



# National PTA Social Media Policy

Guidelines and Aids for National PTA Social  
Media Efforts

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## 1. Introduction: Social Media Today

According to [Nielsen's 2014 Digital Consumer Report](#), almost two-thirds (64%) of social media users say they use social media sites at least once a day. It is no surprise that the daily use of social media is constantly growing, and has increased about 63% more in smartphone apps and web browsers over the last year.

Facebook remains the largest social network for web and mobile with 93 million monthly users. Other platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn have displayed a significant increase rate in the last year. Today's social media and digital audience is more interactive and engaged than ever before.

## 2. National PTA Social Media Policy

National PTA recognizes the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about the entire PTA organization along with our current and potential services. We also recognize the importance of our employees and volunteers joining in and helping shape the industry's conversation and direction through interaction in social media. National PTA is committed to supporting honest, transparent and knowledgeable dialogue on the internet through social media.

The following social media policy guidelines are intended for national, state, regional, district, council and local PTA or PTSA entities. The social media policy guidelines are to be applied to any internet based, official or unofficial PTA site, and otherwise related online elements of the PTA. Regardless if the online content is created using CMS tools, a Facebook page, WordPress or other third-party web hosts/platforms, the use of any PTA logo, related image or name on the online content, the unofficial or informal internet based element must comply with the following policy and guidelines.

As with anything, PTA needs to take some precautions when using social media tools that connect and engage our organization. The same resources that make social media interactive are also the same elements that can damage the PTA brand.

National PTA encourages all PTA entities to use tools that align with our standards and policies to increase membership, communicate with current and potential members, fundraise and increase positive exposure. To that end, social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and blogging sites should be embraced and used with the guidelines set by National PTA. Social media platforms allow PTA to connect to members and potential members in a very interactive way. The digital presence allows PTA to share videos, post information, display pictures, promote PTA, receive feedback, and best of all—network.

### 3. National PTA's Social Media Presence

National PTA uses the following social media platforms and sites:

- **Blog**—[One Voice](#) covers the latest PTA happenings at the local level, commentary on news and issues that impact the everyday realities of children, as well as live action from our conventions and events.
- **Facebook**—The [National PTA Facebook](#) page promotes important info on PTA programs and sponsorships and is our largest online community of parents, teachers, students.
- **Twitter**—[@NationalPTA](#) is the official Twitter account that provides us with real time updates on live event coverages, industry news and press and plenty of tips and clickable resources for PTA members. We also host PTA President Laura Bay's [Twitter page](#).
- **YouTube**—Our [YouTube](#) channel hosts a variety of videos from National PTA, whether it's a recorded webinar, PSA clips, or events.
- **Pinterest**—The [National PTA's Pinterest](#) page shares visually stunning, inspirational and fun things related to the PTA's mission—featuring exercising tips, lunch box recipes, inspirational quotes for kids and more!
- **Instagram**—Our [Instagram](#) is a great way to build awareness on what is going on behind the scenes at our local units. We post fun, personal snapshots of exciting happenings in our local communities, in our offices and on news as well!
- **LinkedIn**—[National PTA's LinkedIn](#) is a business-oriented hub that allows industry professionals to seek connections, browse through current job openings, and provides additional updates on PTA grants and awards.
- **Flickr**—Online users can upload images onto the official National PTA [Flickr account](#) and browse through hundreds of National PTA related images.

### 4. What Should PTA Say Online?

What should PTAs be posting, blogging and sharing online? What topics should they never post about?

***Have something to say.***

Having ideas is perhaps the most powerful thing you can learn to do on social media. Talking about your ideas in a public forum forces ideas to grow, evolve and get better. Ideas matter.

***Stand on the shoulders of giants.***

The internet and social media means having access to literally millions of other ideas; read them, use them, and be informed by them. However, in the process of gaining ideas and information from others, it is most critical to give people credit when influenced by them!

Not only is stealing other people's ideas, words and images a form of academic dishonesty, it is wrong and could lead to problems later. To avoid any unintended issues, provide a link to the original content and use the author's name and/or organization whenever possible.

***Share your opinion.***

Remember, what you have to say matters. Read the work of others and let them know what you think! When sharing your ideas, commenting on others, and posting content, always keep it clean, professional and respectful. Use common language that would be acceptable in a public forum, such as a school meeting (the same general rule goes for images, audio and video). Disagreements are central to growing ideas, but do not attack anyone personally.

***Be consistent.***

Be sure to maintain consistency throughout posts regardless of the social media platform.

***Be safe.***

Do not publicly post anything you would not tell a stranger on the street. Opinions and ideas belong in a public forum; however, passwords, home addresses and phone numbers do not.

## **5. Monitoring Policy**

Hopefully, people are talking about your organization and the issues you care about. How much of the chatter you pay attention to is an important strategy decision.

***Consistently monitor your sites.***

The key to social media success is to stay on top of the online PTA sites and content. Any social media platform will require daily monitoring. Encourage discussion by posting quality content and posing questions. Quickly address any inappropriate messages or misuse of the PTA brand. Examples of inappropriate content include spam, advertising, offensive statements, inaccurate information, foul language or unconstructive criticism of the PTA. Social media can be used in as many productive ways as it can be misused. As a general guideline, if you have any question as to whether something should be removed, please contact your local unit president, state office or National PTA's communications department directly.

## **6. Responding to Negative Comments**

It is hard to figure out when and how you should respond to a post about you, or on your own social media sites and blogs. Always? Never? What should you say?

- Be prepared to respond to negative or inaccurate posts if a reply is warranted, however, some negative comments do not require a response, while others should be taken seriously and addressed.
- Encourage all comments or questions (negative or not) to be directed to the appropriate person able to respond accurately.

- Factors such as the number of followers and the severity of the conversation should determine if and how your PTA responds.
- Direct media inquiries to the appropriate person. Media inquiries coming through social media should be referred to the appropriate designee for an official response.
- Build trust by being open and transparent. Share information, including what the challenges and opportunities are for PTA in your community.

## 7. Privacy and Permissions

Social media venues are a great way to share information, but it is important to make sure that the information and content is yours to share. It is especially important for PTA due to sensitive areas dealing with children, families and education, in which something as simple as a person's name or photo might carry an implication or association with the entire organization.

- Employees should respect the privacy rights of their co-workers and not disclose information about work-related events involving other employees or volunteers of PTA, vendors and partners without obtaining their permission.
- PTA should not post photographs or images of any volunteers, families, children, etc. on any social media site without having their express permission to do so. Secure a written consent and/or [photo release form](#) at events or at the beginning of the school year releasing the rights to use and post pictures. If parents, teachers or volunteers do not sign the consent form, be sure to honor their wishes.
- Do not collect sensitive information—such as phone numbers, student ID numbers, social security numbers, payment information, etc.—via social media, as those are not secure channels.
- If you discuss a situation involving individuals on a social media site, be sure that they cannot be identified.
- As a guideline, don't post anything that would not be appropriate to present at a conference.

## 8. Brand Consistency

Branding is more than just the PTA logo and visual graphics. Consistency in branding displays more credibility and recognition. It helps our constituents recognize PTA's programs and services—on a national and local level—and is critical in strategically promoting the PTA's mission.

The National PTA [visual identity standards](#) and [style guide](#) were created to help deliver a consistent, clear and uniform presence for National PTA® and all PTA® produced materials. When used properly, National PTA's logo and tagline create a consistent message, help unify all PTAs, and create awareness of the National PTA Brand.

The guidelines should be implemented through all online messages, publications, correspondence, speeches, social media platforms, videos and presentations, internally and externally. With the vast number of PTA entities, it is vital to effectively and consistently promote the PTA brand consistently through:

***PTA Logos and Tagline:***

National PTA grants permission for the usage of the PTA logos and tagline on all printed and digital materials distributed for the purpose of membership recruitment and program awareness. State and local PTA logos are customizable to reflect the state or local unit name. To ensure high-quality brand identity, refer to page 15 of the National PTA [visual identity standards guide](#) and download customizable logos [here](#).

- Only use the official PTA approved colors
- Do not add graphics or images to the existing logo
- Do not alter or distort the logo in shape, pattern or form

## **9. Copyright and Attribution**

There are two sides to copyright and attribution issues. First, what are PTA’s policies for allowing other people to use your content? On the flip side, how will you use other people’s content respectfully?

Do not assume that anything found online is fair game to use. If there is no indication of licensing on it, assume that it is copyrighted—do not just put it on social media sites without properly citing the source or providing a link to the original content. It is always OK to link to something, but it is considered good courtesy to include an attribution to the original source.

***Photography:***

Photographs posted on social media sites can easily be appropriated by visitors. Consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800 x 600 pixels to protect your intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the Web, but not suitable for printing.

## **10. Personal vs. Professional**

Social media forces us to address the different ways our personal lives and professional work can intersect. Navigating between them can be difficult, especially on tools like Facebook that require the user to have a personal account to use an organization’s page. It is important to lay out the ground rules ahead of time to ensure that all staff and volunteers—that may have very different ideas about what is appropriate—are clear about the expectations.

- When staff and volunteers communicate through social media, unless authorized to speak on behalf of PTA, they are representing themselves and should use a disclaimer.
- If staff or volunteers write anything related to the work at PTA on a blog or some other

online space, make it clear that what is being said is representative of their own views and opinions and not as a spokesperson for PTA.

- If an individual is speaking on behalf of PTA, that should also be made clear.

**Sample Disclosure for local PTA units:**

[Insert PTA name] does not agree with or endorse every comment that individuals post on our page. Our goal is to share our user’s thoughts, questions and opinions. [Insert PTA name] reserves the right to remove comments who publishes inappropriate language, spamming, and/or excessive posting. We appreciate our readers and thank you for adding to the discussion.

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## 11. Common FAQs on Social Media

***I want to create a Facebook account for my local PTA unit. Do you prefer to open a group or create a fan page?***

Associations use “pages” on Facebook, rather than personal profiles. However, you do have an option of creating a group or fan page. A group page is designed for people to come together around a common cause, issue or activity to organize, express objectives, discuss issues, post photos and share related content, whereas a fan page (such as the National PTA’s Facebook) creates an authentic and public presence on Facebook with updates, photos and just about any other content you’d like to show up in your fan’s newsfeeds. If you do not already have a page for your unit, [here is how you can get started](#).

***Is it necessary for me to create a YouTube, Instagram or Twitter for my local unit too?***

Know your target audience and which online platform your target audience is most responsive to and active on the most. It is not necessary to create an account for every social media platform. Take into account the process of maintaining and updating your content. Narrowing down your platforms and your target audience will help strategize and communicate your messages to your PTA members.

***What if I want to share or retweet a photo from the National PTA’s website or any of the PTA’s social media platforms? Does a photo release form apply?***

No, in this case you may mention in your caption that the “Photo is by National PTA”. Most images that the National PTA uses, if not a purchased stock photo, are provided to us first-hand and directly from our PTA members and state and local leaders—thus giving us permission to share photos and/or disclose additional information such as names, school addresses, etc.

Sharing photos on social media are constantly taking place over the internet. It’s almost impossible to track and monitor who is using your photo and where. For safety precautions, always cite your source and attribute the photographer or source of the photo.

**Questions?** Contact the National PTA Communications Department at [SocialMedia@pta.org](mailto:SocialMedia@pta.org) or call (703) 518-1200.