

# Ethical analysis: facebook privacy

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



1) Identify the ethical actor (who took the action that you will test to the ethical test. Almost all situations have multiple ethical actors, including the "victim". Pick one, if available, whose action is not clearly ethical or clearly unethical; these make for more interesting discussion)

The ethical actor that will be used for the test here is Facebook itself. It is not clear whether it was just exercising its rights to amend the SRR by acting as a private company or whether it was acting unethically by misleading users about the security of the website.

2) Identify the action that is being reviewed for its ethical consequences/nature (being specific as to the action allows application of your ethical standard).

The action here is that Facebook has changed its privacy policies without informing users as to what the changes would mean for their personal information and the way that data is shared on the internet.

3) Select an ethical test. Include the applicable provisions of that ethical test (you can use any ethical test you feel applies, including and not limited to the cowboy code, Kantian ethics, utilitarianism, the ACM code of ethics, the class ongoing ethics standard, etc.)

For this ethical test, I have chosen utilitarianism. This theory suggests that the best course of action morally is the most "useful" or the one that maximizes happiness for the greatest number of people.

4) Apply the specified provisions of the ethical test you selected to the specific actions you are testing. Is the action ethical, unethical, both ethical and unethical, ethically neutral, etc.?

Using utilitarianism, Facebook can be classed as either one individual or as a

small group of individuals (those who work within the company, for example). In this case, I think it best to consider Facebook as a group of employees, as if Facebook maximize profit every individual will potentially benefit. However, the number of Facebook users is in the billions, so making these users unhappy by changing privacy policy would affect them more negatively as a group. This means that the action appears unethical, because the greatest benefit would be to please Facebook users as a larger group than the smaller group of employees. However, it is difficult to judge how much benefit/happiness could be applied to either group. If some member of the “ users” group were extremely negatively affected (i. e. online bullying caused by ill use of their details) then this would support Facebook’s actions being unethical. However, if no-one was negatively affected by the use of these details (i. e. the details were available but never used) then the benefit to Facebook employees may be greater.