

Bard

Best Practices for Social Media Use at Bard College

Social media gives us the opportunity to engage with the people and issues that matter to us like never before. This field is constantly shifting, with new technologies emerging rapidly. While it's difficult to offer universal or comprehensive tips for social media in an environment of continual change, we can provide considerations, best practices, and policies for Bard. We encourage social media users on the Bard campus to stay abreast of trends and keep in touch with the Office of Communications with questions, concerns, and ideas.

Before Starting a New Social Media Account

Consider your audience. Why would you like to start an account? What do you hope to accomplish? Who are you targeting? This will influence the kind of content you post and what social platform you use.

Who will post? Does that person have the time to do this? Make a succession plan: who is going to take over if/when this person is no longer managing the account? Make sure to coordinate with any coadministrators or related accounts.

Login security: Choose unique, hard-to-guess passwords for each account. Keep usernames and passwords in a secure location where a few staff people on your team can access them. Assign a few administrators with specified access on services that allow this (Facebook, YouTube, etc.). Consider using a service like LastPass to share and update passwords within your team. Share usernames and passwords with the Office of Communications as a backup.

Plan your time. Social media can be time consuming. A good rule of thumb is to post to each of your accounts daily. If you are certain you have time to devote to it and lots of content to post, start out with one account (rather than multiple accounts on different platforms) and see how it goes.

Familiarize yourself with some quick **tips for taking good smartphone photos**. [Here's one](#). See especially the notes about getting close instead of zooming in, and also about taking candid. Use phone settings for special modes, if you have them, such as for portraits. Make smart but not excessive use of filters.

Consider your **return on investment**. What are you trying to accomplish? How will you measure success? Event attendance? Ticket sales? Donations? Conversation engagement? Other actions?

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Policies for Official Bard College Accounts

Talk to the Office of Communications before starting an account or if you have difficulties.

Commercial, explicit, or defamatory content is prohibited.

Do not endorse political candidates. This is not allowed under Bard's nonprofit status.

Respect privacy and content ownership. Do not bring privately posted content into a public forum without permission, such as posting a friend's private Facebook photo to a Bard program's account. Credit all photography and quotations. Make sure photos are copyright free or seek permission to share them. See Bard's copyright guidelines on bard.edu/communications.

Follow the Bard College student **handbook** and employee handbook for standards of community behavior.

Best Practices for Social Media

You are **representing Bard** publicly in all your social media interactions on behalf of the College. How you represent the College will vary depending on your program's mission and your social media audience, but all your posts should be made with Bard's institutional identity in mind.

Engage others in conversation. Follow other Bard College accounts, faculty, and people of interest. Follow institutional and individual leaders in conversations that interest you. Tag other accounts, people, and places in your posts and use hashtags to join and follow conversations of interest. Share others' posts, framing the conversation in terms of Bard's work and your program's goals. See bard.edu/communications/socialmedia for quick links to official Bard College social channels for ideas of what accounts to follow.

Use a short but clear **handle** that mentions Bard—for example, @BardAlumni, @Bard_FisherCtr, @BardAthletics, etc.

Use a square **logo** and engaging banner image, where applicable. If you don't have a logo, email Mary Smith in the Publications Office at msmith@bard.edu to request a design. See Bard's logo guide for general-use information at bard.edu/communications/branding.

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Use **rich content**. Video and photography are most likely to gain the attention of your readers. Focus on telling stories and painting a picture of what your program is doing and what life is like on campus.

You may use social media to promote events, but that is not the primary purpose of these platforms. After all, readers can visit your program's calendar to find event information. **Balance events and announcements with rich content** and open questions to start conversations with your fans/followers. Consider a balance of visual content, events, links to articles/conversations/sites of interest, and calls to action.

Be present. **Devote the time** to your accounts so that they become resources for people. Answer questions. Check facts before posting. Make it fun.

Crafting Your Voice

Voices at Bard include the **institutional** voice of the main Bard College social accounts, which is the most formal and reaches out to a variety of constituents (prospective students, current students, families, alumni/ae, donors, friends, and members of the media). Each Bard College **program, office, or institute** on social media has its own voice, which aligns with Bard's larger brand, but can be more targeted to a specific audience in both tone and content. Lastly, there are **individual** voices on the private accounts of staff, faculty, and students. See the last section of this document for information on best practices and privacy for individual accounts.

Browse the main Bard College accounts on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to get a sense of College style and voice.

Keep in mind your audience—who are you targeting? That will help determine your style and tone.

Your voice: smart and social, connected but not casual, academic but not stuffy

Copy edit: even short content posted to social media needs to be edited. Think of social media as a Bard College publication. Everything should be high quality: text, photos, video.

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Privacy on Social Media

If you are using a personal social media account that identifies you as a Bard employee, please choose your privacy settings carefully, or, if your account is public, remember that anyone can see what you post.

Even **protected or private social accounts** are not truly private. An unscrupulous follower can publicly share a screen capture of your post. Platforms can be breached and your data compromised. Be thoughtful about what you share.

For staff and faculty who **interact with students on social media**, you will balance the private and the public. This offers both rewards and challenges. Social media can be a powerful classroom tool—for example, on Twitter, where faculty can share information and host discussions in real time. On the other hand, blending the personal and professional can become awkward if you and your students are not cautious about your privacy settings and what you post.

The best solution for privacy considerations is to **keep accounts separate for different uses**. For example, you may have a Facebook account that is for friends and family only, a LinkedIn account for professional networking, and a Twitter account for promoting your academic work, writing, and course-related interaction with your students. Tools like Hootsuite and TweetDeck can help manage multiple accounts.

Learn more about:

- [Editing your privacy settings on Facebook](#)
- [Creating and posting to lists in Facebook, thereby tailoring your posts to a particular group of friends](#)
- [Protecting your tweets](#)
- [Protecting your Instagram account](#)