

9 Smart Social Media Tips for Students

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Well, here are nine quick and easy first steps for ensuring your online "profile" is everything you want it to be.

1. It might seem obvious, but get rid of any negative posts and pictures, both those you've posted and the ones you're tagged in. Coaches, employers, and deans *do* judge you by the company you keep.
2. Highlight the good stuff. If you're a volunteer, sing in a choir, are part of an environmental association, or participate in another community activity that makes you feel warm and fuzzy inside, be sure to write about it online, even if it's just a couple of Tweets. Post so that Google will pick it up. Make it your Facebook status, or better yet start a blog about how cool the experience was and the interesting people you met.
3. Remember what the Internet really is: a giant public record. They say nothing posted to the Web ever truly goes away, and you might be surprised how quickly and easily your personal information can be shared.
4. Make a decision to let someone whose opinion you value highly (parents, favorite aunt, mentor, etc.) be connected to you on *all* of your social media sites. Even if you are saying to yourself, "No way! That is *my* personal space," remember these people want you to be successful. This is about having your back, not invading your privacy. I look out for my cousins all the time; it's often less invasive to them than their parents, and they trust I'll only send them a (private) message about a post if it's really inappropriate.
5. Speaking of privacy, make sure to continue to privatize your social network accounts. You should know exactly what the world can see of your profile and posts. And keep in mind that privacy polices can change at any time and all the time. Being proactive will help you down the road.
6. Set up a Google alert for your name (ask your parents to do this too) so that when a picture that's been tagged or any mention of your name comes up on Google, you know first. Information is still power. For you athletes, know that many NCAA and NAIA sports teams are doing this as well.
7. Remember that just because you don't post pictures of every event or party you go to, it does not mean it wasn't fun or didn't happen. Even though we are encouraged to post every detail of our lives online, you have to refrain sometimes. The time is now.
8. Download [secureme.me](#), a free app that connects to Facebook and alerts you of what looks less than reputable right now on your profile, pictures, and posts. If you are already in hot water, check out [Reputation.com](#); just be aware that it comes with fees.
9. Give your phone a break. This is especially true if you're upset and feel like you might say something you regret later. You could also benefit from just turning your phone off once a week and giving those texting fingers a rest. It could save you and your family money, and who knows—you just might enjoy being disconnected.