

# Friend Me at Myspace: The Basics

by Adrianna Dane

*"More than one billion people worldwide use the Internet and over 200 million of them have bought a book online. Many more have learned about a book online and purchased it in a local store."*

--Patrice-Anne Rutledge,

[http://www.websavvywriter.com/article\\_online\\_book\\_promotion.htm](http://www.websavvywriter.com/article_online_book_promotion.htm)

## Introduction

"Friend me at myspace."

Isn't this the "in" place to be these days? You hear about it, you wonder about it, but you're not sure if it's the right place for you. And besides that, you've also heard that it's a terrible place for predators to prey on young people.

You probably know about it from your teenagers. You think its about young people and bands who want to gain a following. You think groupies, you think adolescent. And you worry about what kind of element is out there. Do I really want any part of it?

Primarily, I'm going to be discussing writers and why a writer, especially a published author, would want a presence on myspace. Professionally speaking, if you want to reach a larger, possibly more diverse, audience, I suggest you take a look at this powerful, *free* promotional opportunity.

Believe me, I don't fit in the adolescent age group. Even my children don't fit there any longer. But I utilize the power of the Internet, and specifically a presence on myspace. Do you visit large cities like New York, Seattle, Los Angeles, or any other that is teaming with huge populations? Do you take precautions when you visit those cities? Would you send your child out into unknown territory to play in one of those cities?

Of course not. Why should myspace be any different? Why would you take less precautions? Because you're sitting in your own home doesn't mean you should take be less vigilant. A stranger is still a stranger. And people put on character costumes on the Internet and you need to be wary. It takes a long time to get to know someone, remember that. And take precautions.

**Cautionary tips.** Don't download anything from an email. Don't click on links within emails. Don't enter your password anywhere, unless you are at the page (and check the link to make sure it's not just a facsimile) you are supposed to be at. Spammers and phishers are becoming amazingly adept at acquiring information. And be certain you have good firewalls and

virus programs that are up to date and running.

These are the very basics of Internet safety and in running a business on the Internet. I write ebooks and run my business on the Internet and I take these precautions.

### **An Overview**

So, let's get back to talking about Myspace.

Myspace first went on line on February 22, 1996, as a social networking site. In global traffic rankings, it currently comes in as the fifth most visited site *in the world*. ([www.alexacom.com](http://www.alexacom.com)) Yahoo, msn, google, and youtube are the only sites which receive more traffic than Myspace.

Currently (as of this writing), there are over 170 *million* profiles on Myspace. If you watched the Academy Awards recently, even Ellen DeGeneres gave Myspace a little promo. Did you see her picture with Clint Eastwood? It did show up on Myspace. Millions of possibilities like this give one a heck of a lot of wiggle room for making new contacts in an effort to interest people in your stories. Heck, go give Ellen a jingle and ask her to be your friend.

It also gives you contacts for *researching* your stories. There are readers, writers, publishers, editors, agents, filmmakers, models, artists, etc., that you can make contact with.

It is overwhelming at first, but narrow your focus and start with the basics.

**Profile.** Get a profile set up. That's your first goal. It can be simple, or use a template of which there are many available, or html intensive, depending on your knowledge. I used the Thomas Myspace Profile Editor to set mine up.

For business purposes, keep it fairly simple and easy to load for those on dial-up. Be careful how graphics-intensive you make it. *A hint here.* I'm sure you have a lovely face, but the photo you use should be intriguing. Not just a "hi, I'm a friendly kind of person." Unless, of course, you're a major film or music personality that everyone will recognize. In business on Myspace, you want people to invite you to be friends and when I look through profiles, my attention settles on the interesting pictures, especially if you're flipping through a profile that has thousands of friends. Just like how important an awesome book cover can be to the sale of a book.

**Photos.** So, you have your profile. Myspace has a photo management program that will allow you to upload up to 300 photos. Use it, and get your book covers up there. These are what you are trying to get people interested in. So do use that feature. They have improved it and are continuing to do so with the use of photo albums.

**Friends.** Who are your friends? Remember, we're talking about your business profile, not your personal profile. Think of it as a network of friendly associations to your business.

Anyone is a potential buyer of your books. Go out and start inviting people to be your friends. Surf your friends' friends. Search myspace using terms related to your profile and your books. Be generic and search using the terms "books" or "reader" if it comes down to it. How about your own hobbies and interests? Themes for your books? The friends are out there and you should go out and invite them. People on myspace expect to be invited as a friend if they've been around for a while and understand how it works. And if you're there for business reasons, I wouldn't set the profile to private. Nor would I check the box that only allows people who know our email address or name to invite you as a friend. This is only going to limit new contacts.

Another thing about friends. In relation to people who invite you to be friends. Be sure to check out their profile. Porn sites are notorious for trying to become your friends. If a banner comes up that it's an adult site and you have to download something to view it—DENY the friend request—go no further. Spammers are out there as well. I would not suggest simply approving any and everyone who asks to be a friend. Take a moment to check out their profile. The majority are fine, but there are a few every now and then, so do be vigilant.

**Comments.** You are able to leave comments on your friends' profiles. And they can leave comments on your profile. I would suggest that you check the box to approve all comments left on your profile to weed out abuse. A good comment is a few lines, not a web page of information. "Thanks for being my friend," "have a good week," and include a link to your website or to where your book is for sale is tasteful. Why are they advantageous? They give you front page profile for a bit on another profile, and if you leave a link it is spidered by the search engines and comes up in searches outside of myspace. So do leave a link, but don't abuse hospitality. I don't recommend disabling html on comments in your own profile because (a) part of the fun is seeing all the pretty graphics people leave, and (b) you want to be able to leave a link on their profile, so courtesy means allowing html on yours.

**Bulletins.** Posting a bulletin goes out to your network of friends. Another good promotional opportunity. See what people are posting, understand it, and utilize it to your advantage. But don't become a bulletin hog—use it judiciously so you make an impression and people will be more likely to read what you post.

**Blog.** Yes, there is a blog and I've found my blog does receive a nice number of visits and comments. I post excerpts, reviews, my newsletters... Get familiar with this feature as well. People can subscribe to your blog, and you can invite them to become a regular subscriber to your blog.

This just scratches the surface of what you will find available at myspace. There are many features. I've touched on some of the highlights. Read on for a bit more explanation.

You can upload videos, you can join and create special interest groups, provide invites to special events, such as book signings and appearances, notification of contests, and there's also a calendar feature.

Take your time and investigate. Can it be overwhelming? Only if you let it. Take it one step at a time. And enjoy, because you're about to expand your horizons.

*In 1995 there were 18,000 web sites; there are now over 100 million web sites with domain names and content... – [CNN.com](http://www.cnn.com), “Web reaches new milestone: 100 million sites”*

## Introducing You to Myspace

### **Your Profile**

This is the first step. To begin using myspace you will register and set up a profile. Once the profile is set up you can go in to “edit profile” and are able to modify what it looks like.

The profile is your face to the community. It is equal to the home page of a website and your introduction to the public. To get up and running one can simply utilize the plain template that myspace provides. There are other users who have created templates to make your profile sparkle. Here are a few:

<a href="#">Thomas Myspace Editor</a>	<a href="http://www.strikefile.com/myspace/">http://www.strikefile.com/myspace/</a>
<a href="#">Flair Myspace</a>	<a href="http://www.flairmyspace.com">http://www.flairmyspace.com</a>
<a href="#">My Mackspace</a>	<a href="http://www.myMackspace.com">http://www.myMackspace.com</a>
<a href="#">MyNicespace</a>	<a href="http://www.mynicespace.com">http://www.mynicespace.com</a>
<a href="#">Myspacegraphichelp</a>	<a href="http://www.myspacegraphichelp.com">http://www.myspacegraphichelp.com</a>

These are just a sample that I found as I browsed some profiles. There are a ton of places to find pretty layouts that are easy to adapt for your profile. Thomas Myspace Editor is at the top, because that’s the one I used to set up my profile and it’s probably no worse nor any better than any of the others.

**WARNING:** Be careful in choosing because some of these templates are designed to gather your password and your information, so the recommendation would be to either find a friend to design your profile, design it yourself, or use a myspace editor to do so.

From your account home at myspace you will have the ability to:

- ★ Edit your profile
- ★ Change your account settings
- ★ Add/Edit photos (myspace will host up to 300 photos)
- ★ Add/Change videos
- ★ Manage your calendar

- ★ Manage your blog
- ★ Manage your address book

## **Adding Friends**

One of the keys to the powerful networking capabilities is the ability to add friends into your network. With an extended network of over 170 million profiles there is the potential of reaching a vast number of new readers.

When we speak of friends in relation to myspace business networking, we're talking about potential new contacts across a broad range of possibilities.

*How to add new friends.*

To begin with, everyone starts with at least one friend. That would be Tom. He's the one most of your "official" myspace message will come from. You may also have people you know that you can add. But for business networking purposes you will want to add more and varied personalities to your network.

Try doing a search for specific terms and you will see a list of profiles that relate to those search terms. If you are an author, think of your hobbies, the genres you write in, your favorite authors, musicians, television shows, movies, etc. Use those as search terms to locate potential profiles to add to your friends' list.

Click on the picture which should take you to their profile. If their profile looks interests and like someone you would like to add to your friends, look for the box just below the profile. It usually has the heading "Contacting \_\_\_\_\_." Click on the "Add to friends" link. Confirm that you would like to add them as a friend, and that's all you need to do. They will accept or deny your request.

You can check your new friend requests by going to your account home and clicking on the "friend request" link, and then once you reach that page, click on the "pending requests" link. This page will tell you which of your friend requests are still pending.

Friends are the people who will see your bulletins (messages to your group of friends) as you post them, and whose bulletins you will see and their profiles are the ones where you can leave comments as well.

Friends make up your network of associates throughout the world. Think outside the box when inviting friends. One never knows where a potential reader will come from, or who might help in researching a project, or finding an author friend, publisher, artist, agent, etc. Or something with the same interests as you.

**WARNING:** Always use precautions when communicating with someone you don't know. You may be sitting at home, but once you enter any community, such as visiting a strange city, not everything is as they appear on the surface. Be cautious.

## Posting Comments

Comments are little notes you leave on other people's profiles—those people who are in your friends network. There are some people who try to leave lengthy advertisements, so beware of those. The best way to monitor is to approve all comments left on your profile. I would not disable the html for comments and I'll explain that in just a bit.

Leaving comments serves several purposes.

- ★ It personalizes your presence as a friend in that person's network
- ★ It allows you to leave a nice, friendly message, such as "Have a nice day," or a holiday greeting, or just to say hello, with a link to your website, in a non-aggressive fashion.
- ★ If a profile has a lot of friends, your profile is probably buried among the masses. Leaving a comments, gives you front page billing for at least a short time and can be seen by anyone visiting the profile.

Many people use cute graphics when leaving a message and there are a number of places to find these.

- ★ [www.glitterlive.com](http://www.glitterlive.com)
- ★ [www.mycommentcodes.com](http://www.mycommentcodes.com)
- ★ [www.glittergraphics.com](http://www.glittergraphics.com)
- ★ [www.sexyluv.com](http://www.sexyluv.com)
- ★ [www.coolmyspacecomments.com](http://www.coolmyspacecomments.com)

These are a few of the places where people have used graphics and posted to my profile. Or create your own. It tends to brighten a person's day to see a pretty picture on their comment page. And you never know when someone could use some cheering up.

*The business side of comments.*

- ★ a link in your comment to your website not on myspace is actually a non-reciprocated link<sup>1</sup> to the page that you link to which can help with search engine placement. Google does index the profiles on myspace and treats them as individual web pages. The more friends you have, the more comments you can leave, the more non-reciprocated links you have pointing at your website.

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<sup>1</sup> **reciprocated link:** where you link to a website and they in return link back to you. Those are not counted as highly in search engine placement because they are actually a link exchange, rather than a recommendation.

**non-reciprocated link:** where the link is not exchanged and only goes one way, thereby considered a recommendation and ranked higher in search engine placement.

## **Bulletins**

Bulletins are messages that are left for the whole group to read. These can be informative, amusing, promotional, etc. The key is to use them judiciously, especially if you have a large group of friends in your network. Take a moment on occasion to respond to the poster—this is one way of making a connection with them.

Again, my suggestion is to keep any message short and to the point with links to the information you want to provide them with. Bulletins do allow for html coding.

## **Blogs**

Blogging is also available at myspace and blogs can be made available for anyone to view. You do have the ability to change the look of your blog. Use it for excerpts, for upcoming releases, for short stories, you name it.

People can subscribe to your blog and you can invite them to subscribe to your blog.

Click on the link to go to your “Blog Control Center” and this is where you will find out pertinent information regarding your blog.

- ★ Find stats for your blog here, such as views, posts, comments, etc.
- ★ Post to your blog, customize your blog, view your blog.
- ★ Your subscriptions, your readers, your blog home.
- ★ Create new blog groups.

Don’t be afraid to invite friends to become subscribers to your blog—it’s another way to get information out to potential readers.

## **Beyond the Basics**

There are a number of other things to utilize at Myspace to enhance your visibility. I won't go into depth with them here, some I have used, others I haven't.

- ★ There are forums to join and/or create.
- ★ There is the invite feature. An example might be that you are doing a book signing or making an appearance, or have a new release. This is a feature you might use to announce that event.
- ★ You can create events and invite people to attend the events. Such as a book signing.
- ★ You can create special interest groups such as your own author group where you can post excerpts that people stopping by can read, or topics you can discuss.

One additional reference page that may be helpful in creating your Myspace profile and finding graphics is: <http://www.myspacecolorchart.net>.

## **Conclusion**

Myspace is another promotional vehicle for use on the Internet. Each day we see more and more people joining this free community. It is most assuredly one to be taken advantage of in a variety of ways.

Promotion can be time-consuming, no matter what direction one takes. Determine what your needs are and make this one work for you.

*About the author.*

*Adrianna Dane is the author of sensual and erotic romance with over forty stories currently available with her publishers Amber Quill Press, Phaze, Loose Id, and Lady Aibell Press. In 2007 she was a three-time Eppie finalist and she was a 2006 eCataromance Reviewer's Choice Award Winner. She is a member of EPIC and Romance Writers of America. Find out more about her at [www.adriannadane.com](http://www.adriannadane.com). And be sure to friend her at <http://www.myspace.com/adriannadane>.*