

MySpace Profiles

Katherine Giles, Jessica Reid, and John Gagnon

INTRODUCTION

Myspace.com is a website for social networking and can be utilized in several ways. These uses include personal profiles, school networking, occupational networking, profiles for musical artists, personal advertisements, etc. Beyond this, people have managed to broaden the scope of Myspace even further, but the focus of this writing guide is to assist young single adults who are looking for a relationship or just a date in writing effective personal profiles. It is understood that every writer is different and has a different personality that they would like to communicate through their profiles. This guide will include tips for brainstorming, questions that each writer should try to answer, tips for formatting and structure in each section of the Myspace page to most clearly present information, and some do's and don'ts.

The goal of this guide is to show young single adults who are looking for a casual dating or serious relationships how to create a Myspace profile which will clearly communicate what they are looking for and advertise them in an honest and effective way. Before we wrote this guide we explored the genre by doing some research. We used a sample group of thirty 18-22 year old young adults, 15 male and 15 female, who were living within ten miles of downtown Seattle.

For more about [www.myspace.com](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myspace) visit <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myspace>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I.** Understanding Myspace.com Profiles
- II.** Getting Started
- III.** Generating Content
 - Step 1: Creating Your Profile
 - Step 2: Writing Your Personal Profile
 - Basic Info/Background and Lifestyle
 - Optional: Selecting a Meaningful Survey
 - About Me
 - Step 3: Extending Your Profile
 - Blogging
 - Songs
- IV.** Tips: Do's & Don'ts
- V.** Important Myspace Profile Related Sites
- VI.** Conclusion

I. UNDERSTANDING MYSPACE.COM PROFILES

Myspace.com is an online social networking website. It is now the most popular site in the United States and among the most popular in the world! As a Myspace member, you can view other member profiles, interact with strangers, post blogs, and even arrange a date, all from the comfort of your own home. Myspace.com provides an online forum for social interaction and self-expression, while allowing users to remain at least somewhat mysterious in that there is no face-to-face communication. Most importantly, it allows its users to control how they present themselves to the world.

Myspace.com has developed into its current social role with the development and growth of internet technology. Social networking sites share their roots with Classmates.com, an internet community designed for reuniting high school alumni. The popularity of this service grew and a push was made in 2002 by a number of entrepreneurs to expand the service to the public, free of charge. This led to the development of similar sites, such as Friendster.com, Myspace.com, and Facebook.com. As more people joined these online communities, their popularity spread through word of mouth, bringing more users to the sites.

Now that Myspace.com boasts over 100 million users worldwide, it has become heavily integrated into society, especially among younger adults. Myspace has become a way for strangers to connect, old friends to reconnect, and friends to simply communicate. As Myspace continues to grow in popularity, it is as common to ask a new acquaintance if they have a Myspace profile as it is to ask for their phone number. Myspace.com has become embedded into our culture as a multi-faceted mode of communication. Having a Myspace profile means that potentially, all 100 million users can see one's personal information and photos, which is why creating a profile that is an accurate reflection of a person is so important.

II. GETTING STARTED: GOALS AND PRE-WRITING

The first thing to consider before creating a Myspace profile is your reason for creating it in the first place. In order to create a successful profile, you must first have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish with your profile. Do you want to make new friends? Are you looking for serious romantic relationships, or just dating? Knowing what purpose you want your profile to ultimately serve will give you a better idea of how to create it so that it suits your needs. The following guide will be most useful to those between the ages of 18 and 22, who are single and seeking romantic relationships, both casual and serious, in the Seattle area.

Understanding the above criteria will substantially narrow your target audience. It should be understood that your profile is accessible by the public unless you decide to make your profile private, meaning it is only accessible to your friends. It is important to remember that any user can view your profile, and many of the visitors to your profile will not necessarily belong to your target audience group. For this reason, you should make every attempt to

STEP 1: CREATING YOUR PROFILE

The first step in creating a profile is to set up a Myspace account. To begin, first type in "http://myspace.com" on your internet browser, and wait for the Myspace home page to appear. In the right hand side of the screen, you should see an orange button saying "Sign up!" Click on this, and enter the information the page requests. Enter your name, e-mail address, password, and date of birth. As a safety precaution, it is recommended no one under the age of 18 register at Myspace.com. Once you've finished filling out the information on this page, click submit. Congratulations, you are now officially a member of Myspace.com!

STEP 2: WRITING YOUR PERSONAL PROFILE

Once you have successfully registered as a Myspace user, you can begin making your profile your own. After the registration page, you will be taken to a page that will ask you to post a photo of yourself. While this step can wait until later, it would be helpful to post a picture right away, as the photo is often the first thing other users look at when they view your profile. Make sure for this first default photo, you choose a picture of yourself that you feel captures your personality well.

Once you have loaded a photo (or chosen to skip this step for now) your browser will direct you to what is known as your Myspace home page. This page is where you will receive message and comment alerts, as well as bulletins from your friends. From your home page, you can manage every aspect of your account, from editing your profile to your friends list.

It's best to begin with the parts of your profile that change the least. Begin personalizing your profile from your home page by selecting "Edit Profile" from the menu next to your photo (Fig. 1). Then be taken to the blank outline for your "Interests and personality" section. The first text box will be entitled "About me". This section is extremely important, but we recommend waiting to fill it out until you have filled out other information. To do this, click "Basic Info" at the top of the page. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 1

Basic Info

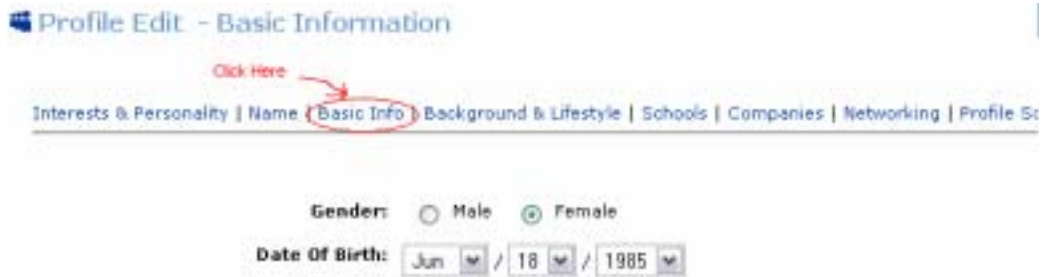


Fig. 2

Although these sections are not necessarily required, most of the users whose profiles we researched chose to fill in this information. It is the easiest section to complete and it gives other users who view your profile a better idea of who you are in terms of appearance and location. More importantly, you can easily choose from a list what your purpose on Myspace is. This is important because Myspace can be used for such a wide range of reasons, selecting your reason for using Myspace allows users to find you using the browse function in Myspace.

An example of how the basic info appears after the Background and Lifestyle section. (Fig. 3)

Background and Lifestyle

The “Background and Lifestyle” portion of your profile is a multiple-choice questionnaire of sorts which asks for more personal information than the Basic Info prompts. This section gives your friends and profile viewers a small glimpse into your lifestyle and habits, as well as your personal beliefs and values. While this information is again, optional, many users within this genre seeking to find dates or relationships include as much of this information as possible. It will help interested viewers determine how compatible you are with them, based on the responses you have chosen. Once you complete it, your Background and Lifestyle section will appear as follows:

Yun Chee's Details	
Status:	Single
Here for:	Serious Relationships
Orientation:	Straight
Body type:	5' 4" / Athletic
Ethnicity:	Asian
Religion:	Buddhist
Zodiac Sign:	Gemini
Smoke / Drink:	No / Yes
Children:	Undecided
Education:	In college
Income:	Less than \$30,000

Fig. 3

Once you have completed the Basic Info section, you are ready to move on to the next section

Schools and Companies

Now that you have listed your occupation, level of education, and income in previous sections, you can build on this information using the “Schools” and “Companies” sections. This will let your readers know not only that you have a job or education, but what kind. Letting readers know what you do and/or where you choose to go to school is especially important if you are looking for a serious relationship. It lets tells readers how compatible your goals and set of experiences are. Listing school or work also establishes common ground and possible affiliations with the reader. It provides a common set of experiences to help them get a sense of your personality. This may or may not have a positive effect, as it is important to note that stereotypes come along with this information. Someone who lists an Ivy League school may be considered a rich snob, just as someone listing an affiliation to a fraternity or sorority may be considered a party animal.

If you are a college student and/or a high school graduate, select “Schools” from the top of the page and search for institutions you have attended in the past or are currently attending. If you have a job, you may also select “Companies”, and fill out all relevant information about where you work and what position you hold. Once again, these sections can provide a sense of common interests between you and other users and is a place for you to expand upon your education and work experience.

Interests and Personality

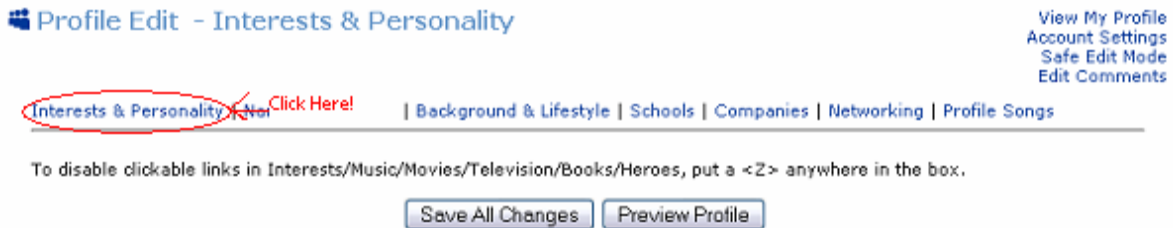


Fig. 4

This portion of your profile is perhaps the most important, as all of the information you give here is entirely self-generated. Anything your viewers read here will be created entirely by you, and is the best way to express yourself and your personality on your main profile page. Despite being self generated, each section has a different format with different conventions, so we will guide you through each of them. The Interests and Personality section contains the following elements:

Headline

Your headline is a quote that is displayed beside your default photo. In addition to being one of the first things a user sees on your profile, the headline is also displayed with your photo on the Myspace search results and browsing pages should someone search for your profile. In this sense, the headline is a way in which viewers can decide if they want to continue viewing

your profile. With this in mind, make sure your headline is something that represents you well, because in most cases it will be the first text a viewer will read on your profile.

About me

The about me box is the first large text box on this editing page which appears below the headline. It is extremely important to the success of your profile and will be the largest section of self generated information about yourself. The About me section is an introduction about yourself and will allow you to show readers just how interesting you really are. It will require a lot of planning and brainstorming before it is written. Because of this we suggest that you use the next few sections to help you brainstorm the most important things you will want to write about, so we will give pointers for those sections first.

Who I'd like to meet

Many Myspace members use this section as a chance to expand describe the traits of the type of people they are looking to find on Myspace for a date or a mate. Because of this trend readers tend to expect that sort of information to be in this section rather than, for example, a list of celebrities you would like to meet. If you want to include information about role models or heroes you would like to meet, it can be included in the About me section, since those are the types of things that reflect your own personality.

For the young single user this is the section where your intentions can be made clear. The purpose has been stated in the basic info that you are either looking for a relationship or a date, but here you can say specifically who you are looking for and what you want in a relationship or potential date. At the same time you don't want to scare readers off by writing an unrealistic description of the perfect (and most likely non-existent) mate. This is a chance for you appeal to the ethical and emotional sides of your audience, and let them know if they're right for you.

In preparation for writing this section, make a list of attributes that are most important to you. Do looks matter? And if so, what should they your potential mate look like? What body type? How much education should they have? How intelligent should they be? Should they have a job? What about their political stance? Does their location matter? What commitment level do you want? Next, ask yourself why these things matter to you and write those reasons down.

Once you've made this list, put it in order of the most important to the least important. Now you are ready to write about who you are looking for. Write a paragraph with the most important information first. Then move on to another paragraph which includes the items at the end of your list.

The tone in this section tends to be casual and inviting. Attributes you are looking for should be listed here as well. The voice in this section is usually in both the 1st and 2nd person and usually includes an invitation for those who are reading to make contact. (Fig. 5)

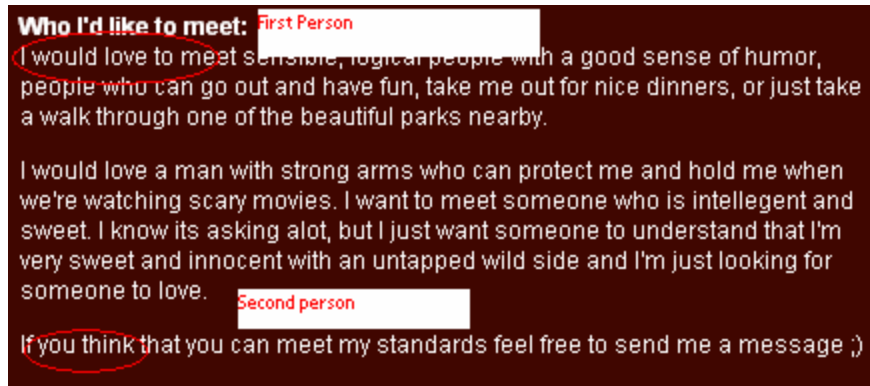


Fig. 5

Interests

This section is for you to list your general interests (sports, music, etc) and favorite activities. The purpose of this section is to concisely list some of your favorite things or unique things which reflect your personality. You do not need to write about every last band that you listen to or every single TV show that you've ever enjoyed to get this across. There are sections below that are dedicated to music, movies, TV, Books and Heroes. Because of this you should list hobbies, activities, athletics, etc. Having this section filled out will give readers a *general* idea of your personality and common interests and it will help readers know whether they are interested or not in communicating with you. This section can be as long or as short as you wish, but remember that you want to maintain your viewers' interest and you want people to read what you write.

For this section and the following interest sections, most users follow the trend of listing each interest out. Since these sections can be used for brainstorming ideas for the About Me text, listing interests can be very useful. For this and the next few sections choose your favorite or items in each category and list them out. Later, once you've finished your About me section, you can come back and integrate media or pictures into all of your interests sections. Another idea for a variation of the writing for sub-genre of interests is to write it in paragraph form, explaining why you like the things you have chosen and why they are important to you. This will also give you a chance to include anecdotes and let your personality shine through in yet another portion of your profile.

For a complete example of the interests section see Fig. 6

Music/Movies/Televisio

These sections allow other users to see any common interest in films, television, and music. List your favorite movies, TV shows, and musical artists here, and if you like a wide range of movies and musical genres, be sure to convey this, so that a wider range of people will find that you have similar tastes to their own. If you don't like movies or don't watch TV, say so. This will most likely attract other users who feel the same way.

Books

Like with movies and television, list your favorite books. If you don't like to read, say so, but avoid saying anything that might offend or insult those who do like to read.

Heroes

The "Heroes" section is a place for you to acknowledge people that you admire. These people can be family members, friends, or celebrities...whoever you look up to. The only thing to keep in mind while filling out this section is that it may be helpful to explain why you look up to the people you listed, so your audience will understand why you feel the way you do.

There are many ways to fill out the interests sections. You can list things using commas or you could list things like a grocery list, but keep in mind to create new "paragraphs" you have to use <p> for each item (see html guide at the end). Other options include writing small blurbs about your favorite things by writing why you enjoy them or how you got interested etc., or you can use photos or links to list your interests. More information is included at the end of this guide for how to do this. Keep in mind that there are many websites which provide html for you to integrate their media into your profile.



Fig. 6: Two basic examples of finished interests sections

Notice the formatting differences, color selection, and tone used by each writer in the profiles above:

Yun Chee's Interests Section (left), lists a number of titles and example for each category. She shows a wide variety of interests in every group which varies from Star Trek TNG to Buffy the Vampire Slayer in TV shows and Mariah Carey to Led Zeppelin in the music section. She has been anything but selective with her answers, which could indicate a number of traits of her personality (she appreciates pop culture, isn't picky, etc...).

The example to the right provides less textual content, but is the tone is very revealing. He has humorous comments posted throughout his interests. For example, his list of movies includes the line *'and even the Notebook when I'm with the 'right person'*, and he sarcastically mentions that he enjoys to read *Calculus textbooks*, revealing a sense of humor. It is also interesting to note his use of the general interest area. He not only states general interests such as golfing, running and food, but goes one step further to provide the reader with his goals for the next two months. This could be indicative of a goal-oriented individual or developing interests rather than existing ones.

These are two different strategies which are effective in communicating more than basic answers to the simple prompts. The act of breaking the convention can often be more effective in portraying personality than a standard list of interests.

About Me

Now that you have filled out every other section of your profile with fairly basic information, you are ready to complete your "About Me" box. We have saved the "About Me" portion of the profile for last, because it is where you can expand upon all of the other basic information you have already provided. This section is entirely self-generated, and everything you include in it will be entirely created by you. Because the About Me section is literally a blank page, you should also take this opportunity to tell your audience what you want them to know about you that you haven't already told them.

As you write, do your best to let your personality show in your writing, by deciding what sections to expand on such as education, music interests, or activities, you will show readers what is most important to you. This is a chance to show your readers how smart, clever, creative, etc you are. The most important thing to remember is that the information you include (and not just the way you present it) will in itself be a reflection of you and your personality, so make sure that the information you choose to include and exclude accurately illustrates who you are.

Similarly to the "I'd like to meet" section, you will want to start by asking yourself a few questions. As mentioned before, you can use the previous sections that you have filled out to guide you in your writing. First of all, what do you do that is most important to you? What is your number one priority? Is it music, work, school, friends, family, or something else? What is something that you do which you believe makes you unique? Once again, make a list and arrange things in order of importance.

Use this list as a basis for a few introductory paragraphs about yourself. Don't write your entire life story, or your reader will most likely get bored. Just write about interesting and current information. If you wish to write more you can always use your blog. Without going overboard, you should elaborate on important interests or activities covered in the general details or interests prompts you previously wrote. This will reiterate to the reader what your main interests are, and will indicate which are the most important to you. This is also a good place to reinforce which qualities and characteristics you are looking for in a possible date or mate. Do they have to love animals? Do they have to like kids? Should they be intelligent, loyal, blonde, etc?

Keep your paragraphs short, and remember that space on your profile is limited and long paragraphs can be overwhelming to your reader. In your closing paragraph, try to include general personality information that coincides with your "I'd like to meet" section, which will appear next in your profile. Before saving your profile a very simple step you can take is to spell check and grammar check your work. Taking this extra step insures that other users see your personality through what you are writing and don't get distracted by spelling errors or bad grammar. Lastly, make sure that this section reflects the same personality as the rest of your profile that you have filled out thus far.



Fig. 7: Two basic examples of completed About Me Sections

The examples above in figure 7 illustrate the "About Me" sections of two Myspace users, a male and a female. Damon has done an excellent job of expanding upon the other basic information in his profile. He starts out by saying that he is a "fun, half Japanese, half

Caucasian college student". Already Damon has reminded his readers of his ethnicity and educational status. He then expands on his educational information, providing more detail. He gives examples of his favorite physical activities, and expands on his love for travel by revealing some of the places he has visited. Damon's third paragraph gives some personal information that was not mentioned previously in his profile, such as information about his family and love for kids. Damon closes by mentioning what kind of girl he is interested in finding, providing a great transition into his next section, "I'd like to meet".

In Tiffany's "About me", she takes a slightly different approach than Damon in that all of her information is in one long paragraph. This is something to avoid, because if your paragraphs are too long, your reader will be less likely to read them in their entirety. Tiffany starts out by revealing her nickname, which allows her readers to see a more personal side of her. She repeats her educational information, but elaborates on it by talking about her future educational plans and career goals. Tiffany talks about her favorite activities, and ends by extending an invitation for her viewers to find out more about her. While this is a different approach than Damon used, it is still a great way to initiate communication with other users.

For an example of a basic profile go to: <http://www.myspace.com/nerdliz>

Optional: Selecting a Meaningful Personal Survey

In many profiles, it is common for a user to post surveys and quiz results that are obtained from outside sources. These surveys typically ask questions on a variety of topics, but are most often focused on personal preferences and experiences (i.e. Have you ever...?). Surveys are a great way to add to the information you have already provided in the rest of your profile, as they often ask questions on topics you may not have thought to include in your profile, but would be interesting for those who view your profile to read about. A word of caution on surveys: Even though the survey questions you answer are not initially a part of your profile, remember that those who view your profile will see the profile as a whole. Because of this, be sure that the information in your survey(s) coincides with that in your profile. For example, if you are looking for a serious relationship, don't post a survey on past romantic behavior that might indicate otherwise. Although surveys are a fun way to expand your profile, make sure that you don't contradict yourself...this will confuse your readers, and detract from your original intent.

Choose from a number of surveys with the following link: <http://www.bzoink.com/>

to the movies, and vacations. California is my favorite place in whole world, but Seattle is pretty cool too! If you want to know any more about me, don't hesitate to ask!!

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF - The Survey	
Name:	Tiffany
Birthday:	April 22, 1987
Birthplace:	Bellevue, WA
Current Location:	Kirkland, WA
Eye Color:	Blue
Hair Color:	BLONDIE!
Height:	5'3
Right Handed or Left Handed:	Right handed
Your Heritage:	Norwegian
The Shoes You Wore Today:	I wore flip flops to the

Fig. 8

An obvious miscommunication could happen if a woman seeking a serious relationship, randomly posted a survey with a number of inquiries into sexual past or preferences. Though her answer may be clear that she doesn't want a casual relationship, her answers may be interpreted by male readers incorrectly

STEP 3: EXTENDING YOUR PROFILE

Now that you have successfully created your profile, with all of your information, you can continue personalizing your page to make it your own in a few different ways:

Blogging

Myspace has a blog feature that allows users to post blog entries for other users to read. Keeping a blog is optional, but is a nice way to give readers a glimpse into your everyday life. Reading about some of your everyday experiences and your reactions to those experiences lets readers see what kind of person you are. Blogs can be as personal as you'd like, but remember that unless you restrict your blog to your friends or your "preferred list", anyone who views your profile can also view your blog. If you'd like to change the look of your blog, from your home page, select "manage blog". Once you reach the main blog page, select "customize blog" from the left-hand column.

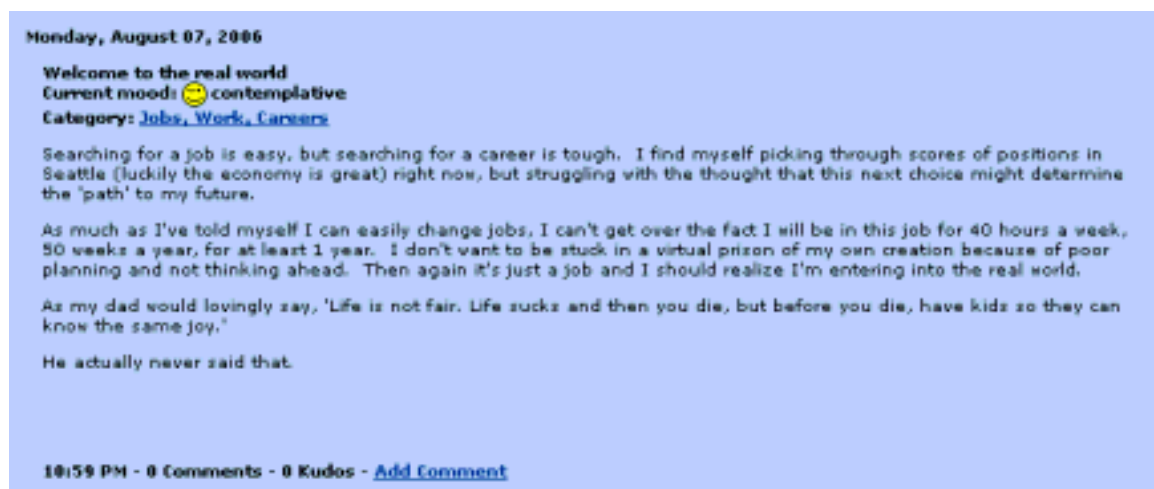


Fig. 9

A blog can be an effective way to communicate what is currently on your mind. It allows you to write freely and share your thoughts with whomever wishes to read them. Like the other self-generated text (About Me) it reveals much more than words on a page, it reveals thought processes. The blog displayed in Figure 9 is very telling. Currently the writer is making a huge transition in his life, but he isn't approaching it haphazardly. It indicates an organized, methodical approach to his life and possibly more.

Profile Songs

Myspace has a music site that allows you to search for your favorite artists and add their songs to your profile. The only thing to remember about the profile song is that it will be displayed and played when another user views your profile, so you should make sure it is a song that accurately reflects your musical tastes.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS: DO'S & DON'TS

Here are some common sense tips and thoughts to create or update a Myspace profile:

Do

- Be honest! Describe yourself as you are, not as you want to be!
- Arrange your content in a readable format using online layouts (see sites below)
- Be intentional about what you write, your profile is for public viewing (employers may be checking up on you)
- Be specific stating what type of relationship you are seeking and also spend time describing the qualities in a person you'd like to meet
- Carefully choose a survey, it provides quick and easy information about you
- Express yourself with your profile and be CREATIVE!

DON'T

- Post pictures of yourself participating in 'questionable' activities or posing inappropriately.
- Make spelling or grammatical mistakes
- Post or exchange critical personal information online
- Accept candy from strangers – approach any proposed meeting as a skeptic, meet in a public place and preferably accompanied by a friend
- Choose a background color which clashes with your text color, you want people to be able to read your profile

IMPORTANT MYSPACE RELATED WEBSITES

Myspace is one of the most popular websites in the world and the most popular in the USA according to wikipedia.org. Because of this many other websites have gained popularity of their own by providing html that allows Myspace users to integrate media into their profiles. Since a majority of regular Myspace users choose to utilize these websites, we have listed a few which may be useful in completing your profile. Keep in mind while adding these features that they all continue to make a statement about you and if you want to attract other users you should try to keep the statement consistent with the rest of your profile:

Myspace HTML:

- <http://www.myspace.com/htmlguide>

Myspace Layouts/Backgrounds: (Warning, many of these sites have pop-ups)

- http://www.hotfreelayouts.com/layouts.php?index=best_myspace_layouts
- <http://myspace.nuclearcentury.com/>
- <http://www.freeweblayouts.net/>

Many peoples' profiles will include links to where they obtained their layouts!

Videos/Pictures/Music:

Picture album sites can be used to collect photos for your profile:

- <http://www.imageshack.us>
- <http://www.photobucket.com>

Slide Shows can be created and integrated into the profile as well

- <http://www.slide.com/arrange>

Music can be found within the Myspace page, simply click on +add+ on a music profile to add the song to your website.

Weekly Top Artists

1	Dave Matthews Band	24
2	Incubus	14
3	The Roots	12
4	Red Hot Chili Peppers	10
4	Green Day	10
6	No Doubt	9
7	Sublime	4
7	Lenny Kravitz	4
7	Dixie Chicks	4
7	Jimmy Eat World	4

Fig. 10

<http://www.last.fm/dashboard/>

You can use this page to keep track of the music you listen to, then there is an option to include lists of recently played tracks, most played tracks etc into your Myspace profile. (Fig. 4)

Videos can also be added to the profile:

- <http://youtube.com/>

CONCLUSION

Myspace.com is the most popular site in the US. It can effectively be used as a tool to attract and evaluate potential relationships. Myspace.com is the largest social networking site in the world, with over 100 million potential mates. You can strategically reveal and withhold information from users to craft your persona at the click of a mouse. Self-generated content may provide glimpses into thoughts and personality, and survey or prompt responses provide basic information and preferences. Who are you targeting? When you find that person online you can instantly see what you may have in common. But remember we are all not who we portray ourselves to be. Now that you have all the tools you will need, you are ready to make a great profile! Happy hunting and BE SAFE!

