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4th Edition



Air Force Social Media Guide



Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Social Media for Air Force Leaders	3
Social Media for Airmen	4
Social Media for Families	5
Social Media Emerging Trends	6
Common Social Media Platforms	6
Social Media Tips	7
Geotagging	8
Telling the Air Force Story	9
Frequently Asked Questions	11
Social Media Terms	13
References	13

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Introduction to Social Media



This guide will help you share information effectively while following Air Force instructions and protecting operations security. These simple, easy-to-follow tips will help you use social media in your professional and personal life. This guide is for informational purposes only and does not replace official Air Force policy.

People of all ages use social media daily. According to December 2012 Pew Internet Project data, 67% of adults who are online participate in social

networking. It's an efficient way to keep in touch with friends and family, and it's how many people get their entertainment, connect with people over common interests and receive news.

You are encouraged to use social media to share your experiences as an Airman. You can contact your local public affairs office to see if they can share your story, or you can publish information on your social media accounts. Whether you're sharing information with just your close friends

and family or sharing it with the world in a YouTube video or a blog, you're informing people on what it's like to be a part of the world's greatest Air Force. Your stories might inspire someone to join the Air Force, support the Air Force, comfort a parent or spouse, improve morale or correct inaccurate information.

Air Force families may want to use social media to keep in touch with deployed Airmen, network with other military families and share stories on social media.

People can feel comfortable about using social media and letting their Airmen use social media. It's one of the many tools available to communicate information, and it has a value-added capability of promoting interaction.

If you would like more information about using social media, contact the Social Media Division at the Air Force Public Affairs Agency at afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil or (210) 395-1795; DSN 969-1795.



"Social media not only serves as a way to communicate internally with our Airmen, but also as a means to tell the story of our Airmen to external audiences who themselves are actively engaged in social networks."

Chief Master Sgt. Brian Hornback
Air Force Global Strike Command
Command Chief Master Sergeant

Social media and social networking have evolved to become the primary communication methods used by today's Airmen, families and leaders. The dynamic nature of social media lets people interact with diverse audiences in an informal and transparent environment. It's an avenue for leaders to help shape conversations about their units and missions and connect with people on a personal level.

Commanders at major commands will use different social media strategies and social networking tools than wing-level commanders. Base public affairs representatives can create a tailored approach to balance the needs of senior leaders with the needs of key audiences. Remember that social media is not intended to push information – it's for sharing interesting content and building relationships with online followers. Social media channels help bridge the information gap for people who know very little about the military in general.

When using social media in an official capacity, it's important to be honest



Social Media for Leaders

about who is posting information on behalf of senior leaders. If you're using social media to keep in touch with family and friends, it might not make sense to allow subordinates access to your personal accounts. Air Force Instruction 1-1, *Air Force Standards*, outlines how leaders can use social networking sites.

All leaders are reminded to maintain appropriate communication and conduct with enlisted personnel, peers, superiors and subordinates (to include civilian superiors and subordinates). If your personal social media accounts are publicly viewable and show your Air Force affiliation, consider what your photos, videos, posts and comments say about you, your values and beliefs and the image you portray of the Air Force.

Air Force leaders can encourage their Airmen to tell their unique Air Force stories. They can also work with their local public affairs office to use social media channels to communicate with their Airmen, stakeholders, news media, families, local community and the public.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Encourage Airmen to tell their unique Air Force stories

01

Be honest about your unit and mission (without violating OPSEC)

02

Keep your interactions conversational and informal, yet professional and tasteful

03

Social Media for Airmen

In general, the Air Force views social media sites positively and respects your rights as Americans to use them to express yourself. However, by the nature of your profession, you are always on the record and must represent our core values. Air Force Instruction 1-1, *Air Force Standards*, outlines how Airmen should conduct themselves on social networking websites. Here are a few things to remember when communicating online via social media as an Airman:

- 1 You are personally responsible for what you say and post on social networking services and any other medium.
- 2 Consider how a post can be interpreted by the public. Be cautious about crossing the line between funny and distasteful. If you have doubts about whether you should post something, err on the side of caution. If the post in question concerns the Air Force, discuss the proposed post with your supervisor or your local public affairs office.
- 3 Maintain appropriate communication and conduct with officer and enlisted personnel, peers, superiors and subordinates (to include civilian superiors and subordinates).



Hashtags

When posting on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, etc., you can use hashtags to help tell your story to a wider audience.

What's a hashtag?

A hashtag categorizes topics in social media. The hashtag symbol "#" is used before a keyword or phrase (no spaces). You can follow specific hashtag topics to see a consolidated list of relevant posts by other social media users.



How can Airmen use hashtags?

You can use a hashtag to mark keywords or topics.



What Air Force hashtags should I use?

The Air Force uses #AirForce, #Airmen and #USAF.

Visit the Air Force's Twitter page:
<http://www.twitter.com/usairforce>

Social Media for Families

As a family member, you are integral to the success of the Air Force. Without your support, Airmen wouldn't be able to accomplish the great work they do every day. The Air Force stories you share on social media help maintain the morale of Airmen and educate the public about the Air Force. You're encouraged to use social media to talk about the Air Force and keep in contact with the Airmen in your life. However, you should use it safely and effectively.

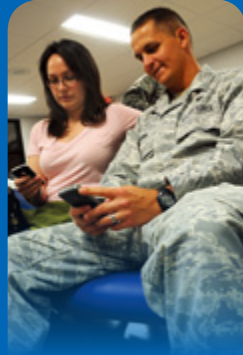
It's important for Airmen and their families to identify and safeguard critical information about military operations. Be cautious about sharing personal information or communicating with people over social media. Posting too much information could jeopardize the security of Airmen and missions. If you wouldn't want to see the information on the news, do not post it on the Web.

Social content shared by Airmen and families is a major target for those looking to gain access to sensitive information in order to impersonate, blackmail or intimidate. While there is a definite benefit to using social media, be wary of the details you provide.

- Don't post the exact whereabouts and activities of deployed Airmen.

How can I share my experiences as an Air Force family member?

- ✔ Blog about what it's like to have an Airman in the family or give tips about military life
- ✔ Post photos of places you've visited while in the military
- ✔ Share photos of your Airman's Basic Military Training graduation
- ✔ Share an Air Force article about your Airman's achievements



- Be general about the dates and locations concerning an Airman's trip arrival and departure.

- Don't make your vacation dates public on social networks. Criminals may track your activities and know exactly when to break into your home while you're on vacation.

- Don't publicly post exactly how long your Airman will be gone on a trip or deployment.

- Be careful about publicly posting children's photos, names, schools, ages and schedules.

- Consider the image you portray on social media. Think before you share information that could jeopardize you and your Airman's career or reputation.

- Let children know they should seek help for cyber-bullying.

You're encouraged to use social media to engage in support networks, such as spouse's clubs, event committees, child care groups or local civic activities. These groups are not considered official Air Force social media, and you don't need permission to form a group of your own. You may want to limit the membership and visibility of the group to help protect the information exchanged.

You may also want to follow the main Air Force social media accounts (listed on page 14), your local base's accounts or the accounts of your Airman's base for the latest information on the work your Airman does. You can help support their specific missions by sharing their social media content and experiences with your followers and friends.

Emerging Social Media Trends

More social sharing options

Blogs, status updates, tweets, pins, videos, photos and podcasts are used to share thoughts and ideas with global social media users. The emergence of social sharing brings together all of these communication products to provide Airmen and the general public with multiple avenues for discussing trending topics. Some of the latest social sharing sites that have gained popularity this year are Pinterest, a social "visual-bookmarking" site, and Vine, a video platform for Twitter that lets people create and share 6-second videos.



Visual content reigns supreme

Social media conversations have morphed from text-based posts to status

updates using photos, graphic illustrations and videos. Social networking websites are optimizing their designs to focus more on photos and video to allow users to tell their stories visually. According to Facebook, its news feed emphasizes visual content to make it more aesthetically appealing.

Mobile, tablet applications booming

Telephones have evolved into modern multi-functional smartphones capable of taking photos and videos that can be uploaded to many social networking websites. Social apps are helping mobile and tablet users connect with friends and family members so they can share real-time information from any location.



Common Social Media Platforms

Social networking

Promotes social interaction among users through posts, commentaries, links, photos and videos (e.g., Facebook, Google+, MySpace).

graphics or video (e.g., WordPress, TypePad).

Video sharing

Provides a location where users upload, share and view videos (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, Vine).

Photo sharing

Uses a website to host and share images (e.g., Flickr, Instagram).

Location-based social networks

Allows users to check-in and connect with people as they explore a particular place (e.g., Foursquare).

Social news/bookmarking

A forum where users share social news trends. It's common to see social news feeds combine social bookmarking on news-related items. This allows users to manage specific content according to preference (e.g., Reddit, Digg, Delicious).

Visual bookmarking

A unique platform that uses a "visual" bookmark feature to allow users to share Web links to information through imagery (e.g., Pinterest, Fancy, StumbleUpon).

- 1 No classified information**
Don't post classified, sensitive or For Official Use Only information (for example, troop movement, force size, weapons details, etc.). If in doubt, talk to your supervisor or security manager.
- 2 Stay in your lane**
Discussing issues related to your career field or personal experiences are acceptable and encouraged, but you shouldn't discuss areas of expertise where you have no firsthand, direct experience or knowledge.
- 3 Obey applicable laws**
You must keep federal law, Department of Defense directives and instructions, Air Force instructions and the Uniform Code of Military Justice in mind when using social media in official and unofficial capacities. As an Airman, you are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- 4 Differentiate between opinion and official information**
Yes, tell them what you think...just make sure you state that this is your opinion and not that of the organization.
- 5 Use your best judgment**
What you write may have serious consequences. Once you post something on social media, you can't "get it back." Even deleting the post doesn't mean it's truly gone. Ultimately, you bear sole responsibility for what you post.
- 6 Replace error with fact**
When you see misrepresentations made about the Air Force in social media, you may certainly identify and correct the error. Always do so with respect and with the facts. When you speak to someone who has an adversarial position, make sure what you say is factual and respectful. Don't



argue, just correct the record.

- 7 Be aware of the image you present**
Any time you engage in social media, you're representing the Air Force. Don't do anything that discredits you or our service.
- 8 Be cautious with information sharing**
Maintain privacy settings on your social media accounts, change your passwords regularly and don't give out personally identifiable information. Be cautious about the personal details you share on the Internet.
- 9 Avoid the offensive**
Don't post any defamatory, libelous, vulgar, obscene, abusive, profane, threatening, racially or ethnically hateful or otherwise offensive or illegal information or material.
- 10 Don't violate privacy**
Don't post any information that would infringe upon the proprietary, privacy or personal rights of others.
- 11 Don't violate copyright**
Don't post any information or other material protected by copyright without the permission of the copyright owner.
- 12 Don't misuse trademarks**
Don't use any words, logos or other marks that would infringe upon the trademark, service mark, certification mark or other intellectual property rights of the owners of such marks without owner permission.
 - The Air Force Symbol visually represents our service's brand identity. To use the Air Force Symbol on a social media platform, you must follow display guidelines found at <http://www.trademark.af.mil>.
- 13 No endorsements**
Don't use the Air Force name to endorse or promote products, political positions or religious ideologies.
- 14 No impersonations**
Don't manipulate identifiers in your post in an attempt to disguise, impersonate or otherwise misrepresent your identity or affiliation with any other person or entity.
- 15 Don't promote yourself for personal or financial gain**
Don't use your Air Force affiliation, official title or position to promote, endorse or benefit yourself or any profit-making group or agency. For details, refer to the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 5, Volume 3, sec. 2635.702, *Use of Public Office for Private Gain*, in the Joint Ethics Regulation or Air Force Instruction 35-101, *Public Affairs Responsibilities and Management*.
- 16 Follow terms of service**
Become familiar with each social media site's terms of service and follow them. For example, having two personal profiles on Facebook violates their terms of service.



What's geotagging?

Geotagging adds geographical identification data to photos, videos, websites and text messages through location-based applications. This technology helps people find images and information based on a location from a mobile device or desktop computer.

How should Airmen use geotagging?

Airmen should be cautious when enabling the geotagging feature on mobile, location-based apps because they could potentially create personal and operational security risks. Disable geotagging at sensitive or deployed locations.

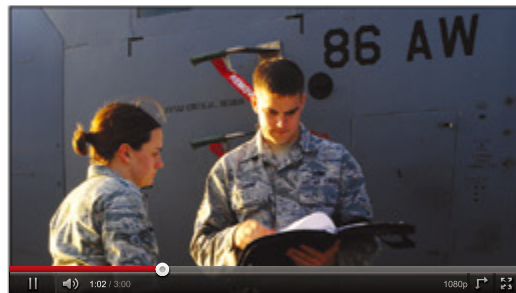
How can Airmen tell their stories via social media?

Airmen already use social media to tell their friends and families about their Air Force experiences, but what are the best ways for sharing text, photos and video on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr? Read the fictional scenario below to see how one Airman leverages these social networking sites to do his part in telling the Air Force story.

SCENARIO
Senior Airman Joe Smith has been a C-130 crew chief for three years. He is proud of his service and uses social media to tell others about his Air Force job and experiences. See how Smith uses Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr to tell his Air Force story.

YouTube

1. Uses interesting video that highlights mission.
2. Uploads a three-minute video, which is the ideal length.
3. Video includes good description, title, tags and keywords.
4. Video resolution is 720p or 1080p.



Flickr

1. Uses action shot.
2. Includes relevant and descriptive tags that will help users find the photo through search engines.
3. Photo has caption identifying Air Force people and resources.
4. Photos don't violate regulations or compromise OPSEC.



Facebook



Joe Smith

Just returned from a humanitarian mission delivering 50 tons of food and water to people 6,000 miles away. Feels good to be able to help people and be a crew chief in the Air Force! View my photo album from our trip and check out [Ramstein Air Base's](#) page to learn more about C-130s!



Smith humanitarian mission photos
go.usa.gov

5 minutes ago · Like · Comment · Share

Post with photo album attached

1. Discusses mission in general terms (no specific dates, locations or OPSEC violations).
2. Tags Ramstein Air Base to link readers to the base's official Facebook page.
3. Attaches album of releasable photos (call your local public affairs office for more guidance on releasable photos).
4. Keeps post brief and concise for mobile and tablet users.
5. Uses enthusiastic and positive messages to describe his job and experience.

Twitter



Joe Smith @joesmithusaf

1 day

Feel great after delivering 50 tons of food during our #C130 mission with @TeamRamstein! <http://go.usa.gov/29xz> #AirForce

Tweet



Joe Smith @joesmithusaf

1 day

RT @TeamRamstein delivers 50 tons of food during humanitarian mission <http://go.usa.gov/29xz> #AirForce #C130

Retweet

1. Keeps tweet under 125 characters to allow followers to retweet his post (140 characters is the maximum allowed on Twitter posts including hyperlinks).
2. Mentions "TeamRamstein" using @ symbol to link readers to Ramstein's official Twitter page.
3. Uses shortened URL (e.g., <http://go.usa.gov>) to save characters.
4. Links tweet to Air Force's official hashtag by using # symbol (hashtags help group tweets by keywords and topics).
5. Retweets a tweet from Ramstein to give followers more information about the mission.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who do I contact if I want to set up a base organization Facebook page/group?

A: The official base page should be limited to wing-level or higher. This allows the official page to display all relevant base information on one cohesive space, rather than having the information spread out among several pages. Closed groups are permitted for smaller, more specific organizations such as the base's Company Grade Officers' Council, but it is always advised to keep your local public affairs office informed of such groups.

Q: How do I get my information out to my base or official Air Force social media platforms?

A: Public affairs offices love to hear from their Airmen and families about potential stories or military-related events. They can assist you with coverage and share your stories when appropriate. However, public affairs offices are not allowed to advertise or appear to make official endorsements, so there are limitations to their support. For sharing material with the official Air Force Facebook, Twitter, Blog or other platforms, contact your local public affairs office.

Q: What regulations apply to an Airman using social media platforms?

A: All regulations that normally apply—you are always an Airman. You represent the Air Force in all of your words and actions. Simply put, as a member of the military, you are held to a higher standard than your peers. This applies to photos involving alcohol or risky behaviors, sharing questionable or inappropriate material, and speaking disrespectful words in violation of the UCMJ. Always consider the consequences before you send your post into cyberspace. You are ultimately responsible for what you post. You are entitled to your opinions, but be clear in your statements that you are expressing your own opinions and not those of the Air Force.

Q: Am I allowed to develop a mobile application?

A: Any Airman who develops an app for official purposes must consult with his or her supervisor and the AFPAA Social Media Division for guidance.

Q: Can I post photos or videos of myself in uniform on social media?

A: Airmen can post photos or videos of themselves on their personal social media pages as long as they do not imply endorsement of commercial or non-profit organizations and comply with Air Force Instruction 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*.

Q: Am I allowed to access social media sites while I am at work?

A: Yes, social media sites can be accessed for official purposes, and wing commanders or equivalents are responsible for publishing local policy and guidance defining authorized personal use of social media in the workplace. In general, Air Force members are not prohibited from accessing personal social media accounts at work. However, the following must be remembered:

- Personal accounts are not covered by the terms of service agreements established with the Department of Defense. The DOD is not responsible for individual obligations or agreements established during personal use.
- Do not use official contact information to establish personal accounts. Personal accounts should be established using personal telephone numbers and/or email addresses.
- Personal accounts should not be used to conduct official DOD communication, except when official communication channels are not available. Personal accounts may be used to participate in professional networking, development and collaboration related to, but not directly associated with, official mission.

Q: What do I do if someone creates a fake social media presence?

A: If there is a fake account, you may report it to the social media platform's help section, or you can contact AFPAA for help at afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil.

Q: What should I do if I am contacted by media members through my private social media account(s)?

A: Airmen should refer the media to their base public affairs office, and spouses may contact a local public affairs office for assistance. It is not appropriate for media members to solicit opinions or official quotes through social media without first working through public affairs. You are not obligated to answer their questions; however, if you are interested in completing an interview, your public affairs office will be able to assist you with preparing and setting up a formal interview.

Q: What should I do as a family member if I see sensitive information posted on social networking sites?

A: If you find that someone has posted sensitive information on a social media platform, politely ask the individual to remove/edit his or her post. If unsuccessful, you can contact your local public affairs office or use your family member's chain of command for assistance.

Have more questions? Contact your local public affairs office or email us at afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil

References

The following DOD and Air Force publications contain information to consider when using social media. DOD Web policies are viewable at <http://www.defense.gov/webmasters>, and Air Force instructions are accessible at <http://www.e-publishing.af.mil>.

DODI 8550.01, *DOD Internet Services and Internet-Based Capabilities*: Covers applicability, definitions, policy, responsibilities and releasability regarding Internet-based capabilities.

AFI 35-101, *Public Affairs Mission*: Covers the overall public affairs mission and how to correctly implement it.

AFI 35-107, *Public Web Communications*: Addresses the Public Web and Social Media programs.

AFI 35-113, *Internal Information*: Section 15 covers social media.

AFI 33-129, *Web Management and Internet Use*: Details proper and improper uses of Internet-based capabilities.

New social media terms

Here are a few new terms used on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and Pinterest.

Circles - Groups and organizes friends, colleagues and acquaintances on Google+.

Hangout - Video service on Google+ that allows you to video chat with up to 10 Google+ users at a time.

Internet Meme - An idea or concept that is shared between people online.

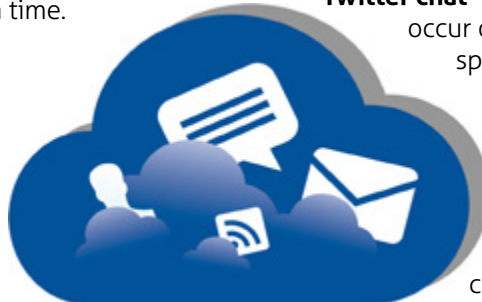
Pin - An image or

video added to a Pinterest board and shared with other users.

Board - Organizes pins on Pinterest by topic.

Timeline - Area on your personal Facebook account that allows you to display photos, videos and posts by event date.

Twitter chat - Discussions that occur on Twitter around a specific hashtag. They occur at a specified date and time. For example, the Air Force has used #USAFchat on several Twitter chat topics.



Download this social media guide online!



<http://1.usa.gov/Y79V9c>

Check out what the Air Force is doing on social media!

The Air Force Social Media Program includes key social networking websites where the Air Force engages with Airmen, families and the general public. Here are a few links to official Air Force social media pages:

Social Media Directory
<http://www.af.mil/socialmedia.asp>

Air Force Live Blog
<http://airforcelive.dodlive.mil>

Facebook
<http://www.facebook.com/usairforce>

Flickr
<http://www.flickr.com/usairforce>

Twitter
<http://www.twitter.com/usairforce>

YouTube
<http://www.youtube.com/afbluetube>

Vine (for mobile iOS, Android devices)
[@usairforce](https://vine.co/usairforce)

Instagram
<http://instagram.com/officialusairforce>



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