

Facebook tries to win back teens by letting them post publicly

October 16 2013, by Jessica Guynn



Facebook Inc. is lifting restrictions on teens to let them share more information publicly in a bid to regain the popularity it has lost to

Twitter, Snapchat and other social networks.

Before the change, [teens](#) ages 13 to 17 could share information only with [friends](#) or friends of friends. Now Facebook is giving them more control over what information they share publicly.

"Teens," the company said in a blog post, "want to be heard."

With the new policy, teens' [privacy](#) settings will automatically share information only with friends - but they will have the ability to change those settings.

Privacy watchdogs immediately cried foul. Facebook says its updated teen privacy policy now mirrors its competitors'. The changes were to begin rolling out Wednesday.

Facebook is ubiquitous among teens. Some 94 percent of teens are said to have Facebook accounts.

But Facebook has been overshadowed in recent years even by its own photo-sharing service Instagram, along with other social networks that are seen as being a bit hipper than Facebook and where their parents don't hang out.

Pew Research Center's Internet Project recently found that many teens take their privacy very seriously. Teens who choose to change their settings will be asked twice if they are sure they want to [share information](#) that broadly, Facebook said.

Privacy watchdogs warned Wednesday that Facebook still isn't doing enough to protect young users. Privacy groups recently sent a letter to the Federal Trade Commission asking it to examine the data Facebook collects on teens.

Jeffrey Chester, executive director for the Center for Digital Democracy, called on the FTC to step in and protect teen privacy on Facebook.

"Facebook is being dishonest with parents and teens. To parents and teens, Facebook is claiming they are giving them more options to protect their privacy. But in reality, they are making a teen's information more accessible, now that they have the option to post publicly," said Jeffrey Chester, executive director for the Center for Digital Democracy.

"Today's announcement actually removes a safeguard that teens currently have, that they only can expose (share) their posts with friends of friends. Under Facebook's new plan, a teen can share their information with anyone on Facebook or the Internet."

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