



# SOCIAL MEDIA

A "how to" guide for OECTA members

2019

Social media may not be the "real" world, but there is important stuff happening there. It is a worldwide network of sharing, learning, and communicating.

While teachers need to exercise some caution about how you interact on social media, it is an increasingly powerful tool to share your perspectives, make new connections, and advocate for issues. As an Association, we want to help members understand what benefits social media has to offer, and how you can best take advantage of them.

# Why Social Media?

## It is a handy source of information

We can use social media to educate ourselves on a range of issues, stay up-to-date with news and current affairs, and get a feel for the pressing issues of the day.

## We can get active

Social media gives us a platform to share our views and show support for people and issues.

## We can build relationships

Social media provides valuable opportunities to connect with peers.

- Within the Association, it helps promote communication and solidarity among members.
- We can also build trust and support with others, for example by sharing messages of support for other groups engaged in strikes, campaigns, or other events.

## It is free

If you have access to a device and the internet, you can engage.

## To make our voices heard

Social media does not have the same sort of “gatekeepers” as traditional media. The beauty of the platform is that anyone can engage, new voices can emerge, and different perspectives can be heard.

## We can engage as members

Member engagement can mean anything, from talking with other teachers about what is happening in your classroom, to sharing photos from a rally, to calling on other members to get involved with an initiative or project. It is an important way strengthen our union by opening dialogue and deepening connections among members.

## It is easy

Social media may be innovative, but the same old rules of effective communication apply: be clear, credible, creative, and concise! Trust us, social media is super easy to use once you get the hang of it!





# Which Platform?

There are many social media platforms out there, all with their own unique features, advantages, and drawbacks. For our purposes, we will focus on the three platforms the Association uses most often: Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

## Twitter

Twitter allows users to post images, links, and video. Posts are limited to 280 characters, so keeping those posts concise is key!

### Key features

- News is posted in “real time”
- Easy to set up and navigate
- Each post allows four photos
- Hashtags make it easy to research topics and reach interested audiences
- Useful for building relationships with people and organizations
- Most profiles are public so anyone can see what you post
- Most suited to activism/advocacy/political engagement
- Can be used on a desktop, laptop, or mobile device



## Facebook

On Facebook, users can post text, photos, links, and video. Post length is unlimited.

### Key features

- Users can post large albums of photos
- Posts can be customized for privacy
- Users can join groups
- Users can follow business pages
- Users can stream live video
- Most profiles are to private, which allows greater control over who sees your content
- Can be used on a desktop, laptop, or mobile device



## Instagram

Instagram, owned by Facebook, is a social media platform where users can share photos and video.

Aside from the main feed, there are two added features built-in: IGTV, where users can share video of up to 10 minutes on their “channel,” and Stories, where users share photos and video that disappear after 24 hours.

### Key features

- Stories – users can share customizable stories that disappear after 24 hours
- Hashtags make it easy to research topics
- Users can stream live video
- Useful for building relationships with people and organizations
- Captions can be up to 2,200 characters long and can contain up to 30 hashtags
- Best suited for use on a mobile device
- Heavily about visuals – a good platform for sharing strong images!
- Profiles can be set to private so only those you allow to follow you can see your content





# POST

## Best Practices

So you know why you want to use social media and which platform to use. Now let's look at best practice tips and tricks!

### Identify your intention

Ask yourself before posting:

- Why do you want to post this?
- What are you hoping to achieve?
- Who is your intended audience?



Taking a moment to set your intention before posting helps to refine your message.

### Use #hashtags and @mentions

Tagging your photos with #CatholicTeachers or #OECTA, or any number of other relevant hashtags (check out the handy glossary!), means your tweets can be searched, retweeted (shared), or commented on.

“Mentioning” a person or organization means including their “handle” in your message, so they know you have been talking about them. (E.g. if someone tweets, “Check out this great resource from @OECTAProv!” we will be notified.)

### Spelling and grammar

Social media lends itself to a relaxed and informal style of communication, but spelling and grammar are still important, especially for teachers.

### Be authentic

If you want to build trust, it is important to be authentically you.

### Be confident

“Newbies” to social media may feel the platform is just for young people. Not true! Communication is as old as time and social media is simply another tool – the age-old “rules” of communication remain the same.

### Start small

Start small, perhaps by linking a news story you find interesting and adding a short descriptor, e.g. “Wow, I never knew this. Such a great read.”

### Think before you post

Apply common sense: refrain from bad language or inappropriate topics, research your arguments using reputable sources, think twice before accusing someone of something, etc.

### Follow people that interest you

This will offer you a stream of relevant, valuable content.

### But also follow people with a different world view

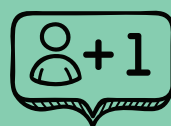
When we choose to only follow people who share similar worldviews, we can fall into a false sense of security that this is how the world is.

### Engage and be engaging

Retweet, share, like, ask questions, add comments. Offer links to more information on the topic. Make your content interesting and colourful. Add video, photos, personality. The more you engage, the more others will engage with you!

### Hashtag Glossary

- #OECTA – main Association hashtag
- #OECTAPD – tweets to do with OECTA professional development
- #OECTAAQ – tweets to do with OECTA Additional Qualification courses
- #CatholicTeachers – a general hashtag for any tweet
- #lessonsforlife – tweets celebrating the great things Catholic teachers are doing
- #onlab / #canlab – tweets relating to labour issues
- #onpoli / #canpoli – tweets relating to politics
- #onted / #cnded / #edchat – tweets relating to education



# HEY

## Protecting Yourself

Teachers are individual citizens who are entitled to personal lives, political views, and diverse interests, but what appears on your social media accounts must be appropriate to your position as a teacher and role model for young people.

Misuse of social media could have consequences for your professional reputation or employment, including discipline before the Ontario College of Teachers. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that even off-duty conduct is relevant to your suitability to teach.

The following are some basic guidelines to keep in mind.

- Share stories and information only from credible sources.
- Present your thoughts or opinions in reasonable language, without profanity or personal attacks.
- Do not share photos of yourself in inappropriate or compromising situations.
- Make sure you have appropriate consent to post content that is not your own.
- Be careful what you say about your employer, colleagues, school, or students.
- Be aware that common disclaimers used on social media – for example, “opinions are mine and do not reflect my employer,” or “retweets are not endorsements” – have no legal basis and will not protect you in case of a complaint or investigation.



Be careful who you friend or follow on social media. Do not follow people or accounts that are known to espouse racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise bigoted views, or who post otherwise offensive or inappropriate content.

Be aware of what others are posting about you. Ask family and friends not to post undesirable content about you, and request that they not tag you in photos without your permission. Monitor your own posts for inappropriate comments.

## Do Not Feed the Trolls!

Tensions can become high on social media, as people are engaging on a number of different issues and ideas, from a variety of viewpoints and circumstances. However, “trolling” is a particular kind of nasty social media behaviour, one you should not engage in or respond to.

A “troll” is a person, usually using an anonymous account or a fake identity, who thrives on attention or derives amusement from distressing others. In recent years, we have also seen the rise of “bots” – automated accounts that are created to influence online discourse.

It can be tempting to engage with trolls, particularly if you are passionate about your standpoint and want to get your feelings across. However, trolls are not interested in engaging in constructive dialogue, nor will they change their opinions based on reasoned discussion.

While engagement on social media is encouraged, you should take care to ensure it is worthwhile.

- Avoid engaging with others who have anonymous accounts, behave aggressively, and/or appear to be trying to provoke a negative reaction.
- Even if you believe your position is correct, engaging in heated discussion online can make you look unprofessional and affect your reputation.

Engaging with trolls is distressing, and it can take a toll on your mental health. You are advised to take advantage of the built-in features each social media platform has to help users protect themselves.

### Facebook

You can “block” other users on Facebook. They will not be notified that you have blocked them, but they will no longer be able to tag you or see things you post on your timeline.

### Twitter

There are two options on Twitter: “muting” and “blocking.”

- Muting allows users to remove an account’s tweets from your timeline without unfollowing or blocking that account.
  - The other account will not know they have been muted.
  - You can unmute them at any time.





- Accounts you block cannot follow you, and you cannot follow an account you have blocked.
- However, if an account you have blocked visits your page, they will see they have been blocked.

## Instagram

Instagram has a “block” feature.

- When you block an account, that person will not be able to find your profile, posts, or stories.
- People are not notified they have been blocked.



# Maintaining Privacy

Make sure you are taking the appropriate steps to protect your privacy, and the privacy of your students and colleagues.

Do not friend or follow students or parents on your personal social media accounts. Wherever possible, make your accounts private, meaning that others need to request permission to friend or follow you. Do not grant this permission to students or parents.

While social media can be a great way to share exciting things happening in our classrooms or schools (usually from a designated class or school account), it is best to avoid sharing photos of students, or disclosing too much information about your class or school. You should also exercise caution when posting students' work, to ensure their identity and copyright are protected.

Check the privacy policies and settings on your social media accounts regularly. They can change often and without notice.



# Getting Started

Getting started on any of these platforms is easy! Just go to the website of the platform you want to use, or download the app to your mobile device, and follow the instructions to set up an account.

While you should be careful protect your privacy and professionalism, you should also feel confident in using these platforms to express yourself and become more engaged with issues, fellow teachers, and labour allies.





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