

Worried about being on Facebook? Some options explained

March 22 2018, by Laurent Barthelemy



Some experts and consumer rights groups say that users should help shift the balance of power between the social network giant and individuals by legal means

A snowballing Facebook scandal over the hijacking of personal data

from millions of its users has many wondering whether it's time to restrict access to their Facebook information or even leave the social network altogether, with the #deletefacebook movement gaining traction.

Here are some options open to the worried Facebook user.

Put it to sleep

Putting a Facebook [account](#) on hold used to be difficult but has become a lot easier.

To deactivate their account, users need to go on their "settings" page, then on to "manage account", where they can "deactivate" their account. Facebook defines this action as putting activity "on hold".

The move disables a user's profile and removes their name and pictures from most things they have shared.

Some [information](#) may still remain visible, like a user's name in a friend's list, or messages exchanged with friends.

If they have second thoughts, users can easily restore a de-activated profile.

Kill the account

Deleting an account is a more radical step, as users will not be able to access it again once they've gone for that option.

Facebook warns users that it can take up to 90 days to purge the network of a user's posts.

Even so, some information is likely to stay online, for example messages sent to friends.

According to French data expert Nathalie Devillier there is also a chance that Facebook holds on to information about some users if asked to by US authorities in the name of national security.



Indian commuters pass a poster advertising Facebook's 'Live What You Love'

campaignaction for any attempt to influence polls by allowing data theft and even threatened to summon Zuckerberg if needed.

Be more alert

Facebook users can check with the network how much of their personal information is accessible on the network.

In "settings", the option "download a copy of your Facebook data" allows a user to do just that.

Once Facebook has double-checked a user's password, the site compiles and then e-mails a compressed file.

The file gives an overview of the pictures and videos a user has posted, their downloaded apps, message traffic with friends, their "likes", unfriended friends and ads clicked.

The information can be difficult to decrypt, as are some passages in Facebook's privacy rules.

It is possible to exercise some control over some ad preferences. This includes, for example, users deciding whether their relationship status can be used as a criterion for targeted ads.

Go after Facebook

Some experts and consumer rights organisations argue that rather than withdraw from Facebook, users should help shift the balance of power between the social network giant and individuals by legal means.

"We must be able to use the service without being under Facebook's surveillance," said Arthur Messaud at Quadrature du Net, a French organisation that defends the rights of internet users.

The group is planning a [class action suit](#) against Facebook in France, based on a new set of EU data protection rules that come into force in May, Messaud said.

He said one aim of the lawsuit is to force Facebook to seek explicit user consent for the use of data by, for example, ticking a box.

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