



# Communication Basics for PTA Leaders

## Communicating with Confidence – Public Speaking

*As a PTA leader, you may be called upon to speak in public. Keep in mind the following tips for public speaking.*

- Plan remarks with an objective in mind.
- Become knowledgeable about the topic.
- Prepare talking points. Include appropriate personal stories in your presentation.
- Plan a message that will resonate with your target audience.
- Begin and end on time.

### ALSO

- **Be comfortable** with yourself. Success comes from projecting your own personality.
- **Don't worry about "butterflies."** We all have them – in fact, we need them to keep us from becoming complacent.
- **Do your homework.** Few people can "wing it." The trick is to appear relaxed, and you can be if you are well prepared.
- **Be flexible.** If necessary, adjust remarks to help meet the need at hand. Find out in advance who the audience will be, and why you were selected to speak.
- **Cultivate effective listening skills.** If you are part of a program, listen to what other participants are saying. If the previous speaker "steals your thunder," comment on sharing similar viewpoints and suggest, "Let's talk about this from another angle." Then continue with your own remarks.
- **Know when to stop.** Respect your audience's time.

### **Resources**

Council and District PTA leaders

California State PTA website [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org)

California State PTA *Online Toolkit* sections:

- Basic Policies
- Advocacy
- Brief Statements on Current Issues

National PTA website [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org).

## Tips for Promoting the PTA

- Identify the Target Audience. When thinking about communications activities, consider your audience. The plan for reaching students may be very different from the one used to reach parents.
- Choose the Medium. Once you decide whom you need to reach, think about the best way to communicate. There is no universal choice. Depending on the audience and the message, the method could be anything from creating a website to making a phone call.
- Prepare the Message. Think through what to say and how to say it. Whether making a speech to a large group or writing an article for the PTA newsletter, take the time to review and refine the PTA Talking
- Points to concisely convey the message. Consider what the audience should understand from the message. Focus on making that message clear. Discard the rest.

## Representing PTA

PTA officers represent their unit, council or district PTA. PTA is a diverse organization, and its leaders speak with one voice on behalf of all children:

- Presidents are the official representatives of their PTAs and may appoint others to officially represent the organization, as needed.
- Know and reflect the official PTA positions.
- Do not commit the association to programs, projects or positions the association has not voted to authorize.
- Build credibility as an individual so that your comments are of value to the audience.
- Do not mix personal and PTA opinions while representing PTA.

# **Talking Points**

*When speaking about the PTA to new audiences, you often have very little time to make your point. These talking points and facts will help demonstrate the strength of the PTA. The more these messages are said, the more likely it is that they will be heard and repeated.*



- The mission of California State PTA is to positively impact the lives of children and families in California.
- PTA is the oldest and largest volunteer association working on behalf of children and youth. In California alone, we have over 800,000 PTA members and have served them for over 118 years.
- PTA speaks for every child with one voice.
- PTA is a nonpartisan, nonsectarian and noncommercial organization that promotes the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community and place of worship.
- PTA connects families and schools. We encourage communication and cooperation between parents, communities and schools to ensure that children and youth receive the best possible physical, mental, social and spiritual education.
- The PTA develops educational programs for parents, teachers, students and the general public.
- The PTA fosters leadership skills in both adults and students. PTA volunteers are leaders and advocates in their schools and communities.

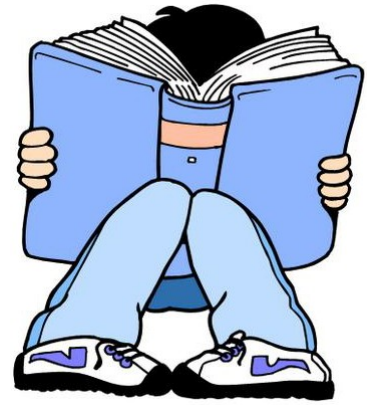
## ***Making PTA Talking Points Personal***

These talking points are only intended as guidelines for speaking on behalf of PTA. Make them your own by considering:

- How can I share my personal PTA experience?
- Why am I so dedicated to the work of PTA?
- How did I get involved?
- What are the areas that need improvement at our school(s) or in our community?
- Is my message concise and compelling?

# Guidelines to PTA Publications

***Adhere to PTA noncommercial, nonpartisan and nonsectarian policies.***



## **Noncommercial Policy**

All PTA bylaws, whether unit, council, district, state or National, require the association to be noncommercial.

This noncommercial policy also means that the name “PTA,” which is a registered service mark, or the names of its officers shall not be used in conjunction with the commercial activities of other organizations including, but not limited to, the promotion of their goods and services. This policy should be applied with judgment, discretion, and common sense, recognizing that it is not meant to prohibit all contact or cooperation with such groups.

Before accepting donations of goods or services, a PTA organization, at any level, should consider whether such acceptance might be construed as an endorsement of the provider.

## **Nonpartisan Policy**

PTA must never support or oppose political parties or candidates, including those running for school boards on nonpartisan slates. However, PTA may adopt a position expressing its support for or opposition to issues dealing with the health, safety, education, or general well-being of children and youth, but only to the extent permissible with respect to the requirements of each PTA’s tax-exempt status. Nothing in the law or in PTA bylaws prohibits members as individuals from exercising their civic responsibilities in personal and partisan ways, including running for office.

One of the Purposes of the PTA is “to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.” It is by educating its members – and through them, the general public – on issues affecting children and youth, that PTAs can best influence the course of action of those who make policy decisions, thereby achieving the Purposes of the PTA.

PTA units may be involved in legislative activities.

- By supporting or opposing local issues that affect children or services to children in their respective communities based upon a study of the issue and a vote of the association; and
- By supporting California State PTA positions on legislation needed to achieve the Purposes of the PTA.

In order for PTAs to retain tax-exempt status and continue to receive tax-deductible contributions, under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3), they may not (1) devote more than an insubstantial part of their activities to influence legislation; (2) participate in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for national, state, or local public office.

A unit’s failure to comply with these restrictions may endanger council, district, State and National PTAs’ IRC 501(c)(3) status. For further information on IRS reporting requirements and options, see Election Campaigns and the Role of the PTA.

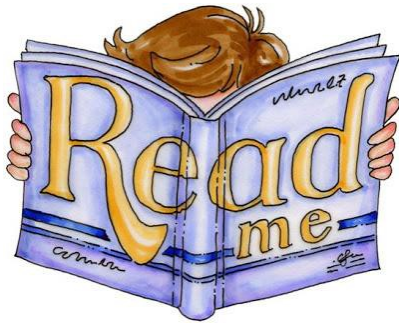
## **Nonsectarian Policy**

The National PTA and its unit, council, district and state PTAs welcome into membership people representing a diversity of cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and political and religious beliefs. Creed, color, race and economic status are irrelevant to qualification for membership. PTA should be hospitable to all — supporting no one religion over another and according each faith equal respect and consideration.

The Purposes of the PTA acknowledge the importance of spiritual faith in the development of children and youth.

As a private association, PTA has the right to offer inspirational messages to open or close its meetings; however, such messages by PTA leaders should be inspirational rather than sectarian, recognizing that in this pluralistic nation, not all members share the same beliefs. Poetry, quotations from great men and women, uplifting anecdotes, and moments of quiet meditation can serve to focus concern for and dedication to improving the lives of children and youth.

PTA leaders should be well aware of their school district’s policy regarding celebration of religious holidays and should work closely with school administrators to observe whatever guidelines have been established.



# **Guidelines to PTA Publications**

*(continued)*

## **Communications must be cleared with the PTA president and school principal before printing, publishing or posting.**

The principal is responsible for the accuracy of school information and compliance with the State Education Code and school district policy. The PTA president is responsible for the accuracy of PTA information and compliance with PTA policies. (Article VI, Section 1i, *Bylaws for Local PTA/PTSA Units*).

### **Publication best practices:**

- Create a visual identity. PTA publications should be consistent in appearance and easily identifiable.
- Date all publications.
- The name of the unit, council, district and state PTA should be on each publication.
- Publications should list PTA contact information—units should use school address; council and district PTA should use office or mailing address.
- Include references to other PTA resources such as council and district PTA, California State PTA and National PTA publications, websites and social media sites.
- Develop a plan to reach all members.

In PTA publications, publish only a summary of actions taken from PTA association meeting minutes. Do not publish, without written permission, photos or personal information about students or adults. Use of photographs or videos of children requires a Photography Release form, available in English and Spanish.

### ***Advertising and Sponsorships***

PTAs may be approached by commercial businesses or individuals seeking a presence in their publications. All advertising should be screened to ensure it meets PTA's high standards and legal obligations.

**The California State PTA strongly recommends finding sponsors rather than accepting advertising.** Thank funders and sponsors. One sentence should do it! To preserve the PTA's tax-free income generated from a sponsorship, the acknowledgement thanking the organization must not actually promote the sponsor, its product or services. Please refer to the noncommercial policy stated on the previous page.

### **Examples of Thank You statements:**

- The Sunshine PTA expresses grateful appreciation to the following merchants for making this publication possible: Neighborhood Bank and Romano Pizza
- The Sunshine PTA expresses thanks to Neighborhood Bank for the use of its parking lot for the car wash.
- Sunshine PTA thanks Romano Pizza for the generous offer to donate 10 percent of all sales made on Saturday.

**Mailed publications should meet the guidelines of the US Postal Service.** Learn more about nonprofit mail content eligibility by going online to: [pe.usps.com/text/pub417/welcome.htm](http://pe.usps.com/text/pub417/welcome.htm)

### **For any publication containing advertising, use the following disclaimer:**

*The mention of any business or service in this publication does not imply an endorsement by the PTA.*

***For more information concerning Sponsorship vs. Endorsement, see CAPTA.org***

---

### **Copyright Laws**

PTA must abide by federal copyright laws governing printed matter, poetry, art, music and computer software. Republish articles, art, photographs etc. abiding by all laws and in an ethical manner.

***For complete copyright information, go to [copyright.gov](http://copyright.gov).***

California State PTA articles and artwork may be used by unit, council and district PTAs without permission. Read National PTA materials carefully to determine when permission to republish is required. Always credit the source.

# **Guidelines to PTA Publications** *(continued)*

It is most important that anything copyrighted, including original artwork, not be reproduced on an item to be sold or to advertise an event. Permission must be secured to avoid litigation. The artist or the syndicating company will generally require a royalty on each item sold and a specific number of complimentary copies of the item.

When showing movies during school or at after-school events or fundraisers, PTAs must observe movie/video copyright laws, site licensing, and promote the event only as permitted by the site license.

## **Translating Materials**

PTAs should work closely with the school to meet the language needs of those who receive association publications. To translate information and materials, seek help from:

- bilingual parents on the executive board;
- teachers or support personnel in the classrooms or the school district; or
- foreign language departments at local high schools, community colleges and universities.

### **Consider providing translated content in one of the following ways:**

- Present side-by-side translations of articles on each page, or
- Print or post a separate issue.
- Offer all information in English with short recaps of major information in languages needed in the school community.
- Have a bilingual point person to contact or a Web page with information available in each target language.
- Develop audio or videotapes of recorded newsletters, notices and parenting tips in different languages and post on your website.
- Learn how to reach out to members in your community whose native language is not English.

***The California State PTA offers Outreach Translation Grants to unit PTAs for written or verbal translation of PTA materials into other languages.***

## **Publication Preparation**

Efficient and timely distribution is crucial to the publication process.

- Set a publication schedule at the beginning of the school year and share with contributors.
- Send publication article reminders as the due date approaches.
- Ask board members to contribute articles and reports about their projects and events.
- Advise contributors that material will be edited for space and form (grammar, punctuation, Spelling and accuracy of information) for all publications.
- Remember to allow time for review of the publication and approval by the PTA president and school principal before distributing.
- Include the cost of materials, supplies, copying, software, service provider subscriptions and equipment in the association budget

## **Publication Distribution**

Send copies of unit PTA publications to council and district PTA presidents. Share your publications with the California State PTA by mailing to the state PTA office or emailing [communications@capta.org](mailto:communications@capta.org). If the publication is in print form, leave several copies in the school office.

Use your publications as a PTA marketing tool. Distribute them to school district superintendents and trustees, businesses, chambers of commerce, service groups, city offices, police departments, libraries, recreation departments, after-school day-care centers, preschools, media outlets, county supervisors, junior colleges, and local state legislators.

## **Best practices for Improving Content**

- **Ask for feedback.** Use an opinion poll, a questionnaire, or interactive questions on social media.
- **Publicize:** coming events, the results of past events, membership campaigns, and PTA award recipients.
- **Remember, people don't read, they skim.** Use bullets, quotes, charts and graphics.
- **Proofread everything.** Have two to three people proofread before anything is distributed.



# Increase your PTA Communications

## Website

A website is a useful tool for promoting and providing resources. It is usually the first point of contact for persons interested in finding out more about your PTA.

- **Plan the design and content of the website strategically.** Simplicity is the key to user-friendly design.
- **Budget for website development and maintenance.** Websites may be hosted by the county office of education, the school district, or by a service provider paid for by the PTA.
- **Do not post** PTA bylaws, minutes and financial reports on the website except in summary form.
- **Update your website content regularly.** Forward approved copy to the website manager with requested posting dates and removal dates.
- **Link to information on the California State PTA, National PTA websites, Long Beach Council PTA and 33<sup>rd</sup> District websites.**
- **Permission should be obtained** prior to posting any name, photograph, or contact information on a website. Observe [copyright laws](#). Use a Photography Release form, available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

## PTA Email Accounts

Create PTA position-specific email addresses, e.g. ABCPTAPresident@xxx.com, called email aliases. The email alias does not change from year to year but is passed on to the position successor. Email alias addresses are set up to automatically forward email to the personal email accounts of board members. Update email aliases, forwarding addresses and passwords at the beginning of each term.

## Email Distribution Lists

Email distribution lists are a cost-effective and efficient way to share information with committees, board members and the membership. Some service providers allow a user to set up a group distribution list at no charge. Blind-copy recipients to avoid publicizing members' personal email addresses. Abide by the email limitations of personal email service providers to avoid triggering spam filters. Provide an unsubscribe option. Honor all requests to unsubscribe.

## E-newsletters

**An e-newsletter** is a time- and cost-effective way to share information with a large number of people. Typically it is an informational update sent via email to members of an electronic distribution list. Use an online marketing company to send e-newsletters. Such companies offer excellent e-newsletter templates and allow your PTA to create distribution lists that are not limited by personal email restrictions.

Graphic elements are blocked for some email recipients. Use a text-only format or send an email that includes the hyperlink to a newsletter posted on the PTA website

Convert your newsletter to Portable Document Format (PDF) before emailing to ensure that all recipients can open the document. Include a link to the Adobe PDF Reader website so members can download the PDF reader free of charge. Keep the e-newsletter brief. Provide short summaries for each topic, adding links to additional information available on the unit's website. For template and design ideas, refer to the California State PTA e-newsletters.

## Increase your PTA Communications *(continued)*

### Social networks

Facebook pages and other social networks offer an interactive way to offer information like a web page, provide updates like a newsletter and send messages like an e-mail account. In setting up the page, give careful thought to the amount of information you wish the public to see, and how much freedom others will have to post information on your site. Part of that decision is how much time the communications team will have to monitor the site in case of controversy. The PTA policies apply to social media use. Foremost, remember the simple rule: **do no harm**.



### Guidelines for social media remain the same as for every PTA publication.

- Maintain PTA's high standards of respect and courtesy.
- Observe the PTA's nonpartisan, noncommercial, nonsectarian policies, "do no harm" to an individual or an organization, and be knowledgeable about PTA positions.
- PTA social media site administrators should be appointed to review the site posts and messaging daily, if not more frequently.
- Follow the guidelines established by each social media site. Use the Photography Release form available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) when publishing photographs.
- Be cautious with censorship. Social media sites encourage members and partners to share insights freely. Remove postings or comments to your social media pages or accounts only when they violate PTA social media standards of respect and courtesy, or violate our nonpartisan, noncommercial, or nonsectarian policies.

#### **Plan on keeping it lively:**

- Give updates on school activities and classroom honors;
- List great plays of sports teams or recess games;
- Ask for ideas to solve parking lot traffic problems or celebrate Earth Day;
- Post contact information if people are interested in helping on a school project;
- Provide PTA meeting reminders.

### Social Media Guidelines for PTAs in California

*Best practices and guidelines are not inclusive and social media and situations change.*

#### **Guidelines and Best Practices for PTA social media sites:**

All PTA social media posts must be respectful, truthful, discreet and responsible. Posts must be Noncommercial, Nonsectarian, and Nonpartisan according to PTA policies.

#### **Administering PTA Social Media Sites:**

- Have at least two Administrators (Suggest: President & Communications Chair (or the like). Although the President is responsible for approving material, A PTA can have a communications plan with preapproved content and general guidelines. The president may appoint a social media person/people to post on PTA sights.
- Some sites (i.e., Facebook) allow contributors or multiple administrators, so adding specialized contributors can allow greater flexibility and faster response. (i.e., Reflections chair, Vice President for programs, fundraising chair) PTAs

should set guidelines ahead of time about what each contributor can and cannot not post. This would typically be posting about their particular program. This allows posts from sources which are quick and accurate.

- Be sure all logins and passwords are kept in a safe place and passed on to the next term's officers. Suggest sites be registered to generic emails for the officers so accounts can be passed along without interruption. (i.e., [sunshineptapresident@gmail.com](mailto:sunshineptapresident@gmail.com) or [president@sunshinepta.org](mailto:president@sunshinepta.org))

# Increase your PTA Communications *(continued)*

## Content on PTA social media:

- Posts should be PTA related and approved. Highlighting special events, programs, grants, PTA and school deadlines, allied agency information and other information of interest to PTA members is a good use of social media.
- Content from vetted sources or excerpts from previously PTA approved flyers, emails or website content is a good way to keep content timely without over burdening your officers. (See Red, Yellow, Green guidelines)

## Others posting on PTA social media:

- PTA Social Media sites (including websites) that are administered and owned by the PTA and not the school, do not need the principal's approval for posts. A good working relationship between the PTA and the school site administrator is best, so when possible coordinate. Remember, any PTA material that is passed out on school property or the school website still needs to be approved by both the president & principal.
- Each local PTA can decide if it wants to allow comments on sites or if it prefers a push only site. The advantage to having a more interactive site is that it allows you to know how your community feels; the disadvantage is that it allows comments which will need to be monitored. **If you do allow public comments or postings, someone will need to monitor the site and decide what is appropriate. Inappropriate or off topic comments should be deleted.** The PTA can decide to delete any comment or post it chooses.
- Setting guidelines and posting them on your sites can help if you feel it is necessary to delete a comment and are asked why. Your PTA social media sites are controlled by your local association and you are not required to post or keep any items.



## Suggested Posting Guidelines:

*(This can be posted on any social media your PTA uses and allows comments from the public.)*

### **Please follow these guidelines when commenting on our site:**

- **Be Relevant**  
Stay on topic.
- **Be Respectful**  
Keep things civil. Avoid abusive or offensive language, threats, hate speech, libels and calls for violence. And don't make jokes about the misfortune of others.
- **Be Honest**  
Use your real name. Don't post commercial messages. Don't publish copyrighted material that belongs to someone else.
- **Be Discreet**  
Don't publish telephone numbers, addresses or other personal information about yourself or others.
- **Be Responsible**  
Think about what you write before posting. Users are solely responsible for what they post.



## Social Media Guidelines for PTA Leaders and Members in California

Each PTA District, Council or Unit can create its own policies for members who use social media and identify themselves as PTA leaders or members. **The California State PTA Social Media Policy is included as an example.**



The California State PTA uses social media and encourages leaders at all levels to participate in an engaging and productive exchange. The community-based aspects of social media can benefit PTAs in reaching out to new audiences and engaging an existing base. However, use of social media carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist leaders and members in making responsible decisions about using social media, we have established the following guidelines:

### Guidelines

- For our purposes, social media includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet – whether or not these channels are associated or affiliated with a PTA – Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online.
- Leaders and members may associate themselves with the organization in different ways— explicitly – by stating in a profile or on a site a PTA title or involvement and/or implicitly—by posting photos, graphics or other information that identifies them as a PTA leader or member.
- You speak for yourself but your actions reflect on the organization. Do not post confidential information, accusatory statements, or any defamatory information. **Be respectful, truthful, discreet and responsible no matter your privacy settings.**

Consider the following:

- If your profile picture identifies you as PTA, be aware when posting comments on other sites, both public and private. Remember PTA’s Noncommercial, Nonsectarian, Nonpartisan policies when posting on public sites (i.e., newspaper comments, public blogs, trade publications and other)
- Privacy settings are no guarantee of privacy. Search engines and other technologies make it impossible to take something back once it’s been posted. Screen shots, forwards and other technologies can spread messages quickly beyond your intended circle of friends or followers.
- Mistakes happen. If they do, apologize.

### Working with the media

As the PTA year concludes use this opportunity to contact the media. Review the print or electronic information pages of your newspaper and community publications to determine who writes education, health and community events articles. Contact these individuals by telephone and offer to meet them personally. Present them with background information about your PTA, a list of the PTA’s accomplishments for the year, the number of Reflections entries and awardees, high school senior PTA scholarship winners, the officers elected, and the number of volunteer hours donated by members on behalf of children. Forward your PTA newsletter to the individual or send them expanded lead articles from individual issues on a regular basis. Media outlets need articles that are well-written, have a unique angle, and evoke a picture.

Submit photographs at 600 dpi resolution and always include tight shots of three to five members in action scenes. Follow up with media contacts and ask if you can provide further assistance. It may take several attempts, but the media will come to rely on your PTA to provide quick stories that have interest and information for your community.



## PTA Logo & Tagline

### *How to create and use them*



PTA's should use the logo and tagline as much as possible. Any form of communication going out from PTA must have the PTA signature, logo, and tagline somewhere on the item. Make sure as president that you approve all flyers, notices, mailings, newsletters, posters & the directory **BEFORE** distribution. It is your job to identify that the PTA Signature, Logo and Tagline have been placed somewhere on the item by your chairman.

***Plan PTA communications that inform the community about PTA activities and school functions.***

- **Identify the Target Audience.** It is important to clarify who you want to reach. Is your publication written for parents? For students? For teachers?
- **Choose the Right Tool.** Decide how best to communicate with your audience. Consider using multiple tools to carry the message.
- **Prepare the Right Message.** Review and refine each article to convey the message clearly and concisely.
- **Use the PTA Style Guide.** Refer to the [California State PTA Style Guide](#) for grammar specific to PTA, helpful punctuation, writing reminders and correct use of the PTA logo.
- **Incorporate the PTA Logo into all PTA communications.** An organization's logo catches the reader's eye and makes an instant, familiar connection. This [PTA logo can be downloaded](#) and customized for use by units, councils and district PTAs.

Long Beach Council

**PTA<sup>®</sup>**

*everychild. one voice.<sup>®</sup>*

-----Signature *–insert your school's name*

-----logo

-----tagline

You can download the logo and tagline from the CAPTA.org. Logo and tagline are available in both English and Spanish and include PTSA versions of both.



# National PTA® Social Media: Twitter Tip Sheet



Companies and organizations use **Twitter** primarily for sharing about a product, brand or a program. It is also used to make announcements and share breaking news. All updates on Twitter should be 140 characters or less. The tips below will help increase your followers and enable you to get your message to a larger audience.

Reference Mansfield, Heather (2011) A How to Guide for NonProfits: Social Media for Social Good. USA-McGraw-Hill

**Develop Your Twitter Voice.** The kind of content and the tone your members and followers respond to will help you give your Twitter voice personality. Your ultimate goal should be to inspire action and reaction from your followers.

**Track Your Links!!!** Use a Twitter app like Bit.ly or Ow.ly to track your links. They shrink your long links which allows more characters for tweeting. It also provides useful statistics on the number of people that click on your links.

**Tweet your Content as Well as the Content of Others.** Master the art of both retweeting and responding. Tweet articles or blog posts from your favorite newspapers, bloggers, and partner organizations. These practices will encourage your followers to retweet your content and information.

**Follow on a 1:1 Ratio.** If you have 1,000 followers, then you should follow 1,000 Twitterers in return. This will help your visibility and let your followers know that you are vested in them.

**Follow People with Similar Interests.** Help increase your visibility and understanding of your audience by following users with similar interests that are relevant to your goals and objectives. Do not forget to tag them in your messages by using the @ symbol.

**Integrate.** To maximize the success of your Twitter efforts, integrate into other online and offline materials. Incorporate a Twitter feed on your website, add a link to follow Twitter into direct mail pieces, and include a “share” button or Twitter link in an e-mail or e-newsletter.

**Drive Website Traffic.** 140 characters does not provide much room for detail. Offer a hook and lead your followers to your website or PTA.org for more information.

**Tweet Often.** Experts recommend tweeting four to six times per day. For some local units that may be too overwhelming. Twitter is most active from 9 am to 12 pm in any given time zone so focus your attention on tweeting during that time span.

**Use Hashtags Strategically.** Hashtags (#) allow Twitterers to discuss issues and events on Twitter in real time. They also help to organize tweets, spread information and find new friends. Tweets should not have more than one or two hashtags.

**Design your Twitter Profile to Match Your Local PTA logo.** Try to blog once a week and at the same time every week. Followers appreciate consistency and routine. Even if you just describe what you are working on this week, share it with the people who have invested time in your blog.



## Communications Training

# Twitter Terms

### **Tweet**

Each message you send out to followers through Twitter is called a "tweet". It works as a verb, as well; you tweet a message. Twitter is one big network for delivering tweets to people, and by default, tweets are public and searchable. Each tweet must be 140 characters or less or else it won't be published.

### **RT**

RT is an abbreviation for ReTweet, which is like Repeat. It's like forwarding, but for Twitters instead of emails. If you see something really cool from one of the people you follow, you may want to ReTweet it so that the people following YOU (and not the original person) can see it.

### **@Mention**

You direct public messages to other Twitter users by inserting an "@" sign immediately followed by their username. For example, "@CaliforniaPTA Hi there." This causes your tweet to also appear in the "@mentions" section of the target's Twitter account.

### **DM**

"DM" is short for "Direct Message", a tweet-like message sent in private between two Twitter users. Unlike the public @Mentions, DMs are private and do not appear to anyone besides their specified recipients, but you can only send a DM to someone who's following you. They're still limited to 140 characters, though.

### **#Hashtag**

People on Twitter insert "hashtags" into their tweet to provide context, and to make them easily searchable for people looking for updates on a specific topic. They're kind of like blog tags. A

hashtag is simply a keyword preceded by the hash symbol, like #marketing. Include it in your tweet and anyone who searches for that hashtag will see your updates. This convention is used a little less than it was in the past, but it's still quite common. We often use #PTA4Kids.

### **Engagement**

When people talk about "engagement" on Twitter, they're referring to the practice of responding to and making conversation with your followers and other people on Twitter. Doing so lets people know you're a human being they can have a relationship, and encourages them to continue following your updates. Most of the businesses that are successful on Twitter make engagement a priority.

### **Feed**

A "feed" is any constantly-updating list of tweets or other updates, usually sorted chronologically with the most recent updates appearing at the top. Almost every page on Twitter includes a stream; your home page is a feed of tweets from the people you follow, your profile page is a feed of your tweets, and Twitter's search results are feeds of tweets containing the searched-for terms.

### **URL Shortener**

Since tweets are limited to a succinct 140 characters or less, services have popped up around the web that create short website addresses that you can share with your followers without using up too many precious characters in your tweet. These services are called "URL shorteners" because "URL" is the technical term for a web address. Typically, URL shorteners create very short addresses that automatically transfer anyone who clicks on them to the longer address of the page you want to share.



# National PTA® Social Media: Facebook Tip Sheet



**Facebook** is a great way to do Social Media marketing for your PTA. Facebook is perfect for brand awareness because it is free advertising and promotion for your local PTA, it allows you to share information with your members, it will enable you to start conversations on various topics, and it gives them the chance to share with their friends as well.

Reference Mansfield, Heather (2011) A How to Guide for NonProfits: Social Media for Social Good. USA-McGraw-Hill

**Create Your Voice.** Your voice will often be found in the status updates of your fans, which means it is very important to find content that engages your fans and encourages them to want to engage with you. A great way to help you gauge this will be by the number of likes, shares, and comments you receive on your posts.

**Fun and Informative.** A great place to get started with content is to share success stories, breaking news, grant deadlines, calls to action, events, and information shared by National PTA.

**Professional vs. Personal.** While adding personality and flair is important, keep in mind that there is a difference between a personal Facebook page and your PTA's professional one. Set up rules of etiquette for your PTA's Facebook page so that everyone knows the rules and can help make it a safe place for sharing information.

**More Than One.** Be sure to have at least two people (although three would be best) as administrators of your PTA Facebook page. This way if someone is sick, traveling, unreachable or has to leave for any reason there are multiple people with access to the page. This also helps spread the responsibility for posting and sharing content, lessening the pressure on everyone.

**Posting Limits.** Be sure to limit the number of posts. Too many posts will cause people to hide or un-Like your Facebook page. Ideally, four to six posts per week is best, though you should not post more than twice a day.

**Content Sharing.** Be sure to share links, videos, and pictures whenever possible in your posts. This will help increase your PTA's visibility and activity. Facebook is all about sharing information.

**Tagging Gold.** Tag sponsors and supporters whenever possible; this will help them to keep up with what you are doing and engage them more. Plus, it gives them greater visibility among your PTA members and supporters.

**Events.** Create events and send them to the fans of your page. It will remind them about your unit and your events, and it will help you engage them in a new way.

**Do Not Automate.** It is always tempting to automatically sync several social media platforms to Facebook so you only have to send one status update. However, avoid doing this as much as possible because each social media platform is unique in the culture of the community and the way content is shared.

**Encourage.** Do not forget to encourage your PTA board members, volunteers, students (if you are a PTSA), teachers, and families to engage and be active on your PTA page. This will help create a flow of information and sharing that will encourage everyone! Most of all, do not forget to have fun, learn a lot, and remember that social media is just another resource for you, your members, and the parents and teachers that will give every child one voice!

*This tip sheet is one of many resources that National PTA offers members. Go to [PTA.org](http://PTA.org) for more!*



# Tips for Maximizing Your Social Media Efforts on Facebook

Most of you are already on Facebook for PTA. You're posting regularly and you're mixing up what you post, and how you post your content.

## Are you utilizing the scheduling function?

Set a schedule for posting – too few posts and your audience will forget about you, too many and they will “unlike” your page.

A great feature on Facebook pages is the scheduling function. This means you can schedule Facebook posts in one sitting. You don't need to log in every day if you don't want to. You can pre-schedule important information such as holidays, testing reminders, PTA meetings, etc. Let's schedule a few posts.

Just click on the “clock” in your post and then you can set the date and time that you want to schedule the post.

You can see the schedule posts by taking a look at your Activity Log. In your “Admin Panel” click “Edit Page”, scroll down to “Use Activity Log” and you can see what's scheduled. You can change the time, but you can't change or correct a post.

## Are you also posting as your PTA on other pages?

By posting as PTA or sharing information as PTA on other Facebook pages you are building relationships and increasing your reach. It's easy to do!

Switch to “Use Facebook As” your PTA, and then click home. This will show the news feed for your PTA. You should like other PTA pages, your council, district and state PTA pages, local businesses that support your PTA, allied agencies, elected officials, school board members, school districts, etc. this is where you can see what they are posting on their pages. This is similar to your personal newsfeed.

## ENGAGE!

Be sure to like posts from others that makes sense for your PTA. Comment when you feel it's appropriate. Share photos on their pages. By doing this, other people who visit that page will see your PTA and might click back to like your page as well. It's another way to connect and get the word out there about the great things that your PTA is doing.

Don't forget to also like, comment and somehow acknowledge those who post or share on your page. Try to make an effort to engage those folks in continued dialogue.

## Hiding, Blocking and Deleting Posts – Handling Difficult Online Situations

A common questions regarding Facebook is about handling difficult situations online – people posting nasty things, or getting out of hand. Most PTAs want to know how they can handle those situations online.

And there's a rule of thumb that you can follow – At the end of the day, it is your PTA page and as an association you don't need to allow anything on the page that you don't want. At the state level we have a link to our social media policy on the “About Us” section in Facebook (<http://ow.ly/ljcx>)

But, even though we can remove just about anything that we want, we recognize the value of having an open forum where people can respectfully express their opinion, even if it differs from ours. You'll want to foster an open community where people can respectfully share thoughts and opinions.

So hide and delete posts sparingly. These conversations about your PTA are happening anyway, now you just have an opportunity to be included in the dialogue and help facilitate the discussion. Take it as an opportunity to engage in discussion, answer questions and maybe even clear up any miscommunication.

You can also move the conversation offline. “Thank you for your feedback. Please email [leadership@capta.org](mailto:leadership@capta.org) for further assistance.”

However, if someone is abusive, uses foul language, is harassing or is trying to use your PTA Facebook page as a way to jump on their soapbox, then consider hiding their posts or blocking them. Remember, you can also hide and remove any posts that are sales-related.

This is a great discussion to have with your PTA Executive Board to decide what our PTA social media policy will be.

# Tips for Maximizing Your Social Media Efforts on Facebook (continued)

## **Facebook Ads**

Let's talk about Facebook Ads. Facebook Ads are paid messages coming from business and they can include social context about friends.

## **Sponsored-stories**

Sponsored stories are built around user activity. Advertisers pay to highlight activity that a user has already taken. Popular sponsored stories include "Michelle claimed an offer from Nordstrom" or "Michelle likes California State PTA". The goal of Sponsored Stories is to get more users to take the same action that a friend has.

## **Page Post Ads**

Page Post Ads are advertisements that begin as posts on a fan page but get additional paid distribution within News Feed or the sidebar, as a result of creating campaigns in Facebook's ad tool. These ads can be shown to anyone on Facebook, even if users are not connected to the page themselves or through a friend.

## **Promoted Posts**

Promoted Posts are similar to Page Post Ads because they originate as a piece of content on a page, but they are bought through the Promote button on a post itself rather than through the ad tool.

The goal of these ads is to reach more of a company's existing audience and some of their friends. These help get a page's content seen but generally do not drive new Likes

The pricing structure is different as well. With Promoted Posts, page owners pay a flat rate to reach a given number of users. For Sponsored Stores, Page Post Ads and other Facebook Ad types, advertisers pay per impression or per click.

## **Marketplace Ads**

Marketplace Ads are desktop sidebar advertisements, which include a headline, body copy and image. These ads can lead to a page or app on Facebook, as well as to third-party websites. You'll also start to see these in your mobile news feed now.

## **Creating your Facebook Ad**

It's easy to create your Facebook ad:

1. Log in as you normally would.
2. Click "create ad" on the right hand side where the ads are displayed.
3. Select your PTA page.

Choose what type of ad you would like to create – and follow the instruction.

4. Under "Campaign, Pricing and Schedule" select your budget, start date and end date.
5. Review your ad and you're ready to go. It's that simple.

## **Understanding Insights**

Understanding and monitoring Facebook Insights is a critical part in maximizing our social media efforts. Click "Insights" on your admin panel to view the following:

- Page Like
- Post Reach
- Engagement
- Likes
- Visits
- Insights on who is visiting your page

From here you can sort by each category to see what ranks to the top of each. A suggestion is to track your top 10 posts and bottom 10 posts each month in each category.

You can start to see trends – what days your members are most responsive, what times are best to post, what type of content is most engaging, etc. This will help you craft your posts moving forward.

## **A few additional Facebook recommendations include:**

- Have more than one administrator for your PTA Facebook Page, just so you have a backup and someone can always access the account. You can decide who should be admin - perhaps the President, Communications VP and the Programs and Member Services Chair.
- Use content from the state FB page. It's easy to share or copy and post.
- Keep a record of all social media passwords, logins, etc. This can be in an Excel document or even a hard copy. Be sure to keep this private, but shared with key members of your PTA Executive Board.
- Publicized your Facebook page – add "Like us on FB" icon to your website. Include the Facebook icon and hyperlink in our electronic newsletter. Let people know at your PTA meetings – Like us on Facebook for all the latest updates and information about what's happening at our school and for our PTA.

## Websites: The “Next Generation” Resource for Your PTA

Doesn't it just seem like everyone has a website these days? The Internet is an amazing resource that has revolutionized our ability to distribute and access information. This article will discuss how *your* PTA can take advantage of it.

### ***So, why does my PTA need a website?***

A website can tackle two communication goals simultaneously. **It is an excellent resource for your members**, where they could find out the latest info about upcoming events, agendas for meetings, important news from your PTA, and plenty more.



**Councils and districts can distribute forms and information about due dates.** If you have a newsletter, distributing an online version alongside a published version can save lots of paper, not to mention printing and postage charges.

Websites also do not have the physical limitations on how much content you can publish that you may have to deal with for a printed newsletter. However, your website is also accessible from anywhere in the world, which means that it is a great way to promote your PTA to new people. **Take advantage of your website to share the great things that your unit does**, and possibly entice new members to join. A website is also available 24/7 and can be updated any time, so you can keep it updated much easier than just a newsletter alone. There are also many other ways that you can use a website to support your PTA.

A website has two aspects: **the domain name** (your URL, e.g. www.capta.org), and **the hosting** (where the files that make up your website content “sit”).

### ***What do I need to have for a website?***

- Ask your school or school district if they have a website, and if they could provide hosting on their server for your PTA website. (In most cases, the URL would then be something like www.myschooldistrict.k12.ca.us/pta/ or something.)
- If that is not an option, then you may need to budget an amount to purchase a domain name (usually \$5-10 per year, sometimes less) and/or web hosting (varies, but most falls between the \$40-80 per year range).

PTA does not have any recommended providers for these services, but an online search can turn up a number of options. Be sure to scrutinize providers offering free hosting, as many of these require you to display advertisements in exchange for the hosting. Avoid these. **It is a legitimate PTA expense to set aside funds for maintaining a website.**

### ***How do I learn how to make a website?***

If you're interested in learning how to write HTML (the language behind web pages), there are numerous tutorials online and in books that you can find. Alternatively, solicit a volunteer who is familiar with web design to be the Webmaster for your association.



# Websites: The “Next Generation” Resource for Your PTA

(continued)

## *Are there any guidelines for designing a PTA website?*



- Always remember that a PTA website is focused on content. Try to minimize the use of fancy images and designs and be sure that the content of the website is allowed to shine.
- Use standard, easy-to-read fonts and colors. When designing the website, remember that less is more.
- Link to the California State PTA website (<http://www.capta.org>) and the National PTA website

(<http://www.pta.org>), as well as websites for any council or district PTA

- Councils (and districts) should list the units (and councils) that they represent, and their websites
- Link to information on these other websites if necessary; you do not always have to duplicate everything.

All material must be cleared with the PTA president (and school principal, if applicable) to ensure that it is accurate and appropriate, and fits with PTA policies and procedures.

**The privacy of your officers is important.** Avoid publishing personal information such as addresses and phone numbers. A good way to handle e-mail addresses is to use a “mailto:” link instead of printing the e-mail address directly on the page. At the same time, however, make sure that there is a place where people can find contact info for your association in general, including an address, phone number, and/or e-mail.

**Never present material critical of any individual or group** to prevent the possibility of a libel suit. Do not publish any personal info about students or adults (including photos with or without names) without written permission. Agendas and meeting announcements may be published.

**Similarly, bylaws and standing rules must NOT be distributed electronically at any time.** It’s a very good idea to ask an average member of your PTA to just check out the website and make sure they can find their way around-- that ensures that you’ve got a navigable, easy- to-use website. The Website job description in the Toolkit has additional details.

Materials that are benefits of membership must not be posted to the website, e.g., bylaws, minutes and financial reports

### ***How do I make sure the website stays current?***

The webmaster’s position should be a full-time chairmanship. The webmaster should be responsible for soliciting and reminding board members to pass along news and other information to be posted on the website. If you have a newsletter, you can often reuse those newsletter articles as website content. A webmaster who has a busy schedule should inform board members how often he/she is able to update and set deadlines for information to be received for a particular website update. Although it does require a bit of a transition and some investment, you will quickly find that there are significant benefits to having a website for your association and that it will help you better connect with your members.

### Commas cont.

- Between names of states and nations used with cities
  - *Los Angeles, California, is a big city.*
- For dates with month, day, and year
  - *October 30, 2007*
- When the day of the month is omitted, so is the comma
  - *June 2007*

### Apostrophes

- Singular possessive - *PTA's office*
- Plural possessive nouns not ending in "s"
  - *children's books*
- "It's" means "it is"; not the possessive, "its size."
- Plural possessive nouns ending in "s"
  - *unit PTAs' collaboration*
- Not with plural nouns, figures
  - *PTAs advocated for arts education*
  - *legislation in the 2000s*

### WRITING STYLE

#### Use:

- Active tenses, not passive;
  - Verbs, not adverbs;
  - 4 p.m., 10-11 a.m., noon and midnight;
  - Chairman, not chair or chairperson;
  - People, not persons;
  - Family engagement;
  - Either Dr. Jane Jones or Jane Jones, Ed.D., not Dr. Jane Jones, Ed.D.;
  - United States as a noun, U.S. as an adjective.
- Tip:
- Rewrite to avoid using *etc.*, *and/or*, *he/she*, *s/he*. (*Usually, a plural form does the trick:*  
*"A student likes his/her homework" becomes "Students like their homework."*)
  - Beware singular noun plural pronoun problems.  
*"Speak with the teacher about your child's homework. Their success depends on it." This is incorrect because the antecedent of "their" is the singular "child." Better: "Speak with the teacher about your child. Your student's success depends on it."*
  - The term *disability* is preferred to *handicap*.
  - Use "people first" style – "a student with a disability," rather than "a disabled student."
  - Include year of passage with names of all laws except those passed in current legislative session.
  - No all cap headlines (except CALL to Convention).
  - Conform to time, date, place format: meeting is at 10 a.m., May 4, at the Capitol.

### OFTEN-USED PTA WORDS

after-school programs	fundraising activities	president-elect
at-risk	fundraiser (noun)	preteen
back-to-school	handout (noun)	school-based
bylaws	health-care clinics	seat belt
caregiver	HIV/AIDS	self-esteem
citywide	Internet	statewide
curricula (plural)	kindergarten	teenage/teenager
curriculum (singular)	nationwide	T-shirt
day care (noun)	noncommercial	vice president
day-care (adjective)	nonpartisan	Washington, D.C.
dropout	nonprofit	website
email	nonsectarian	well-being
extracurricular	online	year-round
flier (NOT filer)	preschool	

### PTA'S VISUAL IDENTITY

Phoebe Apperson Hearst

# PTA<sup>®</sup>

*everychild. one voice.*

See the National PTA website [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org) regarding use guidelines for the logo and tagline. Customize the logo for the unit, council or district PTA using Arial Black or Helvetica Black font for the PTA name. Use Times Roman font for the tagline. Black or dark blue color is preferred, or reverse white on a colored background.

### Mission Statement of the California State PTA

The mission of the California State PTA is to positively impact the lives of all children and families by representing our members, and empowering and supporting them with skills in advocacy, leadership and communications.

California State PTA Board of Managers, October 2009

### California State PTA

2327 L Street, Sacramento, CA 95816-5014  
916.440.1985 • FAX 916.440.1986  
[www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org) • [info@capta.org](mailto:info@capta.org)

# California State PTA<sup>®</sup>

*everychild. one voice.*

# Style Guide

## Capitalization, Number Use, Punctuation, Spelling, Terminology and Visual Identity for PTA Publications

## CAPITALIZATION

California Congress of Parents, Teachers and Students, Inc.  
California State PTA – not CSPTA or CAPTA State PTA  
National Congress of Parents and Teachers  
National Parent Teacher Association  
National PTA  
Parent Teacher Association  
Parent-Teacher-Student Association  
PTA or PTSA – no periods  
Founders Day  
Sacramento County, but Sacramento and San Joaquin counties

### **Nouns or Adjectives Forming Part of Proper Name of an Organization**

Sun Elementary PTA  
Hillside Council PTA  
Twenty-Fifth District PTA  
University of California  
Do not capitalize association or unit, council, district PTA, university when used alone.

### **Terms Specific to California State PTA**

Advisory Board  
Board of Directors  
Board of Managers  
California State PTA Annual Convention  
CALL (to board or convention)  
Continuing Service Award – CSA  
“everychild. onevoice.”  
Golden Oak Service Award  
Honorary Service Award – HSA  
Mission Statement of the California State PTA  
Purposes of the PTA – as title or in a sentence  
Vice President for Communications (etc.)  
**PTA Projects, Programs or Workshops**  
PTA Leadership Training  
Reflections Program  
“SMARTS: Bring Back the Arts!”  
**State or National Government Terms**  
Titles (Governor, Senator and Assembly Member) capitalized ONLY when preceding a name  
Legislature, Senate and Assembly capitalized when referring to the California bodies

## TITLE CAPITALIZATION

- For titles in text, capitalize the first and last words and all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and subordinate conjunctions (therefore, however).
- Articles (a, an, the), conjunctions (and, or, for, but), and prepositions of three letters or less (for, to, on) are lowercase, unless they are the first or last words of a title or subtitle.
- The infinitive “to” should be capitalized.
- Use typeset *italic* or **boldface** for titles of books, periodicals, movies, videos, plays, operas, reports, pamphlets, and kits.
  - *California State PTA Toolkit*
  - *The Communicator*
  - *National PTA Quick-Reference Guide*
  - *Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) Guide*
- When the title or designation precedes the name, it is capitalized. If it follows the name, it is lower case.
  - President-elect Jones
  - Jane Jones, president
  - Sarah Smith, president-elect
  - Henry Jones, the principal of the school
  - James McCay, Ed.D., principal
- Capitalize schools of a university, but not courses or departments. Capitalize languages.
  - School of Journalism
  - biology department
  - UCLA Spanish department

### **DO NOT CAPITALIZE**

- Association, unit, council, district PTA, or board of education unless used as part of a name of a specific group;
- Titles after the word “the” or after a name;
- Organizational terms such as bylaws, chairman, committee, director, parent education, preschool, policy, scholarship, grant, vice president, workshop;
- Seasons of the year, directions (north, southeast), state, nation, federal, flag.

## NUMBERS

### **When To Spell Out Numbers**

- At the beginning of a sentence, except for years;
  - One through nine, 10 and above use numerals;
  - First through ninth, after 10<sup>th</sup> use numerals;
  - First grade, grade one, first-grader; 10<sup>th</sup> grade, grade 10, 10<sup>th</sup>-grader
- Note: More than 100 (not over 100) and fewer than 100 (not less than 100).

### **Use Numerals for**

- Large numbers such as million and billion
  - \$12 million
- Percentages
  - 15 percent (spell out “percent”)
- Ages
  - age 3 to 6
  - 26-year-old (hyphenate)
- Pages
  - page 2
- Ratios 3-to-1; No. 1 killer of teens

## PUNCTUATION

### **Quotation Marks**

- Always set outside the comma and the period.
- Always set inside the colon and the semicolon.
- Set outside or inside the exclamation point, depending on whether the marks belong to the quoted matter.
- Use single quotation marks for quotations within quotations.
- A quoted passage of four lines or more may be used without quotation marks if indented from the body of material.
- Use quotation marks for themes, such as for conventions, workshops, or administrations.
- Avoid overuse of exclamation marks!
- Ellipses (...) should be treated as a word with a space before and after. At the end of a sentence, a period is still needed (for a total of four dots).
- Dashes require space before and after.

### **Colons and Semicolons**

- Use a colon only if the introductory phrase can stand alone as a sentence.
- Do not use a colon after a verb.
- Capitalize the first word after a colon if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence. For a vertical list, capitalize the first word of each item, use commas or semicolons with a final period if the phrases are lengthy.
- Use semicolons to separate elements of a series when the individual elements contain information that is set off by commas or to join two clauses when a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for) is not present.

### **Commas**

- Use a comma:
  - Before the conjunction only when the series of items or phrases is complicated or lengthy.
    - *The flag is red, white and blue.*
  - Before an independent phrase: “*He gave me an apple, and I ate it.*”