

# Update Your Social Media Profile

Social Media  
for Academics

the  
academic  
designer

Jennifer van Alstyne



# It's time to refresh your social media profiles

## In this guide

In the following pages you'll find my 10-step process to updating your social media profile.

At the end of this guide, there's a handy checklist you can print out. It will help you check off the steps to updating your profile.

## Live profile review

There will be opportunity for profile reviews during our live workshop session! Leave a note in the forum if you're interested.





# Does your profile photo look like you?

**A friendly profile photo is best for social media.** Does your profile photo look like you now? It may be time to update your profile photo.

**Selfies, photos that you take of yourself, work well.** You don't need a professional photo. Use your phone camera with a timer. You can prop it up against books (free). Or, get a tripod or selfie stick (\$15-50). I've used both these methods. While I sometimes use a ringlight, more often I just find some good natural light.

Think about something that makes you happy. I like to pretend my best friend is behind the camera and they just told me something funny.

**selfie!**

**Many people feel more comfortable working with a professional photographer.** Here's a pro tip for when you call to schedule your appointment. If you ask for a headshot you're likely to get photos that are meant for an ID. Some photographers call the type of photos you want branding photos, or a brand photo shoot.

**What does a friendly photo look like?** I recommend you

- Smile
- Focus on your face



2

## Has your name or title changed?

**Do you need to change your name?** You may find your name needs to be changed on social media whether you've

- completed your doctorate
- gotten married / divorced
- changed your name legally
- started using a different name





# F.A.Q. What's the difference between a name and a username on social media?

A name on social media is the display name you choose. Mine is "The Academic Designer." Your username, sometimes known as your handle, is more like the name of your profile. It appears right after the @ symbol people might use to tag you. And, it's the end-tail of the URL associated with your profile.

My username is "HigherEdPR" so on social media people can

- tag me in posts and photos with @HigherEdPR
- find my profiles with /HigherEdPR (i.e. <https://twitter.com/HigherEdPR>)

**Your name will probably be your full name** (i.e. "Jennifer van Alstyne" as I use on my personal profiles).

**Some people choose to include their titles** (i.e. "Full Name, PhD," "Full Name, MA" or "Dr. Full Name").

**Choose what feels right to you.**





**Twitter** is one platform I notice people changing their name more often (display name). Some professors include more of a note in their display name, or reference their specialty. I find this is difficult to read on mobile phones (how most people use Twitter) so I don't recommend it.



**On Facebook**, you can change your name once every 60 days. There are more regulations for how you can name yourself on Facebook than you may realize. Their terms require you use "the name [you] go by in everyday life."



It's easy to change your name on **Instagram**, but username changes may need to go through a review process.



**LinkedIn** allows you to change how your name is displayed on your profile. It's privacy settings allow you to choose if you want people to see your last name. Since most people will search for you by name, don't mess with that setting. You want to show up in search results on LinkedIn.



**I don't recommend changing your name often on social media.** Sometimes it's needed, and that's OK.





**ResearchGate** allows you to change your name 3x within a 30 day period. They recommend changing your account name if you start using a new name on publications.

You cannot add Dr. or Prof. to your name. Their algorithm "works best by matching just a person's name without their academic title," according to their website.



**Academia.edu** has a first name / middle name / last name system. They recommend you use names that "closely represents or matches the name used for the academic work that you are posting on your profile."



On your **ORCID record**, you can add "also known as / other names" to your profile. I recommend this if you've published with multiple names, or used initials with some publications.



**Google Scholar** doesn't have clear directions in its Help pages on how to change your name. When you're logged into your Google Scholar profile, click the pen icon next to your name to edit your profile.



3

## Rewrite your bio or About section

If you haven't updated your bio in a while, it's time. A bio is a living document. On social media, your bio is a call to action. By that I mean that the people visiting your profile need your bio to

- understand a bit about you
- know if you might be a good person to follow
- get in touch if it makes sense for them

Some platforms allow for really long bios. Should my bio be long? A longer bio is okay when you use short sentences and paragraphs.

Reflect on who you'd like to connect with on social media. Write bios for each platform that are approachable for the people you'd like to reach.

Include keywords or terms associated with your research.



By character count

	160
	101
	150
	2,000
	No bio
	5,000
	200
	5,000



4



## How do you want people to contact you?

On social media, you have a few options for how you'd like people to contact you.

- Direct message (DM) you, a type of private or group chat
- Tag you in a post using your @Username
- Visit your website or another link
- Email you (if you include it in your bio or profile)

http://



**How are people contacting you now?** Is that how you want them to contact you?

You have some control over this because it's based on information you include on your profile. Think about what makes the most sense for you, and update your settings.

Include a link to your personal website or faculty profile.





**Notifications on social media are an indirect way people may be contacting you.** Make reviewing your notification settings a part of your social media update.

Do you want to receive push notifications? I don't.

Do you want to get emails to your inbox when someone likes your post? Not me.

**Each social media platform has unique notification settings.**

You'll want to do this from the

- Phone apps you use
- Phone settings
- Desktop site

I know it's weird to check settings in 3 places, but I've noticed that on most platforms the options differ. For instance, my Android phone lets me have more nuanced control over which notifications I receive than the settings in say the Instagram app.



# 5

## Updating the details: Facebook, LinkedIn, and the Academic social media platforms

**Some social media profiles, have more sections of your profile.**

When doing a full update, you want to review each section to see if you're

- sharing the information you want
- not sharing info you don't want
- missing info that's new since your last update

If you're on the job market (or plan to be), updating your LinkedIn profile is important. When you go through each section of your profile, focus on ease of reading.

Write your profile for a general audience on social media, not people in your specialty (even if that's who you're mostly connected with). I recommend this even for academic social media platforms for collaborators outside your direct field of research.

For academic profiles, check that you've added in new publications, grants, and accomplishments.



# 6

## Colors and appearance

There are several ways to personalize the colors and appearance for your general social media profiles.

The two most common ways are

- Profile photo
- Cover photo / graphic

On Twitter, you can also change your display color on the desktop site. Visit [Twitter.com](https://twitter.com) > Sidebar menu: click 'More' > Click 'Display' > Choose your preferred color.

Things you can customize in Twitter Display:

- Font size
- Color
- Background (light, dim, lights out)



7

## Pinning a post or tweet

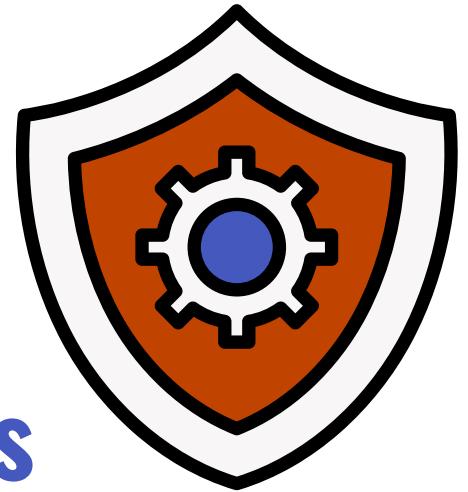
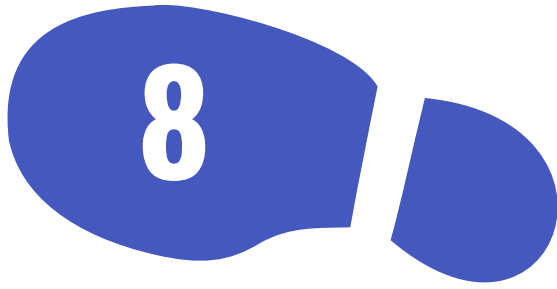
**Did you know you can pin a tweet at the top of your profile?** And on LinkedIn, you can share any social media post in the Featured Section of your profile?

This is a great way to share

- an introduction post
- contact information
- your new book/publication

If you aren't taking advantage of this feature yet, try it out!





# Check your privacy settings for your posts and profile

**Are you comfortable with your privacy settings?** How we feel about

- what we share
- how much we share
- who we share it with

is going to change over time. And that's OK. It's why I always include thinking about privacy when updating your profiles.

Every social media platform has a Privacy page in their Settings. Check every option in the Privacy settings so you don't miss a thing.





# Do you want people to be able to message you directly?

**Some social media platforms allow you to turn off direct messaging.** Or, to limit who may send you a message (i.e. only people you follow, or who follow you).

On Instagram, messaging has been integrated with Meta's cross-platform Messenger. You do have some control over who can send you messages through Meta's Messenger. But you may need to link your accounts together to get access to this setting for both platforms.

Direct messages on Twitter can be great for networking. You do have control over who can message you.

I use direct messages more than I expected when I first joined social media. But they're not right for everyone.

If you find you forget to respond to DM's it's better to ask people to get in touch a different way.

**Learn more about direct messages**



10

Like

Share

Follow

## Who do you want to follow on social media?

**Think about your home feed. Are you seeing content that interests you? Are you finding conversations you want to join in?** If the answer is no, you may be following the wrong people on social media.

Who you follow on social media is important because it determines what you see in your home feed. The last step in updating your social media profiles is thinking through

- who you follow on social media
- if you want to keep following them
- if there are people you'd like to connect with you aren't already







# Add another profile update to your calendar 1 year from today



# Update Your Social Media Profiles in 10 Steps

## Social Media for Academics

- Does your profile photo look like you?
- Has your name or title changed?
- Write a new bio. Include the details most important to you.
- How do you want people to contact you?
- Fill out any additional profile sections on FB, LinkedIn, and the academic platforms. Add new accomplishments like grants and publications in.
- Personalize colors and appearance.
- Pin a post or tweet.
- Check your privacy settings
- Do you want people to be able to message you?
- Do you like what you see in your home feed?

