

A short history of disappearing privacy on Facebook

Since Facebook launched in 2005 its default privacy settings have undergone radical changes, giving more access to personal data than many are aware of.

When I joined Facebook in 2005 I knew who could see my profile information – only my university

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network and my friends. A few years on, I was not so sure any more. Today I know to check my privacy settings regularly and adjust them to make my pictures, personal information and interests only accessible to those I want them to be accessible to.

Since Facebook launched in 2005, it went through a series of changes to its users' default privacy settings, including a [reclassification](#) of personal information. This was largely driven by Facebook's attempt to make its massive database of personal information profitable, by personalised advertising and giving access to companies.

In [2005](#), only name, picture, gender and network was available to all Facebook users, while all other information was restricted to your network or friends only. In 2007, default privacy settings made all information apart from contact info available to friends of friends and name, picture, gender and network to the entire internet. By April 2010, everyone on the internet had access to your 'Likes', photos, wall posts, friends and profile data, if you had not changed the default privacy settings.

This has often been a confusing and unclear process to users. Looking at Matt McKeon's [graphics](#), for 2005 and 2010, it is shocking to see how much of my private data became available freely via Facebook.

More recently, Facebook has been facing lawsuits from parents and criticism from user, and is aiming to make its privacy policy more [transparent](#). It has since changed its privacy settings and full detail on the new ones can be found on Facebook's own [Data Policy Page](#).

The lesson to take from the graphs is not to take your privacy for granted but to check and adjust your privacy settings according to your own wishes.

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