

Facebook forces Timeline; tips to hide users' past

January 25 2012, By ANICK JESDANUN , AP Technology Writer

Facebook will start requiring people to switch to a new profile format known as Timeline, making photos, links and personal musings from the past much easier to find.

Timeline is essentially a scrapbook of your whole life on Facebook, compared with a snapshot of you today found on Facebook's traditional profile page. Once activated, Timeline replaces the current profile.

Although some people have already voluntarily switched to Timeline, Facebook hadn't made that mandatory. Beginning Tuesday, Facebook is telling some users that they have seven days to clean up their [profiles](#) before Timeline gets automatically activated. Facebook is rolling out the requirement to others over the next few weeks.

At some point, even those who haven't logged on to Facebook in a while will be automatically switched.

Timeline doesn't expose anything that wasn't available for sharing in the past. Many of those older posts had always been available. People could get to them by continually hitting "Older Posts," although most wouldn't have bothered. Timeline allows people to jump to the older material more quickly.

Timeline also doesn't necessarily reflect the fact that your circle of friends has likely expanded in recent years. A party photo you posted in 2008 to a small group of friends would be more visible to relatives,

bosses and others you may have added as friends since then.

You'll have a week to curate the Timeline by moving stuff around, hiding photos or featuring them more prominently on your page.

Some things to consider:

- You can change [privacy settings](#) on individual items to control who has access. You might want to narrow embarrassing photos to your closest friends or delete some posts completely, or at least hide them so only you can see them.
- You can change the date on a post. For example, if you took a few months to post photos from a trip to Portugal, you can move them to appear with other posts from the time you took that trip. You can also add where you were, retroactively using a location feature that Facebook hadn't offered until recently.
- For major events in your life, you can click on a star to feature them more prominently. You can hide the posts you'd rather not showcase.
- Besides your traditional profile photo - your headshot - you can add what Facebook calls a cover photo. It's the image that will splash across the top and can be a dog, a hobby or anything else that reflects who you are. Keep in mind the dimensions are more like a movie screen than a traditional photo, so a close-up portrait of your face won't work well, but one of you lying horizontally will. But you don't even have to be in it.
- You can add things before you joined Facebook, back to when you were born. Life events can include when you broke your arm and whom you were with then, or when you spoke your first word or got a tattoo. You can add photos from childhood or high school as well.

- If you feel overwhelmed with so many posts to go through, start with your older ones. Those are the ones you'd need to be most careful about because you had reason to believe only a few friends would see them.
- Click on Activity Log to see all of your posts at a glance and make changes to them one by one. Open [Facebook](#) in a new browser tab first, though. That way, you can have one tab for the log and the other for the main Timeline.

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Citation: Facebook forces Timeline; tips to hide users' past (2012, January 25) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-01-facebook-timeline-users.html>

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