THE CITIZEN JOURNALIST'S TOOLKIT

a friendly guide for making the local, global

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so you want to cover an event?
we have the perfect **citizen journalist's toolkit** for you.

One of the great features of our nation is the broad range of cultures living and working together, yet still maintaining their uniqueness. As a result, we are enriched by experiencing aspects of other cultures.

In the Washington, D.C. area, visitors often have the opportunity to easily explore and interact with cultural events outside of their norms on the National Mall. Each year, more than 3,000 events — from a Native American ceremony honoring veterans on Veteran's Day to the multi-day Smithsonian Folklife Festival — take place on the mall, where groups share their culture with more than 25 million visitors.

These local events, whether they're just for fun or for fundraising purpose, help people share important elements of their culture with others from within the community as well as those from outside it. It can be powerful for participants in these events to document them from their own point of view, rather than rely on a media outlet to cover the events and then share their stories with others who cannot be there. Those others might be local members of their community who simply cannot attend due to time conflicts, or they might be members of a more regional, national or global community who cannot attend. Furthermore, there are some who would be interested in observing the event without physically attending it so they can learn more about the culture being represented.

The process of planning and building resources to create such an online record of the event might not seem immediately "worth it" to potential users, even though others would greatly benefit from being able to virtually attend the event. Social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube provide a place to quickly share text, images and videos with a large and widespread audience.

However, even with hashtags and keywords, it is still often tedious or difficult process for others to find your content. Additionally, these sites typically do not organize and curate the content well, especially when several users are contributing to the various social spaces. Storify and Pinterest are examples of resources that allow a person to easily and spontaneously aggregate posts from different websites and networks, but such sites are limited in terms of presentation options for the collected materials.

ABOUT THE DIGITAL WRITER'S TOOLKIT

This guidebook is the culmination of research for the Future of Information Alliance, an organization seeking to understand the evolving role of information in our lives.

The project ties to several FIA priorities. Namely, it broaches InfoEquity, the idea of reducing the "digital divide" and encouraging opportunity for all; InfoLiteracy, the idea of improving access to and knowledge of digital resources; collaboration and culture.

Through this project, we aim for groups to be able to disseminate information about other cultures by breaking down the digital divide and making technology more accessible and the transformation of information easier. Resources that many may not even have known of or may have known about but didn't know how to use will be considered or re-imagined in the this guidebook. The technologically advanced will hopefully learn something new, and novice users will not be left behind.

Ultimately, the aim is for cultures to be shared and experiences to be documented by people learning how to work together to accomplish this task. We believe in a future where everyone can access resources and use them to their fullest potential, and the Digital Writer's Toolkit seeks to be such a resource.

In this guidebook, you will learn how to document an event from start to finish. You will learn about storytelling, web development, social media networking and copyright laws. We'll teach you how to use exciting new tools and some clever tips about software you might already use. Get excited.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

We are students from Digital Cultures and Creativity, a living and learning honors program at the University of Maryland. We come from the Philip Merrill College of Journalism, the Smith School of Business and the Department of Computer Science, collaborating to help others to disseminate information in a more efficient way.

but first, let's answer the pressing question:
what is citizen journalism?

More so than any technological advance and medium shift in the history of the press, the Internet completely changed the concept of journalism and the methods of disseminating information. Now, for the first time, one did not need to be a part of a major news organization — be it broadcast studio, newspaper or radio station — to document the news and spread it widely. Today, anyone with a smartphone, laptop or tablet computer can publish their own content. This has empowered and reinvigorated community journalism and created new kinds of communities, and it has created serious problems such as credibility and information overload, due to a lack of any sort of standard in this relatively new process of storytelling.

Current projects are far too scattered in their approaches to be successful, as most of them have grassroots beginnings looking to fill a particular need. It is essential that community content is relevant to the community but it is also, by nature, more personal. It is important that it properly balance anecdote and fact, community need with individual need. Taking from the successes and failures of past citizen journalism and community news sources, we can work to perfect a method that involves citizens at every level and fulfills a void in resources for a population.

Citizens hold the knowledge and insight necessary to be effective community reporters. All they need are the tools. That's where this guidebook comes in.

MOBILE REPORTING

With the capabilities of smartphones and availability of incredible apps, it's possible for anyone to be a citizen journalist. You can use fancier equipment — DSLR cameras, high-end voice recorders and more — but you can get equally excellent results using the tools we'll show you in this guidebook.

A mobile reporter takes advantage of convenience of smartphones. It doesn't matter if you're an iPhone or Android user — there are plenty of free and cheap apps to help you cover the details of your cultural event.

———————— CHECK THIS OUT ————————
citizen journalism blogs + sites

CNN iReport — Citizen journalists from around the world contribute to this section of CNN's website, submitting photos and videos, and telling stories of events happening in their towns or communities.

Wikinews — This free news source, a project of the Wikimedia Foundation (the group that founded Wikipedia), compiles news and original reports to form new articles through collaborative journalism. It's similar to Wikipedia, but each story is writing in the form of a news story rather than an encyclopedia article.

grab your **smart phone** or **tablet device**
and get ready to report

checklist
preparing for the event

WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

☐ Set up your blogging and social media platforms. Determine how information will be aggregated.

☐ Brand yourself —create hashtags, logos, designs, etc.

☐ Publicize your website and social media accounts. Communicate with other event coordinators about how you can market your coverage before and during the event.

LOCATION PREPARATION

☐ Scope out the physical area — get a general sense of the layout of the building or outdoor area.

☐ Locate wi-fi hotspots (if any).

☐ Talk to other event organizers about the physical setup of the area to get a better sense of photo opportunities or a base for setting up equipment and materials.
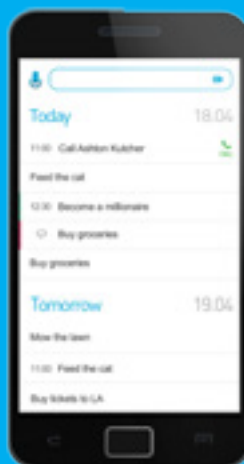
EQUIPMENT PREPARATION

☐ Charge all your batteries and devices. Have extra batteries in stock if it's going to be a long event and chargers if you'll have access to a power strip.

☐ Empty your memory cards if you plan to use a digital camera or recorder with a card slot.

☐ Learn how to use any app you might need for taking or editing photos, conducting interviews, taking notes or submitting blog posts.

OTHER PREPARATION

☐ Know the order of events, who will be speaking, etc.

☐ Research the history of the event.

☐ Consider the weather. Pay attention to the forecast, and weather-proof your devices if rain or snow is possible.

☐ Coordinate with team members about who will be leading which roles. Possible roles could include:
- ☐ Photographer
- ☐ Audio director
- ☐ Bloggers
- ☐ Social media manager
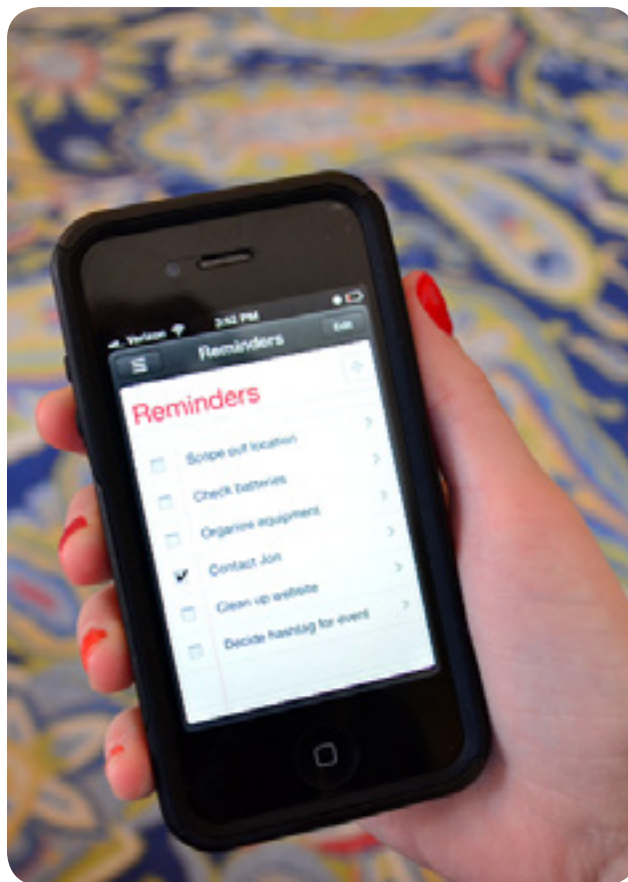- ☐ Web content manager/aggregator

—————— APP SPOTLIGHT ——————

smart planner: **ANY.DO**

This free to-do list app keeps you at the top of your tasks. Use this simple and eye-pleasing planner from the minute you start preparing for an event, and you'll be sure to have smooth sailing as you document the day. Optional alerts keep the most important tasks in the front of your mind (and on-screen) through the app's push notification feature.

FREE for Android and iOS

storytelling

sharing a culture with the community

storytelling
introduction

Storytelling is the heart of journalism — how can you most accurately convey a story in an interesting manner? You, the citizen journalist, might have an awesome idea, but you'll have to appeal to your audience by engaging with them and appealing to their interests.

In this section, we'll discuss how you can go about storytelling, including the following ideas and concepts:
- Conducting an interview
- Writing a blog post
- Tweeting
- Photography
- Audience interaction

By following these guidelines, you should be well-equipped to tell stories, create your own multimedia, and create content that will keep readers interested and convey information. *But before you begin...*

Consider these two questions before you start documenting an event. Considering these concepts will help guide how you tell a story and what you cover.

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

Know who you're writing for. Think about what they want to know and how you can tell the story in a way that will keep this person interested. This will affect how you write your posts, who you approach to interview or interact with and what kinds of media you rely on most often. More often than not, while using this guide, you will probably be writing for people from your own community. How would you want to know this information?

---————————PRO TIPS ————————

maintaining ethics while reporting
guidelines from the Society of Professional Journalists

Seek truth and report it thoroughly
As a journalist, your job is to be a watchdog and making the truth evident to others.

Minimize harm
Though truth-telling is essential to reporting, do it in a way that does the least amount of harm to someone.

Act independently
Though citizen journalism can be a lot less strict in this sense — often, for example, you may be working with a marketing team to cover an event — it is important to refrain from just acting as a public relations spokesperson in your writing. You can certainly relay basic information about events, but try going deeper into your event coverage. How can you make an event more interesting through your own reporting and storytelling?

Be accountable
Be honest in your reporting; let others know if you made a mistake along the way, and correct errors. Explain to your audience your reasoning for covering certain stories if need be.

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO COVER?

Once you know who you're writing for, think about what you want to tell them. What parts of the event do you want to feature, and how will you feature those parts? What medium (video, photos, audio, writing) will work best for each piece of the event? If you consider this ahead of time, you're more likely to be successful in creating a fun story.

interviewing
connecting with a source

Interviewing begins with finding a source — it's as simple as that. The easiest people to start with are event organizers, since they will likely want to promote their event. But you'll often find that the best stories will come from attendees or participants. They could be more reluctant at first, but expressing the value of documenting the event and preserving the culture surrounding it could encourage sources to open up to you.

STEP 1: IDENTIFICATION

Identify yourself right away to people you want to interview. The best approach is something as simply as, "Hi, my name is _____ and I write for/work for/am part of _____. I am interested to know more about X/Y/Z, and I was wondering if I could interview you." People are much more likely to consent to an interview if you identify yourself and explain what you plan to do with their comments. Additionally, it's deceptive if you do not state your intentions right away — and one key component of journalism, whether it's traditional reporting or citizen journalism blogging, is transparency. And if you're going to ask for their name — as you should always do — you should be willing to give yours.

Try to get a full name (have your source spell it out, even if you think you know how to spell it) and a descriptor for every person you interview. The descriptor could be the person's address, hometown, cultural identity, etc. Even find out why he or she is attending. Which descriptor you can get often depends on what kind of information your source feels comfortable sharing, and it can also depend on what kind of event your covering. If you're trying to show the diverse range of ages at an event, you might want to find that out, but if everyone in attendance is 22, that might be less interesting.

Examples of using descriptors:

John Smith, 69, said he attended the rally because he hoped to be part of "history in the making."

Jane Doe, a resident of College Park, Md., said she had expected a bigger turnout.

STEP 2: ASKING QUESTIONS

Keep in mind a few go-to questions to ask (a simple starting question: What's your name, and what are you doing here today?), and be prepared to come up with follow-up questions. Don't be afraid to stray from your notes and let the conversation flow naturally. Paying attention to a source is critical. If the person says something that you were previously unaware of or didn't consider, don't be afraid to ask him or her to elaborate on the details. Doing so will enable you to get a wider range of perspectives and diversity in your stories.

STEP 3: RECORDING AND TRANSCRIBING

Taking notes is essential during an interview. People are often afraid of being misquoted. More often than not, however, they might regret a word choice later on or not realize what they said until it is in print. So keep notes to back yourself up!

Recording interviews can be useful, though time-consuming — especially when you're trying to update your blog as quickly as possible. Make sure to inform a subject you're recording him or her, regardless of whether you plan to use the audio.

blogs
a platform for your stories

Blogging websites have become more popular and accessible over the past few years, with multiple free options available for your storytelling needs. WordPress and Blogger are our top choices, but tons of options exist, so keep exploring the possibilities until you find the blogging platform that best suits your needs. We compiled some tips for first-time bloggers and more advanced writers.

A blog post can be several paragraphs long, similar to what you might see in a newspaper or on a traditional media website. It can also just be one long paragraph. You'll find both can be useful during the day, but you might end up writing shorter one-paragraph stories. A post should be at least a few sentences — definitely longer than a Tweet or status update. If you do have a short post, you could consider just Tweeting it out. Either way, you will be able to share your information with your audience.

Content-wise, you have multiple options. You could post an update after every interview, which could be fun if everyone has a personal or unique story.

Alternatively, you could pick a theme or topic, interview a few people about that and synthesize the interviews into a few short paragraphs with quotes. For example, you could ask people how they felt about the size of the crowd, which speaker they were hoping to see, if they've attended such an event before or what the food is like.

No matter how you compile your interviews, don't transcribe every part of the interview word-for-word directly into your blog post (unless, perhaps, you're doing a Q&A style story). Instead, paraphrase what the person said, and use only the most intriguing quotes or most important ideas. This keeps posts simpler, more readable and to the point. A quote should be its own paragraph, and typically, you should introduce each person before you quote him or her.
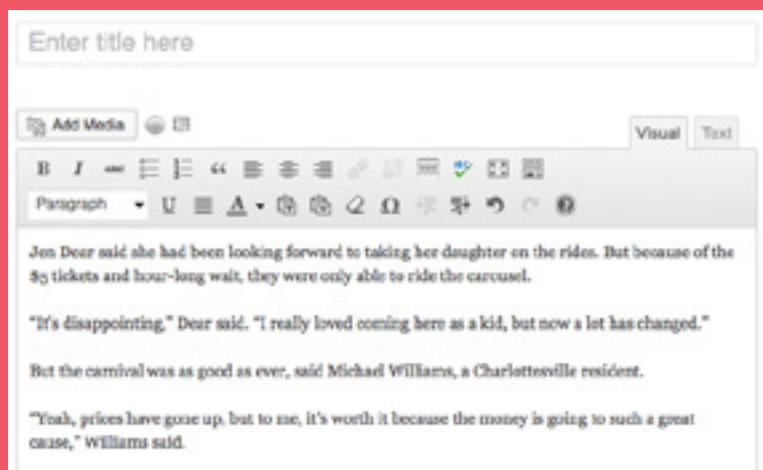
When it comes to adding details, do your research and be the authority. Don't be afraid to link to outside stories to establish credibility as a thorough reporter. Links are an important way to "leverage the power of the web," says Mark Brigss, a digital journalism analyst. The internet is a vast source of information, and sending people to supportive sources of information only benefits you as a trustworthy information provider.

As you're writing, make sure to keep your style simple but effective. Make information clear and easy to understand, and don't shy away from using graphics, images or bullet point lists. A reader may leave if it takes too long to understand or get to the point of the story.

To draw a reader in, use catchy and appealing headlines, which sometimes come only after you've written the body of the story.

Finally, be sure to engage the reader. In today's evolving journalism world, audience interaction is becoming more common and even essential. Add a question, poll, survey or conversation starter at the end of your post. Open your story up for discussion. It not only lets readers feel as though they're part of the story, it also gives you a chance to take in feedback. This can certainly benefit you as you develop your skills.

—————————————————PRO TIPS ————————————————————

Adding quotes to your blog post

Quotes add flavor to your story and act as a great way to insert other people's opinions into your story (remember that as a reporter, even just as a citzen journalist, your own writing should be unbiased). So talk to people! Hear what they have to say.

That being said, don't just copy and paste everything people say word-for-word. Paraphrase what someone says during an interview, and only include the most interesting quotes to underline new ideas or add emotion. This keeps the posts simpler, more readable and to the point.

A quote should be its own paragraph. Introduce each person before you quote him or her.

microblogging
using Twitter for a two-way conversation

Twitter is fast and easy way to spread small bits of information to your audience. Through the use hashtags, people can follow an entire event and see the digital interaction between attendees. But it's not just limited to people at the event. With Twitter, anyone can participate in the conversation, and that's the beauty of microblogging.

We'll discuss the marketing strategies of Twitter in the marketing section of our guidebook. But for now, we'll look into the best practices for getting started on Twitter and developing your tweets.

Digital journalism analyst Mark Briggs offers several pieces of useful advice for using the microblogging platform:
- Be relevant and timely
- Be informative
- Be instructive
- Add shortened links
- Have personality (but don't let it get in the way)
- Interact with other Twitter members

Be sure to include your Twitter stream on your blog — integration is key! It's super simple with websites such as WordPress: just go into your blog's dashboard, find the widgets section and add the username or hashtag you wish to add.

—————— CHECK THIS OUT ——————

6 tips to twitter success
from JournalismNext: A practical guide to Digital Reporting and Publishing

1
Be relevant and timely
Twitter is meant to be up-to-date. Post information as soon as you get it, using relevant hashtags. Not only is this good marketing — which we will get into later — but also it adds to the narrative. Following this guideline means your story will be contextualized in the greater scope of what's going on. And if other people are using the hashtag, it will ensure the narrative is chronological and make sense to people reading the tweets later.

2
Be informative and be instructive
This is essential and can be hard in such short space. But make sure every tweet has value. Don't tweet just because. Put important information in every message you send, whether it's a quick quote, directions for accessing part of the event, a brief fact, an analysis of what you're seeing or a paraphrase of what you're hearing. Give advice to people about the event based on your knowledge. Keep it useful.

3
Add shortened links
Just as in blogs, links are important both for credibility and providing as much information asv possible. The best way to share information with limited space is using a link shortener such as bit.ly or tinyurl. Type in your long link, and the site will generate a shorter link.

4
Have personality …
…But don't let it get in the way of your tweets. Your tweets should be fun and unique, something people would want to follow. Add your own flair, but don't try to be too cute — it will detract from the information, and if you're tweets always take longer to share information that could be easily shortened, people will stop reading it.

5
Integrate with the community
Interaction with Twitter followers adds to the narrative. People who tweet at you will be able to give you more information you can share with your followers, either by investigating the information or simply by retweeting them. Adding in local voices also helps build community and a shared experience.

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photography
visual storytelling

Writing a story in an article form seems to be the most basic way of conveying a story. But a story can be told in so many more ways — visually or audibly, for example.

The old saying goes that a picture tells a thousand words. And an image can do exactly that. Without a single word, a powerful photo can command an audience. Visuals can supplement an article or blog post to add depth, but a photo can also be stand on its own. Consider photo galleries, which can capture a single scene or preserve an entire event's worth of memories.

When it comes to citizen journalism, be aware that you are documenting a community, a smaller group of people in which people may know each other very well (or perhaps not at all). Regardless, as a photographer, be sure to do as little harm as possible. Introduce yourself and obtain permission before taking candid photos. Reconsider any photo that could potentially be embarassing or demeaning to a person. The photo should do a greater public good, not harm a private citzen. Veteran journalist Bill Strode says it best:

**"be a person first
then a journalist
then a photographer"**

With that, let's get started. In this section, you'll learn about mastering the skills and art of photography, editing and uploading photos. Note that the skills are transferrable between mobile technology (smartphones, tablet devices, etc.) and higher end equipment such as DSLR cameras.

We'll also introduce videography, a more advanced skill that combines aspects of visual and audio journalism.

MASTERING THE SKILL

Be sure to avoid relying on the flash as much as possible. Flash tends to make photos look unnatural. Instead, look for natural and ambient light, and use it to your advantage — partly sunny or slightly cloudy days, it turns out, provide the best lighting for photos. And sometimes the best lighting is made simply by repositioning yourself.

That being said — move around! Camera zooms are never as effective as simply moving your bodyto get a better shot, especially on mobile devices. And sometimes, if you take a photo with several different angles, you'll come away with a much more aesthetically pleasing shot than if you had just taken a photo straight on.

Since you probably won't be using a tripod while running around for photography, use what you can to keep the camera as still as possible. You can use your own body as a tripod by holding the camera with both hands and pressing your elbows to your sides (or try resting the device on another surface before snapping your shot). It will result in a steadier and less blury photo than if you were to just shoot blindly.

As your go through the day, make sure to clean the lens of your device; that will also clean up the look of your photos.

Take as many photos as possible. You'll learn from your mistakes; you will learn what settings work and where to position yourself and you will quickly notice an improvement.

MASTERING THE ART

Anyone can take a crisp, clean photo by simply keeping the previous concepts in mind. Find good lighting, hold the camera steady and getting close to the action. But what separates the amateurs from the masters? Take a look at these tips for mastering the art of visual storytelling (though note that every rule is meant to be broken).

First, try to always have a person in your shot — and get a face if you can. Backs are unexciting and typically don't convey much emotion, whereas faces show off someone's personality.

Throughout the day, keep an eye out for the "decisive moments." These moments help pinpoint parts of the overall story — the moment of a ribbon cutting, the raising of a flag, etc. These photos can require quick action, so it helps to know when they're coming. So do your research and find out the event timeline.

While you're at it, look for action. Straight shots are dull; it's as simple as that. You will probably find yourself taking some still shots, especially when a speaker is standing at a podium. But try to find a unique angle, maybe even shoot from above or below. Seek out small details that could enhance the image, and see how your own touch can separate your photos from the rest.

But don't always shy away from taking "mug shots" — posed shots of your subjects. Though photojournalists often strive for candid shots, posed photos are actually big sellers in community journalism.

For such pictures, try to pick a more neutral background, such as a plain wall or simple landscape. Avoid distractions. That way, the focus of the photo is is your subjects and not what's going on behind them.

Perhaps most importantly, keep in mind that most photos are valuable as long as they can convey information. You won't always have a chance to compose a perfect shot. So if all you can do is a quick snap with your cell phone, that photo could still be worth sharing if it captures a moment worth preserving.

PUTTING PHOTOS ONLINE

Incorporate your photos with a photosharing site such as Flickr. This will enable you to create galleries and share your photos through websites geared solely toward photography, thus changing the narrative of your story.

On your blog, a good visual tip is to intersperse photos throughout your posts, rather than just posting a photo and writing above or below it.

Every photo should have a caption. Even if you're just posting a photo by itself, you should always send along a sentence or two to describe what's going on. Good captions are in the present tense, as specific as possible and accurately identify subjects in the phot, according to journalism educator James Stovall.

——————— APP SPOTLIGHT ———————

CAMERA AWESOME and CAMERA ZOOM FX

CAMERA AWESOME
Download this app, and compare the results to your iPhone or iPad's basic camera app. The difference is incredible. Camera Awesome offers crisper, better exposed shots with more advanced focusing options that help step up the game.
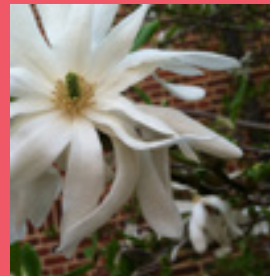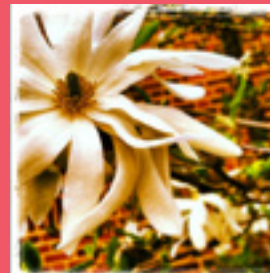FREE for iOS

CAMERA ZOOM FX
This app increases the capabilities of your Android camera, letting you shoot up to 10 shots per second. More advanced photographers will enjoy the app's capabilities such as custom settings for iso, focus metering, exposure, sharpness and more.
$2.99 for Android

——————— PRO TIPS ———————

editing and sharing photos:
THE INSTAGRAM EFFECT

Unedited

Edited

Instagram is among the most popular photo editing and sharing applications on both iOS and Android devices. With more than 100 million monthly active users, Instagram sees about 40 million photos uploaded every day.

The app is a great place to share your photos from the events you document. You can use hashtags to increase the visibility of your photos and reach out to groups beyond your initial target audience.

One note to keep in mind about Instagram is the excessive use of its filters. Filters, though fun, are unethical because they do not accurately show the true version of an image. Consider editing your photo in another app, then use Instagram to share your photos with the world.

FREE for Android and iOS

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Images:

iRig Recorder phone
www.backstage.com

Tumblr logo
www.marketingland.com

WordPress logo
www.wordpress.com

Camera Awesome! icon
www.maisongray.com

Camera Zoom FX icon
www.play.google.com

Instagram icon
www.instagram.com

All other photos by Jenny Hottle

marketing

sharing your event with the community

social media
everyone's in on it. are you?

Social media is the buzz phrase that everyone's talking about. It's a chance to connect with thousands of people who have similar interests and to share more about your organization or event. You can engage directly with your audience and get a better understanding of what they're interested in. You can tell a story in a unique and creatively way. Perhaps most importantly, it is expected you will use it.

You may be tempted to jump right into the social media world and create a Facebook page or Twitter account, but maximizing the full potential of social media takes planning and consideration. Think of your profile as the chance to make a good first impression. Any site you choose is an extension of yourself, your organization and your image.

We'll focus on Facebook and go through how to set up a page to begin interaction with viewers. But first, there are several questions you need to ask yourself before beginning any type of social media campaign or promotion.

WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

Like any other tool, in order for a social media campaign to succeed, you must first understand what you are trying to accomplish and make social media work toward your purpose. Identify if you are using social media to spread information about your event or organization, engage directly with your audience or even use as a platform to document your event. Knowing your purpose will help you choose the best sites for your needs and allow you to plan ahead.

WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE?

Focus on what you are conveying directly to your audience, instead of realizing an overarching goal. You want all of your platforms and social media sites to maintain a similar voice and clear, central message. This consistency will create avoid confusion and allow you to brand yourself.

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

The internet is similar to the physical world. People with similar interests tend to congregate in one place or community. Because of this phenomenon, you should consider your audience and their demographics (age, race, gender, location, etc.). Your probably wouldn't hand out fliers for an ACT preparation class at a college alumni event, just like you wouldn't advertise a 5K targeted for middle age men on Pinterest. Knowing your tar-

—————— CHECK THIS OUT ——————

important considerations

PHOTOS Use a professional-looking picture for your social media profiles. You want to look presentable — remember, this is your first impression. Consider using similar picture across all of your media platforms (i.e., same logo for your Facebook page, Twitter account, etc.).

TIME Take notice of when people are most likely to see your content. You want to maximize the number of people who will see what you share.

ENGAGEMENT is the best way to get people to take notice and connect with you. Utilize questions — asking people to share stories — and polls to prompt followers to contribute. Think outside of the box to create unique content that will stand out. Additionally, always respond to followers who reach out to you. This helps them feel important and will create a more engaging two-way dialogue between you and your audience.

TONE Try to maintain a conversational tone when posting, tweeting or engaging in social media. Make yourself relatable to your audience.

EXISTING RESOURCES When or if appropriate, use your personal account to promote your social media campaign to friends, family and acquaintances. Utilize the network you have already created.

————————————————————————

get audience will make the search for the right social media sites easier and will help you connect with the right people.

WHAT MEDIUM WILL YOU USE?

A variety of social media sites utilize different mediums (text, photos, videos, etc.) and styles for communication. For instance, Twitter only allows 140 characters per tweet. This limitation forces users to keep ideas short and to the point. This may be ideal for an update about an event, question or quote, but it wouldn't be the best format for explaining the mission of your group or purpose of your event. Your mediums should help you work toward achieving your purpose and message.

facebook
the top social network

Facebook is the most popular and widely used social media sites on the internet with users from around the world. It is essential to have a Facebook page for your event or organization to have a successful social media campaign.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Facebook has a demographic of people from all different age groups, education levels, locations, and genders. Although it has a large representation of most demographic groups, it has a slightly larger female population and is most commonly used by younger adults.

MEDIUMS

The site allows users to utilize a wide range of mediums, including text, images, videos, and links to external URLs, which means that you are not limited to spreading the word in one generic way.

The rest of this section will focus on important concepts for beginners to learn and understand. If you already use Facebook, you can probably skip through and check out some important considerations on the next page.

TIMELINE A Facebook timeline is your personal profile and gives you the ability to present yourself to other users. It includes a profile picture, cover photo, and personal information (birthday, age, relationship status, work, education, etc). The reason it is called a timeline is it allows you to record important milestones in your life in as much or little detail as you want.

PAGES public profile pages for companies, non-profits, public figures, and other groups. People are able to see information about the page on their news feed, once they like it.

GROUPS This tool allows you to create a space or community for a group of people with similar interests. This is particularly useful for organizing people or keeping up with a group. Groups allow more flexibility than pages because not only can invited members post, but they can also share photos, files, and chat with all members of the group. Groups also allow for different privacy settings, which can be useful if you don't want just anyone to join.

FRIENDS Facebook allows you to connect with users you know through "friending", which involves searching for and requesting people. You can search for people by using the search box at the top of the page or by looking at the people Facebook suggests for you in the "People You May Know" side bar. Friending is extremely important because it helps to build your personal network. The more people you add, the larger your network grows and the more people you can reach (about your organization or event).

NEWSFEED Friending is even more important because of the newsfeed feature of Facebook. The newsfeed is the first page you see once you have logged in and personal to you. This is a collection of the latest news and activities of your friends (people you have connected with) and pages. This means that your activities on Facebook will also show up on your friend's news feed, which gives you a great platform for spreading information. It's important to note that the newsfeed uses an algorithm to show people the most important and relevant, so it's not necessarily based on the most recent activities. Posts with more likes or comments are more likely to rise up higher in people's news feeds.

STATUS UPDATE The status update is the tool used for sharing information with your friends. This is the place where you can utilize different mediums such as information (including your current location), images, videos, external links, and even polls. You want to create engaging content here, so you will get more interaction with your friends or followers and increase your reach (exposure to other people on Facebook). You can access your status update from either the top of your news feed or timeline.

LIKE BUTTON allows you to show your support or endorsement of activities, pages, brands, and other third party individuals. The like button is housed on almost all Facebook content, including status updates, comments, posts, pictures, videos, apps, and ads. The "like" and share button can also be housed on external sites, which allows you to "like" something outside of Facebook, but still have it show up on your timeline. Liking also is used to determine your preferences and is data mined so the information can be sold to third parties. This information is not here to scare you, but to make you aware of how your actions on Facebook are being used.

TAGGING This feature of Facebook allows you to directly link another Facebook user to your status update, post, or picture. The person tagged will be notified that they have been tagged and the information will appear on their timeline. An important feature of Facebook is privacy, which allows a user to approve their tag before it appears on their Facebook profile or remove it from their timeline. Don't feel insulted if your tag is removed because every person has different preferences about their usage of Facebook.

NOTIFICATIONS let you know when a friend has directly connected with you (through a tag or post on your timeline) or when there is new information posted in a group you belong to. This features is extremely helpful in letting you know when people have interacted with you and will make maintaining your timeline or page easier.

SUBSCRIBE When you enable subscribe, it allows certain parts of your timeline to become public. This is mostly used by celebrities and is probably a feature you will never need to use.

Facebook allows you to create events, which let you organize people; manage details; send invites, notifications, information and reminders; and view RSVPs. When a person accepts an invitation to an public event, it shows up on his or her timeline and in friends' newsfeeds. This means your current friends can help spread the word about your event to a larger audience.

important considerations for facebook

FACEBOOK PAGE

Think of a Facebook page as a landing page for your organization. This is how you will directly engage with Facebook fans, create events, and direct people to your actual site. When designing your Facebook page there are several things you should keep in mind:

It's important to know that you can't change your page title and category once it has been set. Use keywords in your name to make your page easily searchable. So in general, choose a name carefully.

Make sure to utilize the About section on your page. Include a good, yet short description about your organization. You want to use this space to direct people to your actual website or blog. When placing a URL link in the About section, start with http:// so people have the ability to click on it directly. Don't forget to include contact information.

You have the ability to customize your Wall Stream. You can either choose a display screen of three walls or one. This gives you more flexibility for design.

It's important to get people to Like your page. This is how fans are able to stay connected with your page and receive updates on your new content. This is also the only way that your fans can post on your wall.

It is good practice not to use your personal profile for creating events or polls for your organization. A Facebook Page looks more professional and allows multiple creators, called admins, to post content. Instead use your personal profile to lead your friends directly to the Facebook Page.

Find other organizations that relate to yours and favorite them or tag them in a post. Engaging with others helps make the audience aware of you and increase your network potential.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. You can ask fans to use the "Share" and "Suggest to Friends" buttons on your page.

FACEBOOK EVENT

When creating a Facebook event, make sure you use your Facebook page and not your personal account. This will help people associate your event with your Facebook page and maintain consistency and professionalism. This will also make it easier to invite all of your Facebook page fans.

Make sure to create a simple description of the purpose of your event and a schedule of the day's events. If you have a separate website or blog for the event, include the URL link.

Facebook events allow people invited to RSVP through Facebook. If you need people to register somewhere else for the event, make it obvious. People may be confused if they need to register in more than one place so clearly mark with instructions and a clickable link.

Let people have the ability to invite their friends. Utilizing their network will increase awareness and hopefully attendance at the event.

FACEBOOK GROUP

A Facebook Group can be an effective way to communicate with members of your organizing team or group. It is best practice to keep such a group private, so only pre-approved members can see the content. You also have the ability to upload and share files, which can simplify the communication process.

FACEBOOK EVENT

When creating a Facebook event, make sure you use your Facebook page and not your personal account. This will help people associate your event with your Facebook page and maintain consistency and professionalism. This will also make it easier to invite all of your Facebook page fans.

Make sure to create a simple description of the purpose of your event and a schedule of the day's events. If you have a separate website or blog for the event, include the URL link.

Facebook events allow people invited to RSVP through Facebook. If you need people to register somewhere else for the event, make it obvious. People may be confused if they need to register in more than one place so clearly mark with instructions and a clickable link.

Let people have the ability to invite their friends. Utilizing their network will increase awareness and hopefully attendance at the event.

ENGAGEMENT

A Facebook page is worthless unless you can successfully communicate and engage with your fans. It is important to be unique and creative when posting, so don't be afraid to think outside the box. Here are some different ways to engage with your audience:

Direct story (by you or sent in by users)
Quotes (from participants or famous person)
Images and videos
Questions (direct engagement with users)
Polls

twitter
snippets of a story

Twitter is the main micro-blogging site on the internet. Putting it simply, Twitter lets you share your thoughts in 140 characters of text or less. The importance of Twitter is similar to the emphasis on Facebook for social media campaigns, except you must learn a new style of communicating.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Twitter is used by a wide range of people on the internet, with a slightly larger number of women than men. It is important to note that the highest user demographics are in black or Hispanic populations, younger in age (most widely used from 18 to 29), and in urban areas of the country.

MEDIUMS

Twitter mostly is used for messages of text that are no longer than 140 characters, although this can include URL link and/or a picture.

The following section highlights key terms for new Twitter users. If you already use the microblogging platform, check out some considerations on the next page.
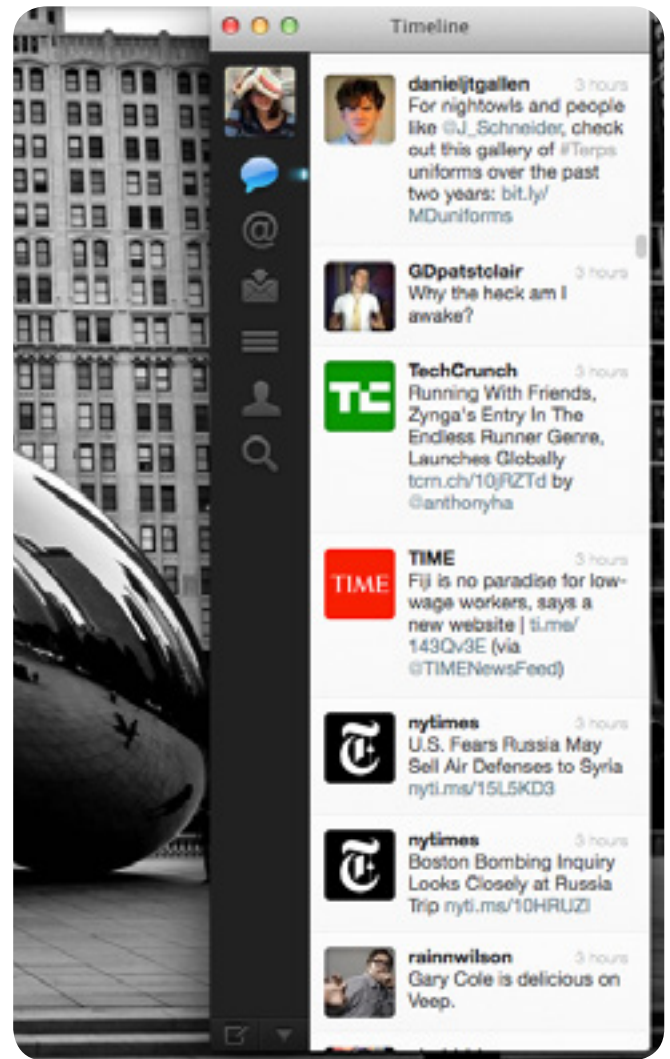
TWEET a 140-character message is displayed on your account's feed and is visible to the rest of the world (unless you change your privacy settings). Tweets also appear on the newsfeed of your followers.

TWITTER FEED collection of the tweets made by the people you follow on Twitter. This feed appears when you log on to your account.

FOLLOW This is when you choose to connect with someone on Twitter and allow their tweets to show up on your feed.

HASHTAG (#) used to associate your tweet with a larger topic of conversation. Hashtags are an important way of collective tweets of a similar theme and can be used by other people to find your tweets, either by searching in the search box or by simply clicking on the actual hashtag.

FAVORITES allows you to show support for or acknowledgment of someone else's tweet without retweeting it. You can favorite a tweet by simply clicking on the star under the text of the tweet, and all your favorited tweets will appear in a list on your personal profile.

HANDLE the name associated with your Twitter account; follows @.

RETWEET (RT) you can share other people's tweets through your account, which your followers will then see.

MENTION (@) used to connect other people's accounts to your tweets. The user/s you mention will be notified, which can help form public discussions or conversations.

DIRECT MESSAGE (DM) a private message between two Twitter users, which is also restricted to 140 characters. You can only send a direct message to a person you follow.

FOLLOWER someone who follows your account. Your tweets will show up on their feeds. The more, the merrier — you generally want people to see what you're posting about.

TWITTER SEARCH the search bar located in the top right corner of your Twitter screen. You can search for keywords, hashtags and handles.

important considerations for twitter

PROFILE

Your profile is the first impression people get of your organization when on Twitter. When designing your Twitter profile there are several things you should keep in mind:

Make sure your profile and header images are consistent with your overall social media campaign. Not only should they complement each other, but also they should help explain what your organization is all about.

Using a custom, creative background also adds a stylish dimension to your profile. It shows you care about your digital image and are putting effort into something you're eager to share with the community.

Your profile should include a link to your blog or website, since that is where you ultimately want to direct people to find more information. The bio section offers you a chance to explain who you are while also letting you show off some creativity. It might be helpful to look around at some examples to see the different styles people use for their mini biographies.

FOLLOWING AND FOLLOWERS

When you first start out, follow some influential people. Not only does it help you better understand how Twitter culture works, but it also shows people who visit your profile that you're not solely online to gain your own followers. Take the time to especially seek out the biggest names related to your field of expertise or interest. But don't go overboard — you want to look like you understand how Twitter works, not just a person who follows everyone without actively working to gain followers of your own.

Don't pass up the opportunity to engage with people you follow, especially if they're well known. Although you may never receive a response, such activity shows your followers you aren't afraid to reach out to others.

Don't be afraid to ask people to follow you. When you gain a follower, follow them back. This will send a positive message that you value the people interested in your organization.

ENGAGEMENT

Twitter is unique because it requires users to limit their messages to 140 text characters or less. Although this can be challenging, it is important to still be creative and engaging within this limiting constraint.

In 140 characters or less, you can use facts, humor, personal stories and questions to engage your audience. Make sure you keep a personable but professional tone.

Interact with your followers using mentions — if you reply to your followers, you help foster a community and give people a reason to start or continue following you.

Pictures speak a thousand words, so use them. Include both photos and text to keep things varied. And don't forget to include a URL in your tweets to drive people to your site!

TWEETING

It's important to tweet during popular times of the day, when the most people will see and possibly engage with your account. During the week, Saturday and Sunday receive the most traffic from Twitter users. Typically, the best times of the day to tweet are during the day from 8am to 7pm. Although it is important to tweet during these times, it is crucial to experiment and see when your own fans are most likely to engage with you.

You should tweet no more than 4 tweets per day (unless you're live tweeting part of an event) because you will receive a diminishing return on user engagement. Don't feel the need to tweet this much per day though. Always remember that quality is better than quantity.

Studies also suggest that keeping your tweets under 100 characters increases user engagement. Including a link in your tweets increases your retweets by 86% (but make sure you links work, so make sure to include a space before the link), while including pictures doubles engagement. You can also increase engagement by including hashtags, but be sure not to go overboard on them. Stick to about two.

Before you start following strangers, send out a few tweets, which will give people the opportunity to know who you are like and what they can expect from your account.

Ask your users at events and such to use the same hashtag. This, in effect, increases awareness about your event and let you see what others are saying.

Finally, don't be afraid to ask your followers for help.

reddit
the internet geek's front page

Reddit's simplistic design of links and thumbnail images may trick you into believing that this social media platform is unimportant. In reality, Reddit has over 43 million active users per month and is self-proclaimed as the "front page of the internet." The site promotes the importance of free speech and anonymity on the internet.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Reddit has a majority of male users ages 25-44 years old. Most Redditors have medium income levels and are well educated.

MEDIUMS

Reddit allows you to post in two different formats: a link to a URL or a text post. This means that you can utilize various types of mediums too such as videos and images.

understanding Reddit: key terms

SUBREDDIT a subsection of the main site that focuses on a category or topic of the creators' choosing. Any Redditor has the ability to create a sub-reddit. A subreddit is denoted as /r/nameofsubreddit.

REDDIQUETTE a set of rules Redditors must follow in order to participate in the social media site and keep posts from being marked as spam. Read through these guidelines before using the site. One of the site's most important rules of Reddit is don't just self-promote your own work.

KARMA ranking system that indicates your status on Reddit based on your posts and comments. Although having a high karma is important to users, it does not indicate where your post will be shown in the subreddit you post in — that's determined by other users.

UP/DOWN VOTE users rate your posts and comments by whether or not they like them. The more up votes you receive, the more visibility your post gets.

FRONT PAGE homepage of your Reddit profile, which can be customized to meet your specific interests.

important considerations

PROFILE

If you do not have an account on Reddit you are considered a lurker, while people who create an account are called Redditors. Having an account gives you the ability to contribute to the site and provides you with a personal profile.

It's important to remember that Reddit values anonymity, so it is a good idea to user name that won't make you identifiable. Choose carefully, though, because you can't change your name.

Verifying the email account you use for your account is the only way you can collect Karma. Although it will not help increase the visibility of your posts, it will make you a more trustworthy source for other Redditors.

Unlike other social media sites, Reddit is not about connecting with the most important people. Instead you should look at people with high karma for inspiration or to better understand what is popular.

SUBREDDITS

Posting in the right subreddit is critical for the visibility of your content. The relevance of your post will affect people's opinion of you (in terms of karma rating).

Some subreddits have a very narrow audience because they are extremely subject specific, so branch out and look for relevant subreddits with more traffic. Observe the content, themes, and style of a subreddit before posting.

It is possible to create your own subreddit if you are unable to find one that meets your interests. Don't submit too many posts into a subreddit at one time because it may result in you being unable to post for a certain amount of time.

ENGAGEMENT

A Reddit post can successfully allow you to communicate and engage with your fans. It is important to be unique and creative when posting, so don't be afraid to think outside the box. You can engage with your audience in a variety of ways, such as by telling personal stories or interesting facts, sharing images or videos or by being humorous.

POSTS AND INTERACTION

After considering the variety of content that you can post, you might be wondering how to go about creating your posts in a marketable fashion. Here are some tips:

Use a clever title — it's what will prompt people to check out your link or message. Utilize people's curiosity by creating thought-provoking or attention-getting titles.

When posting a link, don't use a URL shortener. People tend to be distrustful of shortened links. And unlike Twitter, there's not text limit for message, so no need for shortening things.

Interact with the community by replying to comments on your post and contributing comments to other Redditors' posts. You don't want to be viewed as a self-promoter.

Following along with that idea, never ask for upvotes in your post or ask people to share your messages. On Reddit, this is considered voter manipulation, and the community will be sure to punish you with tons of downvotes.

pinterest
visual bookmarking

Pinterest is a relatively new, yet very successful social media site. The site is a large collection of images that link to related sites on the internet. Users can collect these images on personalized profiles for inspiration, personal use, or future reference.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Pinterest has a large gender inequity in usage, with women five times as likely to use the site. It is important to note that the highest user demographics are in white populations,
younger in age (usually from 18 to 49), and in high-income, well-educated communities.

MEDIUMS

Pinterest utilizes images linked to a URL and can have a text description underneath.

New to Pinterest? Learn the lingo below. Already a pinning pro? We also offer some tips for more advanced users.
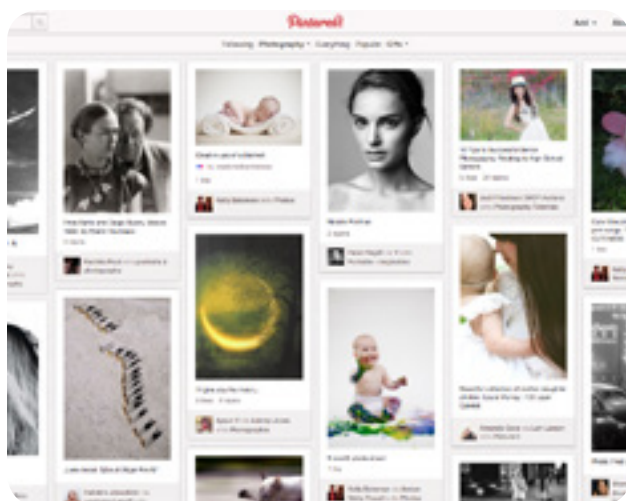
PIN image that links to a URL; usual has a text caption. People collect pins by posting them on their personal profile's boards.

PIN BOARD a collection of pins, usually centered around one theme or idea. Users can create multiple boards to cover a variety of areas of interest.

FOLLOW someone you select to display his or her tweets on your feed.

FOLLOWER someone who follows your account; your pins will show up on his or her feed. The more followers you have, the more people who will see your pins.

CATEGORIES allow you to customize the topic of pins displayed on your feed.

important considerations

PROFILE

Your profile is the first impression people get of you when on Pinterest. When designing your Twitter profile there are several things you should keep in mind:

People tend to trust individuals compared to organizations, so don't be afraid to use your personal account. You can easily link and share on your Twitter and Facebook accounts to maximize reach. You can also allow search engines to view your profile, which will increase visibility.

Include a picture of yourself that looks professional and may relate back to theorg anization in some capacity. In your description section make sure to promote the same types of messages of those on your Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. Make sure to have your blog or website, as well as your Facebook and Twitter account links on your profile.

FOLLOWING AND FOLLOWERS

Just like Twitter, it important to follow people because they will be more likely to follow you in return. Choose to follow people who have similar interests, by looking at the topics of their boards. You can also attract people to follow you by pinning viral images (that are related to your organization or mission) to get their attention. You can engage with people by liking, repining, or commenting on their pins.

PINS

Pins are the only way to reach your audience on Pinterest so it is important to make your images and descriptions interesting, relatable, and eye-catching.

Considering that the main focus on pins is the image, it is crucial to choose high quality images (600 or 800 pixels wide and 1000 pixels deep). You want to make your images shareable, so don't watermark or copyright them. Instead, you can include a text message on your image, such as a hashtag your organization uses, a Twitter handle, or even the address of your blog or website. People have different preferences on the types of pins they like, but in general images that are simple and contain few to no words are the best.

Descriptions are used to describe the purpose of the pin and what type of URL it will link to. Focusing on key words in crucial because it will make your pin easier to find in the search bar and will increase visibility. You can also ask people to repin in your description to increase the likelihood of it being shared. Although detail is important, you should keep your message between 200 and 300 characters to maximize the potential of being repined.

Creating Pin Boards that utilize key words will also increase the visibility of your pins because they are also searchable. People can also follow your board, which would allow them to see every new pin in your board.

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Facebook icon
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Twitter icon and bird
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Reddit icon
         www.iconarchive.com

Pinterest icon
         www.sparkloftmedia.com

All other photos by Jenny Hottle

recording interviews

Sharing and using:

photos

tweets

content

ideas

copyright

media rights and laws

copyright
legal considerations

In today's digital world, it's easy to get caught up in the excitement of sharing ideas — images, stories, videos and more. But what about copyright and legal implications?

It's important to familiarlize yourself with the ethics of sharing all different kinds of information. And remember, every website is different when it comes to permissions. Here's a brief guide to legal issues you should consider before clicking share or uploading someone else's intellectual property.

RECORDING/PHOTOGRAPHING PEOPLE

If you're in a public place, you can photograph people without their consent. But if someone asks you not to take a picture of him, it's easiest to just agree with them.

That being said, watch out for certain areas where photography is prohibited (though hopefully you won't run into that issue if you're covering an event).

It's generally legal to record videos in public areas and to record any interviews you conduct. But the legality of recording someone without consent is a tricky area that varies by state. To play it safe, get permission before recording anything. If you're being given a hard time, just politely explain that you're recording the interview for the benefit of both parties — it's important for you to be accurate in transcribing interviews, and it gives you a solid defense if someone comes back later to try and retract what he or she said (don't back down).

USING OTHER PEOPLE'S PHOTOS

With websites such as Instagram and Tumblr, you should ask permission first. On Twitter, you can use another photo if you display the tweet that accompanied the original image, making sure to include the user's name and handle (@username).

Flickr's guidlines are generally much clearer; you can check the copyright status on the right of the image in question:
- All rights reserved: do not use without permission
- Request to license X's photos via Getty Images: you may be able to license the photo for use on your site. But this can be expensive and take a lot of time.
- Some rights reserved: you can use this photo under Creative Commons (be sure to look into specific guide lines, per different versions of Creative Commons licenses)

Regardless, all photos require attribution. It's as simple as saying who the photo belongs to. Always be sure to link back to the original image.

—————— CHECK THIS OUT ——————

creative commons licenses
guidelines from flickr.com

Attribution means:
You let others copy, distribute, display, and perform your copyrighted work - and derivative works based upon it - but only if they give you credit.

Noncommercial means:
You let others copy, distribute, display, and perform your work - and derivative works based upon it - but for noncommercial purposes only.

No Derivative Works means:
You let others copy, distribute, display, and perform only verbatim copies of your work, not derivative works based upon it.

THE CITIZEN JOURNALIST'S TOOLKIT

a friendly guide for making the local, global

closing
final thoughts

The way we read and take in the news is evolving faster than ever. It's a struggle traditional journalists have to accept as reality. It's a scary thought, some say, to know that more people are replacing traditional news organizations — many of which were built upon the ideals of upholding journalistic standards and ethics.

But we're still moving closer and closer toward this world of fast-paced, hyperlocal news. We can't change that.

What we can do is make sure that you, citizen journalists, do it well. With this guidebook, our hope is you will carry on the tradition of striving to tell engaging stories about your community without compromising the integrity of journalism ethics and the quality of thoroughly and accurately reporting the news.

The world (or at least your community) is waiting on you. Are you ready?