

## **Bebo Mobile safety advice for parents and carers**

### **Introduction**

A social networking site is an online community where people from different communities can meet and share common interests. Founded in 2005, Bebo is the most popular social networking site in Ireland and provides an exciting way to stay in touch with friends, discover new interests or just hang out.

On Bebo young people are active consumers, creators, and producers of content for others to view. Content includes: profiles or descriptions of themselves giving details of gender, hobbies, school etc, photos and videos; quizzes, blogs and many other fun features. This content is referred to as 'user-generated content' which differs from content produced by companies for viewing in traditional media eg TV shows and movies. The fact that users can produce content, which could prove to be extremely popular with a wide audience, is a significant part of why social networking sites are so engaging.

Bebo and O2 have joined together to bring the Bebo social networking experience to the mobile phone. We have prepared this advice for parents to help you understand Bebo Mobile and the range of safety features available on the service.

### **About Bebo Mobile**

Bebo Mobile mirrors the Bebo site accessible on a computer; the same safety standards are available on both. Remember, your child must be 13 years old or older to use the Bebo service and by signing up to Bebo they agree to Bebo's Terms of Service.

### **From a mobile phone a Bebo user will be able to:**

- Log on and browse Bebo on a customised version of the service to fit a mobile screen
- View and update their Bebo page
- View other people's Bebo pages
- Upload photos
- Send and receive Bebo Mail
- Post and reply to comments
- Receive an alert when another user posts a comment on their profile
- Delete comments
- Report abuse
- Block a user from contacting them
- See the top 5 safety tips

Access to Bebo on a mobile phone with O2 costs €1.50 per week. All the above features are free except for uploading photographs which are charged at the standard rate of 25c per message.

## **Become familiar with Bebo**

To become familiar with Bebo you can register on the site by going to [www.bebo.com](http://www.bebo.com). We advise that you register with Bebo and see for yourself what the Bebo experience is all about. This will also help you understand your child's interests and enable you to assess how well they understand the privacy settings and different safety features associated with using the service.

Negotiate with your child to visit and view each others Bebo profiles. Build trust with your child to give them the confidence to talk to you about the positive things that happen on Bebo as well as anything negative.

The site has clear content and conduct policies - see Bebo's Terms of Service on [www.Bebo.com](http://www.Bebo.com). We advise that you discuss these with your child.

Bebo has developed a set of resources to help educate young people, parents and teachers about the safe and responsible use of Bebo. The resources include ten visually-engaging short videos and animations - designed to encourage young people and parents to view together. Go to [www.Bebo.com/safety](http://www.Bebo.com/safety) to view the videos. There is also a link to the resources at the foot of every Bebo page. Watch the videos with your child and discuss the content with them to gauge and help in their understanding.

We advise that you print off and discuss the Bebo Mobile top 5 safety tips at the end of this advice for parents. The safety tips are also available at the end of each profile page on Bebo Mobile.

## **Privacy settings**

On Bebo your child has control over who can view their Bebo page and these controls are referred to as Privacy settings. Privacy settings should influence how your child behaves on Bebo and what information they post - not only on their own profile page but on other peoples.

Young people should think about their privacy levels in terms of an audience. When you register with Bebo you have no audience (for safety, all new Bebo accounts are Private by default). When you **Add Friends** you create a list of friends referred to as **Direct Friends** who are, in effect, a mini audience.

Direct friends should be chosen wisely and you should advise your child to review who is on their direct friends list regularly. Your child can remove a Beboer from their Direct Friends list as follows: Go to the 'Friends' module on your profile page and click the link 'View All Friends'. Click on the profile photo of the person you wish to delete – this takes you to their profile page. Finally, click the link 'Remove as Friend' located below their profile photo and then click the 'Delete' button to confirm your choice.

It is important for young people to consider a number of issues before posting content to Bebo including the following:

- 1) Who is my audience?
- 2) What privacy level am I operating on?
- 3) What communication channel is most appropriate for what I would like to post?

## **The following points explain the three different levels of privacy on Bebo:**

Level 1 Private profile (mini audience): your child's profile is visible only to the people they have connected with as friends. They connect to people as friends on Bebo by either sending friend requests or accepting friend requests from others; these people are known as their 'direct friends' and can view their profile. Young people should think about those 'randomers' (people they only know online), whom they have accepted as direct friends; review their direct friends list regularly and when necessary block anyone whom they feel should no longer be on their list of Direct Friends.

Level 2 Network privacy (moderate audience): as your child becomes more used to using Bebo they may wish to connect with their college or school network. When they join a college or school network their profile becomes visible to other Beboers within that network. Now their audience is bigger and they need to take this into account.

Remember if your child is in a network and would like to communicate privately with one or more people, Bebo mail is an effective way to do this. To make your child's profile PRIVATE (direct friends only), they must leave any college or school group they have joined.

Level 3 Public profile (mass audience): If your child feels that they would like an even bigger audience than their college or school network they can choose to go public. If they choose to have a public profile, remember anyone can view it. Remind them that they can use Bebo mail to communicate more privately with specific direct friends on topics that are not relevant to the public.

To change from Public profile status back to Private your child should click on the '**Edit Profile**' link underneath their profile photo, then un-tick the '**Accessible Profile**' option.

Bebo strongly advises that people under 21 years of age keep their profile private or at network privacy level.

### **Think about your audience**

Negotiate with your child the appropriate level of privacy and make sure it matches their level of emotional maturity and understanding. Make sure your child understands the importance of protecting their privacy online - talk through the three levels of privacy with your child.

Children and young people should think carefully about adding someone they've only met online to their 'friends list' even if another friend has recommended them. Young people sometimes refer to people they only know online as 'randomers' – remind them that people are not always who they claim to be.

Talk to your child about the significance of the location information they post online. Ensure your child agrees to keep information about their whereabouts to themselves – text or call those who need to know. Remind them that just as in the real world, young

people do not advertise their movements to a wide audience; the same should apply when communicating online.

Discuss with your child the dangers of meeting someone they only know online in the real world. "Knowing someone on the Internet is not the same as knowing them in the real world – and people may give false identities online".

### **Content viewing, posting and sharing: Think before you post**

It is important that young people understand the need to be responsible in what they post to other people's profile pages – 'Think before you post' is a good maxim. Discuss with your child what personal information they should and should not post online.

Emphasise to your child that once a comment or posting is made, it leaves a digital record that is linked to their profile. Ask your child to discuss with you the possible consequences – for example, a comment posted in anger may be perceived as bullying.

It is important to advise your child to carefully choose what they share online with friends and the wider community on the Internet:

- Photos can contain information, which, on its own may seem innocuous, but when put together with other information such as school details can be used to locate and identify a child.
- Photos should be appropriate - not sexually provocative or explicit, so as not to attract unwanted attention from adults who may wish to exploit children and young people. Remember photos can be easily copied and changed:
- Your child can choose to share their photos with direct friends only or a wider audience. Ask your child whether they are comfortable with their photos being seen by the people they have chosen to share them with or whether it might embarrass them at a later stage.
- Remind your child that if they wish to do so, they can edit their photo albums to make them visible to direct friends only. Note: mobile photo albums are private by default (visible to your direct friends only) and you cannot upload or view videos on Bebo Mobile. As mentioned previously, they should review their direct friends list on a regular basis.

### **Staying in control**

The safety features available on Bebo and Bebo Mobile have been designed to help your child use the service safely and parental involvement will augment the efficacy of these measures.

Bebo empowers its users with the ability to review profile comments before they become visible on the site. To activate Bebo's review profile comments tool sign-in to Bebo on your computer - Click the 'My Account' tab on your 'Home' page; under the 'Preferences'

section, click the 'Change Preferences' link. Check or un-check the boxes for the two options given, then click the 'Save' button.

For added safety Bebo does not allow search engines to check the site for details of under 16s profiles, whether they are private, network or public.

Bebo Mobile safety features you should know about:

### **Report Abuse**

All Bebo Mobile profile pages include a '**Report Abuse**' link so that you or your child can report potential problems to Bebo. There is also a 'Report Abuse' link adjacent to photos (for reporting specific photos). When a Bebo member is reported, Bebo does not disclose details of the person who made a report.

### **Block Unwanted Contact**

Every Bebo Mobile profile page includes a '**Block**' link to enable your child to block other members from contacting them or posting to their profile page. Your child's profile page does remain visible to users they have blocked but your child can stop the blocked user viewing their photos by editing individual photo albums.

### **Delete Comments**

Your child can **delete comments** that another person posts to their profile page: scroll to the comments section on Bebo Mobile; click on 'View all'; and click the 'Delete' link next to the comment they wish to delete.

### **Requests for Friends**

For your child's safety we have ensured that while your child can receive requests to be friends from other Beboers on Bebo Mobile, your child can only accept these requests using a computer. This affords you the opportunity to advise your child about online friendships.

### **Remove Access to Bebo on your Child's Mobile Phone**

Some parents may not wish their child to have access to Bebo on their mobile phone so we have introduced a control that allows parents to remove access to Bebo from their mobile phone free of charge.

To activate this control you will need to become an authorised contact on your child's account. Any parent who is not already an authorised contact should complete the parental control form to become an authorised contact and post it to O2 customer care. Remember to tick the 'Remove Bebo' box.

Where a parent is already an authorised contact, the Bebo Access Control can be activated by contacting customer care on 1909 or 1747 for Speak Easy customers or 1850 601 747 from a landline. The Bebo Access Control can also be de-activated at any time by contacting customer care.

It's also important to know that your child can also cancel their Bebo account at anytime.

## Getting help

It is critical for parents and carers to maintain an ongoing dialogue and have regular conversations with their children about anything that is worrying them or has happened online.

It is very important that both you and your child understand how to report anything that might be inappropriate or illegal to Bebo; you can report abuse using Bebo Mobile or using a computer.

If you suspect that a young person is being solicited online or is being groomed by someone with an inappropriate interest in children it is important to report it to the Gardai. Save any copies of communications, images, messages or other content related to the solicitation of a child and pass them to the Gardai.

## Guard your handset

Advise your child to guard their Bebo account and handset:

- Talk to your child about the importance of keeping their Bebo password private to protect against someone else taking control it.
- Auto-login (Remember me) should only be selected when signing in to Bebo if they PIN lock their phone – otherwise their Bebo account is easily accessible should their phone be lost or stolen.
- It is important that your child sets up a Personal Identification Number (PIN) on their mobile phone. This means that someone else cannot operate their phone should it be lost or stolen.

Here is some useful information we have provided to Bebo Mobile users to avoid Mobile theft:

**Remain alert** – when you are out be aware of your surroundings and do not use your phone in crowded areas or where you might feel unsafe.

**Remember** – to set your security Personal Identification Number (PIN) on your mobile phone. That way, if your phone is stolen, thieves will be unable to operate it.

**Reset** – your Bebo account password (using a computer) if your phone is lost or stolen, this will stop anybody else accessing your Bebo account from your mobile phone.

**Report** – If your phone is stolen, report it to O2 and your nearest Garda station as soon as possible. Once your identity is verified, your telephone number is deactivated.

Following that, your phone will be unusable on all mobile networks.

## Manage Bebo Mobile alerts

With Bebo Mobile your child can choose to receive alerts (via text messages) when a friend uploads new comments, sends Bebo mail or updates their profile. It's important to know that a young person can remove some or all friends' text message alerts at any time.

Bebo Mobile is an exciting way to keep in touch with friends however, please recognise that if your child is receiving lots of text alerts it may disturb others. Encourage your child to change their phone settings to silent or vibrate so that text alerts do not disturb others.

## Meeting in person with people first met online

Meeting people in the real world who are only known online is not new or particular to social networking or user interactive sites. Young people often assume that those people they have spent time interacting with online are real friends and therefore safe to meet in the real world. However, great caution should be applied:

- It is important for young people to think very carefully before agreeing to meet anyone they have met online and agree that any such meetings should be approved by you.
- Parents should ensure that any meetings take place in public and with trusted adults present.
- It is important for parents and carers to address and consider the possibility of their children being involved in organised 'gang' or rivalry meetings in the real world, which can be arranged online.
- It is also important to recognize that there are online groups and communities where children and young people meet that can be educational and fun.

## Top 5 safety tips for Beboers

These are the top 5 safety tips that we have given young people for Bebo Mobile:

- 1) **Think about your audience:** remember if your profile is public, anyone can view it - including people you don't know. Protect your reputation by thinking before you post.
- 2) **Be smart:** don't disclose your real world location on Bebo Mobile – SMS or call those who need to know. PIN lock your phone, so only you can use it.
- 3) **Be cautious:** if someone you only know through the Internet suggests a meeting in the real world think carefully; inform an adult, bring a friend; and only meet in a public place.
- 4) **Respect your Bebo community:** by signing up to Bebo you have agreed not to bully or harass other users or to post offensive material. If you do, your account could be deleted without warning. Keep Bebo safe – report abuse.

- 5) **You are not anonymous on Bebo**; the Gardai may become involved in response to reports of abuse.

The top 5 safety tips can be found at the end of each profile page on Bebo Mobile and are useful starting points for discussions with a young person around the safe and responsible use of Bebo Mobile.

For further information and safety advice log onto [www.Bebo.com/safety](http://www.Bebo.com/safety)