

# Dangers of Posting Online

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- **Facebook and college admissions:** It's a bad idea to post dicey photos or racy prose on social networking sites, no matter how private teens may think they are. According to a 2008 Kaplan study, one in 10 college admissions officers routinely check out college applicants' Facebook and MySpace pages. And some 38% of them found posts and pictures that reflected poorly on those prospective students. It wasn't even necessarily that they'd posted provocative or hard partying photos. In some cases, students had simply written disparagingly about the campuses they toured.
- **Grad school and careers:** Business and medical school admissions officers surf social networking sites in even greater numbers than their undergrad brethren. So do prospective employers, none of whom are impressed by posts that holler "Par-tay! Woo hoo!"
- **Fellow students:** It's not just admissions officers doing the surfing. Some upper classmen at the University of Redlands were so incensed by partying comments made by several incoming freshmen on the Redlands Facebook group site, they showed the posts to college officials. College administrators said they called the teens' parents a few weeks before school began to have a little talk.
- **Courtroom consequences:** Unfortunate Facebook postings can have serious legal repercussions too. One of the first things attorneys do with a new case is search online for information about plaintiffs, defendants and witnesses alike. In one Rhode Island case, a 20-year-old's drunk driving accident, which severely injured another youth, could have resulted in a relatively light stint at county jail or the considerably more severe state prison. But, as the prosecutor in the case quickly discovered, two weeks

after the accident, while his victim was still in the hospital, the [youth posted photos on Facebook](#) of himself at a Halloween party, prancing around in a prisoner costume. He was sentenced to two years in state prison.

- **Child pornography charges:** Posting or sending photos of oneself or friends in scanty clothing or sexually suggestive poses may be a popular pastime among the younger set, but if any of the people posing are under 18, the practice may result in child pornography charges. There were several such cases in 2008, including an [Ohio 15-year-old who was charged with child pornography](#) after sending nude cell phone images of herself to friends. At the time, officials in Licking County considered charging recipients of those images as well. It's one thing to be charged with sending or receiving child pornography as a minor, but those charges in adult court may carry not only prison time, but a lifetime of registering as a sex offender

## How Online Predators Make Use of your Facebook

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**While you've been having fun posting messages to friends, reconnecting with old pals, accepting invites to parties and uploading pictures from your life a stranger in another city has been keeping tabs on you.** That stranger liked your beachside picture, it caught his eye right away after he used the Facebook search tool to seek out single girls (or guys) aged 15 – 21 who live in towns near his and who are looking for "*Random Play*." Your profile is open so after your picture got his attention your personal essay piqued his interest. You have a few things in common and you like a few things he's always wanted to try, suddenly in his mind you have a connection. You share interests. From your hometown he is able

to find the address of your school. He already knows your work address because you added it on your profile.

A few weeks go by and he's been watching you with great interest. He knows the names of your close friends, he sees all the pictures you put up and the names you tag to those pictures. The more he sees of your life the more he feels he knows you. There is this one picture taken of you at a party where you are looking right in to the camera; he likes it because it feels like you are looking at him, gazing in to his very soul.

He joins one of your groups just to learn more about you. Somebody in the group is having a party and invites all the members using the Facebook events tool. You get an invite and accept it right away. He gets an invite too, and even though he doesn't accept he knows where to find you. Even if he hadn't been invited he could have looked up the location when he saw on your profile that you had accepted an invitation by clicking on the link to the event that Facebook automatically placed in your mini-feed. Either way he now knows where you will be that night and from your posts to the event wall he also knows when you plan to get there. That week he sees a post a friend left you thanking you for covering a shift for them, in the post they mention the exact day and time of the shift you are covering. He now knows where you work and exactly when you will be there. Without ever leaving his home a stranger in another town has found you, felt an attraction to your picture, learned about your life and grown obsessed with you and now he knows of 2 different places where he can finally come see you face to face. He gets gutsy and sends you a friend request. You see his name in one of your groups and on an invite list to the party you plan to attend and you figure he must be safe so in keeping with the friendly spirit of social networking sites you add him. Now he has your cell phone number too. Scary thought? It should be!