

# Understanding #socialmedia

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Today, on the news and in conversation, social media is likely mentioned several times in any exchange between people and in any information delivered by the media. Hashtags. Facebook. Twitter. Almost every news program and personality has a tagline to their Twitter account and Facebook page.

Just what is social media and how does it affect you in daily life? Social media differs from 'regular' media in one major way: it is interactive. When using the web to access regular media such as news or a web search, the information is presented for consumption. When going to a social media site, interaction is usually required if not mandatory. I will discuss the different types and benefits of social media so that you can make more informed decisions as you venture into this new realm of communication.



FACEBOOK is the largest and most popular social media platform. It is a form of social networking, joining people into online communities. If you are not on Facebook, you can be sure that your kids or grandkids are. With over 1.5 billion registered users, Facebook is the primary site for people to share photos and messages on the web. Facebook users must register, and all connections between users must be approved by both parties. Besides keeping up with the lives of your family and current circle of friends, Facebook allows you to connect with people you may know based on schools attended, towns lived in, places worked for and also through mutual friends. You may want to create a Facebook account to observe family members and friends, participation is always optional.



YOUTUBE is another popular site that may not be considered social media but is, as all the videos are uploaded by people (and sometimes organizations) for sharing and discussion.

Whether it is a baby's first words or steps, a family dog doing tricks, a piano recital, a soccer game or a wedding—it can be found on YouTube. Viewing and searching videos on YouTube is free, but to upload or save favorite videos a free account is required. Next time you need to know how to make guacamole or pesto or replace your car's rear-view mirror, look it up on YouTube!



**FLICKR AND**



**INSTAGRAM** are photo sharing websites. Flickr was launched in 2004 and contains an extensive library of personal and

professional photos. You can search for photos by resolution, date, content and even camera type. You can upload and share photos in albums that are public or by invitation only. Flickr can be accessed on any mobile device as well as on a desktop or laptop. Instagram, started in 2011, must be accessed through an app on a phone or tablet, it does not have a website. Instagram's main advantage is the ability to snap photos, post them directly on Instagram and immediately share them on Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms. Instagram also has the capability to edit and manipulate photos directly with a number of filters within the app.



**TWITTER** is a messaging service that enables its users to send and read text-based posts of up to 140 characters, known as "tweets."

A free account allows one to post tweets that are available for others to read. You can use Twitter on a computer, smart phone or tablet, and you can follow the Twitter feeds of several people at once, they appear in a sequential timeline. Since all tweets are limited to just 140 characters, which is exactly the length of this sentence, most posts are succinct and to the point. If you'd like to see my Twitter account, it is @naplesmachelp.



**L I N K E D I N** is probably the most

misunderstood social media service. We have all received the email that starts with "I'd like to add you to my professional network." It is a site for business and professional

networking. To join LinkedIn, one creates a free profile. Then one is allowed to extend invitations to others to join their LinkedIn network. Existing LinkedIn members can invite others to join, and it is a much more closed community than is Facebook. With LinkedIn, the networks created can have rewarding effects for those members who are seeking to expand their market exposure to promote themselves and their business. Resumés can be added to a profile, and employers also post job openings and opportunities on LinkedIn.



GOOGLE+ is the most recent entry to the social media arena. The biggest identifying feature are the ‘Circles’ of friends used in Google+. A user may have a Family Circle, a Work Circle, a Friends Circle and so on. The name of ones Circles are never visible to others, though the members of that Circle can be visible or hidden by the Circle’s creator. Google+ is seen by many as a fresh take on the social networking scene, and is becoming a viable alternative to Facebook. Remember that a Google+ account is another way that Google tracks your activities for marketing purposes.



WIKIPEDIA is a form of a social wiki, which means that the contents is generated, edited and monitored by members of the Wikipedia community. Remember that although Wikipedia bills itself as an online encyclopedia, it is user-generated and the contents can be biased.

Whether you decide to tweet, upload videos or just watch, social media is a part of daily life. All major entities now have a Twitter feed, Facebook page and YouTube channel. The vast array of social media outlets offer much more interaction than most people are interested in, yet the options offered do have something for everyone.

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