

VISTA Guide to Using Social Media
October 2008

Table of Contents

3-4	Introduction Social Media 101 Benefits of Social Media to VISTA
5	Cautions in Using Social Media
6-8	Basic Lexicon
9	Blogging
10-11	Social Networking Facebook or MySpace? What's the difference?
12	Using Facebook
13-14	What to Expect
15-17	Using MySpace What to Expect
18	Interactive Media Sharing How VISTA Benefits
19-20	Using Flickr What to Expect
21-22	Using YouTube What to Expect
	Appendix
24-25	Blog Set Up
26-27	Facebook Set Up
28-29	MySpace Set Up
30	Flickr Set Up
31	YouTube Set Up

Introduction

As a VISTA, you share in VISTA's culture of connection: connecting individuals to VISTA; connecting VISTAs to organizations and communities; connecting communities to resources; and connecting VISTAs to each other. Technology and new media connect the world. Since each VISTA and project is different, but still a part of the whole VISTA community, social media can help tell our story to more people more effectively. It also offers you, as a VISTA, an avenue to document your service experience and connect with others who are serving.

Social media (also called new media or Web 2.0) is nothing "new" to many of you since you use it every day in your personal and professional lives. However, many others are not familiar with media, so this guide will start with the basics.

Social Media 101

Most organizations have adopted one of two views when it comes to using the Internet for communication. Some consider the Internet as a tool in the public relations tool shed, and worthwhile if you have the extra time. Others view the Internet as a new form of communication, not just a tool. They argue that the Internet has overhauled how humans communicate and how the world operates. They assert that web technology must be used as a part of every step of the strategic process. VISTA fits into this latter group, as it is incorporating new technology into every aspect of its programming and business practices. It also encourages VISTA volunteers to use new technology both personally and professionally to connect with others.

Social media is any electronic or web-based technology, media or application that is interactive, changes instantaneously and can be used by multiple people at the same time on different devices. Social media, unlike other forms of technology, is centered around relationships and interaction. Some examples of social media include Facebook, wikis, blogs, YouTube and Twitter.

Benefits of Social Media to VISTA

Using social media can connect you with other VISTAs across the country who have common interests, similar projects and resources to share. It provides a virtual meeting place for further discussions that may have started at PSO about poverty, service or other topics. Some forms of social media allow you to journal about and archive your experiences during your VISTA service.

For your sponsor organization, you as a VISTA can use social media to share information about the mission of the organization you serve. You can connect others who may be interested in serving, donating, or being involved in some other capacity. You can organize current donors and volunteers using social networks. Your organization's employees can also use social networks, wikis, blogs and much more for internal communication purposes such as training, newsletters, memos, etc.

For the VISTA program as a whole, encouraging VISTAs to use social media gives program staff and VISTAs another communication channel. Social media affords VISTA an opportunity to follow issues affecting VISTAs and to gather stories of service, best practices, photos, videos and more to share with the VISTA community and the general public.

Cautions in Using Social Media

1. Do not use profanity, sexually explicit language, or other inappropriate language or subject matter. Remember that you are representing VISTA.
2. Respect the privacy of other VISTAs, project staff, and individuals your organization serves. Write stories that focus on your VISTA experience and project, while sharing resources and best practices you've learned.
3. Do not let personal blogging take away from your work as a VISTA. This applies to other forms of social media, such as Facebook and MySpace, as well.
4. Refrain from talking about specific party politics, campaigns and candidates. VISTAs in their official capacity, or who are perceived to be representing VISTA, cannot engage in any activities that can impact results of a campaign or election. If you talk about poverty or issues relating to it, please do so in non-partisan language. See your VISTA handbook for more information about the restrictions under the Hatch Act and other limitations on engaging in political activities. See October 2006 VISTA Handbook, pp. 110-112.
5. Take responsibility for the content of all your social media pages. Read the "community guidelines" or "rules for use" of each social network or Web site. You are required to agree to and follow all rules set by the Web site.
6. To protect yourself from identity theft or other harm, be careful not to publish personal identifying information, such as your date of birth, Social Security Number, or information that may make you vulnerable, such as your phone number or home address. Also, consider using privacy controls on each of the social networking sites.

Basic Lexicon:

Social Media is not only a new form and function of communication, it offers a new lexicon. Many terms are words created or re-shaped specifically to describe the media. Terms are constantly-changing to describe the constantly-changing technology. Some essential social media terms are:

- **Web log or “blog”:** An online journal that includes the author’s personal profile, entries, photos, video and more. View a video that uses “plain English” to explain blogs at <http://www.commoncraft.com/blogs>.
- **Social network:** An online community where individuals create a personalized profile and search for friends. Some social networks include Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and Twitter. View a video that uses “plain English” to explain social networking at <http://www.commoncraft.com/video-social-networking>.
- **Profile:** A profile is a personalized page that each individual user creates. A template exists that the user can populate with a photo, contact information, lists of hobbies and interests, photo albums, quotes, blogs and much more.
- **Friending:** The act of inviting (or accepting an invitation from) another individual on a social network to be your friend, which links their profile to your profile.
- **Messaging:** An application within many social networking sites that allows users to either send messages to each others’ inboxes within the site or chat in real time.
- **Facebook:** An online social network that began exclusively on college campuses and is now used extensively by the general public. Each individual user creates a personal profile, friends others and uses various applications to communicate, form groups, play games, support causes and much more. All Facebook profiles use the same template with a white background to create a uniformed, clean look. Facebook caters to college students and organizations, but is used by a variety of groups and individuals.
 - **Applications:** Facebook allows individuals and outside organizations to custom-build applications, or mini-programs, and market them to other Facebook users. Applications do everything from organizing online photo albums to sending “gifts,” which are small graphic icons with personalized messages that users can display on their profile.
 - **Network:** Facebook has established large communities within its site called “networks.” Users can join a network of users that represent a geographic location such as a city or an organization such as a college or business. Users can advertise to a specific network, or they can adjust

their privacy settings, so only people in the same network can see their photo or profile.

- **Groups:** Facebook groups can be created by any user. Each group has a profile page that can be set to private or public, containing information about common interests, events, photos and any applications the group chooses to add. The person who created the group is called an “admin,” short for administrator. The admin can invite and approve people to join the group.
- **Causes:** Facebook Causes is a large-scale application created by Facebook that allows non-profit, 501c3 organizations to create a profile page to recruit supporters and fundraise. Any user can join or donate to a Cause. Organizations must be verified as having non-profit status by Facebook to create a Cause.
- **Fan Pages:** Fan pages can be created by any type of organization, including government (VISTA has a fan page), commercial businesses, religious organizations, artists, etc. Organizations cannot sell or solicit donations on fan pages, unlike Causes; they can only invite users to become “fans,” which is similar to being a friend.
- **News Feed:** Facebook automatically publishes mini news stories or updates about everything you do on the site such as adding a friend, installing an application or updating your profile. These stories are published on the “news feed,” which appears on the home page of everyone whom you are friends with, as well as on your profile. You can set the privacy level so that many of your activities do not appear on the news feed—you do this by clicking on “Privacy” at the top right of your screen, then “Newsfeed.” You can also hide news stories about what you are doing on the page after they are published by clicking the small “X” to the top right of each blurb.
- **Poke:** Facebook allows its users to send “messages,” similar to e-mails, to each others’ inboxes on the site. They can also “poke” each other, which simply sends an alert to the other person that they have been “poked.” It’s similar to saying, “Hey!”, “What’s up?” or “Where have you been?”
- **Tag:** Facebook allows users to “tag” or identify their friends in photos that they upload. Photos of you that are tagged by others will appear on your profile in the “View Photos of Me” section unless you “untag” them.
- **Chat:** Facebook has a chat application that allows anyone with a profile who is online to talk in real time with anyone else who is online at the same time. It is similar to other instant messaging programs.

- **MySpace:** An online social network similar to Facebook, but with more design and artistic freedom on profile and group pages for each individual user. MySpace caters to artists and bands, who enjoy the flexibility of creating an individual “look” for their page. MySpace also allows users to “friend” each other and create groups. MySpace recently added several applications similar to those of Facebook, but it currently does not permit users to create the programs.
 - **Skins:** MySpace allows users to add backgrounds and designs to their profile pages to make them more personal. These backgrounds are called skins.
 - **Bulletins:** Each MySpace user’s home page has a bulletin board that allows the user to post a bulletin or short message to all of his or her friends at the same time. The bulletin will appear on the bulletin board of all the user’s friends’ home pages.
- **YouTube:** An online video network of users communicating by posting videos and commenting on them. YouTube, like other social networking sites, allows users to create a short profile on their page, but almost all the content beyond the basics takes the form of video posts. Videos can be set to private, invite-only or public. Groups can also be created, and users can “friend” each other.
- **Flickr:** An online photo-sharing network of users who post photos and comment on them. Flickr also allows users to create a short profile, create groups and “friend” one another. Users can organize their photos into albums and create groups for events or organizations, allowing members of the group to post photos on the group’s page. They can also “tag” their photos, giving them a label that allows others to search for their photo based on the content of it. View a video that uses “plain English” to explain photo sharing at <http://www.commoncraft.com/photosharing>.
- **RSS Feeds:** “Really Simple Syndication,” an application that allows the author of a blog, editor of a news section on a Web site, or the Webmaster of a non-profit organization to automatically broadcast-e-mail updated content or post to everyone who subscribes to the “feed.” It is a method to syndicate your online content. View a video that uses “plain English” to explain RSS at http://www.commoncraft.com/rss_plain_english.
- **Widget:** A small application or program with a specific purpose, such as providing weather forecasts or searching for AmeriCorps positions, that is connected to a main information source and is constantly updating itself.
- **Podcast:** Digital audio files that are feeds syndicated online for users to download and play back later.

Blogging

For many people, blogging has replaced the handwritten journal or bound photo album. Over 71 million blogs are currently in existence. About 22 percent of people who blog update their blog at least once a week. Over 44 percent of young adults read a blog at least once a week. Most blogs have a readership of about 10 people, although some of the most successful blogs have thousands of subscribers and readers. Some blogs written by individuals are often done in the spirit of citizen journalism or consumer advocacy. Others are simply personal stories and collections of photos. Other blogs are maintained by organizations to promote their cause or share news items.

Today's blogs are often strategically planned and take time to market and develop a reader base. Successful blogs cover a niche market or a specific topic, and bloggers who write about similar issues often form communities and link to one another. Bloggers gain readership mostly through word-of-mouth, but they also pitch their blogs to other bloggers and list their blog on search engines that specialize in blogs such as Technorati.

One way to spread the word about VISTA while capturing your personal experience is to create a VISTA blog. A blog is essentially an online journal, where you record observations, thoughts and feelings as well as post photos and video. Readers of your blog can also post comments, which may spark interesting conversations. To be successful, you should blog often, at least once a week. The Outreach Team with your permission will highlight VISTA blogs in the VISTA Viewfinder eNewsletter.

Social Networking

Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and Twitter have become part of daily life for many people. These sites allow people to connect with more people than they usually would be able to interact with by normal communication means. Facebook alone had 60 million users by the end of 2007. More than half of all Facebook users visit the site daily and they spend an average of 20 minutes during each visit. Contrary to its initial focus on college students, 56 percent of Facebook users are over age 25 and represent the fastest growing demographic.

Sites such as Facebook and MySpace allow people of all backgrounds and professions to be equals in the online world. An average worker can feel free to “friend” their boss. An ordinary person can “friend” someone who is famous because of a common interest. A small non-profit organization can look as professional as a global corporation. Most importantly, social networks connect organizations and people. These sites provide the communication channel between organizations and individuals that never existed.

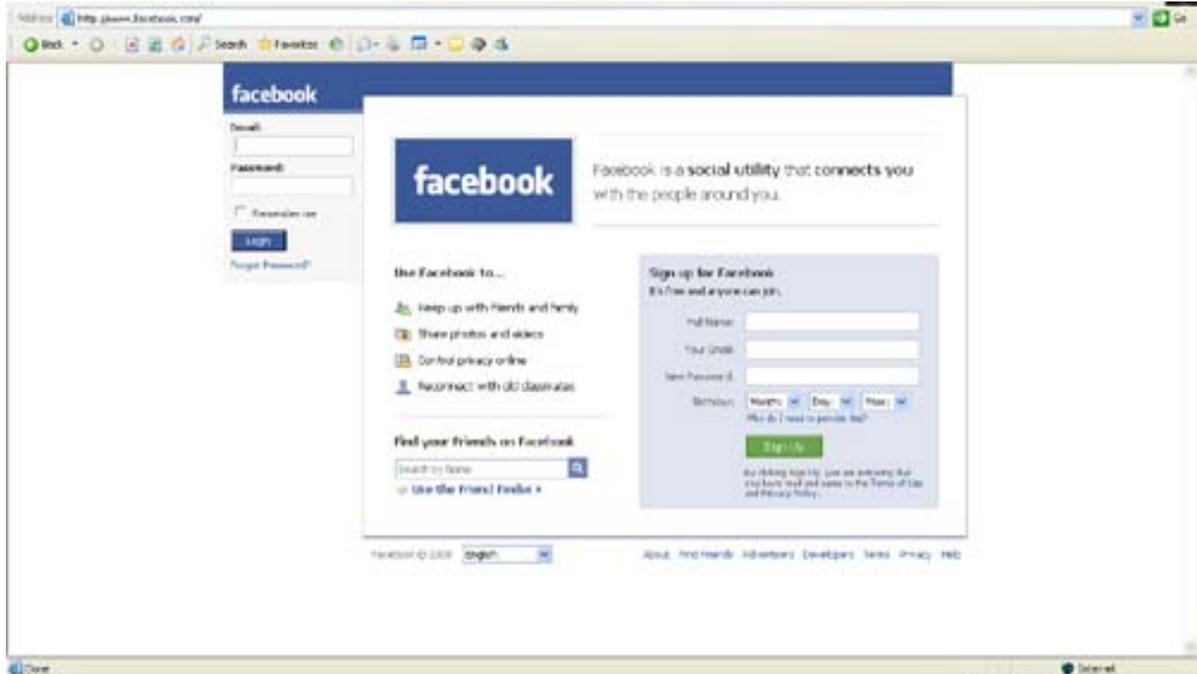
Facebook or MySpace? What’s the difference?

Within the social media industry, there is a lot of buzz about which networks will survive and which ones are the best for functionality, professionalism, etc. Some will only use one network, while others will have accounts with as many as possible. So the questions remain:

- *Do you need to use both Facebook and MySpace?* The answer is no, but you can have both if you want to use both. It depends on how much time you want to spend on the sites, as well as what functionality and design appeals more to you.
- *What is the difference between the sites?* Facebook was created by college students for college students, however its demographics are changing as more older professionals join the network. Still, Facebook tends to draw in the political and non-profit crowds more than MySpace, which focuses mainly on musicians, comedians and artists. Facebook doesn’t allow you to create a background or change the template of your page. MySpace allows you to put in any graphics, background, color, fonts or design elements you wish.
- *If I only want to use one site, how do I choose which one?* There are several factors to consider:
 - First, Will you use the site to support your efforts as a VISTA at your project? If so, does your sponsor fit Facebook’s grassroots non-profit/social entrepreneurial culture—or is MySpace’s indie/arts culture a better fit?
 - You may also consider how much design and technology experience you have. MySpace requires some design and html (the language or code the Internet uses to display its pages) knowledge to create a professional-looking page. Facebook doesn’t permit you to change the look of its page.

- Think about what you want to do on the social network. If you want to recruit volunteers or create discussion among people who are interested in your sponsor, Facebook is the better grassroots/organizing tool. If you want to showcase video or appeal to the art or indie culture communities, MySpace is the better tool.
- Finally, if you intend to use a social network only for your own personal profile to connect with other VISTAs and friends, then which you choose is simply up to your preferences.

Using Facebook



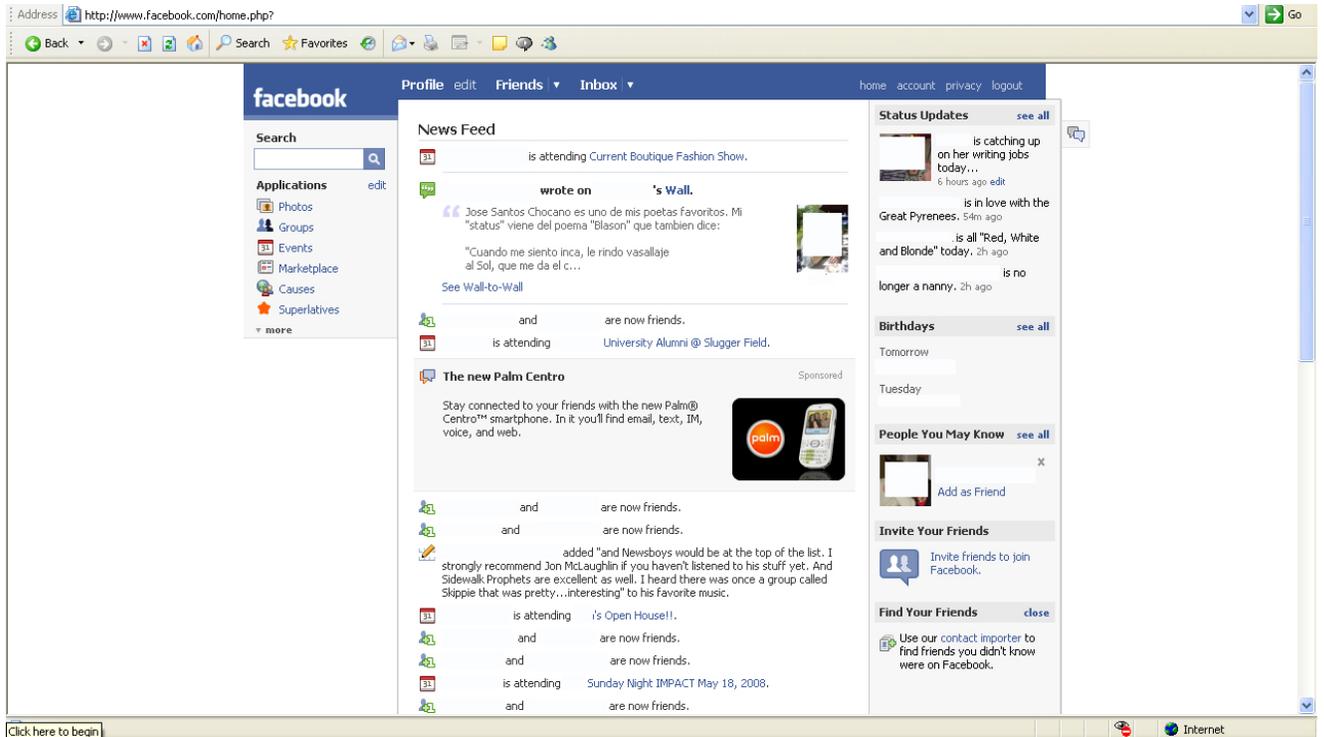
Creating a Facebook profile allows you to connect with other VISTAs across the country. You can become a “fan,” which is the same status of a “friend,” of the [official VISTA fan page](#) to keep up-to-date with the latest VISTA news, view video stories of service from your VISTA colleagues and dig through historical VISTA photos and vintage VISTA recruitment posters. You’ll be able to share your VISTA story with friends and family. VISTA groups will create opportunities for you to discuss issues with VISTAs at similar projects. Facebook Causes will allow your sponsoring organization to promote its mission and raise money.

VISTA Leaders are encouraged to start VISTA “groups” for each state and large projects in multiple sites. VISTA alumni are encouraged to create alumni “groups” for each state. Each “group” has its own page, where members can have online discussions, share photos, post events and more. “Groups” can add multiple applications and appear in searches to recruit more members.

VISTA headquarters may pursue other initiatives using Facebook, such as recruitment pushes using the VISTA logo. At certain times throughout the year (such as AmeriCorps Week), VISTA may suggest volunteers with Facebook profiles use the VISTA logo as their profile photo. This has grown to be a highly successful awareness and recruitment strategy before large application deadlines.

What to Expect

Facebook automatically takes you to your “home” page each time you log in. This is the place where the news feed is displayed, which lists stories or updates in what your friends are doing on Facebook. It also shows the upcoming birthdays of friends and links to your installed applications. Facebook “Chat” is located toward the top right of the page and appears as a small dialogue bubble icon in a square box. Once the box is clicked, the feature opens and allows “friends” to talk in real time.

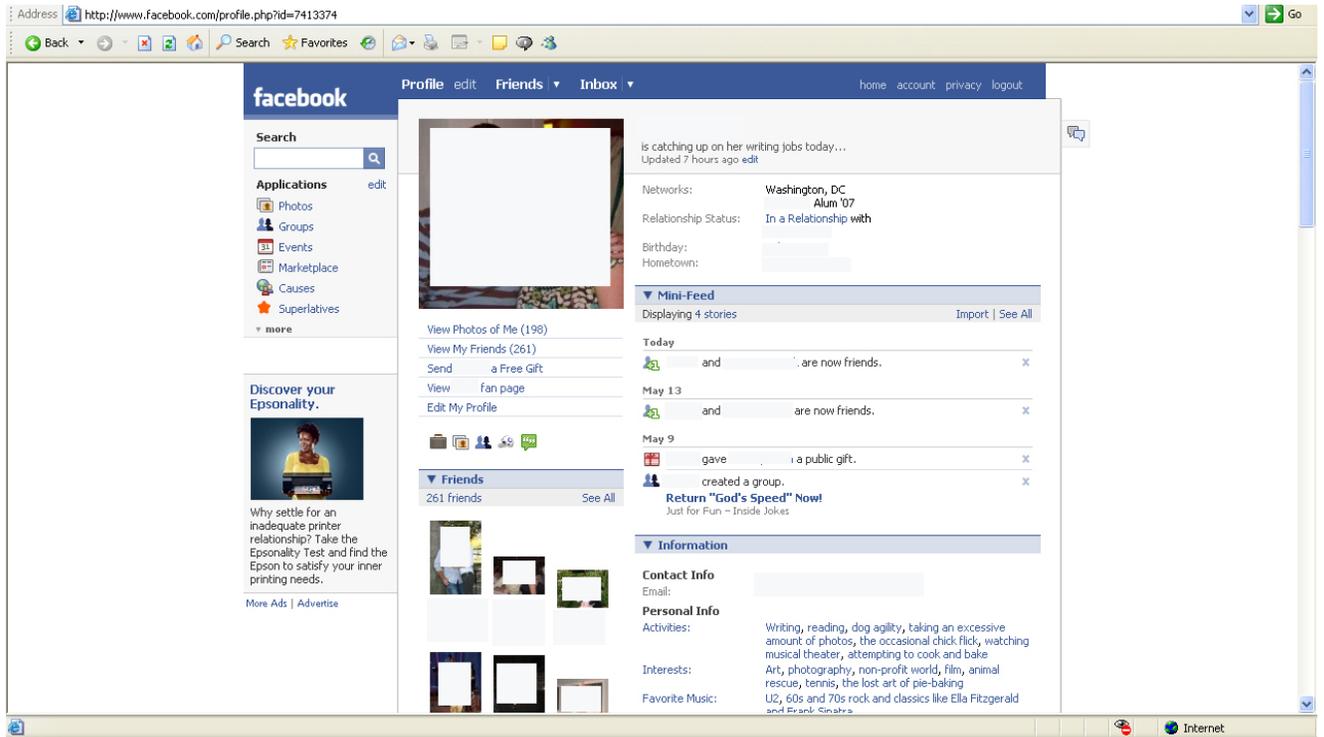


The same navigation appears at the top of every page. On the right side of the top of the page, the “home” option always returns you to the starting page. The “account” option allows you to manage your login information, networks and basic settings. The “privacy” option allows you to control who sees and does what on your profile. The “logout” option makes sure that you are logged off of Facebook completely.

On the left side of the top of the page, the “profile” link allows you to view your profile how everyone else sees it. The “edit” option allows you to make changes to every section of your profile. The “friends” link allows you to view all your existing Facebook friends and search for others. The “inbox” option takes you to your message center where you can read, draft and send messages to any Facebook user.

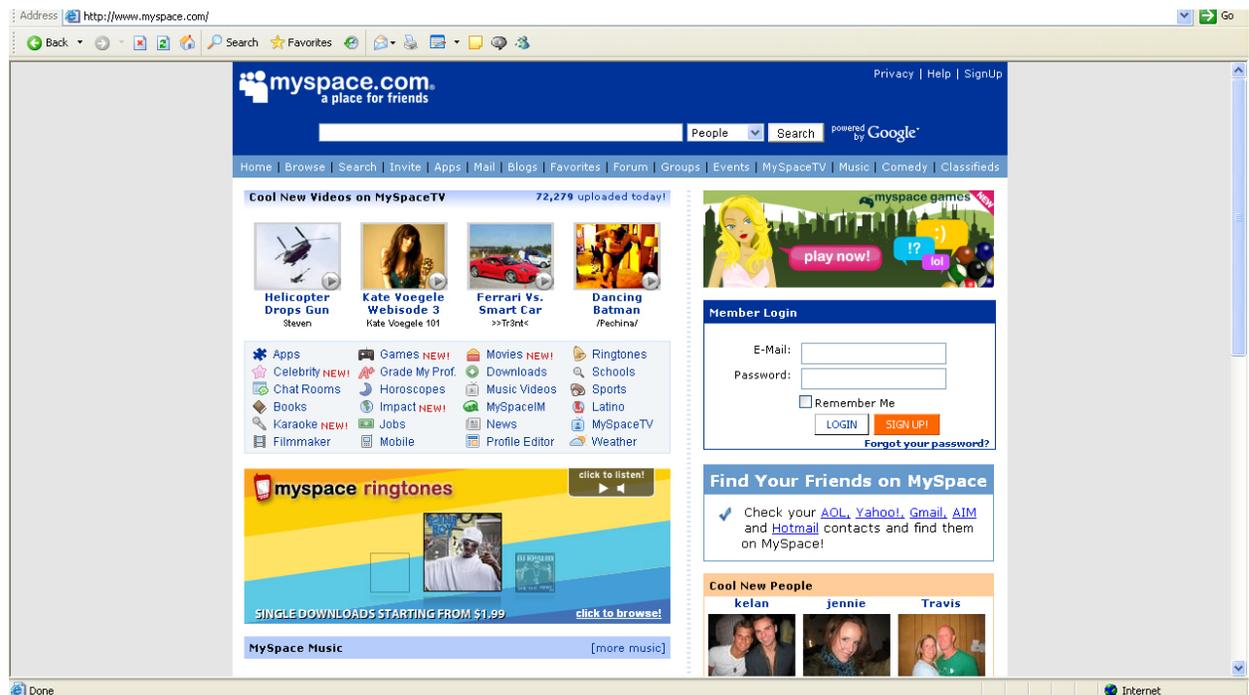
Your profile will include a photo of your choice (or simply a question mark graphic if you don’t add a photo) on the top left corner. Below your photo, friends can view more photos of you that you can add or others can “tag” you in. When you are “tagged” in a photo, users will see your name when they scroll over you in the photo—it is simply a

way to identify who is in the photo, while alerting the person in the photo that they've been "tagged." Other applications that you add will appear below the photos link. On the top right of your profile is a section that lists your name, networks and other information such as birthday or relationship status.



All the content below those two sections can be arranged differently by each user's preference. Other standard sections include a rotating group of photos of six of your friends in the "Friends" section, photo albums, the "mini-feed" that links to the main news feed, information that includes contact info, interests, employers, schools and more, and "the wall," which is a message board for friends to leave notes to you.

Using MySpace

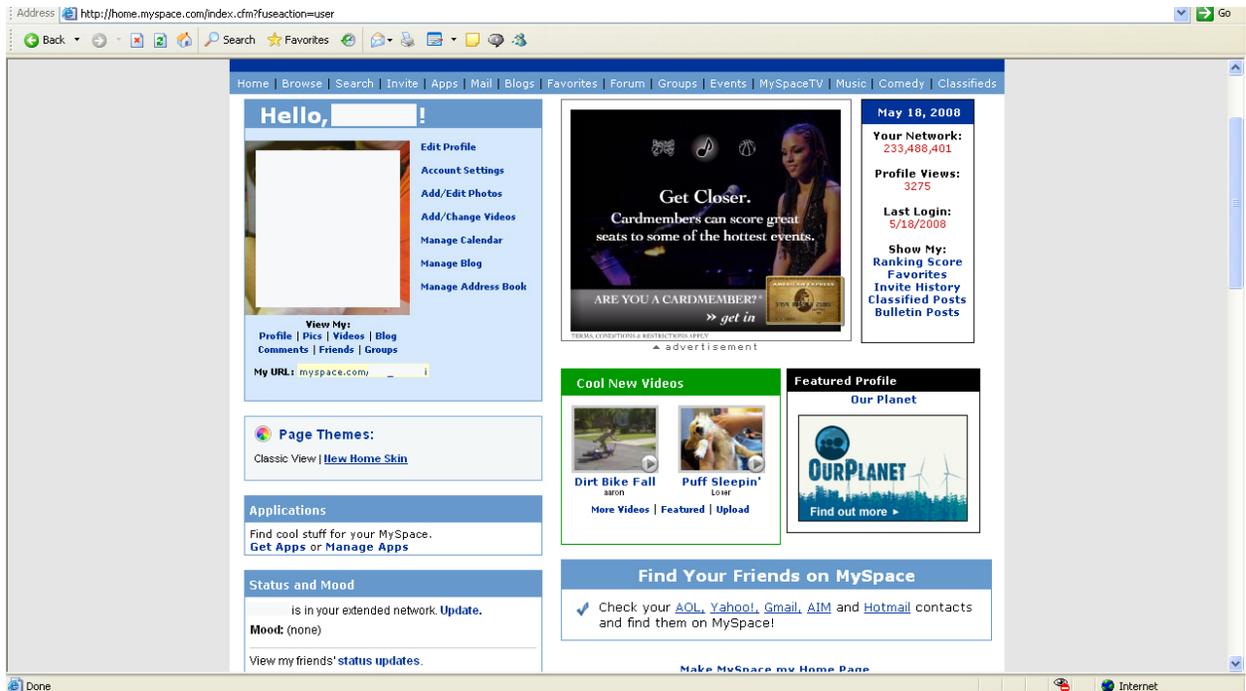


Creating a MySpace profile allows you to connect with other VISTAs across the country. You can become a “friend” of the [official VISTA profile](#) to keep up-to-date with the latest VISTA news, watch stories of service from your VISTA colleagues and dig through historical VISTA photos and vintage VISTA recruitment posters. You’ll be able to share your VISTA story with friends and family, while their VISTA groups offer opportunities to discuss issues with VISTAs at similar projects.

VISTA Leaders are encouraged to start VISTA groups for their state or project with multiple sites. VISTA alumni are encouraged to create groups for each state. VISTA headquarters will pursue other initiatives using MySpace, such as recruitment. At certain times throughout the year (such as AmeriCorps Week), VISTA will ask all volunteers with a MySpace profile as those with a Facebook profile to use the VISTA logo as their profile photo for recruitment purposes.

What to Expect

When you log onto MySpace, you will see the same navigation at the top of every page you visit. At the very top right corner of the page, you will see an option for “Privacy,” which allows you to set profile privacy, control spam, edit e-mail notifications and other settings. The second option is “Help,” which allows you to search for advice by topic. Finally, the “Sign Out” option logs you off MySpace for the session.



The second permanent navigation bar is toward the top of the page, but under a banner ad and the search box.

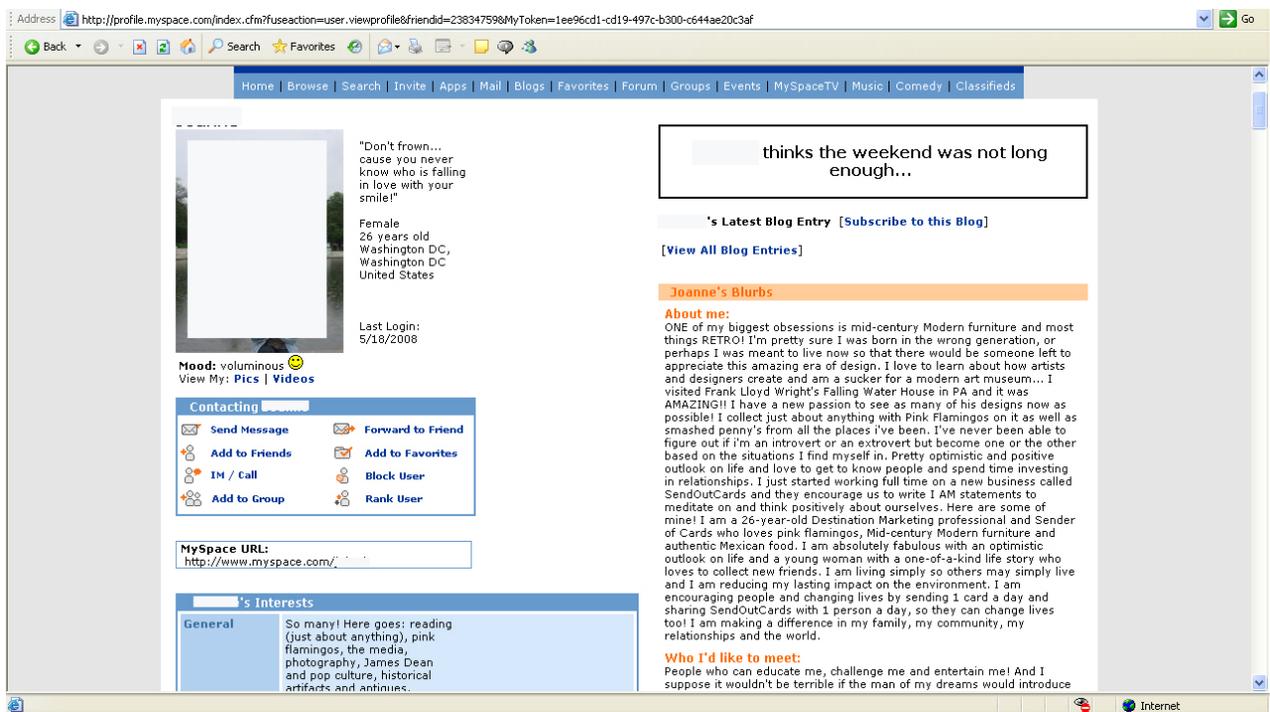
- The “Home” option returns you to your main page.
- “Browse” opens a page that allows you to view people in your network who fit certain criteria that you set, such as gender, age, relationship status or location.
- The “Search” link allows you to search for friends by name, e-mail, school attended or similar personal interests.
- “Invite” allows you to send an e-mail invitation to join MySpace to anyone you select from your e-mail address book.
- “Apps” allows you to add mini-programs to your profile such as games, Flixster movies, music and more.
- “Mail” opens your MySpace inbox.
- “Blogs” opens your personal MySpace blog.
- “Favorites” allows you to bookmark favorite profiles for easy reference later.
- “Forum” allows you to join discussion boards on many topics.
- “Groups” allows you to join a common interest group or create your own.
- “Events” allows you to receive event invitations from friends and create your own events.
- “MySpaceTV” allows you to watch videos uploaded by other MySpace users, as well as post your own videos.
- “Music” allows you to search for musicians’ pages and listen to featured music.
- “Comedy” allows you to search for comedians’ pages and listen to acts.
- “Classifieds” allows you to post and search classified ads by city.

A MySpace “home” page navigation just to the right of the user’s photo allows the user to do the following:

- Edit profile
- Account Settings
- Add/Edit Photos
- Manage Calendar
- Manage Blog
- Manage Address Book

A user can also create a page theme, add application, change his/her status and mood, send and receive “mail,” and view and post bulletins. The “Friend Space” box displays a user’s “Top Friends” and has links to view all friends.

A MySpace profile has the user’s uploaded photo at the top left of the page. Next to the photo, the user can add a quote or status. Under the quote is demographic information including gender, age and location. Under the photo are links to view a user’s “pics” and “videos.” Under those links is contact information and a listing of the user’s interests and personal information. On the right side of the screen are the “About me,” “Who I’d like to meet,” “Friend Space,” and “Comments” sections.



Interactive Media Sharing

Another popular use of social media is file sharing coupled with interactive discussion about what is being shared. Sites like YouTube, Flickr and Photobucket allow users to share videos and photos and then create common interest groups and discussion boards—usually related to the media that is shared. These sites allow users to create an online archive of their photos and videos, share them with others, promote their professional work or use them to promote a cause.

An example of how an organization used a media sharing site to promote itself is the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery and the Colbert Report on Comedy Central. In spring 2008, Stephen Colbert asked the Portrait Gallery to display his portrait as part of a stunt on his show. His portrait was put on display for several weeks in the gallery, while the Portrait Gallery created a Flickr group for the portrait and encouraged visitors to take their photo with the portrait and upload the image. The campaign received national media attention and the gallery received a large boost in attendance for over a month.

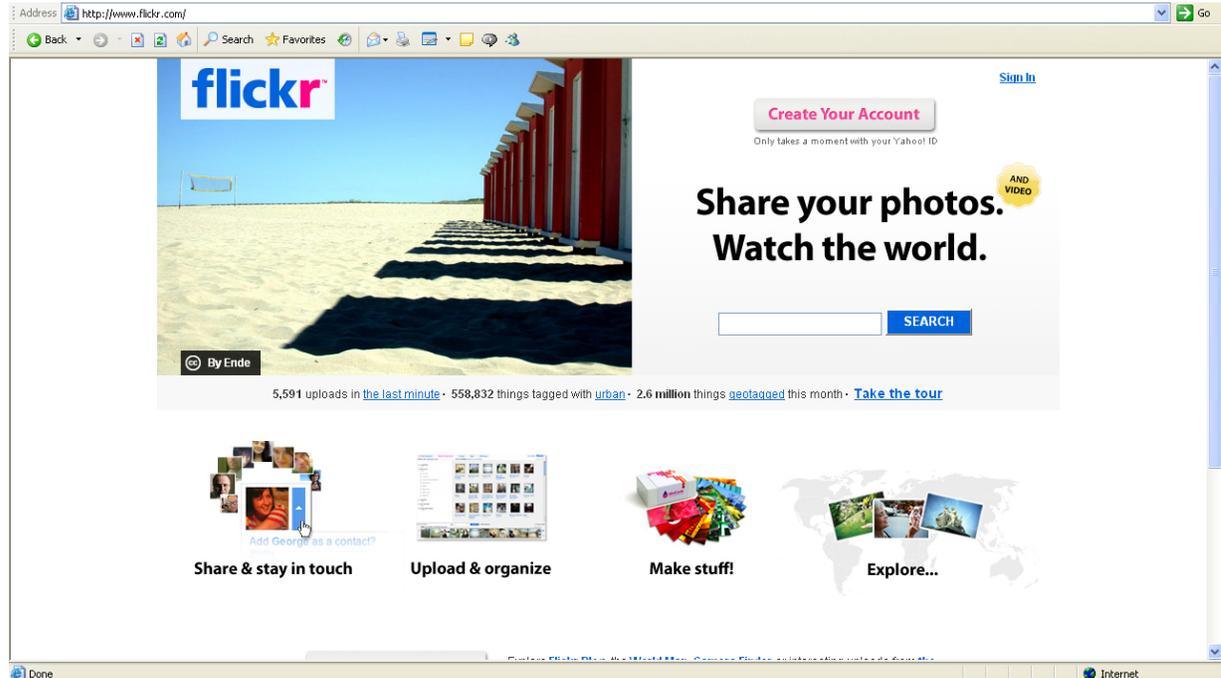
How VISTA Benefits

VISTAs develop networks and collaborative partnerships within communities in order to coordinate local efforts and resources, as well as deepen the impact of those efforts, increase resources, and raise consciousness of issues the community faces. Interactive media is another forum in which to develop those partnerships. Photos and video have an immediate, sometimes visceral impact that the written word may not have. They also offer a facet of communication—playful, creative, dramatic—that may further relationships among individuals and organization that language may not.

You as a VISTA can benefit from using sites like Flickr and YouTube since they allow you to share videos and photos with other VISTAs. You can exchange PSO photos and showcase your project. You can recruit a group of VISTAs to complete a creative project to build community and get to know each other individually.

The VISTA program as a whole will benefit from VISTAs sharing photos and videos from their service as well. Your images and videos may be used in VISTA publications, at VISTA events, in future issues of the Viewfinder and on the Web site. These images and videos are powerful tools to tell the VISTA story.

Using Flickr



What to Expect:

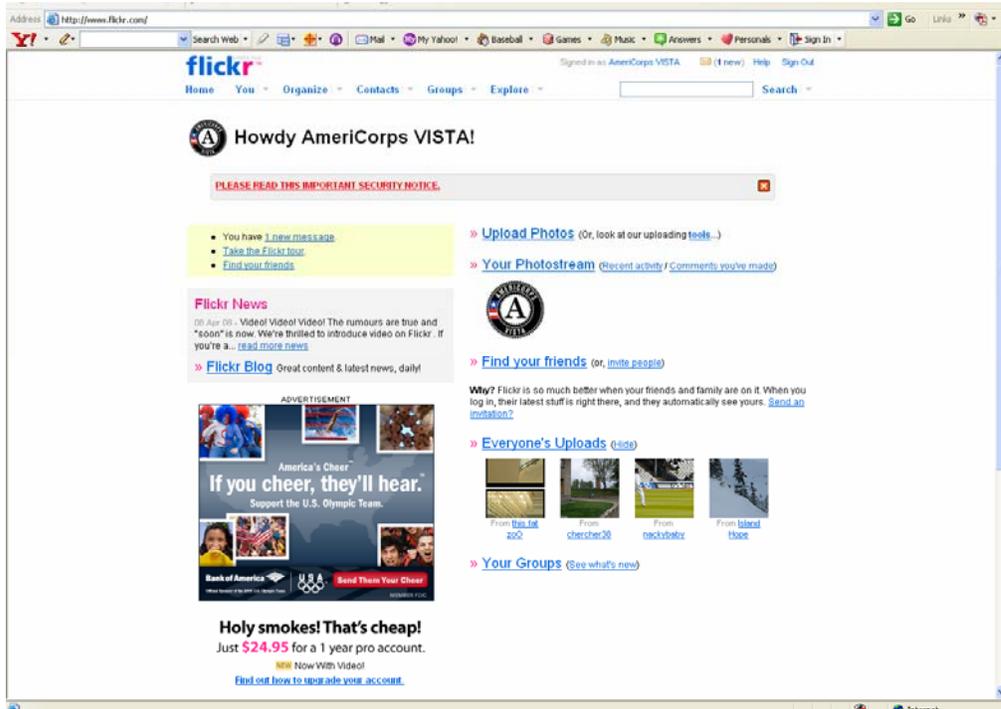
Flickr is a site with a very clean, simple design. The focus is on the photos and albums themselves, not on the interaction on comment boards and in the groups. Flickr members are able to create a short profile with their contact information and personal interests, (which they can make private). Photos can be posted in albums or to groups, and the privacy settings can vary by individual photo, album or shared group photos. Users can also “tag” their photos with keyword descriptions which will allow others to find them in a search. For example, If you take a photo of your group at PSO, you could add the tags, “VISTA, PSO, blue group, July 2008, Chicago.” Friend the [official VISTA Flickr profile](#), and join the [“V is for” Flickr group](#).

Once you log in, Flickr takes you to a “Home” page where you can do everything from upload photos to update your profile. The top left of the page has basic navigation links, including:

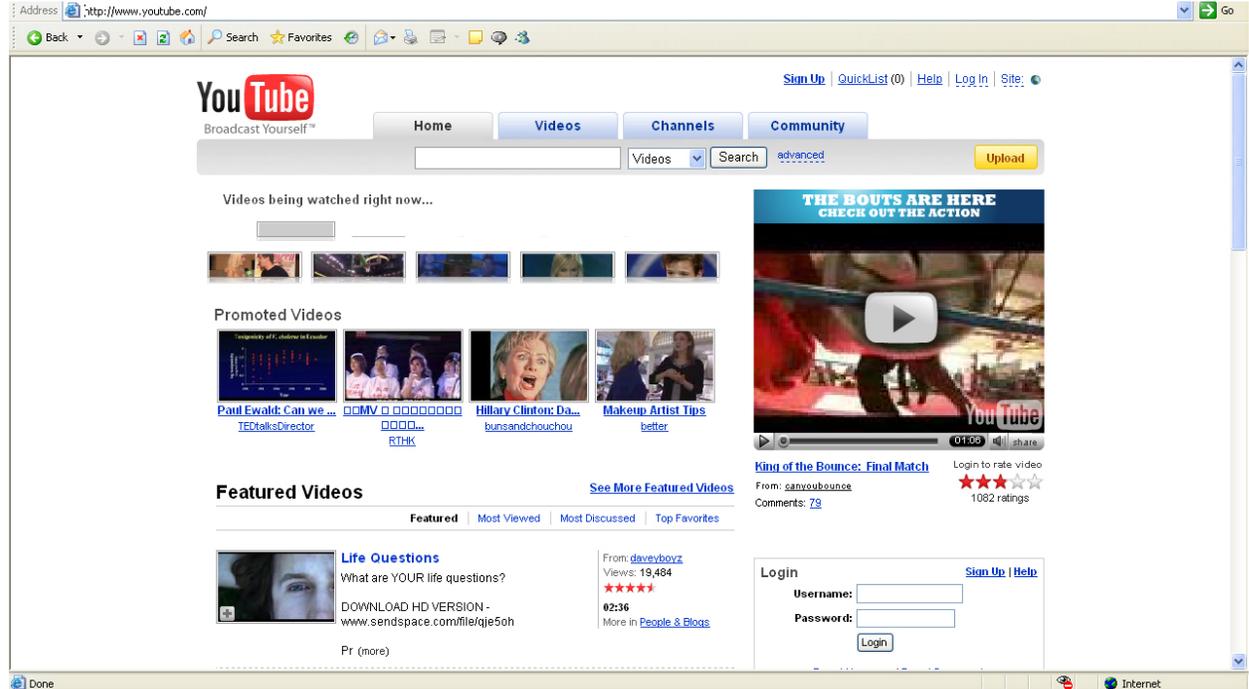
- The “You” link is a pull-down menu that opens account information, your profile and all your activity on the site.
- “Organize” is another pull-down menu that allows you to arrange your content.
- “Contacts” allows you to search for people on Flickr, invite your friends to join and highlights new content on your friends’ pages.
- “Groups” allows you to search for a group, create a new group and view your current groups.
- “Explore” allows you to view content through the Flickr site by what is most recent or most popular—and you can order prints.

- “Creative Commons” organizes photos by what licenses (photos can be used with attribution, non-commercial use, at a cost, etc.) are made available by the user.

Also from your “home” page, you can upload photos, view your Photostream (a timeline of photos you’ve uploaded recently), find friends, view others photos and view your groups. Each Flickr user also has a message inbox to send and receive messages from Flickr friends. Flickr’s blog also gives news and tips regularly.



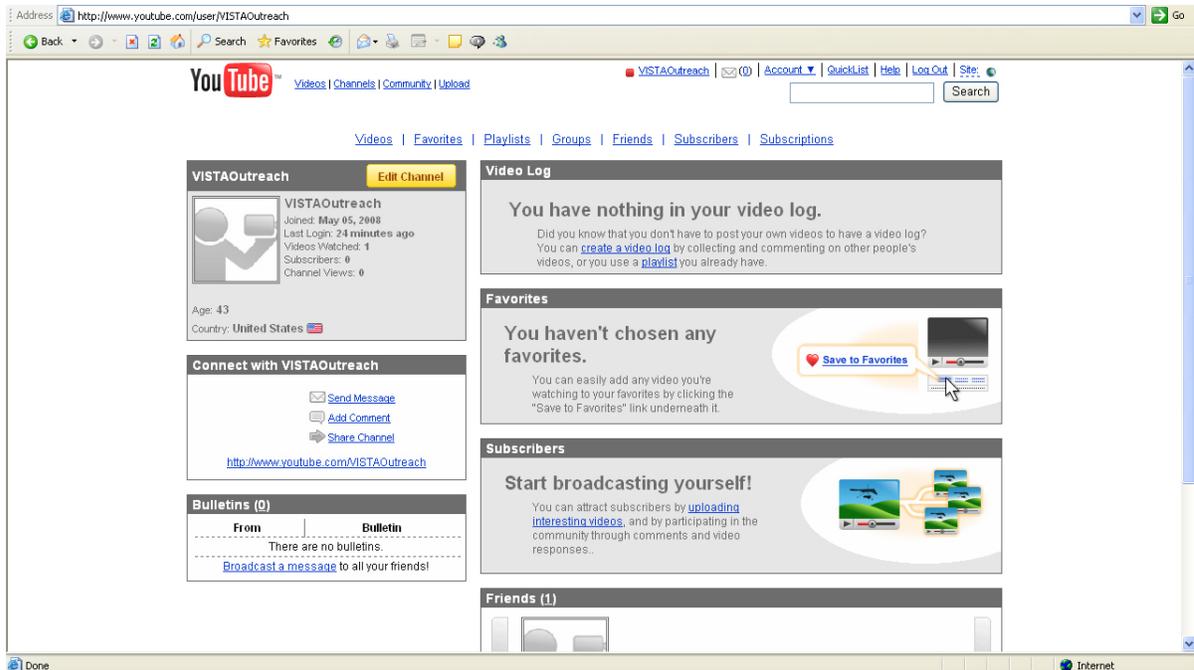
Using YouTube



What to Expect

YouTube is somewhat different from other social networking sites since most communication and interaction is done via video messages; otherwise, it is very similar to other sites in that you have a simple profile, friends, comment walls and groups. Anyone can create an account, regardless of whether or not you upload video. Having a YouTube account allows you to bookmark favorite videos to watch more than once, rate videos, comment on videos, send videos to a YouTube friend's inbox, create common interest groups and invite friends. You can also subscribe to RSS feeds from your friends, then you'll be alerted via e-mail when a new video is posted. Friend the [official VISTA YouTube channel](#) to watch VISTA videos from across the country.

VISTAs and sponsoring organizations can benefit by using YouTube in many ways. On a professional level, you can share videos about your VISTA experience throughout service. You can visually reflect the need for your project in your community, the work and success of your sponsoring organization, and perhaps the long-term impact; sometimes too simple and subtle to capture in print. You might use video to orient and train volunteers or incoming VISTAs. On a personal level, it also allows you to share your experience with friends and family. And it is also cheap entertainment if you already have access to a digital camcorder.



Once you're logged into your YouTube account, you'll see basic top page navigation. The first link in the top right corner of the page will be your user name, which takes you to your profile and account management page. The next link is a letter icon with the number of inbox messages you've received. Under "Account," you'll see a menu for favorite, subscriptions and my videos. "Quicklist" are bookmarked videos for quick viewing later. "Help" is a searchable, topical database. And "Log Out" will sign you out of your YouTube account.

The next row of navigation is just below the top row of links, and each link is a separate tab. "Home" will return to the YouTube homepage whenever clicked. "Videos" takes you to the "Most Viewed Today" page, which has videos sorted by date posted, topic and ratings. "Channels" are sponsored pages that provide videos of a common interest, such as the "NBA.com" channel or "Associated Press" channel. "Community" takes you to a page with listings on contests and groups. Once on your YouTube account page, you can send messages, upload videos, choose favorites, create RSS feeds and invite friends.

Appendix

Creating a Blog

The following steps will guide you in creating a successful blog:

Basic Setup Steps:

1. Choose which host site appeals the most to you. There are many free blog hosts; simply search for “free blog,” and you’ll find many possibilities. Some examples include www.wordpress.com and www.blogspot.com.
2. Choose a template with the colors, fonts and layout that you like. Put Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) and possibly your project name in the title since it will help increase the number of “hits,” or times your blog is listed in a search—which also increases the number of people who visit your blog.
3. Use the VISTA logo on your page. You can find it on the Corporation’s Web site at http://www.cns.gov/about/media_kit/logos.asp. Use the new logo that spells out Volunteers in Service to America under VISTA.
4. Describe the VISTA program on your blog’s profile page.
5. Describe your project and assignment on your blog’s profile page.
6. Be sure to link your blog to the VISTA Web site at <http://www.americorps.gov/vista>. You can also link to other VISTA blogs and encourage them to link to yours.
7. Use your first entry to introduce yourself, explain what you do as a VISTA and talk about your project and site.

Advanced Set Up Steps:

8. Add the AmeriCorps recruitment “widget” that will allow viewers to search for open VISTA positions from your blog. Download the code at <http://www.americorpsweek.gov/widgets.asp>.
9. Provide RSS feeds, so people can subscribe to your blog via e-mail. Each blog host site provides the ability to provide RSS feeds differently. Some blogs automatically provide RSS subscription services, and others require you to add a widget or application for RSS.

Ongoing Maintenance Steps:

1. Write and “publish” an entry once a week at the very least; daily entries build a stronger blog presence and demand more respect from the blogosphere.
2. Post photos and videos relating to your project and VISTA experience when possible.
3. Link to other VISTA bloggers and send out your link to your friends. Encourage your project to link to your blog from its Web site. Put a link to your blog in your e-mail signature. The more people who link to your blog from their blog or Web site, the more “hits,” or visits you’ll receive from the links and searches.
4. Send the VISTA Outreach Team your blog links, and you may be featured in our eNewsletter at VISTAOutreach@cns.gov.

Creating a Facebook account and profile page

Basic Setup Steps:

1. On <http://www.facebook.com>, create an account in the box that says “Sign Up for Facebook.”
2. Once an account is created, you can edit your profile to include any contact information you’re comfortable sharing, interests, schools attended and employment. Make sure to add your VISTA service in the employment section.
3. Add the VISTA Web site link to your profile: <http://www.americorps.gov/vista>.
4. Search for other VISTAs and “friend request” them. You can do this by clicking on the “Friends” link on the “home” page. You can type in someone’s name or e-mail address in the search box on the upper right of the page, or you can click on the “Friend Finder” link to search by location, school attended or employer. You can also search your e-mail address book for people already on Facebook.
5. Once you find a potential “friend,” simply click on the “Add as Friend” link beside their photo.
6. Join VISTA and AmeriCorps “groups” to meet more volunteers and network. To find groups that may interest you, click on the “Groups” link under the list of “Applications” on the left side navigation. “Groups” are organizations into categories, and there is also a search application where you can type in “VISTA.”
7. Become a “fan” of the [official VISTA fan page](#). Once you find the official page, click the “Become a Fan” link next to the VISTA logo.

Intermediate Setup Steps:

8. Click the “Account” option at the top right of the Facebook homepage to manage what networks you belong to, what e-mail “notifications” you’ll receive and other “settings” such as your login e-mail and password.
9. Click the “Privacy” option at the top right of the Facebook homepage to manage who can see your full profile, who can search for you, who can see stories about you on the news feed and how much information about you is shared with applications.

Advanced Setup Steps:

- 10.** Create a group by selecting the “Groups” application on the left side of your home page. Click on “Create a New Group” on the top right of the page. Fill in the information, and set up your group page following the steps you used to create your personal profile. Once created, you can click on “Invite members to join” to market your group to your friends.
 - a.** Some ideas for VISTA groups include a group for all the VISTAs at your project, a group for VISTAs who have similar job descriptions (such as grantwriting, communications or volunteer management) or a group for VISTAs who serve similar causes (hunger, college access or literacy).
 - b.** Make sure to describe VISTA in the group description, and explain why the group was formed or what the goals of the group are.
 - c.** Use the group to share links, resources, events and more!
- 11.** As you will soon learn, you will receive several invitations to join groups and install the applications that your friends are using. These invitations will appear in the right top corner of your home page each time you log in until you choose to accept or ignore them. By accepting an application, you will be installing it on your page. Make sure you answer all the questions and set the privacy controls appropriately to correspond with what information and programs you want to appear on your profile, versus which ones you want to use but not make public.

Creating a MySpace account and profile page

Basic Setup Steps:

1. On <http://www.myspace.com>, click on the orange “Sign Up” button on the right side of the screen under where members sign in.
2. Once you’ve created your account, you can edit your profile to include any contact information you’re comfortable sharing, interests, schools attended and employment. Make sure to add your VISTA service in the employment section.
3. Add the VISTA Web site link to your profile: <http://www.americorps.gov/vista>.
4. Search for other VISTAs and “friend request” them. Under the “Search” link on the top navigation, you can search for friends by their name, e-mail, school attended or interests. Once you click on “View Profile,” the person’s profile page will open, and you can click “Add as Friend” in the “Contact” box under their photo.
5. Join VISTA and AmeriCorps “groups” to meet more volunteers and network. Click on the “Groups” link on the top navigation. You can browse numerous groups by category, or you can type in “VISTA” in the search box.
6. Become a “friend” of the official VISTA profile page at <http://www.myspace.com/amicorpsvista>.

Intermediate Setup Steps:

7. Click on “Get Apps” to view what applications are available for use on your profile.
8. Click on “Profile Editor” to create a custom background with various colors and graphics to personalize your profile.
9. Click the “Privacy” option at the top right of the MySpace homepage to manage who can see your full profile, who can search for you, how much spam you receive and how much information about you is shared with applications.

Advanced Setup Steps:

- 10.** Create a group by selecting the “Groups” link on the top of your home page. Click on “Create a New Group.” Fill in the information, and set up your group page following the steps you used to create your personal profile. Once created, you can click on “Invite members to join” to market your group to your friends. MySpace will send an invitation to each individual, and they can chose whether or not to join.
 - a. Some ideas for VISTA groups include a group for all the VISTAs at your project, a group for VISTAs who have similar job descriptions (such as grant writing, communications or volunteer management) or a group for VISTAs who serve similar causes (hunger, college access or literacy).
 - b. Make sure to describe VISTA in the group description, and explain why the group was formed or what the goals of the group are.
 - c. Use the group to share links, resources, events and more!

Creating a Flickr account and uploading photos

Basic Setup Steps:

1. To create an account on Flickr, you must have a Yahoo! ID. If you already have an e-mail account with Yahoo!, you may use it to sign in and create a Flickr profile. If not, go to <http://www.yahoo.com> to sign up for an account first.
2. On <http://www.flickr.com>, click on “Create Your Account.”
3. Follow the on-screen directions to set up your account preferences and create your profile.
4. Think about what photos you already have that you want to share and what you plan to share in the future (upcoming events or your VISTA story of service). Create albums or groups (if several people will be uploading images) based on what photos you are using. Organizing your photos into groups when you first upload them makes them easier to find later.
5. Click on “Upload” to add photos to your page. Consider adding captions and tagging photos (giving photos labels about what is in the photo) so your friends can find them in keyword searches.
6. Invite your friends to join Flickr and search for other VISTAs already on the site. Friend the [official VISTA Flickr profile](#) and join the [“V is for” group](#).

Advanced Setup Steps:

7. Create groups based on location, VISTA project site, type of cause (hunger, literacy, homelessness, etc.) or job description (grantwriting, communication or volunteer management, etc.). Capturing and uploading images to these groups to share could open interesting dialogue about your VISTA experience and project with other VISTAs.
8. If you also have a Facebook profile, you can install one of the Flickr applications that merges the two sites. Your Flickr albums will be available on your Facebook profile, so you can share them with friends who are on Facebook, but not on Flickr.
9. You can also create a custom look for your Flickr group. To learn how to customize the look of your Flickr page using Flickr API, visit <http://www.flickr.com/photos/fattybigboy/2240974778/>.

Creating a YouTube account and uploading video

Basic Setup Steps:

1. On <http://www.youtube.com>, click “Sign Up” on the top right corner of the page, and complete the “Create Your YouTube Account” form on the right side.
2. Once you’re logged in, create your profile. Be sure to include VISTA and your project name, so other VISTAs can friend you.
3. Begin uploading videos about your VISTA experience, sponsoring organization and project, making sure to tag them with VISTA and other descriptive words so they are searchable.
4. Search for other VISTAs and VISTA groups, and connect with them. Friend the [official VISTA channel](#).

Advanced Setup Steps:

5. On your account page, click on “Edit Channel” to create a “look” or design for your public page, organize videos, update your profile and set privacy levels.
6. Click on the “Community” tab and then choose “Video Toolbox” in the navigation below. This is a forum to get advice on creating a professional quality video.
7. Also under the “Community” tab is the “TestTube” option, which is a page featuring programs in beta form that allow you to:
 - Share videos with others while you’re watching them via an online feed
 - Swap your audio for officially licensed music
 - Chat with others who are viewing the same videos as you
 - Browse videos in a full-screen player.