

BBC Learning English

6 Minute English

Social network scams



NB: This is not a word for word transcript

Stephen: Hello I'm Stephen.

Alice: And I'm Alice.

Stephen: And this is 6 Minute English. This week we're talking about **social networks**.
In the past few years, social networking websites like Twitter and Facebook have experienced a huge rise in the number of people using them.

Alice: Sometimes called social media, they offer their members or users an easy and entertaining way to maintain links or stay in contact with people they know and trust.

Stephen: And do you use social media much, Alice?

Alice: I do, especially with friends who live abroad.

Stephen: Well, social networking websites have been in the news recently because of worries about their safety. There's evidence to show that criminals are trying to trick people into giving away their passwords for example. But before we find out more, are you ready for today's question Alice?

Alice: I am, I hope it's not too hard.

Stephen: Well, we'll see! Can you name the first celebrity to have more than 10 million people following his or her updates on Twitter? Was it:

- a) Ashton Kutcher
- b) Lady Gaga
- c) Stephen Fry

Alice: Oh, I would guess Lady Gaga.

Stephen: I won't give you the answer just yet - we'll find out at the end of today's programme. But more about today's topic. Lots of people use sites like Facebook and Twitter to publish short messages or status updates about what they're doing. They also use them to share photographs or web links.

Alice: A **status update** is a way of telling other users about what you are doing right now. But this can sometimes reveal personal information, which criminals might use to **scam** people into giving away their passwords or other confidential information.

Stephen: A scam is a way of cheating or tricking somebody into giving you money or an important piece of information. Here's the BBC's technology correspondent Mark Gregory to explain how some of these scams work:

Insert 1: Mark Gregory

Social networking is all about maintaining links with people you know and trust, which makes networking services like Facebook an obvious target for scams involving impersonation. The scale of the problem is highlighted in the latest six monthly security intelligence report from the computer software giant Microsoft. Drawing on information from 600 million computer systems around the world, the report says social networking provides a lucrative hotbed of opportunities for fraudsters.

Stephen: So Mark Gregory explains that sites including Facebook are obvious targets.

With information from 600 million computers, experts say social networks provide **a lucrative hotbed** of opportunities for **fraudsters**.

Alice: A lucrative hotbed - it could be very profitable or beneficial for criminals trying to access peoples' personal information. Fraud is the name given to the criminal act of cheating somebody for money – and a fraudster is somebody who commits fraud.

Stephen: Now let's find out about one particular form of online fraud. Here's the BBC's Mark Gregory again. Listen out for the word phishing and see if you can understand what it is:

Insert 2: Mark Gregory

Phishing frauds take the form of messages that often appear to come from someone the user knows - friends or colleagues perhaps - that trick them into providing information useful to criminals.

Stephen: Did you hear the word phishing? It's spelt differently to how you might expect it to be - p.h.i.s.h.i.n.g. Phishing is where you get an email or message that you think was sent by somebody you know. But appearances can be deceiving.

Alice: Deceiving - it isn't what it appears to be.

Stephen: Phishing emails fish for information about people - that's why the word sounds like fish, the creatures in the sea. They might appear as an email from somebody you already know, or pretend to be from a trusted website or company.

- Alice:** Phishing emails encourage you to hand over important personal information, such as your password or username.
- Stephen:** And with this information, criminals might be able to gain access to, or get into your Facebook or your Twitter account.
- Alice:** So are there any ways we can protect ourselves from this kind of scam or fraud, Stephen?
- Stephen:** Well, it's important to be very careful about the information you share online. Lots of social networks have advice or guidelines on creating a secure password and on how to stay safe online.
- Alice:** I guess it's better to be safe than sorry.
- Stephen:** Exactly. The report from Microsoft says there has been a twelvefold - or 1200% increase - in the number of phishing attacks since last year.
- Alice:** That's a very large increase.
- Stephen:** So we should be vigilant.
- Alice:** Yes, we need to keep our eyes open and pay careful attention to any suspicious-looking emails or messages.
- Stephen:** And before we go today Alice, do you have the answer to my question? Can you name the first celebrity to have more than 10 million people following his or her updates on Twitter?
- Alice:** And I said Lady Gaga.

Stephen: And you're right!

Alice: Oh, good!

Stephen: All up-to-date on the latest pop music! And before we go, Alice, would you mind reading some of the words from today's programme?

Alice: Of course:
social networks
status update
scam
fraudsters
a lucrative hotbed

Stephen: Thanks, Alice. Well, it's time for us to log off from today's 6 Minute English.
See you next time.

Both: Bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

social networks	groups of people who interact with each other and share photos or website links via internet sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)
status update	the latest news about someone's activities or what they are doing, as published on a social networking website
scam	scheme or plan to deceive people
fraudsters	criminals or dishonest people who trick others with the aim of getting their money or private information
a lucrative hotbed	here, a good opportunity to earn lots of money from social media users

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