

# BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR CREATING STRONG SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

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SOCIAL MEDIA +  
BIG DATA SERVICES

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Seventh-day  
Adventist<sup>®</sup> Church

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION



While [understanding your audience](#) and [developing a content strategy](#) takes a lot of effort, constructing your social media posts is actually pretty straightforward and mostly formulaic. Once you have your content planned out and your target audience determined, there are basic principles to follow to maximize effectiveness across any channel. Even as the technology changes, these principles will largely stay the same. In this section we'll cover how to create posts and write messages for social media that effectively communicate with and engage your target audience.

### **Main principles for creating a post (also applies to paid ads):**

- Get to the point & focus your message.
- **Less IS MORE** (think snackable content).
- Include a call-to-action (should reflect goals/objectives).
- Include a link (so taking action is easy).
- Limit text in images & use high quality images.
- Video is king.
- Use the lingo of the platform.
- Be honest; no bait-and-switch.
- Include captioning on videos and always provide context.
- Tag relevant accounts. This increases your reach and encourages partners to share.
- Use relevant hashtags.

Visit [SDAdata.org/social-media-resources](https://SDAdata.org/social-media-resources) for a complete cheat sheet to writing for specific social media platforms.

### **Guidelines for choosing good visuals (also applies to paid ads):**

- Keep it visual; less text is more.
- [Optimize your images](#) for each platform.
- High quality (take your own or use stock images).
- Consider the "Rule of Thirds."
- Invoke an emotional response/tell a story.
- People are attracted to bright colors and group shots.
- Keep a consistent look, brand, and color/font palette (see [Branding for Ministry](#)).
- Be creative.
- Use contrast to help your image stand out.
- Keep it simple.

It's okay if you don't have a designer on your team to help you create compelling visuals. While proper Photoshop & design training is a valuable asset in communication and should be utilized if at all possible, you are not limited to bad graphics, even if your skillset or resources are limited.

There are a lot of FREE or low-cost web-based tools out there like [Canva](#) with pre-made templates for social media images. If you're short on high quality images, there are also [stock photo resources](#) available online where you can get professional images for free or very low cost.

When laying out your images and designs, utilize the "Rule of Thirds." This guideline divides an image into nine equal parts. Important elements of the image are placed along (or near) intersecting lines. This helps create tension, energy, and increases interest.



Visit [SDAdata.org/branding-image-design-resources](https://SDAdata.org/branding-image-design-resources) for guidance on free and low-cost stock images, design tips, and branding guides.

## General Tips for Getting Your Social Media Posts Noticed

- **List posts perform well.**

This content allows for a highly shareable headline for an article or video: “7 Ways to Reach Young Adults,” for example. People love that list posts are highly skimmable and offer clear takeaways. This is what we consider “snackable content.” Snackable content is short content that is easily understood, quickly consumed, and memorable.

- **Use “you” and “your” frequently.**

These words tell a person’s brain that this message is about them—which draws them in.

- **Enable your readers to envision a better life.**

If readers believe they will learn how to do something better, get an answer to that nagging question, or have their mind blown, they will be more likely to stop and pay attention, as well as share.

- **Slightly alter headlines for different channels.**

By reflecting the culture and expectations of each platform, you’re more likely to connect with your audience.

- **Tug at emotions. Validate people and let them know you’re here to help.**

Acknowledge your audience’s felt needs and tell them how your content addresses their situation. Create conversations, answer questions, solve problems, and address their pain points. Ask questions; even venture assumptions, such as “Feeling stuck?” or “Life is tough.” Then offer solutions. Do this without asking for anything in return. Build a relationship based on your service to the community. Refer to [element 3 in the previous section](#) on writing for online audiences.

- **Stay real and conversational.**

When in doubt, write as though you are writing to a friend. Refer to [element 2 in the previous section](#) on writing for online audiences.

**Example:** Feeling defeated? Marriage is hard and you're struggling. We're here for you. Join us for a free seminar. Click here to register in advance and get a free book with 5 practical tips for improving your marriage.

## Guidelines for Choosing Hashtags

A hashtag is simply a way for people to search for posts on social media that have a common topic and to join or being a conversation. You may recognize it as the pound sign, or if you're a musician, a sharp sign. Hashtags can be used in many platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. When searching for hashtags on a particular platform, like Twitter, your results will only be pulled from Twitter. To see posts with the same hashtag on other platforms, you must

search them separately. Instagram posts with the highest number of engagements have 11 or more hashtags attached.

The ability to create a collective conversation has made hashtags a vital tool for reaching and engaging audiences that share a particular interest. **For maximum impact and reach, use a combination of three types of hashtags:**

- **Popular.** These are widely used or trending hashtags. You can find these in the trending section of Facebook and Twitter or use sites like trendsmap.com. Make sure your hashtags will actually yield results—sometimes people make up hashtags that are never searched, and therefore will not increase your reach. Instead, search for popular hashtags relevant to your post, and use them.
- **Niche hashtags.** These hashtags are less common and tend to reach a targeted audience. For example, to reach the Adventist community you should use hashtags like: #Adventist, #SeventhdayAdventist, #NADadventist, #SDA, #SDAchurch and #HappySabbath.
- **Branded hashtags.** These hashtags should be unique to your brand, not used by anyone else, and should reflect your message in less than 20 characters. Branded hashtags are a great way to reinforce your brand, start a themed conversation, and create a curated stock of content that tells your story. They also enable your audience to engage with you, contribute to the conversation, and become part of a collective story. #DigitalEvangelism and #enditnowNAD are examples of branded hashtag, and you can use them to engage directly with the ministries.

**TIP: Hashtags aren't used much on Facebook.** The platform's current search capability (as of 2020) isn't polished and, often, relevant posts don't show up when searched. It doesn't necessarily hurt to add a couple hashtags on Facebook to help people understand what you're talking about or reinforce branding. In general, take advantage of hashtags on Instagram and Twitter.

[Download the Hashtag library](#) to help with your hashtag strategy.

## Anatomy of a Strong Social Media Post

Use the following format to write a practice post for your ministry and brainstorm visuals. Follow this format for each platform the message will be posted to.

### Message (Copy):

- Teaser language (1-3 sentences):
- Call-to-action:
- Link:
- Relevant hashtags (if applicable for the platform):
- Relevant accounts to tag (if applicable for the platform):

**Visual/media:** Use the following space to determine if your visual is well suited to your message and goals. (*Applicable to either pictures or video.*)

- What mood or emotion are you trying to convey?
- What mood or emotion are you trying to evoke in your audience?
- What story are you trying to tell?
- Is the message of the visual focused and clear?

- Does your chosen visual tell a story? What is it? Does that story align with your message?
- Does your chosen visual fit in with your overall look and branding?
- Will your visual stand out in the newsfeed, stopping the viewer from scrolling past your message? What can you do to make it stand out?
- Is the visual clear and easy to see on a small screen?
- Is the visual easy to understand without much context?
- Is text on the image or video easy to read on a small screen?
- Does the visual help inspire the viewer to take a specific action?




## Examples:

**enditnow**  
Published by Erica Jones [?] · May 8 at 2:14pm · 🌐

Pastors are not immune from sexual misconduct, and the clergy/member relationship presents unique opportunities for abuse. One case of sexual misconduct can erode the sacred trust that congregants have in all pastors, to say nothing of the irreparable harm to the victim. Here are seven myths about clergy sexual misconduct that need busting as well as seven tips to avoid clergy sexual misconduct: [bit.ly/2lreelo](http://bit.ly/2lreelo)

#enditnowNAD #NADpastors



4,235 people reached

Boost Post

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Raquel De la Cruz, Rhodora Cordrey and 91 others

31 Shares

**gorgeous2god**  
Published by Erica Jones [?] · May 11 at 7:29pm · 🌐

"I have been through countless situations in my lifetime—situations that could have, and should have, left me for dead—all because I didn't value myself."

Read the rest of the story on the gorgeous2god blog: [goo.gl/aB0pF8](http://goo.gl/aB0pF8)



**Enditnow North America**  
Published by Jamie Domm [?] · July 30 at 2:47 PM · 🌐

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#enditnowNAD #NADadventist #enditnow #enditmovement #churchtoo



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**Digital Evangelism Strategies**  
Published by JJ Tayler [?] · July 30 at 3:36 PM · 🌐

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