

Social Media for Scientists: The Essential Why & How

A resource from the IGI Comms team

Why?

- Multiple studies link Twitter use to **higher citation rates** (here are a few: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)), with indications that it may be [causative](#).
- Social media is a great way to **share your work** with other scientists; learn about **new research** in your field; **network** and find potential new students and collaborators; interact with conference attendees; directly share your expertise with **journalists and policymakers**; get **feedback** from peer experts; share/find **events** and talks; inform and **influence** the public; and show **representation** of different kinds of folks doing science.

What to post about

- Share/explain your work
- Summarize thoughts on important new papers or news articles
- Bring up topics for discussion with the scientific community
- Share images of data from new papers... Or lab hijinks
- Be yourself and let your personality shine through. It's a public forum so be courteous, but it's also okay to be fun and informal.

Set up a profile

- Pick a name. Use your real name (@JaneDoe, @JaneDoePhD, @JaneDoeSci) so you're easy to find, or something related to your research area (@DreamingOfDNA, @DNAAdame, @DNAForDays, etc.).
- Add a photo or avatar
- Add a short bio: "Researcher @innovativegenomics.bsky.social, studying #DNA regulation." Add a personal detail or two if you wish, and include "Views my own," or "Posts represent my views and do not necessarily represent the views of my employer."
- Add a link to your lab or professional website

Write posts

- LinkedIn and Instagram allow long posts; Bluesky and X are short. If you can't get your message in one post, link a series of posts together into a "[thread](#)" by replying to your previous post and numbering them "1/n," "2/n," etc. Here are a couple examples ([1](#), [2](#)) of great threads from IGI members.
- Using images and videos helps posts get attention. This could include photos of you, data figures from a presentation or paper, micrographs, or photos of your model organisms. Include [alt-text](#) for images by clicking "Add description" or "+ALT."
- Include relevant hashtags like #CRISPR, #ClimateChange, #cancer or similar. When there are multiple words in a hashtag term, capitalize each one for accessible for readers using a screen reader device

Network

- Even if you don't plan on being an active user, it's helpful to have an account so people can tag you by including your handle in tweets and to make it easy to find your website and current affiliation
- Follow the IGI on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [Bluesky](#)
- Follow departments (e.g. <https://www.instagram.com/ucdaviscaes/?hl=en>), people (e.g. @owentuck.bsky.social), and feeds or hashtags (e.g. "CRISRP") that interest you. Following or mentioning accounts will often trigger them to follow you back.
- Posting regularly helps grow your following. Use hashtags so your posts will show up in search results and Bluesky "feeds", e.g. "New #ClimateChange research..."
- Engage with other peoples' posts – "like" posts you find interesting by hitting the heart, reply by hitting the conversation button, and/or repost by hitting the square
- Getting your posts reshared helps you reach a broader audience, so it's good to mention other people or institutes that are involved in your work. The IGI accounts regularly reshare posts from members, and we often get our posts reshared by other UC Berkeley accounts as well. If you want something reshared, just ask us!

Promoting a paper

- Link to the journal handle
- Start with "New in X journal"
- Include images whenever possible. Photos of people and/or data figures are good options. Describe the image in alt text for readers using a screen reader device.
- Mention your co-authors and tag their social handles. Also tag lab accounts, the IGI account for the platform, and any other institutional accounts.

Stay out of hot water

- Remember that "likes" and who you follow are public on most platforms
- Be kind and courteous. Use social media to promote *your* work and share *your* ideas – think twice before using social media to criticize another community member or their work. If you feel absolutely compelled to, sleep on it. If you still feel compelled to, make sure your criticism is considered and specific. Do not get personal.
- Choose your words thoughtfully. You can edit LinkedIn and Instagram posts, but not Bluesky posts. Social media is forever.
- Don't reply to people who respond aggressively or in bad faith ("trolls"). There is no winning these arguments and they are not worth your time.
- You don't need to reply to people right away. If you're feeling worked up, take a breather, and decide if it's worth responding later.
- If you get something wrong, admit it and apologize
- If you posted something regrettable or another challenge comes up, consult with IGI Comms for advice on handling it