

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media includes websites and applications (commonly referred to as “apps”) that allow users to create and share content, such as videos and pictures, or to participate in social networking. Popular examples include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Flickr, LinkedIn, Blogger, Google+, and more.

WHY SHOULD YOUR ALA UNIT OR DEPARTMENT CARE ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is a great way to increase the visibility of your unit/department and the American Legion Auxiliary.

It allows you to spread your message and engage in conversation with others in real time, and can also be used to encourage active participation from your members and possibly even recruit new members.

According to the Pew Research Center, “around seven in 10 Americans use social media to connect with one another, engage with news content, share information, and entertain themselves ... today, 69 percent of the public uses some type of social media.”



Social media will help you build up loyalty of your current customers to the point that they will willingly, and for free, tell others about you.

—Bonnie Sainsbury, named one of “Top 25 Most Influential Social Media Influencers” by *Forbes*

WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM SHOULD YOU USE?

Each social media platform provides a unique way for you to interact with others and has different user demographics depending on whom you want to interact with. Following is a short analysis of the most popular social media.



Facebook

Facebook is the largest social media network — with 2.6 billion active users — making it a great place for organizations to connect with their communities. It has a desktop website and also an app. It’s great for posting a variety of content, including videos, photos, blogs, links, and general updates. Facebook is more low maintenance than other social media — it does not require daily posting to build a following.

Demographics: Facebook is most popular for 25-54 year olds, and the majority of its users are women.

Twitter

Twitter is a great place to quickly connect with others from all over the world. It allows for short text updates (240 characters or fewer) with videos, photos, and links. Twitter is ideal for sharing news quickly and easily interacting with others.

Demographics: Twitter is most popular for 18-29 year olds and is almost evenly used by both men and women.

Instagram

Instagram is a strictly visual social media platform — users are only able to post videos and photos. Instagram is an ideal platform to promote events and volunteering activities. It is almost entirely mobile as users cannot post or take photos from the desktop website.

Demographics: The majority of Instagram users are women between 18-29 years old.

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Snapchat

Made popular for its disappearing content (posts are available for only 10 seconds at a time and are deleted after 24 hours), Snapchat is accessible only through the mobile app and is another strictly visual social media. It does not have a hashtag option or allow for sharing, so only users who have added you are able to view your content. This social media platform is great for capturing moments during events like ALA Girls State.

Demographics: Over half of Snapchat users are under the age of 24.

Demographics are as of 2018 and are provided by Forbes, Statista, and Sprout Social.

GENERAL BEST PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

This section is meant to help you more efficiently utilize social media to share the ALA's message of who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

Think before you post

Be yourself, but use common sense. Think twice before posting something that may hurt the image of the American Legion Auxiliary or compromise your privacy, and never post confidential or proprietary information. Be aware that courts may judge certain material as proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous, or obscene.

Get social

Social media is meant to be social — think of it as an ongoing conversation. Engage with others by including a call to action such as sharing, retweeting, liking, or commenting on your posts to encourage social sharing. Comment where appropriate to keep the conversation going. Take a sincere interest in members of your social media circle and be generous about sharing their contributions.

Know the etiquette

Ever get an email written in all uppercase letters

and find yourself taken aback? In social media, there are also cultural norms, expectations, and conventions that govern user interactions. Failure to observe them may compromise your credibility.

Talk about the American Legion Auxiliary

Talk about the American Legion Auxiliary, our programs, volunteers, projects, and mission. Share examples of activities going on in your unit or department, keep your content fresh, and update it often.

Be timely

Become the go-to place for your audience to find information about the ALA by posting timely, relevant, and quality content.

Post a photo

Your followers see a lot of text when they sign in to Facebook or Twitter — you want to stand out! Research has shown that using visuals such as photos and videos with social media posts greatly increases engagement.

Add variety

Engage your followers by offering a mix of content such as photos, videos, questions, blogs, and links.

Celebrate

Share good news, celebrate milestones, congratulate members, and post other happy occasions. Audiences want to celebrate your victories with you, no matter how small.

In addition to the above best practices, please observe the following guidelines:

Adhere to brand and identity standards

All American Legion Auxiliary-sanctioned social media should feature the appropriate visual identifiers and conform to the Auxiliary's branding guidelines (including emblem usage). Additionally, no beer, cigarettes, offensive material/gestures, or otherwise reputation/image-jeopardizing items should be in pictures.

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Be thoughtful

You are officially representing the American Legion Auxiliary, so exercise good judgment before posting your own personal views and responding to provocative posts. If someone from the media contacts you via social media, please redirect them to ALA National Headquarters' Communications Division. Never use ALA-branded social media to endorse a political candidate, service, business, etc.

Refrain from posting offensive material, and ask your members to do the same. Address any posts on your timeline that you feel are controversial or might offend members. In general, it's best to not delete posts (unless they are blatantly offensive/vulgar), but rather respond to them publicly and politely.

Respect privacy (including your own)

Don't post confidential, proprietary, or work-related information not intended for public consumption or information that may compromise your privacy or the privacy of a fellow member or volunteer.

USING ANALYTICS

Each social media platform provides analytics/insights of your profile to help you determine how well your posts are performing, the demographics of your social media followers, and more. These analytics are helpful for you to learn more about your audience, including how old your followers are (which can help you tailor your posts to that age group), what kind of content your audience responds to (do they like photos or links?), and what time of day your audience is online (so you can post when your followers are active). Learn more about each social media platform's analytics by visiting the Help Center on the platform.

HASHTAGS: Q&A

Q: What is a hashtag?

A: A word or phrase prefaced with the # symbol.

Q: Why use a hashtag?

A: A hashtag is essentially a way to start or add to a discussion around a certain topic. The hashtag #veterans is telling the world that your post is related to veterans in some way. Hashtags make it easy for people to search for and find posts on a certain topic. For example, if you're interested in finding Instagram posts about the American Legion Auxiliary, you could search #AmericanLegionAuxiliary.

Q: How do I use hashtags?

A: Simple: Just use the # symbol.

Don't include it before every word in your posts (i.e., #dont #do #this #in #your #tweets). Include only topical hashtags.

This is the correct way to tweet: "ALA Unit 1 is volunteering at a stand down today. #veterans #volunteering" OR "ALA Unit 1 thanks our #military and #veterans".

Before you create a hashtag, search available sites to see if other variations exist. Using more popular hashtags instead of creating your own will help ensure its visibility.

Q: Where can I find which hashtags people are using?

A: Check out hashtags.org or other similar sites to see what other hashtags people are using.

Q: What are other uses for hashtags?

A: Many organizations, including the American Legion Auxiliary, use hashtags at events and conferences. For example, the ALA Girls Nation hashtag is #ALAGirlsNation. The specific year is sometimes added as well. This helps create a specific conversation around the event and encourages participation in the event from afar. Hashtags can also be used as rallying points for specific causes.

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SETTING UP SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT PROFILES AND PASSWORDS

Profile names for social media accounts should be consistent with your overall web and social media presence. You'll want to be mindful of what similar organizations and others within the American Legion Auxiliary are using to carefully choose profile names. Names should be short, easy to remember, and not difficult to spell. For example, the National Headquarters profile name on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram is simply "alaforveterans," which is in line with the website URL (www.ALAforVeterans.org).

Name your social media page or group so it clearly identifies your ALA entity (department, unit, program, etc.). For example, a Facebook page named American Legion Auxiliary Unit 43 provides no clue about what state or region it's in. For example, a better profile name is American Legion Auxiliary Unit 43, La Grande, Oregon.

Each social media account should be assigned at least two administrators/managers to be in charge of settings and password management. Allowing for two administrators ensures the account is still accessible by someone in the event of an emergency or departure. Admins should not share login details and passwords without careful consideration. Passwords should be kept unique enough for proper security and should be changed on a regular basis, including following a person's departure or change in ALA activities or duties.

Use this list to record your account information:

Account One:

Profile Name: _____

Manager 1: _____

Manager 2: _____

Account Two:

Profile Name: _____

Manager 1: _____

Manager 2: _____

Account Three:

Profile Name: _____

Manager 1: _____

Manager 2: _____

Account Four:

Profile Name: _____

Manager 1: _____

Manager 2: _____

Account Five:

Profile Name: _____

Manager 1: _____

Manager 2: _____