

# Post. Tweet. Friend. **WHAT?**

by S. Kim Henson



**Until her death at 104, Ivy Bean, of Great Britain, was known as “the world’s oldest Twitter user.”**

**A**t age 102, Ivy joined Facebook® but switched to Twitter® because the former only allows 5,000 friends and she said Twitter was easier to use. She tweeted daily to her nearly 57,000 followers about watching “Deal or No Deal” on television, eating “smashingly good” ice cream, and taking a nod. When she shared her love for pop singer/songwriter, Peter Andre, he got word of her tweet and paid Ivy a visit. One of Ivy’s profile pictures on Twitter showed Andre kissing her on the forehead.

According to research by The Nielsen Company, 6 million more users 65 and older are on the Internet compared to five years ago. The amount of time seniors are spending online also has increased. The third most visited site is Facebook, following Google and Windows Media Player.

The Pew Research Center



AP Images

reports in the last year the number of adults 50 and older using social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace™, and LinkedIn® jumped by 42 percent. Twitter users include 11 percent of those 50 to 64 years old and five percent of those 65 and over. Although e-mail continues to be the most popular online communication among those 50 and older, this same group is the fastest growing on the social network scene.

### Reach Out and Touch

Advantages common to social networking sites include the user-friendliness to add links, upload videos, post photos, send messages, chat online, and share personal updates with lots of friends.

Social networks also offer ways to:

- stay in touch with family and friends, especially those who are long distance;
- reconnect with past relationships;

### What in the world is out there in the world of social networking?

- Facebook (FB), as of 2010, is the most popular social networking website with more than 500 million worldwide users, ages 13 and up. The site allows users to add friends, send messages, write on friends' walls, chat back and forth, and post updates and photos.
- MySpace is the next largest social network and offers similar features to Facebook.
- LinkedIn is the business world's version of Facebook and MySpace.
- Twitter is a microblogging site whose slogan, "What's happening?" describes what users post on their tweets, short updates of no more than 140 characters (letter, numbers, and symbols).



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Courtesy of Neil Gussman

### What in the world does that mean?

Blog — a Web log (get it, blog) usually with up-to-date posts, like a not-so-private journal

Blogging — adding posts to a blog

Post — an entry on your blog or a message on a Facebook wall, available for everyone to read

Common abbreviations

LOL means “Laughing out loud”

BTW means “By the way”

BFN means “Bye for now”

- find and network with people who have similar interests and hobbies;

- monitor children and their friends, if you are responsible for tweens or teens;

- share your faith through online prayer requests, posting Bible verses and devotionals,

and through outreach opportunities like Global Media Outreach (an Internet ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ — <http://www.globalmediaoutreach.com/>).

### Depending on Facebook

Neil Gussman of Philadelphia was 57 years old when his Army Aviation unit was deployed to Iraq. When they arrived, no one could afford cell phones, so they quickly turned to the slow, reliable Internet available on base. He communicated on Facebook with church members and connected with high school friends. He even received orders for a mission on Facebook.

Gussman tried Twitter, but he said, “The pace is frantic. Facebook allows more grace and space in communicating. It is a good way to keep in touch and share information about events, family milestones, and prayer requests. And since so many people are on it, it is easier to get help.”

### What to Choose


Choosing which site(s) to join depends on why you’re connecting with the online crowd, how you will use the site, and where you feel most at home. Edie Melson, a social networking expert, is an online missionary with Global Media Outreach

and a Christian conference instructor for workshops on Web writing. She said, "For communicating with friends of like ages, the preference is Facebook. Since tweeting is more like texting and that's how young people are communicating these days, the best choice for keeping up with them is Twitter."

## Where to Start

Getting started can be as simple as asking your children or grandchildren to help you set up and navigate a social networking site. Basic social networking classes are offered at local universities, community colleges, and technical schools, and most towns and cities have nearby computer-related services like the Geek Squad.

If you're more of a social networking do-it-yourselfer, Melson suggests Mashable ([www.mashable.com](http://www.mashable.com)), a site that shares social media news and Web tips. On the site, mash (or click on) "Guide Books," and you're privy to thorough manuals all about Facebook and Twitter.

Although technology will never replace a good conversation with friends, online connections are invaluable during transitions like family relocation, retirement, and even the challenges of aging. Before you know it, you'll be part of an online community who is friending, following, posting, and blogging. By the way, if you start Skyping before I do, send me a tweet. 

**S. Kim Henson** lives with her husband, John, in Myrtle Beach, S.C. When she's not writing on his Facebook wall and e-mailing him, they actually talk in person. He taught her most of what she knows about technology until she left him and their kids way behind to join the world of blogging and tweets. For more, check out [www.skimhenson.com](http://www.skimhenson.com).

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## Stay Online with Smarts and Safety

- Take cues as to whether your kids and grandkids want to be friends on social networking sites. You may want to wait for them to ask you.
- Show respect and think about comments on your grandkids' photos, putting messages on their wall, or asking their friends to be your friend. It may mortify a teenager for you to post, "Hi Sugar Lump ... Love, Grandma."
- Avoid showing up too often on your grandchild's wall, chatting with them and their friends, or asking meddling questions unless you have a real concern.
- Steer clear of haphazardly giving out personal information.
- Before you respond to a friend request, check out the person by looking at his or her photos and information.
- Share only what you want everyone to know. For example, steer clear of sharing that you're lonely because you live alone or you are leaving your home unattended to go on a cruise.



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