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TECHNOLOGY

Get Pinning!

Find, share, and organize ideas at pinterest.com.

by Kate Winn

Have you heard the buzz about Pinterest yet? It's an online bookmarking site where people share and save the best resources available on the internet. Want to keep family-friendly recipes (photos included) all in one place? Look for inspiration for decorating kids' rooms? Find articles with tips and tricks for parenting, or for your career or hobby? Then Pinterest just might be for you!

How does Pinterest work?

Pinterest (www.pinterest.com) is a virtual pin-board. Instead of bookmarking websites on your browser as you search the Internet, you can "pin" and save the great things you find onto your own boards in whatever categories you choose (i.e., baby, school snacks, craft ideas, gardening, scrapbooking, home décor).

Each "pin" is made up of a photo with a link to the original internet source. In place of a long list of bookmarks, you have boards with great photos, all organized and ready when you want the information.

You can also surf through others people's pinboards and repin their goodies to your own boards for future reference.

Why do people love it?

"The visual imagery sets Pinterest apart from other book-marking sites," says Crystal, a nurse, blogger and mother of three. Check out Pinterest right now, and you'll see a wall of gorgeous photos, under all kinds of categories, which you can quickly scan for ideas. "It's a lot more visually stimulating and exciting than reading headlines one by one," says Crystal.

Mary Jane, a teacher and grandmother, loves "the variety of ideas that are all in one place. I like that people post things they like, so I am searching through other people's favourites!" It means less hunting on the internet, and a sort of stamp of approval. Mary Jane loves to cook, and since signing up for Pinterest, has "tried at least two new recipes a week!"

How do you get started?

You can browse Pinterest without joining, which means you can search for people or for ideas, but can't actually make your own boards or save the pins (links) that you find.

Leigh, mom of two and daycare provider, hasn't signed up. She describes herself as a "lurker, browsing Pinterest for things that I know are popular with others. I've used tons of DIY holiday décor ideas, and crafts with my children and the daycare kids. I've even found great tips for my sister's wedding."

But to create your own boards, you need to join, which is by invitation only. You can sign up on the site and wait (possibly weeks) for an invitation. For a shorter wait, get a current user to "invite" you. If you haven't already heard friends, neighbours or coworkers raving about Pinterest, you can search the site for people you know and see if you can score an invite.

For the inside track on ideas to make parenting simpler and hobbies more fun, check out Pinterest and you won't be disappointed. (No money-back guarantee necessary, since it's free!) Happy pinning!

Kate Winn is a teacher, freelance writer and blogger. Send her an email through her blog (www.thismomloves.blogspot.com) and she promises to send you a Pinterest invite.

Tips and Tricks

- Pinterest can be very "addictive", so you may want to set aside a certain time of day or week to surf the site.
- Check out users who "follow" you. You likely have similar interests. You can also help build a sense of community by repinning others' finds, and commenting on pins.
- Don't skimp on the number of boards. "I recommend that you make more boards rather than fewer," advises Mary Jane. "If you like to cook, don't just make a board for recipes, for instance. Make one for desserts, salads, crock pot, etc. It's a lot easier to find things later on." Some people give their boards generic names ("Baking", "Shopping") while others get a bit more creative ("Yummy", "Yes, please!").
- You can use Pinterest to entertain the kids. Pinterest isn't just for the grownups. One mom suggests making a pinboard of images (toys, favourite characters, etc.) to entertain your kids using your mobile device in waiting rooms or on long drives.



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