



**The University of Texas at El Paso
Social Media Standards**

Social Media Standards

Whether you are a University faculty member using social media as a part of the classroom experience or a staff member who is been charged with the exciting task of growing a social media presence for an administrative department, or student, you'll find these governing standards helpful in navigating the quickly evolving world of social technologies¹.

We also invite you to [Follow UTEP](#) on the web and engage with our faculty, students, staff, alumni, and community.

I. Introduction

In the fast-growing world of social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook (Google+), Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, SnapChat, Tumblr, etc., it cannot be argued what a profound impact social media has made on web users world-wide. It has forever changed the way a wide variety of information is communicated on the web. The impact is far reaching and presents new challenges while opening the door to endless possibilities in information collaboration, research efforts, information sharing, and teaching, to name a few. The University of Texas at El Paso supports these creative venues for effectively sharing information, helping to create and nurture relationships, providing awareness, building support, and facilitating participation in important discussions and collaborations of new ideas. By engaging in social media we may more effectively spread the wonderful stories about our programs, services, community, and points of pride in support of the University's mission to further student success and create a climate in which all members of the UTEP community can achieve their full potential.

These standards are to ensure appropriate and effective use of social media. This standard is not meant to address a specific form of social media; but rather social media in general. The standards will evolve as social media evolves.

II. Standards

The University of Texas at El Paso staff, faculty, and students, as well as Web visitors, shall engage in social media, blogs, social networks and the online community in a manner that is respectful, professional and appropriate. The following are standards for engaging in social media.

¹ Adapted in whole or in part from "Social Media Guidelines" [previously located at <http://www.utexas.edu/known/directory/guidelines/>], with permission from ITS, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712-1110, November 2011.

1. Respect and Ethics

The University of Texas at El Paso encourages different viewpoints and opinions, and as a participant in social media, you should too. Be respectful of others' viewpoints. If you disagree and would like to engage in a conversation, do so cordially, logically and ethically. As always, the University's code of ethics applies, even in the realm of social media and online networks. Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a "private" social media web site. What you write from your home computer may follow you to school or work. Always show respect. Do not publish content containing slurs, personal insults or attacks, profanity or obscenity, and don't engage in any conduct on a social media site that would not be acceptable in The University of Texas at El Paso workplaces or classrooms. You are personally responsible for the content you post on University-managed social media properties – from blogs and microblogs to social networks, forums and other social media platforms.

Use of social media sites during paid working hours must be focused on work-related activities and not on personal activities. While incidental usage is allowed by University policies, abuse of this privilege may be subject to disciplinary action as stated in Section IV below and in accordance with applicable law, policy, rules and regulations.

2. Accuracy and Honesty

Write about your areas of expertise, research, or study at The University of Texas at El Paso. If you are writing about a topic related to the University, or research conducted at the University, but you are not the in-house expert on the topic, make this clear to your readers and check the facts before you post. If there is a web site you used to gather facts, provide the link for your readers to show accountability. Also, always write in the first person. Your unique voice contributes to the overall message of the University. If you make a mistake, admit it. Your followers will be more willing to forgive and forget if you are up front and quick with your correction. Maintain a high level of quality that exhibits superior grammar, punctuation and spelling.

3. Value and Interest

When posting to your blog ask yourself if your content adds value and interest to the discussion. Make sure your comment, post or tweet is a valued piece of information. If your insight helps people improve knowledge or skills, discover something interesting, solve problems, or better understand The

University of Texas at El Paso, more than likely you are adding value. There are millions of people, companies and universities on the Web. If you want to stand above the rest, try to provide content that is exciting, engaging and stimulating.

4. Personality

In the social media realm, you are encouraged to use your own voice and bring your personality to the forefront. The web is a venue that is relaxed, open and diverse—embrace it. Make sure your site is not a place for self-promotion. Some social media sites, such as Twitter, close down such accounts.

5. Transparency and Disclosure

When communicating using social media or blogs – Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, Blogger, or others – on behalf of The University of Texas at El Paso, or in your role as a University student, faculty or staff member, make sure you clearly identify yourself and your affiliation with the University. Being open about your ties to the University will illustrate credibility and transparency. Make sure you have a formal disclosure that identifies your comments as your unique viewpoints. Agencies working on behalf of UTEP must also follow these standards, including disclosing their business affiliation.

Examples:

- “The posts on this site are my own and don’t necessarily represent The University of Texas at El Paso’s academic goals or opinions” or when writing for personal blogs or social networking sites, make sure you disclose your affiliation with the University if you discuss university-related topics. This will enhance credibility with your readers.
- Disclosure methods could include @usernames that contain UTEP and/or your department name, a link to a bio or “about me” page or a statement in the post itself, such as “I work for The University of Texas at El Paso, and this is my personal opinion”.

Be aware of your association with The University of Texas at El Paso in online social networks. Your profile and content should be consistent in the manner you wish to present yourself to colleagues, students, parents, alumni and others. Assume conversations about The University of Texas at El Paso are internal and private. Ask permission prior to sharing these conversations

via social media properties. Posts that do not mention work-related topics will not require you to reference your university relationship. Talk with your supervisor if you have questions about how these social media standards fit with your communications plan, or if you have questions about the university-wide policies referenced here.

III. Policies and Other Resources

1. All The University of Texas at El Paso-managed social media sites must comply with University policy, rules and regulations, including the [UTEP Information Resources Use and Security Policy](#) and standards.
We emphasize the importance of properly managing the administration of organizational social media accounts (i.e. keeping the number of administrative publishers to a minimum and having rules in place for managing login credentials). Do not share your social media passwords in the workplace or classroom.
2. Comply with applicable copyright and fair use laws to the fullest extent. Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting material to social media.
3. Know and follow the University's policies, rules and regulations, including these Social Media Standards, [Standards of Conduct Guide](#), [Web Page Standards and Best Practices](#), [Standard 2: Acceptable Use of Information Resources](#) for information technology, [Graphic Identity Guide](#), and [Web Privacy Policies](#).
4. Be knowledgeable and comply with applicable privacy laws, rules and regulations, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) which protects students' personally identifiable information in educational records.
5. When maintaining or contributing to University-managed social media properties, we should follow the standards of nondiscrimination and social conduct as outlined by the University policies, rules and regulations, including the University [Handbook of Operating Procedures \(HOOP\)](#), [Chapter 1: Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action/Non-Discrimination Policy](#) and [Standards of Conduct Guide](#). We should also expect the same of our visitors to The University's social media outlets.
6. Protect The University of Texas at El Paso and students, faculty, staff, or third-parties (high school students, consultants/vendors, etc.) confidential or personal information. If you have any questions about what constitutes confidential or sensitive data, consult the [UTEP Standard 9: Data Classification](#) provided on the Information Security Office (ISO) web site.

7. Provide official University social media site URLs to University Communications for dissemination. Doing so encourages cross-site collaboration with all University-managed social media properties and the University's web audiences to connect with our social media platforms.
8. University Social media sites should be marked "official". Where appropriate (for example, in a Twitter bio or in the Facebook "about" section), University social media sites should be monitored (and moderated, where appropriate) to ensure the community is following the University policies, rules, regulations, guidelines, and standards.
9. If a team of managers and content contributors is posting content on a University social media site, each post should be "signed" by the person who posted it (for example, "Posted by J. Smith, University Communications," or "^JS" on Twitter).
10. Before debuting a social media initiative, you should develop a social media strategy that should be part of your department's or office overall communications plan. This strategy should be approved by your College Dean or Department head and then submitted to University Communications for final approval before releasing the media property to the public.
11. University-managed social media sites cannot host advertising. On third-party social media platforms, if ads can be turned OFF on University pages, they should be turned OFF.
12. Any information created, transmitted, downloaded, uploaded, exchanged, or disclosed in a university-managed social media forum is subject to monitoring and security testing by the University ISO at any time without prior notification and subject to records retention requirements under applicable law. Additionally, content may be subject to open records requests.

IV. Disciplinary Actions

Violation of this Standard or other U.T. System or UTEP Information Security Policies or Standards by faculty, staff, and students who have access to UTEP Information Resources or Data for the purpose of providing services to or on behalf of an Institution, are subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the applicable Institutional rules and Policies. For contractors and consultants, this may include termination of the work engagement and execution of penalties contained in the work contract. For interns and volunteers, this may include dismissal. Additionally, certain violations may result in civil action or referral for criminal prosecution.

V. Revision History

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