

Social networking in today's world

Hands up those of you who like to chat online? How many of you use Facebook? Probably quite a few of you, as in today's world we can't seem to live without it. So what is a social network? It is a way of communicating with other people. Why do we use them? Because we like to communicate with other people, especially our family and our friends. It is a good way to keep in touch. There are many different forms of social networking. Probably the most popular today are Facebook, Skype, MySpace, Twitter, Google chat, Yahoo! Messenger and ICQ. All are different. So what is Facebook? It is a network that allows users to communicate with others using chat. It also allows you to upload photos etc. Skype allows users to telephone each other for free – if using another computer. It allows us to phone each other in different countries at a greatly reduced rate – the cost of a local landline call, thus transforming how we communicate with each other. Other similar networks allow one to telephone to far off countries at an even lower telephone rate than Skype charges.

The 'new' Skype gives a better sound performance - whereas before the sound quality was poor. Users today can see each other if they use a video camera. ICQ network has also upgraded itself. However, it tends not to be as popular today as it used to be. It depends on which country you are living in and what your friend's use, as to what you use and what is the most popular form of communicating. Twitter is also very popular today. People like to upload messages like "I just made a cup of tea." However, it came into its own during the Iranian election when the current government cracked down on its own population. It denied them the freedom of communication. Twitter users told the world what was really happening. Other networks like Unister, for university students, are used. Social networking sites like MySpace have rapidly evolved and will probably continue to do so. While Facebook and Skype remain the most popular today who knows what tomorrow's new technology will bring us!

Category: Lifestyle / Social Networking / Chat
Level: Intermediate / Upper Intermediate

EXERCISES

1. Social networking: What is social networking? Can you give any examples of social networking? What is your favourite social network? Go round the room swapping details.

2. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page two - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten are acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - we need to do some work!

3. Reading: Get students to read the passage aloud. Swap readers every paragraph.

4. Vocabulary: Students look through the article. Underline/highlight any vocabulary you do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through & explain any words or phrases you do not understand.

5. The article: Students look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

6. Let's think! Think of five social networks. Then add five reasons you might use social networks. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these?

Five social networks	Five reasons to use social networks
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

7. Let's think! Social networks: Think of three positive and negative points about social networks. Write them below. Compare and discuss with your partner.

Three positive points	Three negative points
1	1
2	2
3	3

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. Let's talk! Social networking: In pairs. You are in a pub discussing the best social networking sites. Discuss what sites you prefer and why you prefer to use

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them. Also what are the pros and cons of using them. 5-minutes.

9. Let's debate: In pairs. Students A think Facebook is best. Students B think otherwise – you think another social network is better. Explain why.

10. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) How many social networking sites are mentioned?
- 2) How did Twitter come into its own?
- 3) What does the new Skype give?
- 4) What happened in Iran?
- 5) What does Skype allow?

Student B

- 1) What is Facebook?
- 2) Why do we use social networks?
- 3) What is Unister?
- 4) What have rapidly evolved?
- 5) What has ICQ done?

11. Let's think! Social networks: Swap partners. With your new partner on the board write as many words to do with '**Social Networks**' as you can. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

12. Presentation on Social Networking: In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two minute presentation on: **Social Networking**. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation to the class. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the good and weak points on each presentation. Learn from the results.

13. Let's write an e-mail: Prepare and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **The best social network**. Explain your reasons. Use bullet points to help you. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

14. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) ICQ _____
- b) Twitter _____
- c) Skype _____
- d) Facebook _____

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) How useful are social networks?
- 3) What benefits do you get by using a social network?
- 4) Do you like chatting on social networks? Why? Why not?
- 5) Do you use a web cam?
- 6) Do you prefer to chat, speak or both when online with your friends?
- 7) Which is the newest social network?
- 8) Which is the oldest social network?
- 9) Have you managed to contact any of your old friends using social networks?
- 10) What business benefit is there for companies using social networks?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you think about what you've read?
- 2) What is your favourite social network? Why?
- 3) What is the worst social network? Why?
- 4) What social network do your friends use?
- 5) What would you do without a social network?
- 6) What three tips would you advise a newcomer to social networks?
- 7) How would you sell social networks to your friends to entice them to join?
- 8) Why do people use social networks?
- 9) Do you Tweet on Twitter?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! Social networks

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

In small groups talk about the social networks listed below. How can you use them? Choose a spokesperson who can present your ideas to the class at the end of your preparation. Present it visually or use the board etc... Try to be imaginative!

1	ICQ	5	My Space
2	Facebook	6	Twitter
3	Skype	7	Yahoo! Messenger
4	Google-chat	8	Other social networks

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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network

chat

online

landline

similar

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telephone

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students

freedom

popular

upload

technology

PUT THE ARTICLE BACK TOGETHER

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GRAMMAR

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings:
Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20

1	communicate	11	because
2	probably	12	especially
3	technology	13	upload
4	university	14	transforming
5	freedom	15	similar
6	popular	16	however
7	current	17	really
8	government	18	remain
9	evolved	19	rapidly
10	quality	20	tomorrow

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