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## Securing your friends list on Facebook (and why this is so important)

Scammers. The internet is awash with them. It is easier to figure out a lot about you and your life than you realise. We have all received friend requests from people we are already friends with. This is quite a common scam that happens all over Facebook. Seniors in the community are particularly vulnerable.

### **A scam like this can present in a few different ways.**

The first and most common: You will often see friends announcing on Facebook that their account has been hacked. This is not the case. It has been duplicated, not hacked, which may be considered a form of identity theft. It is pretty easy for a scammer to do, and unfortunately, there are no laws against this unless they do something genuinely harmful like scam money or cause harm, and if that happens, you need to contact the police or crime stoppers immediately.

What a scammer will do is find your account on Facebook, and if your friend's list is public, that makes you a good candidate for them to target.

The second way is by searching by hashtag. If you type in a popular hashtag to the search bar of Facebook, it will show you all the public posts that have shared that particular hashtag. In some cases, it will also show you people's accounts, especially if they are not set to private, and their friend's list is set to public.

So here is what a scammer may do. Firstly, they will drag your profile photo to the desktop, and they will do the same with your cover shot. They will then take screenshots of all of your friends so that they have a list of potential people to invite to your new account. After stealing a couple of your photos, they will create a profile that looks exactly like yours and block you from it.

You won't be able to see it, but your friends might start receiving friend requests from the new you. They might ask for money pretending to be you, or convince you to join a lottery that they have been successful with (pretending to be your friend of course).

Please NEVER accept a friend request from people that you know you are already friends with. And never ask them via Facebook messenger if it is them as you will be having a conversation with the scammer.

A public friend list is the default of Facebook. You more than likely have that as your current setting, so it needs to be changed immediately.

## Here is how you do it.

### If you have Facebook on your smartphone:

1. Open up the Facebook app.
2. Go to the three little lines in either the bottom or top right and tap on them.
3. Scroll to the bottom of the list that you see until you get to settings and privacy and tap on that heading.
4. In the dropdown menu click on settings.
5. On the next screen scroll down until you get to the Privacy Shortcuts.
6. Immediately under that sub heading you will see take a privacy checkup. Tap on that.
7. Scroll down until you see the subheading highlighted in dark grey "How People can find and contact you"
8. Under that you will see – Who can see what you share?
9. Click on that heading and then continue.
10. Scroll to the bottom and change both tabs under "Freinds and following" to "Only me"
11. Scroll through the rest of the settings and think critically about who can see what. It is always a good idea to tighten up your privacy settings.

Always remember that if anyone in your friends list ever gets hacked or has their account duplicated – you need to change your password immediately as they will already be able to see a lot about your life.

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