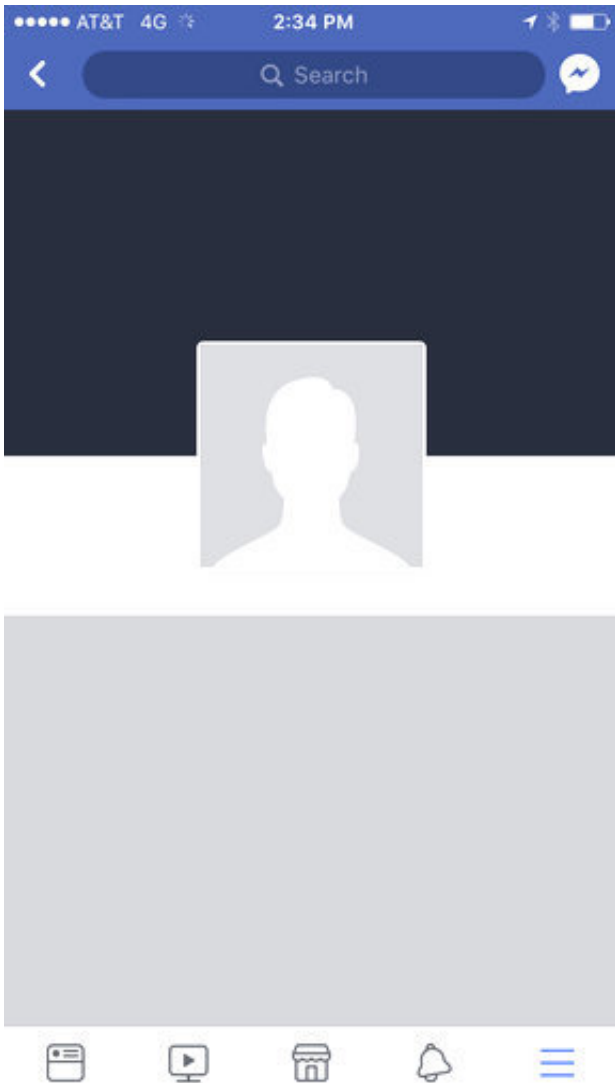


Fed up with Facebook? Here's how to break it off

23 March 2018, by Barbara Ortutay



This screenshot taken Wednesday, March 21, 2018, in New York, shows a recently deleted Facebook profile page. Before deleting your account, rescue your posts and photos. Facebook lets you download the data you've shared with Facebook since you joined. If you're not quite ready to delete Facebook, deactivating your Facebook is an option. (Facebook via AP)

Fed up with Facebook? You're not alone. A growing number of people are deleting it, or at

least wrestling with whether they should, in light of its latest privacy debacle—allegations that a Trump-linked data-mining firm stole information on tens of millions of users to influence elections.

Even before that, users have considered dumping Facebook after growing tired of political disagreements with friends and relatives. And studies have shown that the mindless scrolling that Facebook is so good for can leave us feeling depressed.

While Facebook has tried to address some of these problems, it's not enough for some users. If you are one of them, there are options. 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 contains your profile, messages, list of friends, ads you've clicked on and IP addresses you've used to connect to Facebook.

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/198wloI and click on the blue button. You can't get that from the settings page, as Facebook, it may seem, doesn't want you to leave. 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,

though likely not all at once. 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.

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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