Once disclosed online, your personal data may be kept permanently and you will no longer have control over who can read it. Do you want any information you may regret later to be available online forever for all to read?

Think before you post

You may not want everyone to read your postings. Think what may happen if someone (e.g. for youngsters, potential employers or university admission office) in the future reads things you post today.

Think before you post

Picture tells a thousand words – they may be embarrassing or contain information you do not intend to share (company logo in the background or uniform that identifies where you work/study, even name tags or tickets that may give your name away).

Think before you post

Social networking sites are not entirely virtual. If you leave too much information of you or your friends (such as your whereabouts), people could find you in the physical world.

Think before you post

Avoid providing excessive personal data. When you create a new account, assess the genuine need to provide each piece of personal data and whether supply of the data is obligatory (e.g. why should you provide your day and month of birth when the site only wants to impose an age limit on users?)

Think before you post

If you want to avoid others to collate information about you from different social networking sites, consider creating different account names. People may easily track you down if you register using the same account name or email address across multiple sites.

Think before you post

Privacy setting

Find out how your personal data will be shared in the social networking site. In particular, they may allow multiple levels of sharing which may result in your personal data being revealed to unintended parties. Make sure you understand how it works before posting your data.

Think before you post

Some sites often change their privacy settings. Keep checking the privacy setting pages to see what kinds of personal data are being shared.

Think before you post

Do not accept people you do not know, or are unsure of, as your friends.

Think before you post

If available, set up friend groups to control the access to your personal data by different people.

Think before you post

Some social networking sites offer third-party applications to users. These applications have different privacy settings and will access different types of personal data from your profile and pass the data to third parties. Make sure you understand the implications before accepting any application.

Think before you post

Read the privacy policy to find out how the site will handle your personal data.

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Think before you post
Remember to remove accounts in sites that you no longer use or are interested in to reduce the fragmented information you leave in the Internet. Keep a list of accounts you have created so you can remove them later.

It is difficult to verify information provided by others in the Internet including their true identities, think twice before meeting others you get to know in the Internet, or acceding to their request for information, money or help.

Social networking sites provide a convenient tool to get in touch with one another but are full of malicious links or files. Make sure your anti-virus programme and its virus definition files are up-to-date.

Social networking sites provide test ground for all sorts of new ideas. Often the privacy side has not been well-considered. So, use new features with cautions.