

reddit.com

A growing collection of online forums that is one of the most visited websites. Reddit's content, managed largely by volunteers, has contributed to the spread of false information and conspiracy theories.



This website is a platform that publishes content from its users that it does not vet. Information from this source may not be reliable.

Ownership and Financing

Reddit is owned by Reddit Inc. Steven Huffman, one of Reddit's two co-founders, is the corporation's CEO. Advance Publications, whose properties include Condé Nast, 30 local and regional newspapers, American Business Journals, and a digital marketing agency, is Reddit's largest shareholder.

The site earns revenue through advertising, sponsored content, and premium memberships. Reddit announced in February 2019 that it had raised \$300 million in series D funding, which included \$150 million from Chinese technology company Tencent, increasing the company's valuation to \$3 billion. (Tencent owns the social media platform WeChat.) In 2017, technology news site Recode reported that Reddit raised \$200 million in venture capital funding. A previous funding round in 2014 raised \$50 million.

Content

Anyone with a Reddit account can post text, videos, images, and links to external websites on the platform, which describes itself as "the front page of the internet." RedditMetrics.com reported in January 2018 that about 1.2 million online forums, called subreddits, had been created, although as of August 2018 approximately 138,000 were active, according to Reddit's corporate website. Reddit was the fifth most visited site in the U.S. and the ninth most visited site in the world as of August 2018, according to Alexa rankings. A Pew Research Center study published in February 2016 found that about 71 percent of Reddit users are men.

Users — who go by names they create on Reddit — often use acronyms popular on the Internet, such as TL;DR (too long; didn't read) and IMO (in my opinion), as well as terms with a unique meaning on Reddit such as cakeday (the day a user joined the site) and

karmawhore (a pejorative term for users who post content simply to earn points, or votes from other users, on Reddit).

Each subreddit focuses on a specific topic, which can cover anything that doesn't violate Reddit's content policy, and is referred to using the last portion of its web address (for example, /r/announcements). There are subreddits on commonplace subjects (/r/science, /r/politics, /r/books), and specific ones (/r/AnimalsWithoutNecks, /r/Random_Acts_Of_Pizza, /r/lifeofnorman).

Subreddits include an array of original posts, each generally followed by user comments. Users can comment directly on the original post or on any subsequent comment. Original posts and their comments can be "upvoted" or "downvoted." Original posts are all given a rank, which is determined by an algorithm. They can also be labeled as inappropriate ("not safe for work" or NSFW), or as content originally published on Reddit. Subreddits can be marked as "Over 18" if the content is not suitable for a young audience.

One of Reddit's most well-known subreddits (/r/AMA) features the site's Ask Me Anything series. Many high-profile figures have done Reddit AMAs, including former President Barack Obama, Bill Gates, Jerry Seinfeld, and Madonna. Users who do AMAs must provide proof of who they are.

A 2018 redesign of the site includes a home page that displays content from the subreddits to which each user is subscribed, and links to pages showing popular content on the site and content originally published on Reddit. Users can choose to sort posts based on the categories hot, new, controversial, top, or rising.

Reddit's interface has been translated by volunteers into 63 languages, some of which are made up, such as LOL (an interpretation of how a cat might speak English) and Arrrrrrrr! ("pirates" language).

Reddit has a staff of approximately 300 people.

Volunteer moderators manage each subreddit, and can largely run them as they please. They can create new rules about what content can be posted and how users should conduct themselves, as long as they don't go against Reddit's overall content policies. They can remove content they decide is objectionable or off topic, and ban users. Users can appeal a moderator's decision, and Reddit administrators can take control of a subreddit.

Any user can create a subreddit after maintaining an account for at least 30 days, acquiring enough "positive karma" (points earned when others vote on a user's posts or comments).

The user that creates a subreddit automatically becomes its moderator, and can ask others to join them.

Reddit created a content policy in 2015 that it says "provides a lot of leeway in what content is acceptable." However, it banned content that is illegal, encourages violence, involves sexual content and children, or is threatening or harassing.

The site enforces these rules in a number of ways, which include asking users to stop bad behavior, removing content, suspending accounts, and banning subreddits. Reddit's values, which include rules written by Reddit users, are often referred to as "reddiquette."

In June 2020, Reddit updated its content policy to more explicitly prohibit hate speech. The updated policy states that "communities and users that incite violence or that promote hate based on identity or vulnerability will be banned." Steven Huffman, Reddit's co-founder, owner, and CEO, wrote in a post on the site that approximately 2,000 subreddits — the majority of which were inactive — were banned from Reddit as a result of this new rule.

Two of the most active banned subreddits included the ardently pro-U.S. President Donald Trump subreddit [/r/The_Donald](#), which was known for promoting conspiracy theories and for the use of derogatory

language, as well as /r/ChapoTrapHouse, an offshoot of a left-wing podcast of the same name. Huffman wrote that /r/The-Donald “has consistently hosted and upvoted more rule-breaking content than average...antagonized us and other communities...and its mods have refused to meet our most basic expectations.” He said that /r/ChapoTrapHouse also “consistently [hosts] rule-breaking content and their mods have demonstrated no intention of reining in their community.”

/r/The_Donald still exists as a separate site not associated with Reddit. It was created in July 2019 after Reddit quarantined /r/The_Donald a month earlier for violating the site’s content policy. Quarantining a subreddit means that the forum will face restrictions such as not appearing in search results. Reddit also took steps to limit /r/The_Donald’s reach in June 2016 and February 2017 by adjusting its ranking algorithm.

Reddit’s content policy does not prohibit the spread of conspiracy theories and false information, which allows such content to proliferate on the site

Many false claims about the COVID-19 pandemic have appeared on the site, including the debunked claims that Bill Gates is somehow responsible for the pandemic, that the outbreak was a hoax, and that the virus was man-made.

For example, an April 2020 post titled, “The Coronavirus was manmade, but a single country didn’t make it” stated: “The virus, along with the Spanish flu, SARS, and H1N1, was made by the Illuminati. It was developed in a bunker. They are continuous [sic] making viruses to make a virus that will completely depopulate a country in days. These viruses were being developed and some of them were accidentally released.”

There is no credible evidence showing that COVID-19 was manmade or that any of these other claims are true. A March 2020 study in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the COVID-19 virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention, COVID-19's similarities to other coronaviruses suggest "a likely single, recent emergence of this virus from an animal reservoir." A February 2020 study published in the journal Nature found that the COVID-19 virus is "96% identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus."

The conspiracy theory known as "Pizzagate," which claimed that a pedophilia ring run by Hillary Clinton and her aide, John Podesta, was operating out of a Washington pizzeria, gained traction on the mainstream internet after a Reddit user posted a document detailing the "evidence" in November 2016, shortly before the U.S. presidential election. The theory spread widely on social media and in right-leaning outlets such as InfoWars. Subsequently, a man fired a rifle inside the pizzeria, claiming he was there to "self-investigate." Supporters of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan even used the theory verbally to attack Erdogan's opponents, claiming Erdogan critics should be more focused on Pizzagate and less on an actual child-abuse scandal at a foundation linked to the Turkish government. Reddit banned the /r/pizzagate subreddit in late-November after users repeatedly posted private information of people they believed were involved in the "conspiracy," saying "We don't want witch hunts on our site."

In the aftermath of the April 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, a Reddit user created /r/findbostonbombers, a subreddit intended to host discussion about who was responsible for the attack. Users in this subreddit misidentified multiple people as the perpetrators, including missing Brown University student Sunil Tripathi. Reddit issued a public apology for its role in spreading this misinformation, acknowledging that "some of the activity on Reddit fueled online witch hunts and dangerous speculation."

There are also many subreddits on which users attack those who disagree with them, often using hateful language.

Reddit instituted new rules in 2017 prohibiting the exchange of goods and services such as firearms and falsified documents. These rules banned subreddits

such as /r/stealing and /r/DarkNetMarkets.

Transparency

Reddit users can remain anonymous under the site's rules. Reddit users, including moderators, are identified by their usernames, which they choose when they sign up for an account on the site. Each subreddit identifies moderators and provides a link at which users can send them private messages. Reddit requires moderators to provide an email address where site administrators can reach them.

The original author of each post, subreddit moderators, and Reddit administrators are identified with different colors, images, and bold usernames. Original authors are denoted with a microphone next to their username, which is bold. Moderators are identified with a shield and their username in green, and administrators with the site's mascot, Snoo, and their username in red.

Reddit Inc.'s website lists Reddit's executive team, including each employee's biography. Reddit publishes a transparency report each year regarding requests the site has received for private user information and requests for content removal. Site administrators communicate with users regularly through different subreddits.

History

Reddit was founded by Huffman and Alexis Ohanian in 2005, during their last year of college at the University of Virginia. They developed the idea that summer at the first Y Combinator, a startup accelerator which has helped launch numerous successful companies.

The site was acquired by Condé Nast in 2006 and became a subsidiary of Advance Publications, Condé Nast's parent company, in 2011. Advance re-incorporated Reddit as an independent entity in 2012.

Huffman and Ohanian left Reddit in 2009, after their contracts with Condé Nast expired, although Ohanian came back as a board member in 2011. The pair returned to Reddit fulltime in 2015, to help revamp the site after controversies over its false content and hate speech. Ohanian stepped away from his day-to-day role at Reddit in February 2018, but retained his seat on

Reddit Inc.'s board. In June 2020, he resigned from the board and urged the company to fill his seat with a Black member, in the wake of protests following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. The site honored this request, naming Michael Seibel, a partner at seed funding company Y Combinator and CEO of its startup accelerator program, to Reddit Inc.'s board.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on July 1, 2020, to include details about Reddit's updated content policy and about changes to the Reddit Inc. board. This Nutrition Label was previously updated, on April 3, 2020, to include details about content on the site relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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