

ONLINE REGISTRATION

Identify Elements of Social Networking Site (SNS) Accounts

Online services include sites that require users to register and create personal profiles prior to using their service. Best practices include:

- Review the terms of service for each site to determine their privacy policy and data sharing agreements with third party entities.
- Avoid filling in optional identity fields for online profiles. Only fill in the minimum required identity information.
- Never give online services access to your social security number or physical address.
- Deny options to upload and share your existing contacts.
- Immediately after completing the registration process, check and if necessary, change privacy settings to protect your personally identifiable information.

First and Last Name

First and last name are mandatory for almost all SNS accounts. Some users choose to use their first and middle name instead.

Gender

Gender is a common field to fill out on the registration page, used mostly for future content customization. Whenever possible, avoid making a distinction when signing up.

Email Address

Email is the second most common requirement for creating a SNS account. It is used to verify your account during registration and as a credential for future log-ins.

Sexual Orientation and Relationship Status

These fields are most often required in online dating sites but are optional on most other SNS.

Cell Phone Number

Registering for email accounts frequently requires a verifiable phone number. Refrain from using services that require phone numbers or opt to use an alternative method to verify accounts when available.

Username

Username is unique to each user account, unlike first and last name which can be shared across multiple users. DO NOT include personally identifiable information, such as last name or birthday when creating your username.

Location

Location information is required to various levels of granularity depending on the service. It may include address, zip code, and/or country.

Employment Information

Company and employment information are required for professionally-oriented SNS services.

Birthday

Birthdays are used to verify the user's age and customize age-appropriate content for the user on the site. This information is sometimes published on the SNS profile and must be removed retroactively.

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IDENTITY INFORMATION REQUIRED DURING ONLINE SERVICES REGISTRATION							
	LinkedIn	Amazon	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Pinterest	Spotify
First and Last Name	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Username	*Name by Default	*Name by Default	X	X	X	*Name by Default	Optional
Password	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Birthday	X	Optional	Optional		Optional		X
Gender	Optional		Optional		Optional	Optional	X
Email Address	X	X	**Optional	X	X	X	X
Phone Number		Optional	**Optional	Optional	Optional		Optional
Country	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zip Code	X	X					
Employment	X						
Job Title	X						
Facebook Account	Optional	Optional	X	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional

*These sites use the "name" provided as the Username when setting up the account instead of asking Users to create a "handle."

**Facebook requires a mobile number or email address when registering. Consider using a Google Voice number for two factor authentication.

It is easier to sign-up or register on a social media site when you link other accounts to it. Usually, it is a simple click of the button. However, it is NOT recommended to do this.

If someone gains access to your Facebook account and you have signed up for other social media accounts using Facebook, then that likely gives them access to those other accounts, as well. Treat social media account creation just like your passwords; create new and unique ones for each site you sign up for.

Additionally, it is always best to use a current email for any social media account. This way, if something were to happen to your account, you're immediately notified and can quickly address the problem. If you have an email account that you do not check routinely, or that has suffered a major data breach, you might not know if someone hacked into your social media account(s) until it is too late.

Online identity can be described as an aggregate of accounts and account-related activities associated with a single person. Common identity elements required by SNS for creating accounts and participating in their online services, shown above represent vulnerabilities to your identity if not properly protected.