

**Socialising (3): Social networking****Topic:** Socialising and social networking**Aims:**

- To introduce and discuss the importance of social networking and how it helps with face-to-face networking;
- To teach some tips, techniques and useful phrases for social networking;
- To provide practice of writing brief social networking messages (blog posts, comments, tweets, etc.).

**Level:** Intermediate (B2) and above**Introduction**

Why is it that when you go to a conference or business gathering, everyone else seems to know each other already? At least part of the answer to the puzzle seems to be social networking: getting to know business contacts online first, so that by the time you meet face to face for the first time, you already have plenty to talk about. For many people, social networking is seen as something to do instead of work. This lesson emphasises that social networking is real work. The lesson introduces useful language and techniques, building up to a large social networking simulation at the end.

**1. Lead-in**

Write the following questions on the board.

- a. What exactly is networking? What's the difference between networking and social networking?
- b. Which social networking sites / tools have you heard of? Which have you used? Which would you recommend?
- c. What is the relationship between social networking and face-to-face socialising?
- d. Do you see social networking as something you do for work or for pleasure?
- e. What can you do to get the most out of social networking for work?

Students discuss the questions in small groups. After a few minutes, open up the discussion to include the whole class.

**Suggested answers**

- a. Networking (in general) involves building a network of people who you are connected to in some way (e.g. old school friends, ex-colleagues, people you meet at conferences). The principle is that you can get to know new contacts because they already know some of your existing contacts. An important part of networking is maintaining relationships with people in your network, e.g. by sending them messages from time to time. Social networking is the same as traditional networking, but it involves using internet sites and tools to make the process much easier and more effective.
- b. The best known sites include Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and LinkedIn. However, there are thousands of such sites, and new ones are becoming popular all the time. The most important social networking tool seems to be blogs: writing them or commenting on other people's blogs. Because so many

blogs are connected to each other (e.g. when the writers comment on or recommend each other's posts), the blogging community is called the blogosphere.

- c. If you build strong relationships with people through social networking, it will be much easier to talk with them when you finally meet face to face.
- d. Most people see it as something they do for pleasure, or as a distraction from their real work. But anybody whose job involves networking and socialising would benefit from spending time building and maintaining a professional social network.
- e. Set aside some time every day to build and maintain your network. Make the effort to stay in touch with people and make sure you always reply to their messages.

## 2. Kim's blog

Students read the blog post to see which of the questions on the board it addresses and what it says about them. When you discuss the answers with the class, check any vocabulary problems (e.g. *to change sb's mind*, *to approach sb*, *to end up doing sth*, *in advance*, *spare*, *to transform sth*).

### Suggested answers

Kim focuses mainly on question (c), but he also deals with questions (d) and (e). He refers to an answer to question (b) in his comment at the bottom.

## 3. Discussion

Focus students' attention on the third comment at the bottom of the blog. Discuss with the class how Kim should respond to the comment.

### Suggested answer

See *Top ten tips to get started in social networking*, tip 8, and the sample answer in *Phrases for social networking*.

## 4. Top ten tips to get started in social networking.

Write the ten bold words and phrases from the text on the board (e.g. discussion groups, LinkedIn, etc.). Students work in pairs or groups of three to predict what advice will be given about each word or phrase in connection with social networking for work.

Cut up the text so that each numbered section is on a separate slip of paper, and stick the ten slips to the wall around the classroom. If you have a large class (i.e. more than about 12 students), you may need two copies of each slip.

Students then go around the room, choosing around five or six sections to read to check their predictions. After about five minutes, students go back to their groups to report back on what they read, using the key words from the board to help them remember. They should discuss whether their predictions were correct, what the text advised, and whether they agree with the advice. If nobody in a group read one of the texts, they can go back and read it now.

After a few minutes, open up the discussion to include the whole class. Discuss whether any students already follow the advice given, or whether they intend to.

You may need to check some vocabulary from the texts: *deathly quiet, lively, to get involved in sth, cheeky, to bore sb, an approach, spam, to re-tweet sth, amazed, brave, to respond, to integrate sth, an element, available, to make an effort, to irritate sb, to resist the temptation to do sth, to regret sth, to engage with sb, delighted.*

## 5. Phrases for social networking

Distribute the worksheet so that each student has a copy. Students then work in pairs to decide which type(s) of social networking each set of phrases or messages belongs to. After a few minutes, discuss the answers with the class.

### Suggested answers

- The first box contains phrases from Twitter. RT stands for re-tweet, i.e. somebody sends your message to everyone in their own network. Note that mention and follow are normally verbs, but here are used as nouns. It would also be possible (but longer) to say 'thanks for mentioning my post' or 'thanks for following me'.
- The second box contains phrases which could come from any social networking site or blog. They are useful for introducing a link or reacting to somebody else's message / blog post.
- The third box contains phrases which could also come from any site, such as Facebook or Twitter.
- The fourth box is a message on a site such as LinkedIn, to accompany an invitation to connect.
- The fifth box could be an email chain, or a live text chat on a site like Facebook or Skype. Note that Olga manages to generate some potential business for her company even though she doesn't try to sell it or ask for help directly.
- The sixth box is a reply to the unpleasant comment on Kim's blog.
- The seventh box contains a set of useful phrases for commenting on blog posts. Note that the writer of the final comment disagrees with the author, but tries to be positive and constructive, not aggressive or negative.

## 6. Discussion

Focus students' attention on the sixth box. Discuss with the class the techniques that Kim uses to deal with the problem, and whether students agree with Kim's approach.

### Suggested answer

Kim starts by acknowledging the other person's complaint, while avoiding the temptation to try to argue against it. Kim's attitude seems to be that differences of opinion are healthy and positive – we can learn from hearing other people's opinions, even if we don't agree with them. In the second paragraph, Kim answers Dominik's question, without being too defensive / apologetic or aggressive. Kim ends with an invitation, which he tries to make sound as genuine and open as possible (I'd love for you to ...; What do you think?), to avoid the danger that Dominik will think Kim is being ironic / sarcastic. Dominik will probably ignore the invitation, but if he does decide to write a post, it could be a great addition to Kim's blog. More importantly, Kim has shown all the other

readers of his blog (including people who read the blog years into the future) that Kim is pleasant and open to other people's opinions.

## 7. **Social networking game**

Print out the instructions so that students can read them in small groups. While students are reading the instructions, distribute the Blog post worksheets so that each student has a copy. You should also stick some copies of the Social Network worksheet on a wall.

When students have read the instructions, check they have understood by asking questions: How long should your initial blog post be? Where should you write it? What should it be about? What information do you need to include in your blog post? Where are the two places where you can write comments? What do you need to monitor? Point out that if they run out of comment boxes, they can write their comments on the back of the sheet of paper, or ask for more sheets of paper from you.

If you prefer, you could ask students to write their initial blog posts in pairs, with one student writing down their joint ideas. This will be easier and more communicative, but it will mean the advice and interaction are less personalised.

Allow five minutes for the initial writing and around ten minutes for students to read and comment on each other's blog posts. Encourage students to be brief and positive in their comments. Monitor carefully to help with any language questions that come up.

When they have finished, ask each student to report back on by summarising their initial blog post and the discussions that it generated. You should also discuss with the class the best advice from the blog posts and comments. At the end, collect the sheets of paper in order to correct language mistakes before the next lesson.

As a follow-up, encourage students to repeat the game in real life at home, by commenting on real blog posts and getting more involved in social networking in English.



## Worksheets - Socialising (3): Social networking

## Kim's blog

[← Previous post](#)[Next post →](#)Posted Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> November by [Kim](#)**What I learned about social networking**

I used to think social networking was all about telling the world what you had for breakfast or explaining why you think world peace is such a good idea. But a strange thing happened to me last year, which completely changed my mind.

I've been going to conferences for years, and have always found it difficult to talk to strangers there – especially as everyone else already seems to know each other. But last year's conference was different: there were about twenty people who came up to chat to me, or who were delighted to see me when I approached them to introduce myself. And because I knew these twenty people, they introduced me to more people, so that by the end of the conference I felt that I knew about half the people there. I ended up having a great conference – much better than before. The strange thing was, I'd never met any of the people before ... at least, not face to face.

The difference, as I'm sure you've guessed by now, is that before last year's conference, I did a little bit of social networking in advance. Maybe half an hour a day for a month. Now, before you say that you don't have a spare half hour every day to chat to strangers, remember that this is not just about chatting. It's work. My small investment totally transformed the conference for me. And I've now got some great friends and business contacts. Do you know the old saying, "It's not what you know, it's who you know"? Well, in today's business world, the more people you know, and who know you, the better.

**3 comments**

[Andy](#) wrote: Great blog post – again. I think you're absolutely right about the importance of social networking. Which sites do you use?

[Kim](#) wrote: Thanks, Andy. I'm glad you liked it. And thanks for your great question. Have you read "[My top ten social networking tips for beginners](#)"? That post includes some of my favourite sites. Let me know how it goes.

[Dominik](#) wrote: What's the point of this blog? If you're a beginner in social networking, why on earth are you trying to tell us what to do?

### Top ten tips to get started in social networking.

1. Join some **discussion groups**. A good place to start is Yahoo! Groups (<http://groups.yahoo.com/>). Search for groups discussing topics you are interested in, set up an account and join. Some groups are terrible, some are deathly quiet, but some are fantastic. If you find a lively group, get involved by replying to other people's messages, even if it's just "Great idea – thanks".
2. Join **LinkedIn** (<http://www.linkedin.com/>) and use it to build your professional network. Invite lots of people to connect: most people will be happy to connect with you, if your profile shows that your work or experience is in some way similar to their own, even if they don't know you yet. LinkedIn is also full of amazing groups: join as many as you can, and get involved.
3. Join **Facebook** (<http://www.facebook.com/>), but be careful to keep your business contacts separate from your close friends. The last thing you want is for your ex-school friends and your cheeky cousins to get involved in conversations with your important business contacts. You also don't want to bore your friends and family with posts about work all the time. The safest approach is to have two accounts, one for work and one for fun.
4. Join **Twitter** (<http://www.twitter.com/>) and find some people to follow – start with one of your contacts who you know is well connected, and follow his/her followers. Build as large a network as you can – no-one minds being followed on Twitter, and you can always stop following someone who only posts spam. The easiest way to get involved in conversations is to re-tweet someone's link, perhaps with a short comment: "Great post" or "Really interesting".
5. Join the **blogosphere**. There's no one website for you to go to, but if you find one great blog, it's usually easy enough to find related blogs. Most bloggers have a 'blog roll' – a list of other blogs they recommend. Find a few that you like and post some comments. You'll be amazed how easy it is to start conversations. If you're feeling brave, you can start your own blog. Don't worry that you have nothing interesting to say – just find a topic that you find interesting and that you want to learn about. You can simply blog about what you've learned. But if someone makes the effort to comment on your blog post, make sure you always respond.

6. The real key to social networking is to **integrate** the different elements (and all the other great social networking tools that are available). Connect with the people who seem to be at the centre of social networks, tweet about the blog posts you like and read the blogs that are recommended by your contacts.
7. Be **systematic** – make sure you always thank people who are nice to you, even if all they're doing is following you on Twitter. If you're really well organised, you can write a short message to each and every one of your contacts at least once a year. It can be just a quick one-line message, asking what they're doing, but your contacts will feel great that you've remembered them and made a little effort to keep your connection alive.
8. Never, ever, get **angry** in public. You'll probably see all sorts of posts, tweets and messages that irritate you, but resist the temptation to be negative. Remember that your messages can be seen by hundreds or even thousands of potentially useful contacts, so a single angry message can do a huge amount of damage. If you really are angry, turn your computer off and go for a walk – just make sure you don't post something that you'll regret later.
9. Don't use social networking only as a **sales** channel: if you are only trying to sell to the people in your network, rather than trying to engage with them, they will soon get bored with you. But if you show a genuine interest in what they're doing, and if you make an effort to be friendly and positive, you'll find your next international conference much, much easier, as all your online contacts will be delighted to meet you face to face at last.
10. Finally, just as you use your online contacts to help you meet people face to face, you can bring your **face-to-face contacts** into your social network. Every time you meet a new person, try to get a business card – or at least their name or email address, so that you can find them later online. When you then invite them to join your network on LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter, include a short message to show that you enjoyed meeting them and that you'd like to stay in touch.

**Phrases for social networking**

- Thanks for the follow.
- Thanks for the mention.
- Thanks for the RT.

- Great post!
- Great link!

- Just posted on my blog: [What I learned about social networking](#).
- Just read a great blog post: [Top ten tips to get started in social networking](#).

**Invitation to connect**

Hi Marta. It was great to meet you at the conference last week. I hope we can stay in touch.

All the best  
Kim

- Hi Luis. How's it going? What's new?
- Hi Olga. Not bad. Busy as usual. What about you?
- Also really busy. We've just launched a new service for university graduates, so I've been working hard on that. (You can see the site [here](#)). Now we just need to find some graduates to sell it to ...
- Looks interesting. I might be able to help you there.
- Really? Any help would be more than welcome. Tell me more.

Hi Dominik

Sorry to hear you're not a fan of my blog.

The blog is really for me to share the things I'm learning. The idea is that other beginners might not be ready for all the things that expert social networkers are doing, so this blog can be a gentle introduction for them. If you have some more advanced or up-to-date advice, I'd love for you to write a guest post for me? What do you think?

Kim

- Great post. Really interesting. I especially liked your comment about ...
- I'm not sure I agree with you that ...
- I had a similar experience myself when I was ...
- Wow! I'd never thought of that! But I'm definitely going to use these ideas ...
- It's an interesting point, but you might want to read [this post](#) on my blog, which comes to rather different conclusions.

**Social networking game**

1. Write a short blog post about your experiences of social networking: what you've used, what you've learned, and what you'd recommend. If you have never tried social networking, you could explain why. If you have had a bad experience, you could describe that. Be quick – you've only got five minutes. But make sure other people will be able to read your handwriting.
2. Make sure you've included a name for your blog (e.g. Kim's Blog) and a title for the blog post (e.g. What I learned through social networking). Display your blog post somewhere in the classroom, for example on a wall or a desk.
3. Go around and read other people's blog posts. Add a short comment at the bottom. Try to be positive, but at the same time try to bring in some new ideas if you can. Make sure you include your name.
4. There is also a separate sheet of paper, called **The Social Network**, which represents sites like Twitter and Facebook. Use this sheet of paper to recommend the blog posts you have read. Remember to include the name of the blog and its location (e.g. on the wall by the door).
5. Monitor your own blog, so you can respond to other people's comments, as well as the Social Network site, to thank people for their recommendations, and other blogs you have commented on.

**Blog post**

Name of blog: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of post: \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments**

Comment by: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment by: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment by: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Social Network**

Comment by: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment by: \_\_\_\_\_