

## Argumentative Essay Prompt A2: SOCIAL NETWORKING

Be sure to annotate before filling out your Planning Web.

**ESSAY PROMPT:** In a multi-paragraph, well-organized essay, take a stance on the following issue: **Are social networking sites good for society?**

*Remember to support your claim with relevant textual evidence and be sure to include a counter-argument to make your argument more effective.*

### Source - ProCon.Org

#### Background:

74% of American adults online use social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest, as of Jan. 2014, up from 26% in 2008. [26] [174] On social media sites like these, users may develop biographical profiles, communicate with friends and strangers, do research, and share thoughts, photos, music, links, and more.

Proponents of social networking sites say that the online communities promote increased interaction with friends and family; offer teachers, librarians, and students valuable access to educational support and materials; facilitate social and political change; and disseminate useful information rapidly.

Opponents of social networking say that the sites prevent face-to-face communication; waste time on frivolous activity; alter children's brains and behavior making them more prone to ADHD; expose users to predators like pedophiles and burglars; and spread false and potentially dangerous information.

#### Some Interesting Facts:

- Social networking sites are a top news source for 27.8% of Americans, ranking below newspapers (28.8%) and above radio (18.8%) and print publications (6%).
- Students who used social networking sites while studying scored 20% lower on tests and students who used social media had an average GPA of 3.06 versus non-users who had an average GPA of 3.82.
- 35 global heads of state, every US Cabinet agency, 84% of US state governors, every major candidate for US President, and more than 40% of top global religious leaders are on Twitter.
- In July 2012 Americans spent 74.0 billion minutes on social media via a home computer, 40.8 billion minutes via apps, and 5.7 billion minutes via mobile web browsers, a total of 121.1 billion minutes on social networking sites.

PRO (FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES)	CON (AGAINST SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES)
<p><b>Social networking sites spread information faster than any other media.</b> Over 50% of people learn about breaking news on social media. 65% of traditional media reporters and editors use sites like Facebook and LinkedIn for story research, and 52% use Twitter. Social networking sites are the top news source for 27.8% of Americans, ranking close to newspapers (28.8%) and above radio (18.8%) and other print publications (6%). Twitter and YouTube users reported the July 20, 2012 Aurora, CO theater shooting before news crews could arrive on the scene [3], and the Red Cross urged witnesses to tell family members they were safe via social media outlets.</p>	<p><b>Social media enables the spread of unreliable and false information.</b> 49.1% of people have heard false news via social media. On Sep. 5, 2012 false rumors of fires, shootouts, and caravans of gunmen in a Mexico City suburb spread via Twitter and Facebook caused panic, flooded the local police department with over 3,000 phone calls, and temporarily closed schools. Shashank Tripathi, tweeting as @ComfortablySmug, spread false information in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy by tweeting that the New York Stock Exchange was flooding and that the power company would cut off electricity to all of Manhattan; the bogus information was picked up by national news outlets including CNN and the Weather Channel.</p>

<p><b>Law enforcement uses social networking sites to catch and prosecute criminals.</b> 67% of federal, state, and local law enforcement professionals surveyed think "social media helps solve crimes more quickly." [5] In 2011 the NYPD added a Twitter tracking unit and has used social networking to arrest criminals who have bragged of their crimes online. When the Vancouver Canucks lost the 2011 Stanley Cup in Vancouver, the city erupted into riots. Social media was used to catch vandals and rioters as social networking site users tagged the people they knew in over 2,000 photos posted to the sites.</p>	<p><b>Social networking sites lack privacy and expose users to government and corporate intrusions.</b> 13 million users said they had not set or did not know about Facebook's privacy settings and 28% shared all or nearly all of their posts publicly. The US Justice Department intercepted 1,661 pieces of information from social networking sites and e-mails in 2011. The 2009 IRS training manual teaches agents to scan Facebook pages for information that might "assist in resolving a taxpayer case." 4.7 million Facebook users have "liked" a health condition or medical treatment page, information that is sometimes used by insurance companies to raise rates.</p>
<p><b>Social networking sites help students do better at school.</b> 59% of students with access to the Internet report that they use social networking sites to discuss educational topics and 50% use the sites to talk about school assignments. After George Middle School in Portland, OR introduced a social media program to engage students, grades went up by 50%, chronic absenteeism went down by 33%, and 20% of students school-wide voluntarily completed extra-credit assignments. A Jan. 2015 study published in the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology said college freshman should use social networking sites to build networks of new friends, feel socially integrated at their new schools, and reduce their risk of dropping out.</p>	<p><b>Students who are heavy social media users tend to have lower grades.</b> Students who use social media had an average GPA of 3.06 while non-users had an average GPA of 3.82 and students who used social networking sites while studying scored 20% lower on tests. College students' grades dropped 0.12 points for every 93 minutes above the average 106 minutes spent on Facebook per day. Two-thirds of teachers believe that social media does more to distract students than to help academically. [86] The Sep. 2, 2014 Learning Habit study published in the American Journal of Family Therapy found that grades began a steady decline after secondary school students reached 30 minutes of daily screen time (time spent using an electronic device such as a computer or mobile phone). After four hours of screen time, average GPAs dropped one full grade.</p>
<p><b>Social networking sites allow people to improve their relationships and make new friends.</b> 70% of adult social networking users visit the sites to connect with friends and family, and increased online communication strengthens relationships. 52% of teens using social media report that using the sites has helped their relationships with friends, 88% report that social media helps them stay in touch with friends they cannot see regularly, 69% report getting to know students at their school better, and 57% make new friends.</p>	<p><b>Social networking sites can lead to stress and offline relationship problems.</b> A University of Edinburgh Business School study found the more Facebook friends a person has, the more stressful the person finds Facebook to use. According to a Feb. 9, 2012 Pew Internet report, 15% of adult social network users had an experience on a social networking site that caused a friendship to end, 12% of adult users had an experience online that resulted in a face-to-face argument, and 3% of adults reported a physical confrontation as the result of an experience on a social networking site.</p>
<p><b>Social media sites help employers find employees and job-seekers find work.</b> 64% of companies are on two or more social networks for recruiting because of the wider pool of applicants and more efficient searching capabilities. 89% of job recruiters have hired employees through LinkedIn, 26% through Facebook, and 15% through Twitter. 1 in 6 job-seekers credit social media for helping find their current job. 52% of job-seekers use Facebook for the job search, 38% LinkedIn, and 34% Twitter.</p>	<p><b>Using social media can harm job stability and employment prospects.</b> Job recruiters reported negative reactions to finding profanity (61%), poor spelling or grammar (54%), illegal drugs (78%), pictures of or with alcohol (47%), and religious content (26%) on potential employees' social media pages. Several athletes were banned from the 2012 Olympics because of their racist social media posts.</p>

**Social networking sites facilitate face-to-face interaction.**

People use social media to network at in-person events and get to know people before personal, business, and other meetings. Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project found that messaging on social media leads to face-to-face interactions when plans are made via the sites and social media users messaged close friends an average of 39 days each year while seeing close friends in person 210 days each year.

**Social media facilitates political change.** Social networking sites give social movements a quick, no-cost method to organize, disseminate information, and mobilize people. The 2011 Egyptian uprising (part of the Arab Spring), organized largely via social media, motivated tens of thousands of protestors for eighteen days of demonstrations and, ultimately led to the resignation of Egyptian President Mubarak on Feb. 11, 2011. A July 4, 2011 tweet from @Adbusters with the hashtag #occupywallstreet started the American Occupy movement, which gained traction in Sep. 2011 when protesters gathered at New York City's Zuccotti Park and remained there until Nov. 15, 2011.

**Social media sites empower individuals to make social change and do social good on a community level.**

Social media shares popularized nine-year old Scottish student, Martha Payne, and her blog, "Never Seconds," which exposed the state of her school's lunch program prompting international attention that resulted in changes to her school and the formation of "Friends of Never Seconds" charity to feed children globally. Jeannette Van Houten uses social media to find owners of photographs and mementos strewn from houses by Hurricane Sandy. Hillsborough, CA freshman varsity soccer goalie Daniel Cui was blamed for and bullied about a losing season until over 100 of his teammates and classmates changed their Facebook profile photos to one of Cui making a save, silencing the bullies and building Cui's confidence.

**Social media allows for quick, easy dissemination of public health and safety information from reputable sources.**

The US military and Department of Veterans Affairs use social networking to help prevent suicide. The World Health Organization (WHO) uses social media to "disseminate health information and counter rumours," which was especially helpful after the Mar. 2011 Japanese earthquake and nuclear disaster when false information spread about ingesting salt to combat radiation. The Boston Health Commission used social media to get information to its 4,500 Twitter followers about clinic locations and wait times for vaccines during the H1N1 outbreak.

**Social media causes people to spend less time interacting face-to-face.**

A Jan. 2012 Center for the Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School study found that the percentage of people reporting less face-to-face time with family in their homes rose from 8% in 2000 to 34% in 2011. 32% reported using social media or texting during meals (47% of 18-34 year olds) instead of talking with family and friends.

**Social media can endanger the military and journalists.**

The US Army notes that checking in with location based services on social networking sites like Foursquare or Facebook could expose sensitive whereabouts and endanger military personnel and operations. In 2011 a Mexican journalist was murdered by the Zetas drug cartel because she used Twitter to report on cartel crime. A blogger was found murdered by a Mexican cartel in 2011 with the note "this happened to me for not understanding that I shouldn't report things on the social networks."

**Social networking sites facilitate cyberbullying.**

49.5% of students reported being the victims of bullying online and 33.7% reported committing bullying behavior online. 800,000 minors were harassed or cyberbullied on Facebook according to a June 2012 Consumer Reports survey. Middle school children who were victims of cyberbullying were almost twice as likely to attempt suicide. Adults can also be victims of cyberbullying, from social, familial, or workplace aggression being displayed on social media.

**Social networking sites encourage amateur advice and self-diagnosis for health problems which can lead to harmful or life-threatening results.**

One in five Americans uses social media for health care information. An American Journal of Public Health study revealed that, "Social media may also pose a hazard to vulnerable people through the formation and influence of 'extreme communities'—online groups that promote and provide support for beliefs and behaviors normally unacceptable by the social mainstream such as anorexia, suicide, and deliberate amputation." A North Carolina blogger was criminally charged with "practicing dietetics or nutrition without a license" for offering potentially dangerous nutritional advice about the Paleo diet while posing as an expert. Jeffrey Benabio, MD, searched for "eczema" on Twitter and found, in the first 100 results, 84 were spam and other gave harmful and sometimes bizarre advice like using toothless fish to eat eczema affected skin.