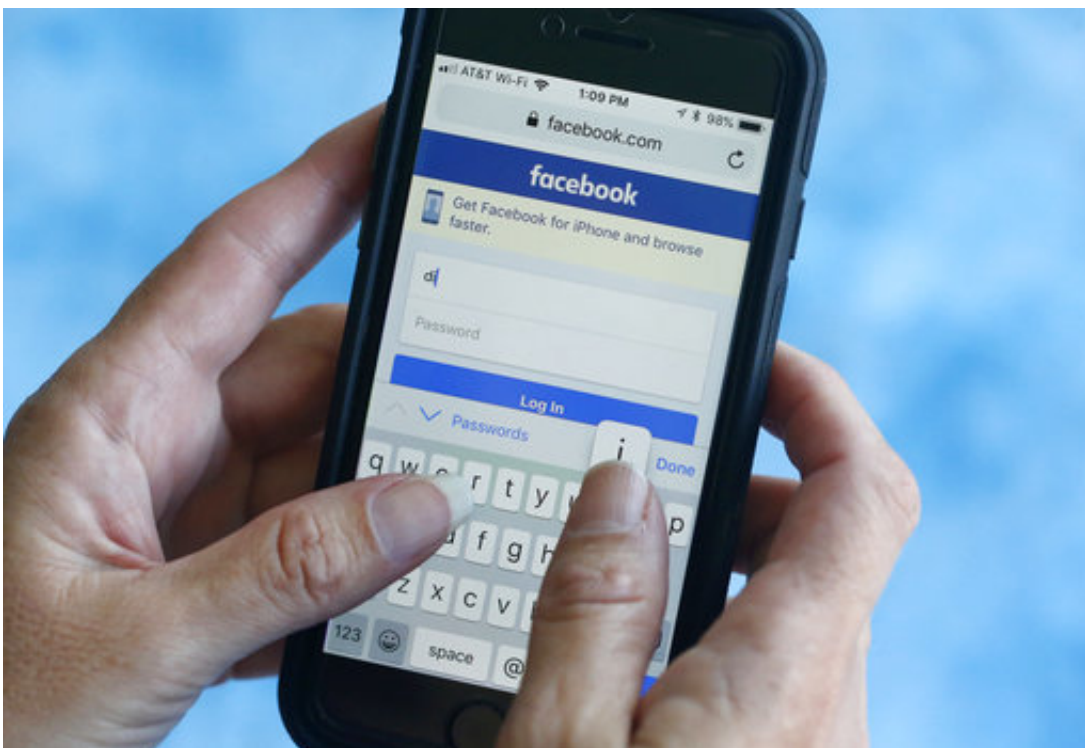


Breaking up (with Facebook) is hard to do: Here's how

December 21 2018, by Barbara Ortutay



In this Aug. 21, 2018 file photo, a Facebook start page is shown on a smartphone in Surfside, Fla. A growing number of people say they are deleting Facebook, or at least considering it. Before you take the plunge, remember to download your data, then, you can deactivate temporarily, or delete everything in a few steps. (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee, File)

Every relationship has a breaking point. Even yours with Facebook.

There's a way out, though the social network will try to win you back with promises to do better. Maybe even flowers.

For some users, though, the past two years of privacy scandals, election manipulation by Russian trolls, executive apologies and even the political disagreements with friends and relatives have become too much. The latest: an alarming New York Times report detailing the massive trove of user data that the company has shared with such companies as Apple, Netflix and Amazon.

A growing number of people say they are deleting Facebook, or at least considering it.

While Facebook has tried to address some of these problems, it's not enough for some users. Hard as it might seem to quit, especially for those entwined with it for years, it can be done.

Mostly.

GOODBYE FOREVER

Before deleting your [account](#), rescue your posts and photos. Facebook lets you download the data you've shared with Facebook since you joined. This includes your posts and photos, as well as the "activity log"—the history of everything you've done on Facebook, such as likes and comments on posts, use of apps and searches. The download also includes your profile, messages, list of friends and ads you've clicked on.

This process should give you a good—perhaps scary—idea of what Facebook has on you.

What you won't get are photos other people shared with you, even if you've been tagged. You need to save those individually. And some stuff

will remain, including what others have posted about you, your chats with others and your posts in Facebook groups (though your name will be grayed out). To delete all this, you'll need to sift through your "activity log," accessible through your profile page, and delete each item individually.

Once you've saved everything and gone through your activity log, sign in one last time. Go to bit.ly/198wIoI and click on the blue button. Facebook says the process could take a few days. Your delete request will be cancelled if you log back in during this time. Facebook says it may take up to 90 days for all the data associated with your account to be wiped, but you can't change your mind after the first few days are up.

If you used your Facebook account for third-party apps and sites, you'll need new usernames and passwords for each.

TRIAL SEPARATION

If you're not quite ready for a divorce, deactivating your account is an option. To do this, go to your account settings.

Deactivating means other people won't be able to see your profile, but if you log back in, the whole thing is canceled and you are "active" again. Ditto if you log into an outside app or site using your Facebook account.

FOMO (FEAR OF MISSING OUT)

Depending on whether you were a full-time Facebook addict or an occasional lurker, the psychological separation could prove harder or easier than the physical one. Facebook has become a one-stop shop for so many things. You can keep up with friends and family, find out about or create local events, buy and sell stuff, keep up with the news, raise money for a cause or join groups of like-minded people such as parents,

porch gardeners and people with a rare disease.

There are other places to do many of these things. There's Eventbrite for events, Letgo for buying and selling stuff, Peanut for moms to connect, Meetup to find and meet like-minded people, GoFundMe for raising money and Twitter, or, gasp, your local newspaper's website for the news. The difference is there's no single other place to do all these things, and your friends might not be there.

If you find your mind wandering back to Facebook as you go through your day, thinking how you might craft a post about a thought you've just had or an article you came across, it's OK. Let it go. It's all part of the breakup process.

And while you may not see updates about near-forgotten schoolmates or that random person you met six years ago, the people who matter most will stick around. For them, there's email, the phone, and meeting in person for coffee.

ABOUT THOSE OTHER APPS

If your boycott of Facebook has more to do with your view of the company than with tiring of the Facebook service, you might consider deleting Instagram, WhatsApp and Messenger as well—they are all owned by Facebook. Deleting your Facebook account won't affect your Instagram or WhatsApp account. If you want to keep using Messenger, you can create an account using your phone number instead of your Facebook profile.

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