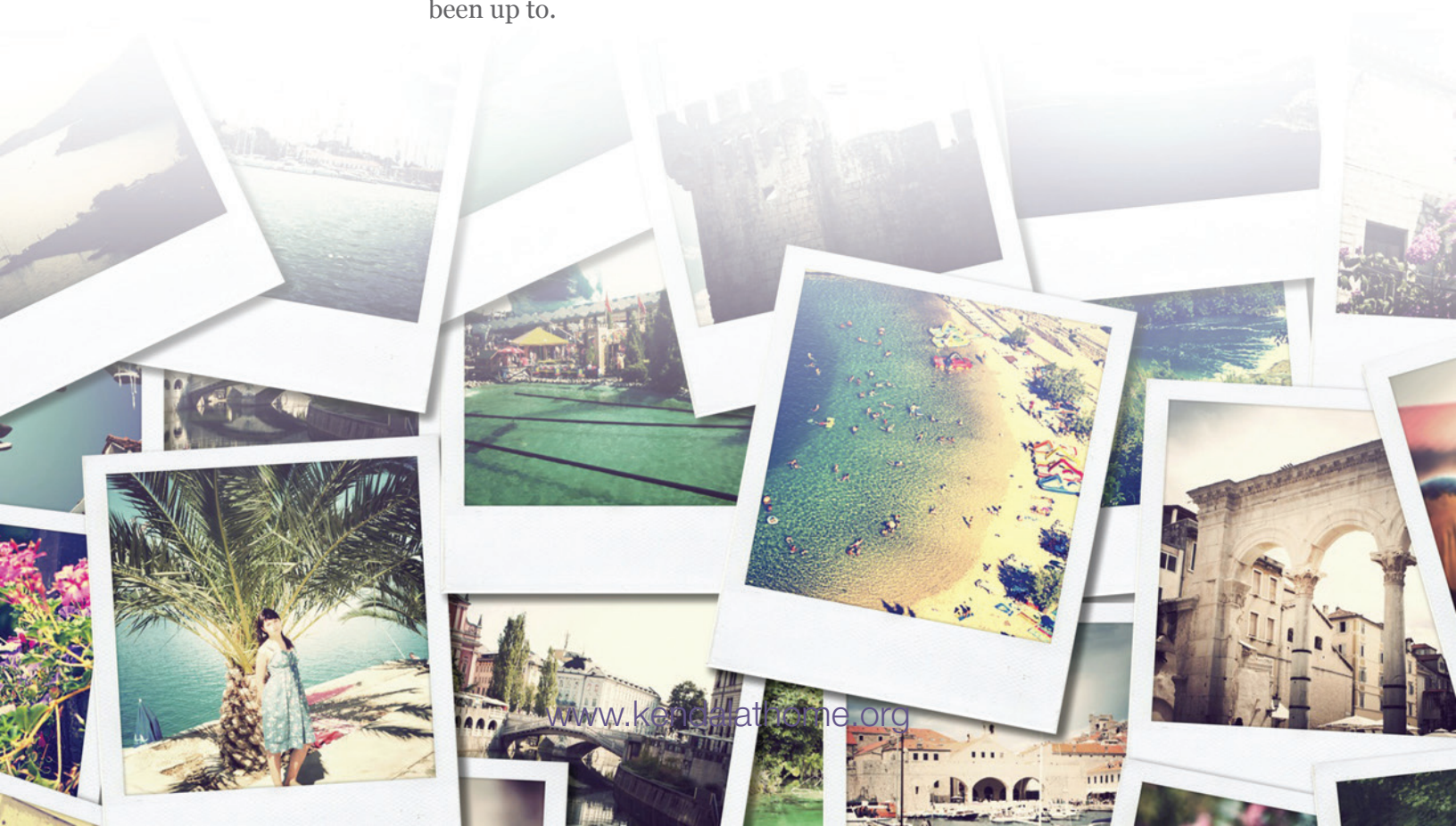
Social Media Can Improve Your Mood and Combat Social Isolation

Some older adults may be more [vulnerable to social isolation](#), which can lead to depression and other health concerns. Social media can offer an easy way to expand your social circle without having to change your living situation or daily routine. Thanks to joining sites like Facebook, Twitter, or Google+, many older adults have found support groups, reconnected with old friends, and found a new way to express themselves.



Social Media Gives You a Place to Express Yourself

When you create a profile on a social media site, you're carving out your own little corner of the web where you can choose how to express yourself. You can share information and ideas that are important to you, make virtual scrapbooks out of your photographs, and tell your friends and followers what you've been up to.



The DOs & DON'Ts of Using Social Media

When you first get started with social media, it's easy to get carried away and forget that the Internet is a big place. Exercising caution with what you post and the connections you make are important elements of staying safe online. To help ensure your foray into social media usage is a positive one, we've broken down some helpful tips into DOs and DON'Ts.

DO

DON'T

Connect with friends and family

Sites like Facebook, Google+, and even Twitter are great for staying in touch with loved ones.

Accept friend or follow requests from people you don't know

A good rule of thumb is to stick to connections you actually know "in real life" or, at the very least, with whom you share a mutual friend. Since the web can act as the ultimate identity mask, you should always be skeptical of someone who wants to be your social media friend but doesn't know you in real life.

DO

DON'T

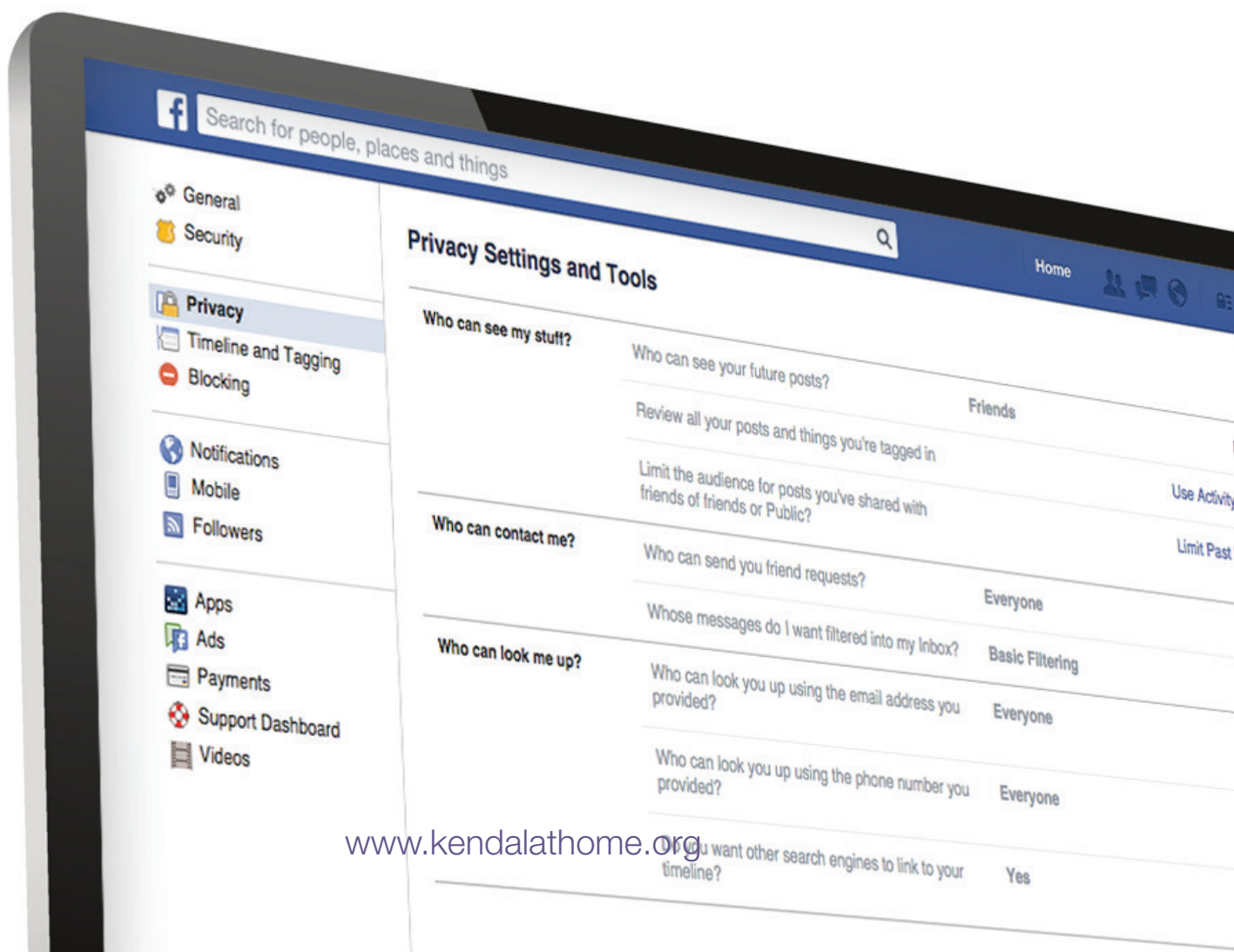
Post, share, tweet, and like

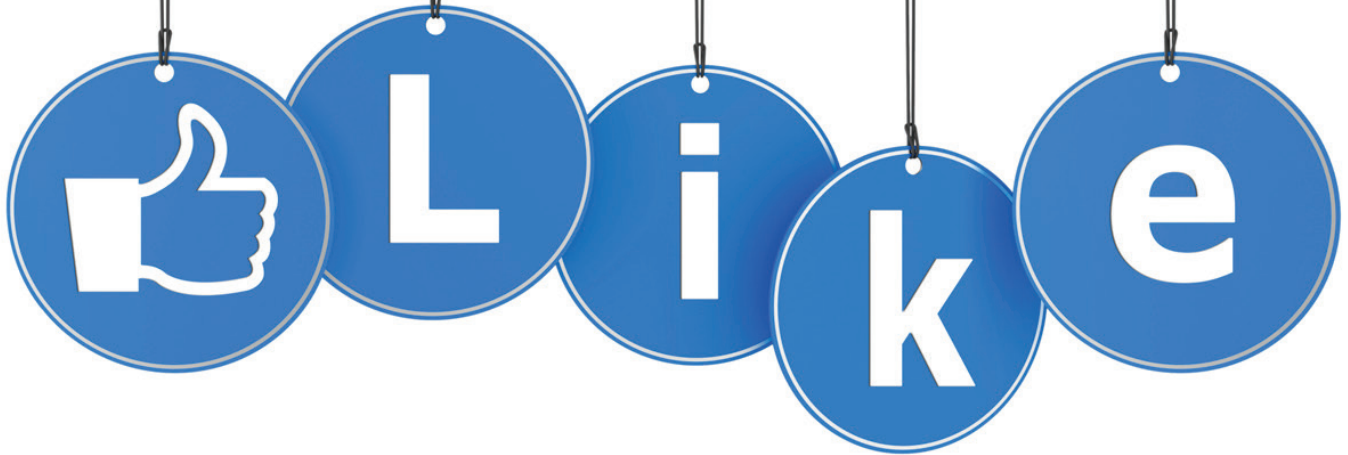
Social media is all about being social. You should feel free to express yourself by posting and sharing information and thoughts that are important to you.

(Don't know what these terms mean? Look ahead to our Glossary!)

Ever give out personal information

Even if you have a limited following on social media, the information you post online should never be considered “secure.” Avoid posting personal information like your address or when you’ll be out of town. Make sure to visit your profile settings and adjust privacy settings in a way that makes you feel comfortable. For instance, on Facebook, you can set a preference that only friends see your postings—otherwise, everything you post will be searchable and public





Interact with your friends and followers through likes, comments, and retweets

If one of your Facebook friends posts a picture that you like, well, then “like” it!

If it’s your grandchild’s birthday, write on his or her wall—even if you already sent a card! If you see worthwhile information or advice on Twitter, retweet it to share with your followers.

Over-share or overwhelm

Think of social media along the same lines as the words you speak: Once something is out there, you can’t take it back. Sure, there are edit and delete options, but it’s best to just exercise posting caution from the very start. For instance, you don’t need to share every aspect of your day, from the minute you wake up to the second you go to sleep. You also don’t need to always comment or respond to your friends’ posts. Keep in mind that what you post on a friend’s Facebook wall or comment on their status is often visible to all of their connections. If it’s something personal, you might want to consider sending a private message instead.

Social Media Glossary of Terms

Can't keep the likes, tweets, follows, feeds, or circles straight? Social media platforms all tend to have their own terminology. To make getting started easier, check out this collection of terms and definitions.

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Friend request

When another user asks to connect with you.

Like

A way of giving a “thumbs up” to something posted.

Newsfeed

A collection of your friends' recent activity that you can scroll through to see what's new.

Status update

Where you can tell your friends what's new with you, share an interesting article, or post a photograph.

Notification

What you'll receive when someone sends a friend request or interacts with something you've posted.

Timeline

A place where your friends can write messages. Your wall also shows your recent status posts and activity

twitter

Followers

The term given to people who elect to have your tweets sent to their feed.

Tweets

140-character messages you can write and share with your followers.

Twitter feed

A scrolling, constantly updating list of tweets from the people you follow.

Retweet

The act of sharing someone else's tweet with your followers.

Hashtags

Words or phrases that are preceded by a hash sign (#) become links that are searchable throughout the Twitter world. Including hashtags with your tweets allows you to join the conversation on trending topics.

Google+

Circles

Where you can organize your followers into categories or groups.

Stream

Like the Facebook newsfeed, this is where you'll see updates from the people in your circles.

Hangouts

The ability to connect with your Google+ followers in a video chat (with up to 10 people!)

+1

A button that allows you to share another person's post with your followers.

One final tip before you begin your online social life...

Don't be intimidated! Social media might seem confusing and overwhelming at first, but it can quickly become a positive part of your everyday routine. All it takes is a little patience and practice. So, what are you waiting for?

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