5 little-known Facebook tips and tricks to make your News Feed less frustrating

With these quick fixes, using Facebook will be far less infuriating.

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The problem with social media is that it requires you to be social with other people, and other people can do things that dampen your enjoyment of, say, your Facebook feed. But there's no need to let technology exacerbate interpersonal conflict, or vice-

versa. Follow these tips to reduce your Facebook frustration and minimize the potential for messy social media drama.

Tip #1: Lock down your privacy settings

You may not be the kind of jerk who tags someone in a photo when they're looking especially triple-chinned, but you may know those jerks, and you certainly don't want them posting their triple-chinned photos of you on your timeline without your say-so.

So don't give anyone the opportunity to post stuff to your timeline. Go to your Timeline and Tagging settings, then change who can post on your timeline to you and you alone.

(https://cms-images.idgesg.net/images/article/2015/10/facebook-timeline-and-tagging-100618628-orig.png)

This section is your best hope for changing what people can see and post on your Timeline.

But say you and your friends use each other's Facebook pages as ways to share links with one another and start conversations. And say you have one Facebook friend who constantly posts nonsense on your wall, but you can't unfriend this person without it prompting a lot of in-person conflict? You'll take two steps:

First, you'll go through your Friends list and turn the most likely offenders into mere acquaintances. To do this, go to your profile page, click on the Friends tab, then hover over the people you'd like to restrict. You have the option to make someone an acquaintance, put them in the "limited profile" group or put them in the "restricted" group.

The purpose of the limited profile group is to prevent people from viewing certain content. In other words, if you're the kind of Facebook poster who enjoys posting political articles and you have Facebook friends who can't play nicely in the comments, you might put those friends on limited profile.

You then have the option to specify which group sees which posts, and you can exploit that option in two ways. You can set it under the Privacy settings with "Who can see my stuff?" or you can set it with each individual post you make on Facebook. If you'd prefer not to think about who's checking each post, do the former. If you post a healthy mix of content for different groups, do the latter.

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Change who can see your posts if you don't want to have to think about it every time you post.

If that's too much work, then you can turn on the option to review the posts friends tag you in before they appear on your timeline. This way, the picture your cousin posts of you napping after your second helping of stuffing may still appear on his timeline, but it won't automatically pop up on yours. To do this, go to your Timeline and Tagging settings, then enable the "Review posts friends tag you in before they appear on your timeline?" option.

People in your limited profile group still have the potential to see the posts which are set to be shared with all friends. People in the restricted group are basically there because it would be too awkward to unfriend them, but you really don't care to share

anything with them at all. The only things that people in the restricted group can see on your page are the posts you set to "public."

Now you've managed to control the content that people post on your page, and you've managed to reduce the likelihood that people will stir the pot in the comments on your posts. Unfortunately, there is no one good way to keep that jerkstore cousin from posting your post-Thanksgiving nap picture on his own Facebook page. There used to be a method for preventing people from tagging you, but Facebook quietly disappeared it a while ago. (People are still clamoring for it (https://www.facebook.com/notes/techniqued/how-to-prevent-users-from-tagging-you-in-facebook-photos-and-videos/10150325768080392).)

So you'll have to resort to the non-tech hack: Ask people to please not tag you in photos or posts.

Tip #2: Consider a plug-in

There's a browser extension called F.B. Purity (http://www.fbpurity.com/features.htm) that does a great job of sweeping a lot of cruft off your feed, like suggested posts, related posts, sponsored posts, or game invitations. I like it for two key features: It turns auto-play off in videos (you must click to play) and it lets you hide trending topics, which is not a bad thing if you're spoiler-averse (a lot of people post about television shows and sports) or not in a place to deal with seeing an endless parade of tragic headlines.

Tip #3: Unfollow liberally

Note that unfollowing is not the same thing as unfriending. You can unfollow the people you're friends with—maybe they post too many selfies, maybe their statuses are ceaseless litanies of woe—and remain Facebook friends.

Why would you go to this trouble? Because sometimes, in order to maintain peace in face-to-face interactions, you have to play nicely online. So stop getting bummed out by your cousin's vaguebooking (i.e. statuses like "Sometimes, you really find out

who's on your side"). The next time he posts, just wander on over to the upper-right corner of that post and click the "unfollow" option. You'll never have to wonder who's stabbed him in the back again.
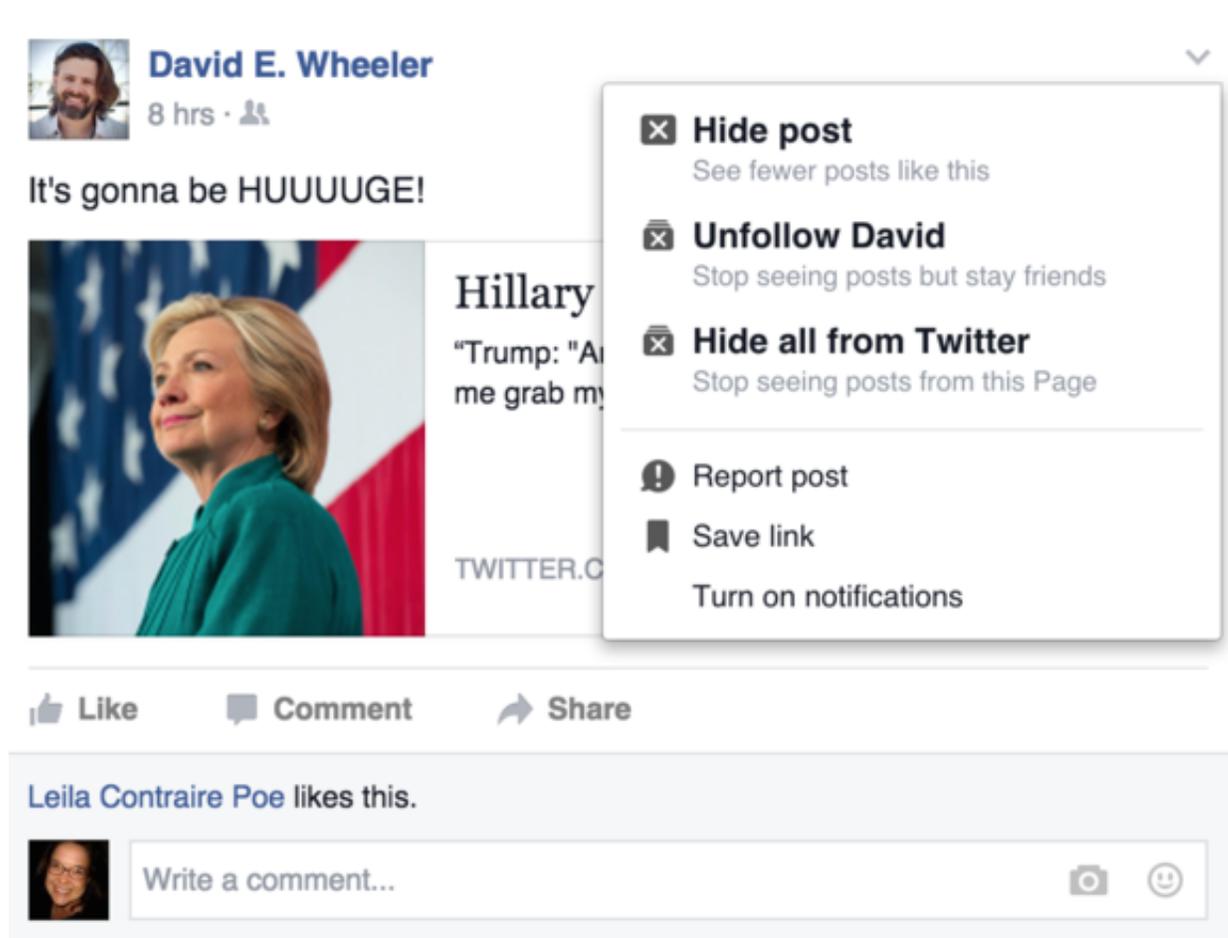

David, if you're reading this, I didn't really unfollow you. I'm just using you to illustrate how you would unfollow someone.

Now, let's say a second Facebook friend is constantly posting links from a site that you loathe, but every so often, they post something funny, so you'd like to keep them around. The next time they post something from that specific site, click on the upper-right corner and select the "Hide all from [site]" option. If anyone in your friends group makes a post linking to that site, you'll never know.

And if you ever get curious about exactly who and what you've unfollowed in your decluttering spree, you can click on the little triangle in the upper-right corner, select the "News Feed Preferences" option, then see who you've unfollowed. You then have the option to reconnect with those you've unfollowed.

Tip #4: Sort your groups and pages

Groups are a great way to keep in touch with very specific bunches of people, but not all groups are created equal. You can add different groups to your Favorites list and they'll appear higher up on the left-side navigation bar under "Favorites," so you can quickly click on the swimming group to see if anyone's down for a brisk 7 p.m. swim, or you can check your college newspaper to see what fellow alums are up to. And then you can leave the groups you only check intermittently down, down at the bottom of the column.
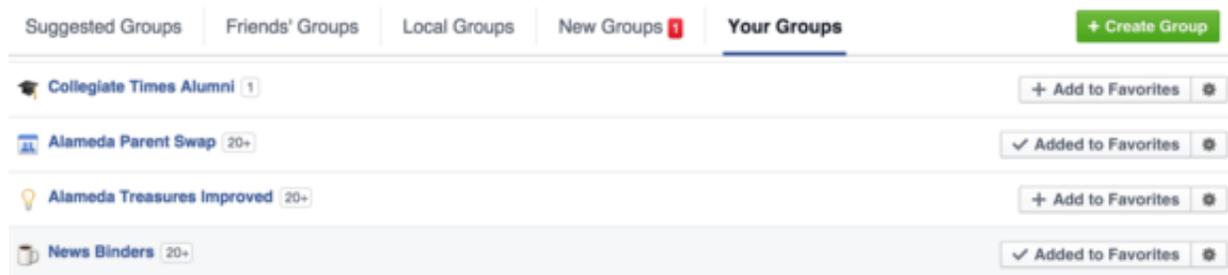
You manage this from your groups setting, which you get to by hovering over the "Groups" label on the left navigation area.

This tip also applies to Facebook pages. You can favorite them to push them higher on the left-hand navigation. Another way to make sure you see all your favorite page updates without bloating the Favorites section is to create a list of all the pages you like on Facebook. The feed of those pages' updates will appear in the lower section of the left-side navigation bar, and you can just scroll through it. I like lists for hyperfocusing content: a list for local pages like swap groups and the parks department, a list for retailers I like, a list for news sources I like, and so on.

Tip #5: Be a model citizen on Facebook

It's easier than you think to avoid being a jerk online. If you follow steps 1–4 above, you'll have already headed off many unpleasant incidents at the pass. The following tips will help you avoid causing any future unpleasant incidents.

Watch your tone. As communications consultant Laura Mecoy points out, "Simple, old-fashioned words like 'please' and 'thank you' will help." And Jonathan Poston of Yideo.com said, "Don't assume everyone appreciates your special sense of humor. It's one thing to be a certain way at family gatherings where there is sufficient context to decipher or ignore jokes, but jokes are often misread or misunderstood on social media."

If you're getting angry, take it offline. There's nothing to be gained from airing out your grievances with anyone via Facebook. Not only will you not resolve your original conflict, you'll be creating a new problem. Many people have their coworkers and professional associates on their friends list, Mecoy notes, and nobody appreciates having their dirty laundry aired in front of the boss.

Err on the side of privacy. Advice columnist April Masini told me, "While one family member is thrilled to have the family reunion photos posted all over the internet, others may feel that it creates problems for them—at work, with significant others, etc. So post your holiday celebrations, but consider the privacy of others, and consider a selfie instead of a group shot."

The same mindset–protect other people's privacy–applies to posting photos of other people without asking them. Masini suggests emailing or texting the photo to its subject and asking if it's OK to post.

And finally: Do not announce someone else's pregnancy, the birth of a baby, or the death of a loved one without getting permission first.

Finally, **remember that social media is a mass medium**. Jennifer Grygiel, who teaches social media at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, said, "You need to remember that most social media are a form of mass communication. And if you constantly communicate with family members using mass communication methods you are going to have issues."

In other words, the best way to use Facebook? As a reminder of who you'd like to talk to one-on-one.

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