

#SciComm via Social Media

A guide to choosing the best social media channels to share your science

AGU SHARING
SCIENCE

	 Twitter	 Tumblr	 Instagram	 Facebook	 Blog
 Time	Low	Medium	Low	Varies	High
 Length	Shortest	Short(ish)	Varies	Varies	Long
 Images	Sure!	Yas!	Must!	Sure!	Ok!
 Audience	Peers/Public	Public	Peers Fam & Friends	Fam & Friends	Peers
 Ages	18-29	18-24	18-29	25-54	21-35

Using Social Media

Whether it's Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook, blogging, or some other outlet, social media can be a powerful tool to get your message out.

GENERAL HELPFUL HINTS

- **Have a plan.** Don't sign up for any site before you know what you want to say to what audience – and what you want them to get out of it.
- **Keep it simple.** If your next-door neighbor, your grandmother, or your friend from high school can't understand what you're talking about, rephrase your message.
- **Keep it interesting.** We live in an age of short attention spans and sound bites. Use catchy phrases and striking images to capture readers' attention. This varies with social media outlet (i.e. it's easier to keep people interested with 280 characters).
- **Keep it relevant.** Know your audience: Who visits your site, how regularly, for how long? How can your content reflect your visitors' interests and behaviors? You can usually track metrics and gauge your audience.
- **Keep it up.** Social media sites and feeds must be updated frequently (from once a day to once a week). Why visit your site again if there's nothing new? The level of commitment necessary will help you gauge what type is right for you.
- **Keep it under control.** Joining every site out there will be overwhelming and exhausting; start out with one or two and see if you want to expand.
- **Keep making contacts.** Social media is by definition interactive – find others, make connections, and add links. Become part of a larger network in order to reach others.
- **Keep trying.** It takes time to acquire followers to your sites and feeds; don't give up if you're not immediately noticed. Think of it as a more fun version of trying to get a manuscript accepted or grant funded.
- **Keep your cool.** Social media can be seen by everyone, and it's all too easy for tone to shift from informal to unprofessional.

Scientist's Guide to Twitter



WHEN TO USE TWITTER:

- **Your time investment:** 5-10 minutes daily.
- **Your desire:** To convey brief messages or direct readers to other sources through 280 characters or fewer at a time.

TWITTER CHECKLIST:

- **Is this the audience you want?** Make sure you're using the best tool for the audience you want to reach.
- **Tweet often.** You need to post at least once a day (ideally more) in order to maintain followers.
- **Make it a conversation.** Re-tweet others' posts, respond to their tweets, and get involved in hashtag conversations. Others will be more likely to connect with—and follow—you.
- **Use hashtags.** People often search for topics by a relevant hashtag, for example, #AGUpubs or #SharingScience. Use hashtags and your tweets are more likely to be noticed.
- **Live tweet.** If you're at a conference or other relevant event, tweet about what's interesting, new, or striking, and use the hashtag(s) for that event.
- **Use bitly.** Bitly will shorten unwieldy URLs to mini-links that fit in tweets.
- **Use a management tool.** Social-media management tools and apps, like Tweetdeck or Hootsuite (among others), will allow you to schedule your tweets in advance, manage multiple accounts, and track your interactions.

Start using Twitter!

It isn't too restrictive
If you write haikus.

More info [here](#) and follow us on Twitter [twitter.com/AGU_SciComm!](https://twitter.com/AGU_SciComm)

Scientist's Guide to Tumblr



WHEN TO USE TUMBLR:

- **Your time investment:** 10-30 minutes daily.
- **Your desire:** To share striking images (your own or others'), brief comments/captions, and links to more information.

TUMBLR CHECKLIST:

- **Choose a topic.** What is your Tumblr about? Choose a theme that's interesting to you and others—and that it's easy to find or create material for. If you draw your experimental design, methods, or study sites, consider a “science drawing” theme; if you take pictures on research cruises, consider “science at sea” photos; if you want something that covers images from the whole of your (and others') daily activities, consider “life of a scientist.”
- **Follow others.** Like Twitter and Facebook, you'll gain more followers—and see more interesting posts—if you follow many people and institutions whose work you like.
- **Make a schedule.** Decide how many times you want to post during a week—either your own material or re-blogging others' posts—and set aside a few minutes of time each day to accomplish this.
- **Make it a conversation.** Re-blog others' posts, “like” or comment on their posts, and get involved in hashtag conversations. Others will be more likely to connect with—and follow—you.
- **Allow submissions.** Encouraging others to submit material to your site can be a great way of generating fresh content without having to create it all yourself. (And, since you have to approve submissions, you don't need to worry about posting content you don't want.) Allowing submissions is not automatic, however; you'll need to choose it in your settings.
- **Make submissions.** If Tumblrs you follow ask for relevant images or stories, submit to them! (This includes [AGU's Tumblr](#), which regularly calls for Postcards from the Field, Artified Abstracts, and other submissions.)
- **Use hashtags.** People often search for topics by a relevant hashtag, for example, #AGUpubs or #SharingScience. Use hashtags and your posts are more likely to be widely seen.

More info [here](#).

Scientist's Guide to Instagram



WHEN TO USE INSTAGRAM:

- **Your time investment:** 5-10 minutes, daily to weekly
- **Your desire:** to share images of daily life in the field, classroom or laboratory in a Flickr-meets-Twitter environment with a snap-happy crowd.

INSTAGRAM CHECKLIST:

- **Make a plan.** You can share all sorts of different images, but make sure that they have a purpose: Do they illustrate a blog post, website, or study of yours? Do they connect to your teaching? Are they evidence of citizen science?
- **Use hashtags.** As with Twitter, people often search for topics by a relevant hashtag, for example #AGUpubs or #SharingScience. Use hashtags and your images are more likely to be noticed.
- **Post often.** Images are riveting, often more so than words, but people will look at the same old photo only so many times.

More info [here](#) and follow us at [americangeophysicalunion!](#)

Scientist's Guide to Facebook



WHEN TO USE FACEBOOK:

- **Your time investment:** 10 minutes daily.
- **Your desire:** to provide pithy messages about science and/or to direct your audience to other sources.

FACEBOOK CHECKLIST:

- **Is this the audience you want?** Make sure that you're using the best tool for the audience you want to reach. If your Facebook friends are primarily family members or friends from high school, make sure you're tailoring your communication to that group.
- **Post often.** Post at least once a day in order to keep people's attention.
- **Comment often.** The best way to get people to pay attention to you is to comment on other status updates.
- **Links are your friend.** Keep your updates short and link to longer blog posts, articles, or websites.
- **Consider the "like" button.** If you are using Facebook to link regularly to another website, add a "like" button to that website to help direct traffic.

More info [here](#) and find us on Facebook [here](#)!

Scientist's Guide to Blogging



WHEN TO BLOG:

- **Your time investment:** one hour several times a week.
- **Your desire:** to tell science stories in an engaging, popular-science format.

BLOGGING CHECKLIST:

- **Don't jump into it.** Blogs require a lot of planning and maintenance. Get a feel for the medium—browse other blogs, or write a guest post for an existing blog—before starting your own.
- **Plan it out.** You'll need to plan not just your specific message per post but, more importantly, the overall theme of your blog, and you'll want to choose an interesting title that reflects that theme.
- **Post regularly.** Not every post has to—or should be—long, but you should post something new at least once a week.
- **Watch your comments.** Make sure that no comment thread gets out of hand, and respond regularly to the comments you receive. Social media is interactive; readers will visit more if they know you're responsive to them.
- **Catch the eye.** Make post titles interesting, and make use of striking images of your own or those in the public domain (but be sure to follow all copyright and attribution requirements).
- **Draw them in.** You can tell the stories behind your research or the stories of your research, but make sure you create a narrative that will capture readers' interest.
- **Draw them out.** Ask questions of your readers: Have they experienced a natural disaster? What was their favorite science class and why? Do they have a memory of stargazing to share?

More info [here](#), check out the Sharing Science blog [The Plainspoken Scientist](#), and find all the AGU blogs [here](#).