



Mississippi State University Extension Social Media Guidelines

Extension encourages personnel to use social media as a way to promote the Extension brand and everything we have to offer. Social media allows our organization to:

- provide education
- create communities of interest
- build relationships
- engage clients
- raise brand awareness

We have created these guidelines as a resource for developing the best possible social media presence for Extension. By using these best practices, Extension as a whole can present a consistent and positive brand online, and make Extension's impact more evident to both internal and external audiences.

These guidelines are a living document that will continue to be updated as social media and our organization's needs evolve. If you have questions that are not answered by these guidelines, please contact Agricultural Communications at agcomm-contact@ext.msstate.edu or (662) 325-2262.

Best Practices for Using Social Media

These best practices pertain to social media accounts that represent Extension (such as county Extension offices, county 4-H groups, and Extension programs). Also, keep these best practices in mind for your personal social media accounts that publicly identify you as an Extension employee.

- Post to your social media accounts daily or, at the least, weekly.
- At least two Extension employees should have access to social media accounts. This will help prevent forgotten passwords and guarantee access if someone retires, leaves, or otherwise no longer has access.
- Use photos and videos in your posts. Text-only posts tend not to receive as much engagement as posts that include photos and video.
- When you share a link to a website, always include a caption with a description telling your followers why you've chosen it for them and why you believe it's relevant to them.
- Answer people's questions promptly and adequately. Account holders must monitor social media accounts for such questions.
- Use the official Extension profile pictures created for Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram.
- Cover photos should include pictures that best represent your office, program, or unit.
- Keep your posts friendly and engaging, just like your face-to-face interactions.
- If a member of the news media contacts you because of something you posted, respond promptly and courteously. If you need guidance on handling a media request, contact Agricultural Communications.
- **Use the correct hashtags in your social media posts.**
 - #MSUext
 - #MS4H
 - #mscrops



- Social media accounts associated with Extension should not be used to promote commercial products, causes, political candidates, or political views.
- Do not engage in arguments or vent frustrations when you are using social media professionally. Communicate respectfully and positively with your contacts. If a situation arises that you need help with, contact Agricultural Communications.
- When identifying minors in photos, use only their first name in the caption to protect their privacy.
- Don't post a photo of 4-H'ers unless they have signed photo release forms on file that allow Extension to use their photos for promotional purposes.
- Do not tag a minor's social media profile in posts.
- If you want to create a post that includes a minor who is not a 4-H'er, request permission from the adult/guardian with the child. You might also consider taking a picture or video that does not include any identifying features of the minor.
- If you need a photo release form, you can find it on the Extension Intranet under Forms. After it is completed and signed, keep it on file in your office.

Agricultural Communications

- Agricultural Communications will hold Facebook page access with full control rights on all Facebook pages representing MSU Extension and/or 4-H. Agents, faculty, and staff will have Facebook page access with partial rights to pages representing MSU Extension and/or 4-H.
- Agricultural Communications is responsible for creating new social media accounts representing Extension and/or 4-H. Do **not** create a new social media account representing Extension and/or 4-H before contacting AgComm.
- Agricultural Communications is responsible for overseeing the coordination of all social media activity for Extension and its units and programs.
- Agricultural Communications will provide naming conventions and options to ensure appropriate use of the Extension brand.
- Agricultural Communications will create and manage profile pictures for use on social media accounts.
- Agricultural Communications is responsible for social media coverage of statewide/regional MSU Extension events.

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