



# Facebook Best Practices



*Facebook is a great tool for educating and reaching parents and current/potential patients. This toolkit is designed to provide more information about Facebook's best practices, how to create content and concerns about privacy.*

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## **4-1-1 On Facebook**

The first thing you see on Facebook is a News Feed. The News Feed is a personalized stream of stories you build from the people and Pages you've connected to on Facebook. The goal of your News Feed is to show stories that matter most to you. To do this, Facebook ranks stories based on how interesting they believe they are to you: specifically, whom you tend to interact with, and what kinds of content you tend to like and comment on.

### **Post Quality Content Regularly**

When someone likes your Page, they're saying that they care about your business and want to know what's going on. Posting relevant content is the most important thing you can do to keep them interested. When you post content and have conversations on your Page, you're building loyalty and creating opportunities to gain patients.

*How often should I post?* How often you should post depends on your Page. Each Page has a unique audience that may respond better to more or fewer updates. If you notice that engagement with your Page has decreased, try varying your posts and their frequency. Create the types of posts that have been successful in the past and experiment with new types of posts.

*What are the most engaging types of posts?* Engagement will be different for every Page. Generally, the most engaging Page posts are:

- Short
- Original
- Benefit the person viewing the content
- Connect to your objectives and identity

*People tend to respond well to the following types of posts:*

- **Photos and videos:** Bright, colorful images depicting human interaction are particularly successful.
- **Questions:** Asking questions encourages interaction and tells people their opinions matter. When you ask for feedback or thoughts, make sure to respond in the comments so people know you're listening.

### **Will Everyone See My Posts?**

It's possible that an update you post on your Page may not be shown to everyone who likes your Page because News Feed space is limited. The News Feed algorithm uses several factors to determine top stories posted by people and Pages, including the number of comments, who posted the story, and what type of post it is (ex: photo, video, status update).

### **So Why Do People Unfollow Brands?**

- **Too Much Self-Promotional or Uninteresting Content:** A little self-promotion is a good thing. After all, why would a brand be on social media if they weren't there to promote their latest achievement? However, too much "look at me" is the No. 1 reason why people choose to unfollow a brand. Out of those surveyed, 45% said that they would unfollow a brand on social media because of too much self-promotion.
- **Lack of Personal Engagement and Responses:** It's important to respond on Facebook to build loyalty and engagement. You must quickly respond on Facebook:
  - 16% expect a response within 12 to 24 hours on Facebook
  - 13% expect a response within 1 to 2 hours on Facebook
  - 12% expect a response within 30 minutes to 1 hour on Facebook

## Writing for Facebook

Good content is the key to a successful Facebook page. Social media content should be:

- Relevant, useful and interesting
- Easy to understand and share
- Friendly, conversational and engaging
- Action-oriented

Facebook content is most effective when the content relates to a particular interest or desire of a specific group of people. Because your target audience receives multiple messages from multiple sources every day, try to make your messages relevant, useful and interesting so your audience will interact and be engaged.

### Relevant, Useful and Interesting

Relevant social media content makes people think “This matters to me.” Relevant information can be based on:

- Time
- Audience
- Geography
- Interests

### Easy to Understand and Share

On Facebook, your message competes fiercely with others for your readers’ attention. That is why it’s important to use plain language and craft your message so the information you present is easy to understand.

Here are some ways to ensure your messages are easy to understand and share:

- Put relevant, intriguing information at the beginning of your post. Can you ask a question?
- Keep messages short but relevant.
- Test your message on a cold reader. Could someone “get it” in less than 2 seconds?
- Provide enough context so your message can stand alone.

## Facebook Best Practices:

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- Keep posts short 140 characters or less, with a compelling image and/or link, when appropriate.
- Monitor and respond in a timely manner.
- Respond to every post (“Like” or “Comment”).
- Write in a more conversational tone.
- Don’t talk at the audience. Instead, ask questions and engage in conversation. Constantly pushing messages will turn a social media audience against you.
- Always check the tone of your social media presence.
- Do not be defensive.
- Do not assume responsibility.
- Do talk about conditions, treatments and research.
- Remain respectful.
- Make sure your posts are relevant to your audience and business.
- Be succinct, friendly and conversational.
- Share photos and videos because they tend to be more engaging.
- Ask questions or seek input.
- Give access to exclusive information.
- Be timely by posting about current events, holidays or news.
- Post regularly – at least twice per week.
- When appropriate – use the @ sign and then type a person’s name/Page name to tag them on Facebook.

## **Friendly, Conversational and Engaging: The Importance of Plain Language**

Often, we in health communication create health literacy problems for our audiences when we present information that makes it difficult for them to understand what they should know and do. Some of the most common mistakes:

- Using jargon or words and phrases that are not commonly understood by most people.
- Writing dense and long content that overuses the passive voice and doesn't give clear and concise directions or "calls to action."
- Including too many distracters (for example, visuals and text don't match).

**Using plain language helps to correct these problems.**

### **How Plain Writing Promotes Health Literacy**

- Quickly engages the reader, and tells them what to do (don't be ambiguous)
- Gives the most important information first.
- Tells what actions to take in clear, easy-to-understand language.
- Explains why the action is important.
- Uses concrete nouns (things you can see, hear, smell, taste or touch).

*Example of an action message*

**Weak example:** Following safety precautions can reduce food-borne disease transmission.

**Good example:**

Follow these rules to avoid getting sick from food:

- Cook meat until it is not pink in the middle.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds after touching raw meat.
- Wash fresh fruit and vegetables completely before you eat them.
- Keep hot food hot and cold food cold.

## **Limit Use of Jargon, Technical or Scientific Language**

Avoid using jargon and technical language as much as possible. If technical information is essential to help the audience understand the action steps, define the terms first and explain them in everyday language your readers will understand.

*Examples of alternatives to scientific language*

**Weak example:** hypertension

**Good example:** high blood pressure

**Weak example:** contraception

**Good example:** birth control

### **Action-oriented:**

#### **Write in Active Voice**

In active voice sentences, the subject is doing the action of the verb. Active voice sentences are often easier to understand.

*Example of a message written in active voice*

**Weak example:** A sample of the patient's blood was taken by the nurse.

**Good example:** The nurse took a sample of the patient's blood.

### **Keep Messages Short**

Use words with one or two syllables when you can.

*Example of a short message*

**Weak example:** Stress is a prevalent psychological and physical consequence of the ever-increasing demands of life.

**Good example:** Stress is normal. It's a mental or physical reaction to problems people have in their lives.

### **Write in a Friendly but Professional Tone**

A conversational style is easier to understand. Use personal pronouns as often as possible.

*Example of a conversational style with personal pronouns (you)*

**Weak example:** Exposure to the chemical could cause adverse health effects.

**Good example:** You could get sick if you are near the chemical.

## Use Numbers When They Help Make Your Point

It is clearer to write “3 in 4 people” rather than “75% of people.” To make the message stand out, it’s okay to use % rather than “percent” and to use numbers rather than spelling them out in letters when creating social media messages.

*Example of message using statistics*

**Weak example:** Researchers found that 90 percent of Americans believe the risk from vaccines is very small.

**Good examples:** Researchers found that 90% of Americans believe the possible harm from vaccines is very small.

Consider using alternatives to words expressing mathematical concepts, such as risk, normal, and range, if those words do not have meaning to your audience.

If possible, use words such as “chance” or “possibility” instead.

*Example of an alternative to a mathematical message*

**Weak example:** Most Americans believe there are very few risks associated with vaccines.

**Good example:** Most Americans believe the chance that something bad can happen to them after getting a vaccine is small.

## Where Can I Find Content to Share?

- Your practice’s website
- Nationwide Children’s Hospital’s Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/NationwideChildrensHospital>
- 700 Children’s Blog: <http://700childrens.nationwidechildrens.org/>
- Helping Hands: <http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/helping-hands>
- Pediacast: <http://pediacast.org/>
- Health e-Hints™: <http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/e-newsletter-sign-up>

## Protected Health Information and Facebook

Facebook’s greatest value is in its ability for the community to engage in dialogue. However, Facebook is not the appropriate place to engage in clinical discussions. If someone asks for medical advice on Facebook, please direct them to make an appointment.

Here’s an example of an appropriate response to post if someone asks for medical advice:

*“Hi ‘Name.’ Thanks for the question. Unfortunately, we can’t dispense medical advice on Facebook. If you are having a problem, make sure you contact your regular doctor right away. That’s the best place to get guidance on whom you should see or where you should go.”*

## 5 Tips to Avoid HIPAA Violations in Social Media

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1. Don’t talk about patients, even in general terms.
2. Do talk about conditions, treatments and research.
3. If you wouldn’t say it in the elevator, don’t put it online.
4. Take conversations offline. When you feel that comments or questions on your social media platform are approaching HIPAA violations, take them offline. Ask the patient to call your practice for more details.
5. You should not post patient stories or photos if you have not received the appropriate HIPAA authorization signed by the patient/parent. You must keep the HIPAA authorizations filed and available for review for any patient for which you are disclosing PHI.

