

# FACULTY TIPSHEET

## Managing Your Digital Footprint

Your “digital footprint” is any information you leave about yourself online, from comments, pictures, and posts on social media to app use, emails, and the websites you visit. In today’s world, your digital footprint matters. At some stage, someone will search for you online. It could be a future boss, student, parent, or colleague. Take time to consider what your digital footprint is currently and what you would like it to be. Here are some tips for creating and maintaining a positive online presence.

### GETTING STARTED

- 1. Enter your name into several search engines.** If you have recently changed your name, look up both your prior name and your current one. Try the common misspellings, as well. Review the first few pages of results. Are they positive? Do they show you in a professional and respectable light?
- 2. Delete old accounts.** Reducing your digital footprint by deleting old accounts can help you polish your footprint.

### BUILDING A POSITIVE DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

- 1. Document your work on social media.** Post photos or videos of your presentations or engage with other scholars or accounts within your specific area by sharing content or interacting with posts. This will help elevate awareness of your content and increase engagement through analytics, which can make your content appear more readily in search engines.
- 2. Consider private vs. public posts.** When sharing your teaching, creative activity, scholarship, or research materials, think about your audience. Do you want to safeguard your ownership or increase your reach?
- 3. Focus on your intended audience.** Use platforms that will best reach your audience or those that your discipline tends to favor. Sites consistently popular with adults ages 18 to 29 are YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and TikTok. For those over the age of 30, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram are most popular.

### AVOIDING A NEGATIVE DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

- 1. Avoid posting when under emotional duress.** After a stressful day, you may want to jump online to vent about an issue or colleague. A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself whether you would want your colleagues seeing the content. If they wouldn’t approve, don’t post it. Remember, even if your profile is private, content can still be shared by others with a screenshot.
- 2. Don’t engage with trolls.** These are people who leave intentionally provocative or offensive messages to get attention, cause trouble, or upset someone. It is best to ignore them.

### RESOURCES

- Pew Research Institute: “Social Media Use in 2021” [go.unl.edu/smu2021](https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/01/28/social-media-use-in-2021/)
- Chronicle of Higher Education: “How to Deal With the Dark Side of Social Media” [go.unl.edu/dssm2021](https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-to-Deal-With-the-Dark-Side-of-Social-Media/257311)
- Social Media Support and Resources for Penn State Faculty [go.unl.edu/smsr2020](https://www.psu.edu/psu/psu-faculty-affairs/social-media-support-and-resources-for-penn-state-faculty/)

