

Facebook rules at a glance: What's banned, exactly?

24 April 2018, by Barbara Ortutay



In this March 29, 2018, file photo, the logo for Facebook appears on screens at the Nasdaq MarketSite in New York's Times Square. For the first time, Facebook is making public, on Tuesday, April 24, its detailed guidelines for determining what it will and won't allow on its service. (AP Photo/Richard Drew, File)

Facebook has revealed for the first time just what, exactly, is banned on its service in a new Community Standards document released on Tuesday. It's an updated version of the internal rules the company has used to determine what's allowed and what isn't, down to granular details such as what, exactly, counts as a "credible threat" of violence. The previous public-facing version gave a broad-strokes outline of the rules, but the specifics were shrouded in secrecy for most of Facebook's 2.2 billion users.

Not anymore. Here are just some examples of what the rules ban. Note: Facebook has not changed the actual rules—it has just made them public.

CREDIBLE VIOLENCE

Is there a real-world threat? Facebook looks for

"credible statements of intent to commit [violence](#) against any person, groups of people, or place (city or smaller)." Is there a bounty or demand for payment? The mention or an image of a specific weapon? A target and at least two details such as location, method or timing? A statement to commit violence against a vulnerable person or group such as "heads-of-state, witnesses and confidential informants, activists, and journalists" counts here too.

Also banned: instructions on "on how to make or use weapons if the goal is to injure or kill people," unless there is "clear context that the content is for an alternative purpose (for example, shared as part of recreational self-defense activities, training by a country's military, commercial video games, or news coverage)."

HATE SPEECH

"We define [hate speech](#) as a direct attack on people based on what we call protected characteristics—race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, sex, gender, gender identity, and serious disability or disease. We also provide some protections for immigration status," Facebook says. As to what counts as a direct attack, the company says it's any "violent or dehumanizing speech, statements of inferiority, or calls for exclusion or segregation."

There are three tiers of severity, ranging from comparing a protected group to filth or disease to calls to "exclude or segregate" a person our group based on the protected characteristics. Facebook does note that it does "allow criticism of immigration policies and arguments for restricting those policies."

GRAPHIC VIOLENCE

Images of violence against "[real people](#) or animals" with comments or captions that contain enjoyment

of suffering, humiliation and remarks that speak positively of the violence or "indicating the poster is sharing footage for sensational viewing pleasure" are prohibited. The captions and context matter in this case because Facebook does allow such images in some cases where they are condemned, or shared as news or in a medical setting. Even then, though, the post must be limited so only adults can see them and Facebook adds a warnings screen to the post.

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

"We do not allow content that sexually exploits or endangers children. When we become aware of apparent child exploitation, we report it to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), in compliance with applicable law. We know that sometimes people share nude images of their own children with good intentions; however, we generally remove these images because of the potential for abuse by others and to help avoid the possibility of other people reusing or misappropriating the images," Facebook says. Then, it lists at least 12 specific instances of children in a sexual context, saying the ban includes, but is not limited to these examples. This includes "uncovered female nipples for children older than toddler-age."

ADULT NUDITY AND SEXUAL ACTIVITY

"We understand that nudity can be shared for a variety of reasons, including as a form of protest, to raise awareness about a cause, or for educational or medical reasons. Where such intent is clear, we make allowances for the content. For example, while we restrict some images of female breasts that include the nipple, we allow other images, including those depicting acts of protest, women actively engaged in breast-feeding, and photos of post-mastectomy scarring," Facebook says. That said, the company says it "defaults" to removing sexual imagery to prevent the sharing of non-consensual or underage content. The restrictions apply to images of real people as well as digitally created content, although art—such as drawings, paintings or sculptures—is an exception.

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