

HOW-TO GUIDE FOR EXCELLENT (AND EVIDENCE-BASED!) TWEETS, POSTS AND VIDEOS



Social media allows us to reach new audiences who may be disengaged from traditional media, and Registered Dietitians and Nutritionists are in prime position to be the authoritative voices in nutrition on these platforms. In this module, we offer some tips to help you communicate new nutrition research and dietary advice effectively on social media and to establish your own voice while maintaining credibility.

CREATING EXCELLENT EVIDENCE-BASED CONTENT

- **Show your credentials:**

In an era of 'fake news', audiences are becoming more and more cautious when it comes to believing online content. Research, scientific evidence and factual sources give your content credibility and will establish your feeds as a trusted source of information. Start tagging credible sources and health bodies where possible – if you manage to build a rapport with them, they may even return the favour and tag you in their own content.

- **Layout is important:**

It's easier for your audience to follow a narrative when content is presented in a user-friendly way. Headings, subheadings, lists and bullet points can often ensure that your reader stays and engages with your content. Consider using multiple Stories and Carousels (multi-image posts) to break complex content down on social channels.

- **Be relevant; be educational:**

Consumers will engage with content and creators that provide value – you should aspire to make people think, laugh, learn or feel inspired with every piece of content you publish. Think about how you can package your content into an interesting story to relate to your audience and to help them to learn something brand new. In addition to any planned posts for the calendar year, mix in spontaneous one-off posts that reinforce your overall message by jumping on news stories or emerging trends (e.g. the introduction of HFSS packaging rules or a change to recommended guidance).

CREATING EXCELLENT EVIDENCE-BASED CONTENT

- **Master the art of capturing a good photo:**

You don't have to be a professional photographer or graphic designer, but focus on increasing your post quality, whether through upgrading your phone/camera, sitting by a window for better lighting, or considering your photo composition. You can also use a standalone app to edit your photos before uploading them. Some examples include:

1. Adobe Photoshop Express and/or Lightroom
2. VSCO
3. Snapseed

- **Evaluate your content:**

The more content you post, the more data you'll have to inform your future posts. Use native insights on each platform to look at reach, impressions and engagements to evaluate what works best, and continually refine your content strategies by building on the content that performs best.

- **Don't be afraid to reuse:**

Repurpose your most successful content. Often, people need to see something multiple times before they remember. Additionally, realistically the people who saw it back then are different than the people who see it today.

INCREASING YOUR ENGAGEMENT

- **Mix up your content:**

One of the best ways to drive engagement with your audience is by varying your content with images, graphics, infographics quotes and videos. Images are eye-catching when your audience is scrolling through their feed, but it's been proven time and time again that videos deliver a greater reach.

- **Make it relatable:**

Avoid one-word or single-sentence captions and instead try to inspire and evoke emotion by telling a story and sharing actionable tips. Be authentic - and your audience is more likely to engage.

- **Ask your followers to participate:**

With a call to action such as voting on a favourite portable snack or sharing a recipe hack, your readers know exactly how to engage with you and other followers. Chances are you'll drastically increase your engagement simply by asking politely.

- **Share where you are:**

Each time you upload content, you can add your location - tell your audience where you were, when the photo was taken, or any other location details to increase relevance and reach. Ask yourself 'which places would my target audience be interested in?' and use those to reach more people.

INCREASING YOUR ENGAGEMENT

- **Follow and comment on other profiles:**

If you want to increase your engagement, then you need to spend time engaging with others. When you show genuine interest in someone's content by liking and commenting on their posts, not only does it show that you support them, but it also encourages the person to check out your feed.

- **Be smart about hashtags:**

Make sure you're using targeted hashtags that describe your post or audience on every single post. When you've selected the right tags, you can significantly increase the engagement. There's no one right way to use hashtags that works for everyone, so feel free to experiment and find a way that works for you and your audience, but you should always try to follow these two golden rules:

1. Don't be 'spammy' – it's fine to find one or two generic hashtags you use across all your content, but other than that only use hashtags that are relevant to the content you're creating (i.e. don't use #diabetes on a post about #skinhealth and vice versa).

2. Don't use so many hashtags in your sentences that your content is hard to read. (i.e. #this #kind of #sentence #can #turn #your #audience off). Instead think about placing them at the beginning and end of your posts.

- **Promote your content further:**

On Instagram, Stories are fast becoming the most popular format. At the beginning of 2019, there were 500 million daily active users on Stories and the number of Stories posted is set to surpass feed posts this year. Utilising Stories not only broadcasts your content to more of your audience but can also 'game' the algorithm to increase traffic to your recent feed posts and easily boost your engagements. Make sure to share your post using the in-feed functionality or @ mention yourself so viewers can get over to your feed as seamlessly as possible. If you've got over 10k followers, you could also use a swipe up link!

- **Get tagging:**

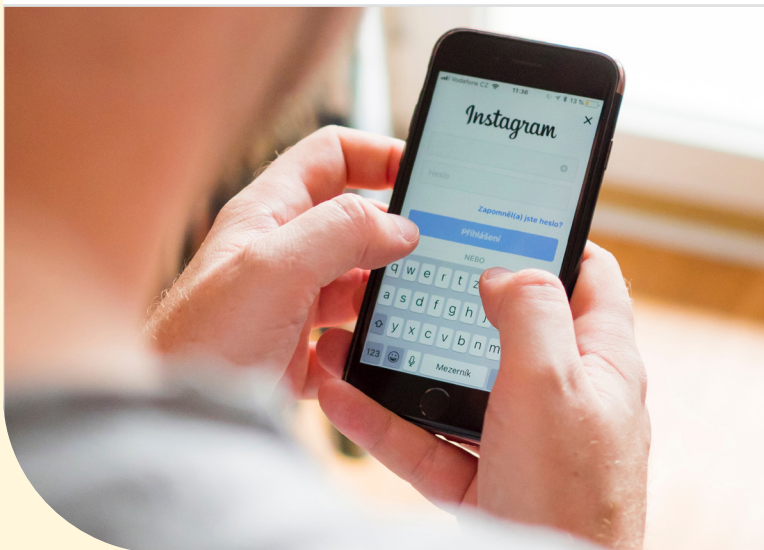
By tagging people and brands in your posts, they receive a notification of the mention and it effectively grabs the attention of the brand and their audience.

- **Share everywhere:**

Everyone in your audience won't always see your Instagram, Facebook or Twitter posts, so you want to make sure you're cross-promoting to make your content as accessible as possible. Sharing on multiple platforms also lets you experiment to find out what content works best on which platform and can help you tailor future content to specific audiences.

BUILDING YOUR COMMUNITY

- Post regularly:**
You want your photos, content and voice to remain steady, so people get what they signed up for. Whether it's once a week or three times a day, try to keep a rhythm. Having a consistent posting schedule keeps your viewpoint/brand/content top of mind and puts you in good standing with the Instagram algorithm which can drastically increase your likes from picture to picture.
- Share snippets of your daily work:**
Take notes from your favourite books that inspire you. Share what it means to you and how it relates to your life and profession.
- Be positive:**
Talk about something exciting coming up. In sharing real and relatable positive moments, you inspire your audience to be successful too.
- Ask questions and share your input:**
Get your audience talking and engaging with one another by asking a question. You could ask, "What sort of content should I blog about next?" or use the question function in Instagram Stories to ask what they want to hear about. That's possibly the best way to know what your audience really wants to see from you. Share your response in a way that is clear and easily understood.
- Show your passion:**
The best way to make your content engaging is to create it with enthusiasm. When you're passionate about a topic, it's easy to let that enthusiasm shine through your content and have readers engage with it.
- You and your audience:**
Your followers who like, know and trust you are the most important asset you have - make them your focus and you will build a like-minded community.
- Look after yourself:**
If social media is getting you down, step away. Take a break to reconnect with what you're passionate about so you feel inspired.



USING SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSIBLY

Providing followers with transparency and validity will build and maintain their confidence in you. Every claim and opinion should be supported by credible evidence before it is shared. If you are providing advice, it needs to be honest and informative and avoid language which exaggerates or makes assumptions. Provide references from peer-reviewed studies or health organisations. Importantly, when posting or responding to any individual, you are effectively representing the nutrition and dietetic profession as a whole and should apply the same level of integrity as you would to anything else you do in your professional capacity.

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS BEFORE POSTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

- Is it clear to the consumer what sources of information were used to write that content?
- Are your sources scientifically robust? Sharing single studies without considering them within the wider context of the research is not responsible and could misinform.
- Have you given a balanced view and highlighted areas of uncertainty or limitations?
- Does your content provide details of where to access additional information?
- Is the information that you are sharing as personal opinion being presented as fact?
- How will this be interpreted? If you are not qualified to inform a decision, what is your intention for such a post? Be clear.
- How do you think the images you post would be perceived by a vulnerable individual?
- Do you have different types of foods in your feed that are reflective of a varied balanced diet?

SOCIAL MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS

If a consumer starts to read a post and doesn't realise it is an ad until the very end, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) consider that post as not immediately or obviously identifiable as a marketing communication. The ASA recommends that any labels, such as #ad or AD, are placed at the very beginning of all social media posts.

USEFUL RESOURCES

British Dietetic Association

https://www.bda.uk.com/professional/practice/professionalism/making_sense_of_social_media_bda_professional_guidance_on_social_media

General Medical Council

https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/Doctors_use_of_social_media.pdf_58833100.pdf

Advertising Standards Agency

<https://www.asa.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/3af39c72-76e1-4a59-b2b47e81a034cd1d.pdf>