

Chapter 8

Plugging In to Social Media



Overview

Social networks, blogs, online communities, podcasts—there are so many ways to communicate with others through social media. In this chapter, you will differentiate among different types of social media, understand their risks and rewards, and learn about ways to use social media in your personal, academic, and professional life.



Key Terms

- Social media
- Social networks
- Blog
- Microblog
- Wikis
- Podcast
- Online communities
- Virtual worlds
- Media sharing
- Online and video chatting
- Web conferencing
- Webinar

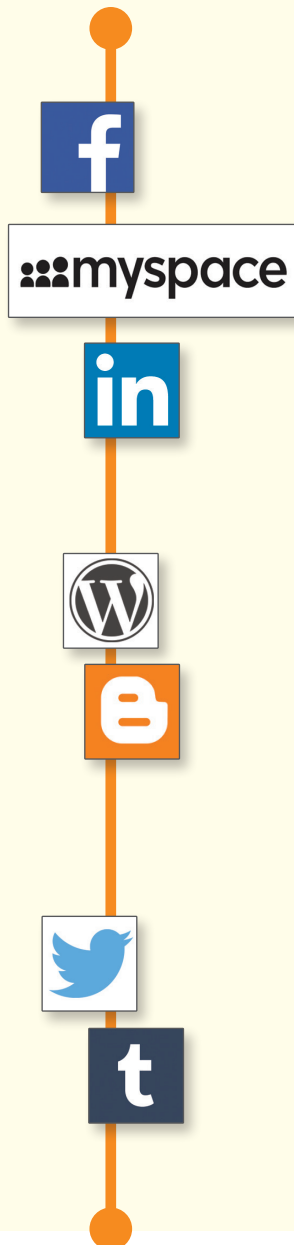
Fact!



Did You Know?

73% of American teens who use the Internet also use social networking websites.

Source: *Pew Internet and American Life Project*



What Is Social Media?

Social media is a form of online communication using Web-based tools such as comment-enabled blogs, social networking sites, online content communities, and virtual game worlds. Users can send messages and share pictures, news, and status updates with friends, family, and even strangers.

Social media tools—such as Facebook and Twitter—have drastically changed how we communicate. These tools make interacting in real time possible without actually being face to face with another person. Businesses also use social media to reach customers, and many people rely on social media to learn about what is going on in the world in real time.

Types of Social Media

See below for some of the latest tech tools that make online social interactions possible. Often, there is overlap in functionality among different social media types.

Social Networks

Social networks allow us to connect to others online through status updates, wall posts, and shared pictures and videos. These sites are formed around user profiles, and they allow users to share information, such as favorite movies or music.

Examples: Facebook.com, Myspace.com, LinkedIn.com

Blogs

A **blog** is like an online journal. Bloggers can write about any subject, from a trip they took to day-to-day life. Some bloggers offer advice on different topics. Many blogs are public, though some may require registration to read. While you can leave comments on many blogs, comments are often reviewed first by the blog owner before they are posted.

Examples: WordPress.com, Blogger.com

Microblogs

People often use microblogging to keep people up to date on their “status,” such as what they’re doing at the moment or what is on their mind. Often, there is a character limit (such as 140 characters for Twitter). A **microblog** post is much shorter than a blog post. Status updates on Facebook are considered microblogs.

Examples: Twitter.com, Tumblr.com



Wikis

Wikis are online tools that allow community members to add to and edit posted information in a shared space.

Examples: Wikispaces.com, Wikipedia.org

Podcasts

Anyone can make and subscribe to a **podcast**, which can be played on MP3 players. Audio podcasts are audio-only. They include radio programs, news reports, and even language lessons. Video podcasts are just like audio podcasts, but they include audio and video.

Examples: BBC.com, Apple.com, NPR.com, Ted.com, News.Discovery.com

Online Communities

In **online communities**, users have common interests (such as gaming or traveling), and they communicate online. The format of the websites allows users to share information.

Examples: TripAdvisor.com, Sk-gaming.com

Virtual Social Worlds and Virtual Game Worlds

Virtual worlds simulate the experience of real life through the use of an *avatar*, or a digital version of oneself, that interacts with the online community. Users can chat with each other in real time. **Examples: Secondlife.com, Worldof Warcraft.us.battle.net**

Media Sharing

Media sharing websites allow visitors to post their own videos, photos, or other content and view content that other users have posted. Many companies use YouTube to create channels that users can subscribe to. **Examples: Youtube.com, Flickr.com**

Online and Video Chatting

Online and video chatting websites allow users to chat with one another, either through typing or with telephone or video calling. Most of the websites are free.

Examples: Skype.com, FaceTime.com, Yahoo.com, Google.com, MSN.com, Apple.com

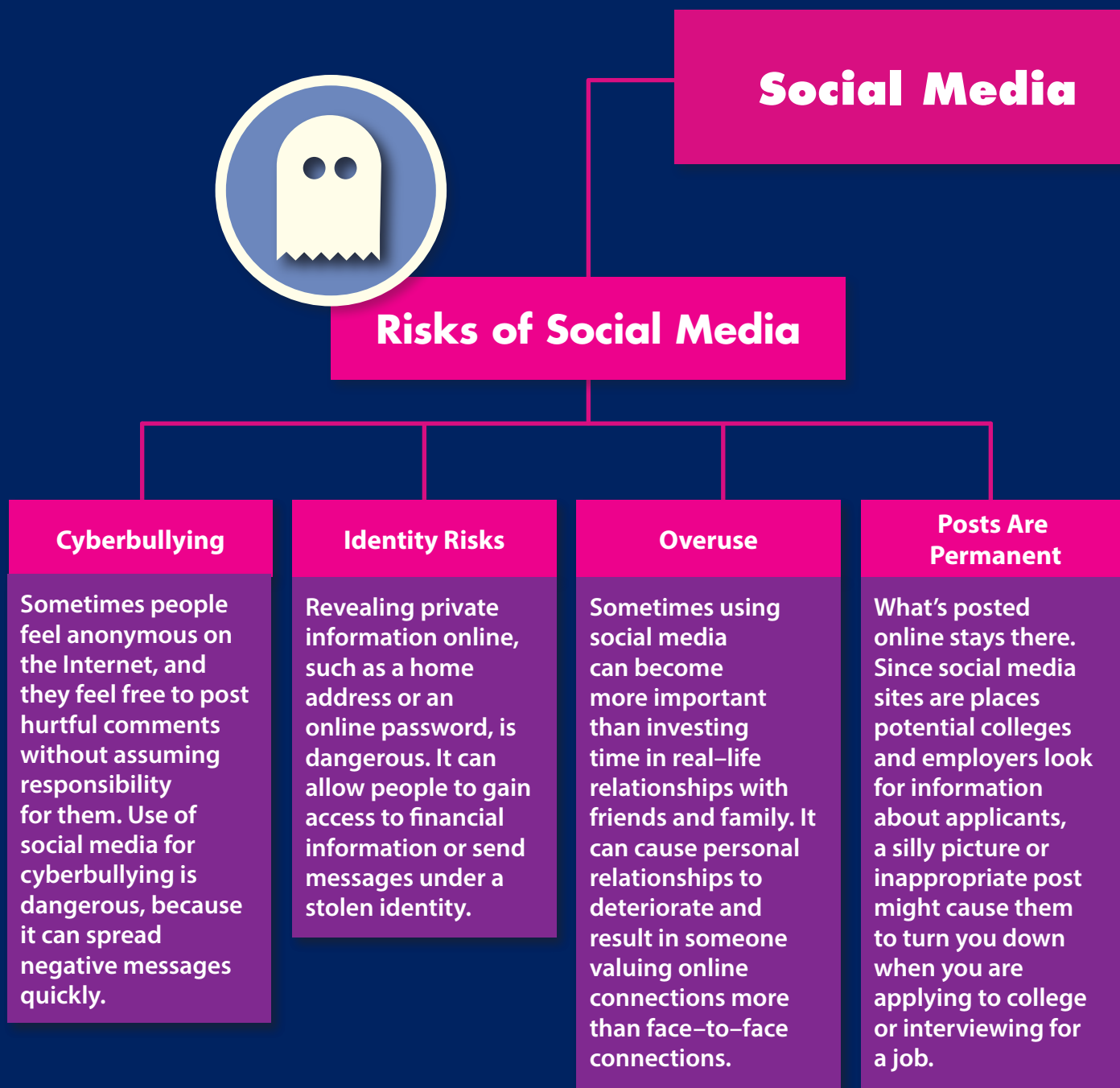
Web Conferencing and Webinars

Web conferencing allows users to participate in an online meeting or a **webinar**, which is a presentation, seminar, or workshop conducted over the Web. **Examples: Webex.com, GoToMeeting.com**



Risks and Rewards of Social Media

Social media can help us build strong relationships and connect with old friends, business colleagues, and family members, but it can also put our privacy at risk and negatively affect our social relationships in real life. Learn more about the risks and rewards of social media by reading the information shown below.





Rewards of Social Media

Join Communities

There are forums and communities for every topic, from gaming to traveling. Users can connect to worldwide communities that share similar interests and values.

Connect Instantly

Family, friends, and business colleagues who have lost touch can reconnect through social media, regardless of where they are.

Self-Expression

Through blogs and other social media applications, people have a platform for creative expression and the exchange of ideas.

Collaboration

Applications such as Facebook, Skype, and Twitter can help students share ideas and work together on group projects, even if they can't get together in person.

Real-Time Information

Social media websites have up-to-the-second information on news, social events, and music.

Uses of Social Media

Since the debut of social media, the ways in which it can be used have expanded dramatically. **The three primary ways we use social media are discussed below:**

1 Personal Use of Social Media

From communication to information sharing, social media offers convenience for many personal uses. **Common examples are shown below:**

- **Writing a blog post** about a favorite story, movie, or song
- **Chatting with a friend** who lives in a different state
- **Sharing photographs** of a family trip
- **Sending a personal message** to a relative
- **Keeping friends updated** by status posts on websites such as Facebook





2 Academic Use of Social Media

You might think that using a search engine such as Google is the only way to do research online. However, social media also can be a powerful research tool. Social media such as YouTube, blogs, and podcasts puts the world at our fingertips in seconds. But, as was discussed in Chapter 7, not every website is a credible source. This is especially true of social media, because much of the content on these sites consists of personal opinions, not factual information attributed to credible sources. We have to be very cautious when using social media for academic research. **Keep the following in mind:**

- **Who** posted the information?
- Is the person who posted the information an **expert** on the subject?
- If the source of the information is not the poster, is the source identified? Is that source **credible**?

3 Professional Use of Social Media

Social media isn't only for fun and for school; it also has professional uses, some of which are listed below:

- Professional networking sites, such as LinkedIn, allow people to make **professional connections** and network online.
- Employer-created blogs, wikis, or community pages help connect employees with **colleagues and customers**.
- Professional websites or online portfolios can be used to display employees' **professional achievements**.



**Where Else
Might You See...**

Social Media?

- Companies often use social media to market products, poll customer opinions, and create a dialogue with customers.
- Municipalities use social media to interact with and communicate important messages to the community.
- News agencies use social media to present current news to a large readership.

Always remember to check the credibility of the site you are on before you trust the information you find there.

Chapter 8 Assessment

What Do You Think?

Write three paragraphs that follow the outline below. Your paragraphs should reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of social media.

- 1 Describe the advantages of social media and include two examples.
- 2 Describe the disadvantages of social media and include two examples.
- 3 State and justify why it is important to think about the advantages and disadvantages of using social media.

Challenge: What Would You Do?

Read the scenarios below. For each, write one paragraph explaining what you would do if you were faced with a similar situation and why you would take that action.

1 Theresa and Abigail have been assigned a group project that requires them to conduct research together using the Internet. However, Abigail will be out of town until the day the assignment is due. Abigail says she will have Internet access while she is gone, but Theresa is worried because they can't work together in person.

If you were Theresa and Abigail, how would you collaborate and communicate from a distance?

2 Last weekend, Derek had a birthday party at a skate park, where his friend Rachel tried skateboarding for the first time. She fell often, but she was proud of herself for trying something new. The next day, Rachel's feeling of accomplishment faded when she checked Facebook and saw that Derek had posted pictures of her falling. Below the photos, people had posted comments that made fun of her. Embarrassed, Rachel asked Derek to delete the photos, but he refused.

If you were Rachel, what would you do?



Extension Activities



Activity 1 Social Media Matching

Using what you have learned in this chapter, match each social media tool seen below with its correct definition.

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 Wiki | 2 Blog | 3 Podcast |
| 4 Microblog | 5 Virtual world | 6 Social network |
| 7 Online communities | 8 Webinar | |

- A. This tool allows us to connect to others online through status updates, wall posts, and shared photos and videos. These sites are formed around user profiles, allowing users to share information such as favorite movies and music.
- B. This tool simulates the experience of real life through the use of an avatar, or a digital version of one's self. Users can chat with other users.
- C. This tool has a small character limit. It is used to keep people up to date on our "status," such as what we're doing at the moment or what is on our mind.
- D. This tool consists only of audio and can include radio show segments, news reports, and even lessons on how to speak another language.
- E. This tool allows community members to add to and edit posted information on a shared space.
- F. On these websites, people share similar interests, such as gaming or traveling, and they communicate online. The format of the websites allows users to share information and tips with others.
- G. This is a presentation, seminar, or workshop conducted over the Web.
- H. In these online journals, users can offer advice on different subjects or write about a variety of topics, including travel experiences and day-to-day life.

continued



Extension Activities

Activity 2 Short Answer

Write a short response to each of the prompts below.

- 1 Define the term *social media*.
- 2 List the three uses of social media, and provide one example of each.
- 3 Define the four risks of social media.
- 4 List three rewards of social media, and provide one example of each.
- 5 Explain the difference between academic and professional use of social media.

Activity 3 True or False?

Using the information from this chapter, determine whether each statement is true or false.

- 1 Social media is used only for personal reasons, such as sharing photos and keeping in touch with friends.
- 2 It's safe to share your social media passwords and private information online.
- 3 Anyone can post information using social media tools, so it's important to check the credibility of information when using the Web for research.
- 4 Creative expression and collaboration are two rewards of using social media.
- 5 Social media is used in the workplace to communicate with employees, colleagues, and customers.



Hands-On



Create Your Own Social Media Website

Apply what you have learned in this chapter to create a new social media website. You may want to work with a partner or a small group. Follow the steps below.

Step 1 Social Networking Assessment

- Create a table similar to **Table 8.1**, which is shown on the next page.
- Think about your favorite social networking sites and write down at least five of their basic features (such as photo sharing, status updates, and profiles) in the “Social Media Feature” column.
- Rate each of your features in the “Rating” column from 1 to 5, with 1 being most important and 5 being least important.
- Next, assess the risks and rewards of each, writing each idea in the corresponding column. Think about how your new social networking site will create solutions to these risks, and write a complete sentence about how your site will protect the privacy of visitors in the “Solutions to Risks” column.

Step 2 Create a Title

Come up with a title that reflects the purpose of your social networking site. Choose a title that will give visitors to the site a quick snapshot of what your site is all about and why they should be interested in visiting. Here’s a tip: Think about what your social networking site focuses on. Is it targeted toward a certain age group? Toward people whose main priority is to share photos and videos? Take the main focus of your site and come up with a title that reflects its primary purpose.

Step 3 Create a Design

Now that you have a title, it’s time to think about design. Reference **Figure 8.1** to see how a new social media website might look. Think about colors, graphics, and page layout. What will attract your users the most?

Check with your teacher for design guidelines. You may use a design program to create the look of your online site or draw your design on paper or poster board using colored pencils, markers, and photographs. When you have finished, present your social media site to your class.

continued



Hands-On

Table 8.1

Social Networking Assessment				
Social Media Feature	Rating	Rewards	Risks	Solutions to Risks
Photo sharing	2	Share pictures easily with family and friends.	Someone can post a negative image of yourself or others.	Include privacy settings that can make photos not visible to certain site visitors.
Instant messaging				

Figure 8.1

Sample Social Media Website

Site Title

User Profile

A profile will show up here when it is clicked on from the newsfeed or chat areas. If no profile is clicked, this will default to the user profile.

Video Screen

Video of the person the user is chatting with appears here.

News Feed

This shows status updates, new pictures, wall posts, etc.

Chat Window

Users type to communicate with friends instead of (or in addition to) video chatting.

Online Friends

This shows who is online by their profile picture. It continually updates/scrolls.