



## SOCIAL NETWORKS

The use of social media by AP’s journalists is held to the same high standards as reporting, communication and distribution over any other medium. Those standards include, but are not limited to:

- Avoiding expressions of opinion on contentious issues, even in supposedly password protected conversations.
- When publishing to AP’s branded accounts, staffers should get explicit permission from a senior manager before distributing third-party copyrighted material.
- Not disseminating rumors and unconfirmed reports, and attributing information.
- Carefully verifying information and content before it is distributed.
- Transparently correcting errors on all platforms on which the erroneous material was distributed.

AP journalists are encouraged to maintain accounts on social networks, and must identify themselves in their profiles as being with AP if they use the accounts for work in any way. We must not share AP proprietary or confidential information or include political affiliations or preferences. If we retweet or otherwise share opinionated material by others, we should add language that makes it clear that we’re simply reporting someone else’s opinions. In social posts related to sports and entertainment, we must steer clear of trash-talking directed at teams, athletes and celebrities. Staffers are encouraged to share AP content in all formats to social platforms. We should do so by using the “share” buttons on apps, browsers and sites that cause an item to be posted, or by posting a link to the content. We should not manually upload or copy and paste published photos, videos or the full text of published stories into social accounts. Staffers should not upload directly to social networks images they captured that closely resemble those the AP is publishing. Staffers may share content from other news organizations, but we should be mindful of potential competitive issues and refrain from sharing unconfirmed material. We should also keep in mind that denouncing fellow users, newsmakers or anyone else can reflect badly on AP and may one day harm a colleague’s ability to get important information from a source. AP journalists who have confirmed urgent breaking news should not share that information over social accounts until they have provided it to the appropriate AP desk and done any immediate reporting work that is asked of them. Exclusive material and important tips should not be shared online before the related story has been published. We may follow or friend sources or newsmakers, but when doing so with politicians or political causes, we should try to connect with accounts on both sides of a given issue or campaign. AP managers should not issue friend requests to subordinates; otherwise, friend requests among AP employees are fine. Employees must not post any information that might endanger a colleague, and shouldn’t post about a The Associated Press missing or detained AP staffer without clearance from senior AP

managers. Posts and tweets aimed at gathering opinions for a story must make clear that we are looking for voices on all sides of an issue. If an AP tweet or social media posting contains an error of fact, emphasis or tone, the tweet or posting promptly should be removed from the platform where it occurred, followed by a note acknowledging the deletion and a substitute corrected tweet or posting issued where appropriate.

## USE OF OTHERS' MATERIAL

An AP staffer who reports and writes a story must use original content, language and phrasing. We do not plagiarize, meaning that we do not take the work of others and pass it off as our own.

When we match a report that a news outlet was first with due to significant reporting effort, we should mention that the other outlet first reported it. At the same time, it is common for AP staffers to include in their work passages from previous AP stories by other writers – generally background, or boilerplate.

This is acceptable if the passages are short. Regardless, the reporter writing the story is responsible for the factual and contextual accuracy of the material. Also, the AP often has the right to use material from its members and subscribers; as with material from other news media, we credit it. Unless we are clearly retransmitting in full a story by a member outlet, we do not transmit stories in their original form; we rewrite them, so that the approach, content, structure and length meet our requirements and reflect the broader audience we serve.

Under no circumstances can news releases be published in their original form; we can use information, quotes and properly cleared images from releases, but we must judge the material's credibility, augment it with information from other sources, and then prepare our own stories, with the release material duly credited.

For video, if another broadcaster's material is required and distributed, we advise the name of that broadcaster on the accompanying shot list. Pickups of audio and of television graphics are credited in billboards/captions when the source requests it.

ADDED MAY, 5 2022:

This guidance applies to any personal account used by an AP staff member and seeks to clarify and expand upon AP's current [Social Media Guidelines](#).

Many AP employees use social media as part of their job. AP employees must identify themselves in their profiles as being with the AP if they use the accounts for work in any way.

Employees who don't need to engage with social media as part of their job have the option of not using the medium if they so choose. No AP employee is required to post content on social media. For example, some journalists may need to maintain a Twitter account to follow sources and stay on top of breaking news, but it is perfectly acceptable for that person to never tweet if they choose.

At the same time, we recognize that many journalists use social media to build their audience and for professional development. Others use social media to connect with family, friends and the wider world. These guidelines are meant to help protect AP and its employees.

The use of social media by AP's employees is held to the same high standard as reporting, communication and distribution over any other medium. Those standards include but are not limited to:

- Avoiding expressions of opinion on contentious issues, even in supposedly password protected conversations
- Not disseminating rumors and unconfirmed reports
- Carefully verifying and attributing information and content before it is distributed
- Transparently correcting errors on all platforms on which the erroneous material was distributed

Staff members can express themselves on social media but should consider a series of questions, below, before doing so.

Employees must not share AP proprietary or confidential information or display political affiliations or preferences.

Employees should not use social media to break major news or share exclusive information or tips before AP publishes the information.

Employees should not share opinionated material from others. If an employee feels that sharing opinionated material is crucial for reporting purposes, they must add language that makes it clear they're simply reporting someone else's opinion.

Staff can follow or friend sources or newsmakers, but when doing so with politicians or political causes, must try to connect with accounts on all sides of a given issue or campaign. Staff members should not repeatedly like or share content with a particular point of view on controversial issues, as it can leave the impression that the staff member also holds that view. The same is true for following social media accounts. For example, staff members should not repeatedly like or share stories about a particular political party.

Posts aimed at gathering opinions for a story should make clear that the reporter is looking for voices on all sides of an issue.

It is critically important that employees not post anything that might endanger a colleague or otherwise hamper their ability to do their job. Employees should not post about a missing or detained AP staffer without clearance from senior AP managers. Social media posts can unwittingly put colleagues at risk and jeopardize company operations continents away.

In social media posts related to sports and entertainment, employees can root for teams or make general comments about elements of popular culture such as movies, TV shows or music, but must refrain from insults or personal attacks directed at teams or individuals. Journalists

engaged in sports or entertainment coverage should not publicly show favor to or criticize specific teams or individuals within their area of coverage.

Staffers may share content from other news organizations but should be mindful of potential competitive issues and refrain from sharing unconfirmed material.

Employees should keep in mind that denouncing fellow users, newsmakers or anyone else can reflect badly on AP and may one day harm a colleague's ability to get important information from a source.

AP managers should not issue friend requests to subordinates; otherwise, friend requests among AP employees are fine.

If a social media post contains an error of fact, emphasis or tone, the post should be promptly removed from the platform where it occurred, followed by a note acknowledging the deletion and a corrected post issued where appropriate.

AP employees should refrain from using work-related social media accounts to seek customer service assistance. For example, a tweet about how an airline lost an employee's luggage could create a conflict for colleagues that cover that airline.

Staffers should not, as a matter of course, respond to personal attacks on social media. If, however, a person is presenting erroneous information, staffers should consult their supervisor and see if there is an appropriate response. Involving others serves multiple purposes, including giving the employee a sounding board and providing an additional level of protection for themselves. Employees should consider whether the exchange might venture into the disinformation range. If a person repeatedly attacks an employee or issues threats, the employee should engage resources to combat online harassment.

#### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE POSTING:

- What is your objective in posting your content and is social media the proper forum?
- Would you feel comfortable with someone surfacing your content and sharing it widely?
- Would you say the same thing in an AP story?
- Could your post endanger one of your colleagues or compromise their ability to work?
- Are you expressing views that could lead an average person to conclude that you or the AP can't be impartial?
- Are you exhibiting a pattern in your posts, likes or friends that could lead an average person to conclude that you can't be impartial?
- If your post is on a private account, could it still be interpreted as you speaking as an AP employee?