Glossary of Online Terms

A list for beginners to explain common terms used online (in relation to websites and social media). Please be aware that terminology changes frequently, and this list is only accurate at the time of writing.

Facebook

Personal Profile - A Facebook Profile is created when you set up an account on Facebook as an individual. If you're on Facebook yourself and have set up an account, then you have a Facebook Profile. In the words of Facebook: "A profile is a place on Facebook where you can share information about yourself, such as your interests, photos, videos, current city and hometown. To see your profile, click or tap your name or profile picture at the top of Facebook."

Wall / Timeline – These are slightly outdated terms that refer to the content that is on your Personal Profile. Generally, people just use the term 'profile' now instead, but this can be referred to as your 'Wall' or, more commonly, your 'Timeline'. The term/s exist to differentiate between your personal timeline (which lists posts and status updates by you), and your News Feed (which is the homepage and lists posts and status updates from others). See below for full definitions.

Friend – "Facebook Friends" are more like Facebook contacts who you are connecting with online, however, in many ways a Facebook Friend is the same as a real-life friend. Whilst you can add anyone as a friend, in most cases people add friends and family they know in real life, and not random people they've met online. Being a 'friend' of someone on Facebook usually gives them access to view the content on your profile and allows you to view the content on their profile (however you have complete control over your privacy settings and can change this at any time). This concept is also used on other social media platforms (Twitter and Instagram), however the terms 'followers' and 'following' are normally used rather than 'friend'.

Facebook Page – Sometimes also known as a 'business page', and you are required to have a personal profile in order to create or help manage a 'page'. In the words of Facebook: "Pages are places on Facebook where artists, public figures, businesses, brands, organizations and non-profits can connect with their fans or customers. When someone likes or follows a Page on Facebook, they can start seeing updates from that Page in their News Feed." The actual contents of a Facebook Page is sometimes referred to as your 'page profile' – and similarly the contents of a Personal Profile is sometimes referred to as your 'profile page'. Do make sure to always be aware whether people are talking about 'Pages' or 'Profiles'.

Feed (News Feed) – The News Feed is your homepage on Facebook and is where Facebook will show updates from people you are friends with or page's you follow, as well as the odd advertisement. News Feeds are (as a feature) used on many social media platforms, however the term changes: so it is referred to as a 'Timeline' on Twitter, and your 'Home

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Feed' on Instagram. Algorithms curate what content you see on your News Feed (and on all social media platforms).

Algorithm – an algorithm is a process or set of rules to be followed by a computer. The Facebook algorithm works by ranking all posts that can appear on a user's News Feed based on how likely that user is to have a positive reaction to it. Facebook's algorithm for ranking and displaying content on your News Feed is based on many factors and often changes. Algorithms use different factors for different social media platforms, so the Facebook algorithm and Twitter algorithm are not the same. Unless you are a more advanced user of Facebook Pages, then there is little reason to completely understand how the algorithm curates your feed, however, it is useful to be aware that not all posts by a profile or a page will appear in front of all your friends, followers or fans.

Post / Status - A Facebook post or "status update" is a message that you post (share) on your Facebook. It can take the form of a comment, link, picture, video or other media and is 'posted' to your Personal Profile (your "Wall" or "Timeline") and shows up in your Friends News Feed (depending on your privacy settings). The term also applies to messages 'posted' by Facebook Pages, which can also post a "status update", comment, link, picture, video or other media.

Profile Picture – Sometimes referred to as an 'avatar', a profile picture is a public image that represents your account across the Facebook Platform. It shows up at the top of your profile, and also on all activity by you in other people's News Feed. Profile pictures (as a feature and a name) are used across many other social media platforms including Twitter and Instagram. One confusing aspect is that the term 'profile picture' is also used on Facebook Pages (referring to the image that represents the page across Facebook), so just because the term includes the word 'profile' doesn't mean they are limited just to 'personal profiles'.

Cover Photo - Your cover photo is the large image at the top of your profile and is there for aesthetic purposes only. Facebook Pages also have cover photos. It is usually public, like your profile picture, and so anyone can see it, even if they are not friends with you (although you can change this in privacy settings).

Like - A "Like" is an action that individuals and pages can make on Facebook as a quick way to show approval of a status, post, link, image or video. Instead of writing a comment you can click the "Like" button which is symbolised by a thumbs up. This is different from 'liking' a Facebook Page, which subscribes you to following activity from that page. 'Liking' a post or status (from either an individual or a page) doesn't make you follow that account or page, it is just a one-off show of approval/support or that you literally 'like' what they have posted.

Reaction - As well as "Likes" Facebook provides additional means to interact with a status, post, link, image or video. These act in the same way as "Likes", but just communicate a different meaning depending on how you are wanting to 'react' to that particular post. You can hold down / hover over the "Like" button to receive the additional options of "Love" (symbol: heart), "Haha" (symbol: laughing face), "Wow" (symbol: shocked face), "Sad" (symbol: crying face), "Angry" (symbol: angry face).

Fans - A Facebook fan is a user who likes (follows) a particular Facebook Page. Users who "Like" a page can receive updates from that page in their News Feed. A list of pages a fan has liked will appear on their Personal Profile.

Tag – A 'tag', or tagging, identifies someone else in a post, status update, photo or video that you share. Tagging someone else in your post will notify that person that you have mentioned them or referred to them in your post or photo and provide a link back to their profile for other users. The post or content will also appear on their Personal Profile (their "Wall" or "Timeline") depending on privacy settings. You can tag someone in a photo that you share to identify them in the photo. You can also tag Facebook Pages in posts, as well as locations (referred to as "Check-in"), and a Feeling/Activity.

Feeling / Activity – Facebook allows you to tag (share) your current feeling, or the activity you're doing, directly as part of your post (both for Personal Profiles and Facebook Pages). For instance, if you're currently watching a movie, you can add "Watching [movie name]" to your post as an activity. Or if you're feeling excited about something that's happened, you can add an "excited" emoji and label to your post. The "Feeling/Activity" button lets you select what you're feeling, watching, reading, listening to, drinking, or eating, among others. Each brings up a sub-menu of emotions and media, and then when you share the post will have this as a label.

Messenger – Messenger is the name for the Direct Messaging service part of Facebook where users can contact and talk to each other or pages. As described by Wikipedia, "Facebook Messenger (commonly known as Messenger) is a messaging app and platform developed by Facebook. Originally developed as Facebook Chat in 2008, the company revamped its messaging service in 2010, and subsequently released standalone iOS and Android apps in August 2011". It is an integrated part of the Facebook website (when used from a computer), however, when used on a mobile, 'Messenger' has a separate app to the standard 'Facebook' app.

Direct Message (DM) – formerly Private Message (PM) and Instant Message (IM). Personal message, private message, direct message, or personal chat are all terms describing a private form of messaging between different users on a social media platform. It is only seen and accessible by the users participating in the message. On Facebook, as with many other social media platforms, you can direct message other Personal Profiles (users) individually or in a group chat with multiple users able to talk to each other. You can also direct message Facebook Pages, and the admins of those pages will be able to see and respond to the message.

Page Admin and other page roles – Admins manage and have control over Facebook Pages. You can have as many admins as you like but remember that Admins can alter all settings and post on your Page. However, Facebook does offer four other administrator roles (which can't alter settings) that you can assign to people: Editor, Moderator, Advertiser and Analyst. Each role has different capabilities — only Admins have full access and the ability to change each admin's role. An Editor can: "Can publish content and send Messenger messages, respond to and delete comments on the Page, create ads, see who created a post or comment, and view insights.". A Moderator can do everything an Editor can do except publish content (post) on the page. An Advertiser can "create ads, see who created a post/comment and view insights". And an Analyst just has access to insights.

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Page Insights – The "Insights" tab on a Facebook Page provides data for you to analyse on how your page and posts are performing. You'll be able to determine the best time of day to post, the best day of the week to post and what type of content is most popular. If you want to run a successful Facebook Page, it's important to pay attention to "Insights" and the analytics Facebook offers you. Facebook Insights can be seen by all the admins of your page and they can help you track the number of active users to better understand your page performance. When exploring Facebook's insights section, it can be a bit overwhelming with all the data and terms it uses: Engagement, Reach and Impressions. These terms are also used on other social media platforms, such as Instagram, which also provides "Insights" on your account. "Engagement" refers to the amount of times your post has been liked, shared or commented on. "Reach" refers to the number of unique accounts your content was seen by or reached. "Impressions" are the number of times your post is displayed. For example, if someone sees your post in their News Feed and then sees that same post when a friend shares it, that would count as 2 impressions but only add 1 to the number reached.

Facebook Live - Facebook Live is a feature for the live broadcast of user videos and allows people to "Live Steam" direct to Facebook. Both individuals and Facebook Pages can "go Live" (upload live streamed content). Videos that are filmed "Live" are retained on your profile or page for people to watch later.

Facebook Group – A Facebook Group is, as might be self-explanatory, a space where a small group of people can communicate and share together around a common interest. In the words of Facebook: "You must have a profile to create a group or help manage one. Groups are a place to communicate about shared interests with certain people. You can create a group for anything — your family reunion, your after-work sports team, your book club — and customize the group's privacy settings depending on who you want to be able to join and see the group. When you join a group on Facebook, you start seeing content from that group in your News Feed". Facebook Groups are a main feature of Facebook, with many users being part of multiple groups (whether community groups, buy and sell groups or church groups), however people often get confused between Facebook Groups, Personal Profiles and Facebook Pages.

Story / Stories – Facebook Stories are a replica from Instagram, which was first to launch a version of "stories" in 2016 (although many accuse it of copying Snapchat). It didn't take long for Instagram to surpass Snapchat, welcoming twice as many daily active users in just eight months, and noticing this popularity, Facebook launched "stories" in 2017. It is an almost perfect copy of the Instagram interface (Instagram is now owned by Facebook). See the entry for "Stories" under Instagram for what they are and how they work.

Boost Post – this is a button which appears on Facebook Pages encouraging users to get started with Facebook Paid Advertising (Facebook Ads) by promoting a specific post to Facebook users.

Twitter

This glossary of terms is provided by Twitter itself.

Name - Your (display or account) name is a personal identifier (sometimes a business name or real name) displayed on your profile and used to identify you to friends, especially if your username is something other than your name or business name.

Profile - Your profile displays information you choose to share publicly, as well as all of the Tweets you've posted. Your profile along with your @username identify you on Twitter.

Username / Handle - A username (or handle) is how you're identified on Twitter, and is always preceded immediately by the @ symbol. For instance, Twitter Support is @TwitterSupport. The @ sign is used to call out usernames in Tweets: "Hello @twitter!" People will use your @username to mention you in Tweets, send you a message or link to your profile.

Profile Photo - The personal image (avatar) associated with your account. It's also the picture that appears next to each of your Tweets.

Tweet - A Tweet is equivalent to a "Post" on Facebook and can be up to 280 characters and may contain photos, GIFs, videos, and text. Tweet (as a verb) is the act of sending a Tweet. Tweets get shown in Twitter timelines or are embedded in websites and blogs.

Timeline - A timeline is a real-time stream of Tweets. Your Home timeline, for instance, is where you see all the Tweets shared by your friends and other people you follow.

Bio - Your bio is a short (up to 160 characters) personal description that appears in your profile that serves to characterize your persona on Twitter.

Like - Liking a Tweet indicates that you appreciate it. You can find all of your likes by clicking or tapping the Likes tab on your profile.

Hashtag - A hashtag is any word or phrase immediately preceded by the # symbol. When you click or tap on a hashtag, you'll see other Tweets containing the same keyword or topic.

Retweet - A Tweet that you forward to your followers is known as a Retweet. Often used to pass along news or other valuable discoveries on Twitter, Retweets always retain original attribution.

Retweet with comment - You have the option to add your own comments, photos, or a GIF before Retweeting someone's Tweet to your followers.

Follow / Follower / Following - Subscribing to a Twitter account is called "following." To start following, click or tap the Follow icon next to the account name on their profile to see their Tweets as soon as they post something new. Anyone on Twitter can follow or unfollow anyone else at any time, with the exception of blocked accounts. A follower is another Twitter account that has followed you to receive your Tweets in their Home timeline. A follow is the result of someone following your Twitter account. You can see how many follows (or followers) you have from your Twitter profile.

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Mention - Mentioning other accounts in your Tweet by including the @ sign followed directly by their username is called a "mention". Also refers to Tweets in which your @username was included.

Reply - A response to another person's Tweet. Reply by clicking or tapping the reply icon next to the Tweet you'd like to respond to. A direct reply count is displayed next to the reply icon of a Tweet, and indicates the total number of replies the Tweet has received.

Thread - A series of connected Tweets from one person. You can provide additional context, an update, or an extended point by connecting multiple Tweets together.

Trending - A Trend is a topic or hashtag determined algorithmically to be one of the most popular on Twitter at that moment. You can choose to tailor Trends based on your location and who you follow.

Verified Account - A verified Twitter account receives a blue check icon to indicate that the creator of these Tweets is a legitimate source. Verified accounts include public figures and those who may have experienced identity confusion on Twitter.

Protected Tweets - Tweets are public by default. Choosing to protect your Tweets means that your Tweets will only be seen by your followers.

Lists - From your own account, you can create a group list of other Twitter accounts by topic or interest (e.g., a list of friends, co-workers, celebrities, athletes). Twitter lists also contain a timeline of Tweets from the specific accounts that were added to the list, offering you a way to follow individual accounts as a group on Twitter.

Geolocation / Geotagging - Adding a location to your Tweet (a geolocation or geotag) tells those who see your Tweet where you were when you posted that Tweet.

Bookmarks - A feature that allows you to save Tweets in a timeline for easy, quick access at any time.

Direct Messages - Direct Messages are private messages sent from one Twitter account to another account(s). You can use Direct Messages for one-on-one private conversations, or between groups.

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Instagram

Instagrammer - A user of the photo-sharing and social networking service Instagram

Profile / Page – see definition of 'profile' under the Twitter section. Your Instagram profile is sometimes also referred to as your Instagram Page.

Bio - This is the same as on Twitter: your Instagram bio is a place on your profile to tell the world a little bit about yourself in 150 characters. You can use text, emojis, hashtags, and even '@' mention profiles here.

Username - Your (display or account) name is a personal identifier (sometimes a business name or real name) displayed on your profile and used to identify you on Instagram.

Handle – As with Twitter, your handle is how you're identified on Instagram, and is always preceded immediately by the @ symbol. All your posts show your handle above the photo or video in people's Home Feed. The @ sign is used to mention accounts on Instagram.

Hashtags – As will all social media, a hashtag is any word or phrase immediately preceded by the # symbol. When you click or tap on a hashtag, you'll see other Instagram content containing the same hashtag. Hashtags are the lifeblood of Instagram and you can use up to 30 of them in each post. Hashtags are a great way to increase your followers, your engagement, and reach more people.

Home Feed – The Instagram Feed (or Home Feed) is a place where you can share and connect with the people and things you care about. When you open Instagram or refresh your feed, the photos and videos Instagram thinks you care about most will appear towards the top of your feed. In addition to seeing content from people and hashtags you follow, you may also see suggested accounts that are relevant to your interests.

Stories - Instagram "Stories" is a feature within the Instagram app where users can capture and post related images and video content in a slideshow format. Stories are catered to vertical video/photos, and crucially can only be viewed for 24 hours. There many extra features such as "stickers", polls, augmented reality filters, and filming options such as 'Boomerang', that have made it a hit among younger users. According to Instagram, "Stories are made for friends and family to share more of their lives with those they are close with. The feature makes it possible for people to show more content without creating an excess of posts on their Instagram page. Companies can use the feature to promote their products or services in depth while maintaining a clean main Instagram page. The feature can also be useful to promote engagement, allowing users to have a more intimate, direct connection with their followers."

Filter – Instagram offers many photograph filters that users can choose from within the app. These filters can be used on your photos in posts or stories to enhance features and colours.

Boomerang - The Boomerang feature (and separate app) takes a burst of photos, or video, then speeds it up and plays them forward and backward to create a looping Boomerang video.

Story highlights – "Highlights" are Instagram's way of helping you keep your best Instagram Stories viewable. Stories you post disappear after 24 hours, but they can still be accessed

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in your archive. Using the highlights feature, you can create a reel of your best Instagram Stories, or bundle them into related categories or events. For example, you can make a Highlight about your latest event, topic or frequently asked question to share with your audience. Story Highlights are accessed through your profile.

IGTV – IGTV (standing for Instagram Television) is Instagram's attempt at longform video, which means anything that's longer than one minute. IGTV is both a standalone app and a section in the main Instagram app. If you want to watch vertical, longform videos from your favourite Instagrammer, you can do that using the TV icon in the top-right corner of Instagram.

Caption - A brief description of your post that appears beneath your photo or video on Instagram (and a great opportunity for using hashtags).

Saved Posts - Instagram lets you save posts for later. This is not the same as downloading an image or video, but instead it's more like bookmarking. When you come across a post you want to save for later, tap on the bookmark icon in the bottom-right corner of the post and it will be saved. Saved posts can be accessed from your profile.

Business Profile – These act much like Facebook Pages on Facebook. Instagram offers a simple way to switch from a personal profile to a business profile and you don't need to be a registered business to use a business profile. There are many advantages to converting to a business profile: you get access to action buttons in the bio, detailed insights from your followers, and using a business profile is the only way to unlock features like embedding links in Stories and adding buy buttons to your posts.

Explore - Tap on the Search button in Instagram and you'll end up in the Explore tab. This is a feed of everything that's trending on Instagram right now but also personalised to you. On the top, you'll find topics, and below, a feed of popular photos and videos.

Nametag - Nametags on Instagram are designed to be scanned quickly and easily take people to your profile or allow them to follow you.

Likes / "Double Tap" - The 'double-tap' feature works as you might expect, and instead of searching for the little 'Like' icon (a heart) you can simply double-tap any image in your feed to like it. A small heart will pop up confirming your like. In all other regards, Likes work in the same way as on Twitter and Facebook.

Followers – see definition under Twitter and Facebook.

Geotags (location tags) – Adding (tagging) a location to your photo or video post tells those who see your photo or video where it is taken.

Influencer - These are Instagrammers who have an established credibility and a following on the platform. They are people who can persuade others by virtue of their trustworthiness and authenticity. There is no set number of followers needed to become an influencer. Brands often collaborate with influencers to achieve their marketing objectives.

Instagram Live - Instagram Live is a feature for the live broadcast of user videos and allows people to "Live Steam" direct to the Instagram platform. All users can "go Live" (upload live streamed content). Videos that are filmed "Live" can be saved to your camera roll after the video finishes.

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Other

Meme – A Meme is an image, video, piece of text, etc., which is typically humorous in nature, that is copied and spread rapidly by Internet users, often on social media, with slight variations. According to Wikipedia: "Colloquially, the term may refer specifically to pieces of media that take the general format of memes which traditionally but not exclusively involves combining image macros with a concept or catchphrase. These traditional types of memes can be very simplistic, often featuring a single word or phrase. In some cases, these words and phrases contain intentional misspellings or incorrect grammar. However, in more recent times, memes have evolved to more elaborate things such as challenges, GIFs and viral sensations. Their evolution has made it uncommon to go anywhere nowadays without seeing some form of meme. These small movements tend to spread from person to person via social networks, blogs, direct email, or news sources, and may relate to various existing Internet cultures or subcultures".

GIF – GIF stands for 'graphics interchange format' and is simple an image file that supports both animated and static images. They are not videos and don't have sound, but they a popular format for online animated images. According to Howtogeek.com: "GIFs are gaining popularity because, like memes, they're useful for communicating jokes, emotions, and ideas".

Selfie – According to Wikipedia: "A selfie is a self-portrait digital photograph, typically taken with a digital camera or smartphone, which may be held in the hand or supported by a selfie stick. As long as the photo is being taken by one of the subjects featured, it is considered a selfie."

Troll / Trolling – According to Wikipedia: "In Internet slang, a troll is a person who starts quarrels or upsets people on the Internet to distract and sow discord by posting inflammatory and digressive, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community with the intent of provoking readers into displaying emotional responses and normalizing tangential discussion, whether for the troll's amusement or a specific gain".

Vlog – A "Vlog" is a video blog or video log and is a form of blog where the medium is video.

Emoji – The word "emoji" comes from Japanese and originally meant pictograph; the resemblance to the English words emotion and emoticon is purely coincidental. Emojis are ideograms and smileys that are used in electronic messages and online. Emojis have various categories including facial expressions, common objects, places, weather, and animals. They are like emoticons, but emojis are actual pictures instead of typographics.

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Websites

Bandwidth - this is the amount of information your internet connection can carry, usually measured in 'bits per second'.

Bounce rate - A common metric in web analytics programs (such as Google Analytics), bounce rate is defined as "the percentage of single-page sessions in which there was no interaction with the page." A bounce rate of 50% means that half of the people that arrived on your page left without clicking to another page.

Breadcrumb – Sometimes referred to as 'breadcrumb trail', this is a secondary navigation system that shows a user's location within the structure of a website. The term comes from the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale.

Browser - A browser is what you use to view web pages. Examples of some common browsers are Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari and Opera, however there are several others. Since web pages display slightly differently depending on which browser you are using, this should be checked when designing a website.

Call to Action (CTA) – This is a common term in digital marketing and is used to describe text or content that specifically encourages a user to take an action. A CTA often comes in the form of a link with phrases such as "Buy now", "Learn more", etc.

CMS (Content Management System) - CMS allows many users to create and change website content using an online editor, without the need for coding knowledge. Because Content Management Systems are online, there is no need for any external programs or uploading of separate pages, and content can be published with a single click.

Cookie - Cookies help identify website users who have visited previously, or those that are visiting for the first time, and can show customized content depending on those criteria.

CSS (cascading style sheets) - A type of code that dictates how elements are displayed on the web. It is the most common way of setting the look and feel of a website.

Domain - A domain (or domain name) is your main website address. Similar to a physical address, it specifies where on the internet your browser should go to look for information. The domain name of the Methodist Church website is "www.methodist.org.uk"

Favicon - A Favicon is the small image that appears in the browser window next to the URL

Hosting - Hosting refers to where your website 'lives' on the internet and is the method by which your website is published online. Typically, a website is hosted on a web server, and your hosting provider is who provides space on their server to host your website so that other can access it.

HTML - HTML stands for "Hyper Text Markup Language". It's a coding language that developers use in order to specify content for a webpage.

Hyperlink (link) - A clickable element on a webpage that directs users to another website, webpage, or file. Links are commonly displayed as text or images.

Landing page - A standalone webpage designed for a specific campaign or purpose. Usually marketing on Google or social media drives traffic to the landing page, which is typically designed to promote a specific 'call to action'.

Plug-in - A third party program that can be installed onto a web browser, or add-ons on a website platform (such as WordPress), to provide additional and customized functionality. They allow web developers to easily install additional pre-built tools for a range of functions and purposes.

Responsive Design – this is the term for a website that is mobile friendly. The design is 'responsive' to the size of screen you are viewing the website on and adapts accordingly.

RSS – this stands for 'Really Simply Syndication' and is a method by which content from websites is collated into a single feed (an RSS feed). News, blogs and other content can then be viewed all in one place.

Secure Connection (HTTPS) and Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) – this is a protocol designed to enable encrypted communications across the Internet. It provides privacy, authentication, and message integrity online. SSL is often used between browsers and web servers, and a URL that begins with "https" is an indication that an SSL secure connection will be used on the website.

SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) – SEO generally refers to the entire practice of using a range of procedures that lead to higher ranking in search results. The internet is now completely saturated with web pages and so it has become increasingly important to optimise your website for search results. Simply, SEO means getting your web page found through search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.

Server (web server or internet server) - A web server is a system that delivers content (a website) to end users over the internet. The server consists of a physical server (computer), an operating system (OS) and software to facilitate HTTP communication.

Themes (or templates) – a theme (in WordPress) is a collection of templates and stylesheets used to define the appearance and display of a website. Other website providers also often use themes or templates to make creating or designing your website easier.

URL – often referred to as web addresses, URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator. This has similarities to your domain name, but it is the complete address seen in the address bar of your browser for a certain page. The URL for the about us page on the Methodist Church website is "https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/"

Widget - Widgets are various pre-built components that can be added to a website without having to write the code, and differ in style, function and purpose.

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