

# The Beginner's Guide to Understanding the Basics of Web 2.0

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## Table of Contents

<b>What is Web 2.0?</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Web 2.0 Sites</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Social Bookmarking Sites .....	6
Blogs .....	8
Wikis .....	10
Popular Personal & Video Sites.....	11
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>12</b>

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## What is Web 2.0?

You've likely heard the term 'web 2.0' and perhaps had little to no idea what it was referring to. In its simplest form, web 2.0 provides an interactivity to the web that was not there before. These days, leaving comments at the end of an article, uploading videos, writing a blog, and contributing to the internet is the norm. This is web 2.0. It allows everyone to interact, give feedback, vote for articles and videos they liked, etc.

Prior to web 2.0, webmasters built a site and users had very little interactivity with it. They read the articles, may have filled out a contact form and that was about it. With web 2.0, we *all* have control over content on numerous websites. We can contribute, communicate immediately, advertise and more.

Web 2.0 includes social networking sites, wikis, sites like Squidoo.com and MySpace.com, Blogs, RSS Feeds and other sites that emphasize collaboration and sharing among users.

## Web 2.0 Sites

How do you know if you have landed on a Web 2.0 platform? Chances are, if you are asked to contribute to the content or body of knowledge contained on the site, you're working with web 2.0. Most sites are those that encourage visitors to add their insights to a page, whether through ongoing commentary, through editing or by any other means available.

Amazon.com is an early and easy example. You can rate products and leave written feedback for others to review. If you know the best books for 5-year-old girls, you can create a list of suggestions for others to see. Furthermore, based on products you buy, Amazon makes recommendations. You're able to rate the recommendations so you see more or less of the same kinds of products.

Web 2.0 sites differ in their mission and purpose from traditional web pages. Some provide users the opportunity to share personal biographies, pictures and journals. Examples include sites like MySpace.com. This fast and growing site is popular among young and old alike.

One of the advantages of Web 2.0 is users can use it to express their opinions or passions, but also passively promote their products or services in the process. Here are some other common sites characteristic of this new trend.

## Social Bookmarking Sites

Social bookmarking sites allow internet users to classify and share their internet bookmarks or favorites with others. We've all been bookmarking our favorite sites on our own computers in the past. With Web 2.0, we can now bookmark our favorite pages on social bookmarking sites for everyone to see and truly share what we discover.

While the intent of social *networking* sites (like MySpace) is more to create communities of like-minded people, social *bookmarking* sites concentrate more on increasing the popularity of common internet articles or pages. You can tell the whole world what your passions are, and increase the page rank and number of visitors to your favorite sites (or your own) by listing them in social bookmarking networks.

Social networks are nothing new, they have existed for some time on the internet. Only recently however, have people taken a keen interest in their potential, especially from a marketing perspective. Think about it: you put bookmarks to all your blogs, sites and lists in a public forum. Others can link to your sites and click through to visit your sites through the social networking site you list with. You increase knowledge and awareness of your websites and also get free advertising and targeted traffic. If the quality of information you provide is worthwhile, chances are you benefit tremendously from this new technology.

Remember, people join these sites and post information because they want quality links and information from real people. If you use the sites as a general "bulletin board" or classified ad, you diminish the value and might even get booted off.

The best way to truly understand a social bookmarking site is to visit one or more of the examples below, sign up and start looking around. You'll see real life

examples of how others use social bookmarking and get clear on how it all works.

**Example Social Bookmarking Sites:**

[Stumble Upon](#) (My personal favorite, this is an excellent way to surf the internet for things that interest you and you'd probably not have found any other way. Truly a great resource.)

[Digg](#)

[Propeller](#)

[Technorati](#)

[NewsVine](#)

[Del.icio.us](#)

## Blogs

Blog is short for 'weblog.' This is a site that allows users to create journal-like entries in a chronological way. Users often post blogs or short entries and articles on information they are passionate about or have an interest in. Still others focus on providing content about news, entertainment or political commentary. To name a few example, blogs may be for personal use (like a diary), informational or teaching (news, training or learning through articles etc.) or for business use.

Many use these as online journals and diaries to communicate the latest and greatest events with their friends. Most bloggers (authors of blogs) now include photos and other graphic elements in their web pages, along with basic text. You can even use MP3 audio or videos to enhance the quality of content provided in blogs.

Most bloggers allow visitors to post feedback or comments about their blog entries, so in some ways blogs serve as a mini community or forum. Popular blogs may receive thousands of visitors every month. There are search engines whose sole purpose involve tracking blogs and related sites, including Technorati.com for example.

One of the reasons web logs are popular for marketing is they allow users to provide content that is updated frequently. You can post daily, weekly or monthly. The more frequently you post information to blogs, the more likely you are to maintain your page ranking and rate higher in the search engines. Search engines love blogs, so linking them to your business is often a very good idea for added exposure and information. It's an excellent marketing tool.

Like social bookmarking sites, blogs are not anything new, but are now gaining more attention and popularity among individuals, communities and online entrepreneurs and marketers. People are using them in many ways, even

politically, to announce their passions, beliefs, purpose or to pitch their products and services while providing visitors with valuable content and information.

Everyone these days, from celebrities to political commentators use blogs to deliver information and news to people throughout the globe. There are private and public blogs, blogs focusing on entertainment, those focusing on politics, the media and people, training, reviews and more. Even corporations are starting their own blog campaigns to encourage people to investigate their company.

## Wikis

Another example of Web 2.0 in full force is the wiki. These are websites that allow individuals to add, edit and even remove content. Many act like an encyclopedia, like [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org), where users can add content, thus creating a global online encyclopedia of sorts.

The problem with such sites is the information provided in the sites may not always be accurate. Remember, anyone can log into the site and edit, remove or add information, so most “wikis” need some form of monitoring.

This usually comes in the form of community collaboration, where a group or wiki community work together to make sure any and all users are engaging in reasonable and acceptable practices when adding information.

As a benefit, these sites may include more information than traditional strict “book” type or “knowledge based” learning centers. Most of these sites work on the premise that communities will band together to provide honest and positive information, rather than work in a malicious or malevolent way.

Wikis are less of a tool for self-promotion than some other common Web 2.0 interfaces like social bookmarking sites and blogs. Their primary foundation is a content based site and community of people gathered together to learn and grow.

## Popular Personal & Video Sites

There are many other types of Web applications that qualify as Web 2.0 interfaces or platforms for users.

[MySpace.com](http://MySpace.com) allows users to create pages about themselves with biographies, videos, music, photos and more. People viewing others' pages can make comments, friends, business contacts and more. It truly is an interactive online community. A trip to this site in late 2007 showed 55,000 videos had been uploaded on the site THAT day!

[YouTube](http://YouTube) is a popular one that allows users from all over the world with different interests and backgrounds to create videos and upload them for all to see.

Users can post any type of video clip they like using a basic or high end web cam, video recorder, video camera, etc. Some are for training, humor, advertising, news, spreading the word, groups, politics and more, while others do nothing more than film ordinary events. Not surprisingly however, YouTube and sites like it are among the fastest growing on the Web. It's like reality TV. People like to see other people in action.

## Summary

There are many types of sites one can categorize as part of the growing Web 2.0 base. These sites are user-friendly sites that promote socialization, collaboration and community building. These sites are also frequently used as a platform for small businesses and entrepreneurs to introduce their products and services to the public without blatantly advertising them.

The best way to learn more about Web 2.0 is to visit sites that use this technology. Keep in mind the technology itself isn't "new", it has existed for some time. People are finding new and interesting ways however, to use this technology to their benefit. How can you take advantage of 2.0? Here are some places to check out:

- [Squidoo.com](http://Squidoo.com)
- [YouTube.com](http://YouTube.com)
- [MySpace.com](http://MySpace.com)
- [Del.icio.us](http://Del.icio.us)
- [Technorati.com](http://Technorati.com)
- [Digg.com](http://Digg.com)
- [StumbleUpon.com](http://StumbleUpon.com)
- [WordPress.com](http://WordPress.com) (For Blogging)

Searching for the term "Web 2.0" on Google will give you even more information and examples. Currently, Wikipedia and YouTube are among the top listings.

Web 2.0 is a popular term used to describe a new way of using the Internet. If you are an entrepreneur or business owner, you will find 2.0 is a great tool for promoting your business and establishing your credibility on the Web.

If you are someone interested in sharing information and forming collective communities on the Internet, you will also find 2.0 technology something new,

exciting and innovative to explore. No matter your intent or purpose, it's worth your time and effort to explore the potential of web 2.0 and see what it can do for you!