



Creative Capital

Social Media Best Practices for Artists

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Introduction

It seems cliché to say it now, but social media offers artists the chance to connect directly with audiences hungry for their work. Many artists have made social media a natural extension of their practice, while others only use it when they have time or when they want to promote their work. Regardless of your experience with social media, communicating across different platforms can take time and some strategic thinking. We have created a guide of best practices for artists who want to gain a following on the most popular digital platforms.

Managing a digital presence through social media can take more time than you expect, especially if you choose to engage communities on multiple platforms. While there are services like Hootsuite or Buffer that help manage many kinds of social media accounts in one place, these are probably more useful for businesses or artists with an actual team dividing the work. The best, most authentic way for individuals to engage with audiences on each platform is through the actual application itself.

Aside from connecting with your friends, family, and artistic network, and keeping abreast of the cultural buzz, you may not yet use social media as a business tool. **If you only use social media during your down time, and have less bandwidth to strategically promote your artistic practice, we recommend implementing a digital media strategy incrementally.** First, focus your time by building out a website that represents the narrative arc of your artistic career. Make sure you update this whenever you have new work, with links to press and reviews, and a more in-depth exploration of your practice. This gives audiences who might be curious about you a “landing page,” or a place to find out everything they wanted to know.

Once that is set up, you can start building out an email audience and newsletter, allowing people who want to follow your work to easily sign up through your website. This list of email contacts can become your die-hard fan base if you keep them updated about your practice through regular emails.

Social media platforms should generally be used to keep your existing audience up to speed about your new work, works in progress, and any other updates about your practice. Use simple tools like a Google doc and calendar reminders to draft and map out your posts and strategically build your narrative over time. Social platforms can help to grow your network, and drive sign-ups to your email newsletter and traffic to your website. As you continue to give followers news about yourself, you will build a network of fans that are knowledgeable about your artistic work, and may even be dedicated enough to spend money on, or engage with your work in the ways you want them to.



Think strategically ahead of time about what kind of audience you want to cultivate through digital platforms—your user demographics, the age, income-level, and backgrounds of your followers could drastically affect your social media strategy. For instance, many younger art lovers may not be as active through email or Facebook, while they may be very engaged with more visual apps like Instagram. On the other hand, a higher percentage of people from their forties to their sixties use Facebook more often. Research up-to-date social media usage statistics to find out where your potential audience spends most of their time, and make it easy for them to learn about you and share your work with their own audience.

Above all, social media should be an enjoyable, natural extension of how you think about engaging an audience. **If you dread making posts on a certain platform, then rethink your approach to it so that it actually generates ideas and positivity, and doesn't hinder growth.** If a platform isn't "sparking joy" for you, get rid of it! Social media is forgiving to people who want to minimize or start from scratch.

We have compiled some best practices for each platform, but feel free to experiment with each of them, and see what works for you.

[We welcome your feedback. If you have suggestions about how to improve these guides, or want to let us know how it helped your own digital strategy, please let us know!](#)



Creative Capital

Email Marketing Best Practices for Artists



Email Marketing for Artists

Although you may not think so, email is still the top digital platform for building and engaging with audiences. While there are many ways to connect with a fan base these days, email—a service that is decades old—is the most direct way to get information in front of an engaged digital network. In this article, we will review some best practices for building your email contacts, sending out regular emails, and keeping people in your network informed and interested in your career.

Treat Your List of Email Contacts Like VIPs

Why does email continue to be the best way to engage with your audience? When someone signs up to receive an email from you, they have to provide their contact information. That means they have flagged themselves as willing to go the extra mile to show that they're interested in your work. While it's very easy to "follow" someone on Instagram or Twitter, simply because the barrier of entry for signing up for your newsletter is a little higher, your audience has proven that they will be a stronger fan base than on other platforms. Secondly, when people are in their "reading email" mode they are typically in a more engaged mindset than when they're more passively scrolling through social media.

Finally, as social media companies try to monetize their platforms, they often use algorithms to push certain content above others, often favoring corporations that can spend money on ads. This means that 100% of the content you publish on social media won't always show up to the people who have followed you. With email, although there is a chance a subscriber might miss your email, you can generally assume that the majority of your messages will get through to your networks.

With all this in mind, you should take your list of email contacts very seriously. Treat your email contacts like a list of VIP clients, and spend time thinking about different ways to grow your list. These contacts, with a little bit of diligence, could become the most informed people about your work, and the most willing to engage with your practice.

Growing Your Email List

There are many ways to increase the size of your email list. You should make it super easy for people who find your website to find out how to sign up for your newsletter. Don't hide the sign up form on one of your "contact" or "about" pages: consider putting it on the homepage of your website. If you made contacts through in-person events, or are networking digitally, you can send personal emails, and ask them if they would like to sign up to receive your newsletter. Due to new regulations, you should give your contacts an opportunity to "opt-in" to receive your email newsletters—just because you have emailed with them in the past, doesn't mean they have opted-in to your newsletter.



In each context, consider telling a potential subscriber about what they might receive when they sign up for your emails, like works in progress, updates about new work, exhibitions, or special events. Once they are prepared to receive this information, they are more likely to be engaged readers.

To increase the size of your contact list, you should think of running “acquisition” campaigns—essentially, an increased effort to gather new subscriptions over a finite period of time. For instance, you could say that subscribers will exclusively receive a new digital artwork every month, or they will be invited to a special Q&A or performance, depending on how much time you can commit. Whatever you choose to do, remember again that your email contacts should be considered among your most dedicated fan base—and they should be treated like VIPs.

Welcome emails are a good way to introduce yourself to your new subscribers. These emails usually have the highest open rates, so make sure to make a great first impression. Email marketing platforms can help you create emails that are automatically sent to anyone as soon as they subscribe for your newsletter. The email can introduce your new contacts to the kinds of newsletters you will send in the future, and you can direct them to your social media channels, website, and anything else that you want to bring to their attention.

As you send regular emails, and look at the analytics of who is opening and clicking around on those emails, you will begin to identify even more dedicated fans and better understand what drives your audience. If you are looking to drive people to your events, buy your work, or purchase tickets to see your work, these engaged contacts have identified themselves as the most ready to do that. Your job now is to make it as easy as possible to get them to convert their enthusiasm into concrete ways of supporting your work!

There are lots of articles about which email marketing platforms you can use to streamline creation of your newsletters, analytics, and more, like Mailchimp or Constant Contact. We recommend shopping around. Make sure that when you look up reviews of each platform that they are up to date, and no more than a year old. Once you have chosen an email client service, develop a few templates that match the look and feel of your website and digital presence.

Just as important as making it easy for people to subscribe to your list, make it easy for them to unsubscribe. Don't be too sensitive when people unsubscribe from your emails. Consider it more like an active way to keep up a fresh email list of engaged fans—plus, pricing of email platforms is often based on volume, so it's better to pay only for active subscribers. You may also consider having different types of preferences. For instance, have a list where people can sign up to receive emails on rare special occasions, and ones for more regular emails. This gives users the option to receive less emails from you, but still stay in touch.

How to Communicate Your Message Clearly

Consider your own email inbox for a moment. It's probably full of junk that you have to make your way through to find important messages each time you open it. When you send an email to someone, they are seeing it among many other emails, in the same way that you would receive



another person's eblast. When developing a newsletter or email campaign, be clear and targeted in your use of visuals and language, and respect the time of your email reader.

With each email message you send out, you should have a general goal of what you want your contacts to do. This goal should be a little more targeted than something like “receive an update about my work.” These goals can be reached gradually over a period of months or years, and may take a series of several emails.

For instance, if you are getting ready to open a solo exhibition, you could update people on the progress of your work, and lead them up to the opening reception through a series of emails. If you are about to publish a book, send them excerpts over the course of a few months. Over a series of emails, your readers will become more engaged and versed in your practice—they will begin to connect the progress you are making toward a singular goal, and help you meet it.

Above all, you should be clear about the goal of your email—it should go beyond just keeping your audience up to date, but also be singular and targeted. Because email subscribers are the most engaged audiences, you will be more effective if you use your email to drive them to a focused outcome: whether it's buying your new book, purchasing a new print or tickets to your show or screening, or even clicking around on a website. **The goal should get the users to go somewhere or do something beyond the email.** Funnel their attention towards a main link that leads them there, and use buttons to make it obvious where you want them to click.

What's in the Email?

Whether you are sending one email or a series of emails, you should remember that even if someone has signed up to receive your newsletters, they may not remember who you are, or why they signed up in the first place. Unless you send very regular emails, each email should start off with a general introduction about either yourself, or the concepts you are interested in discussing.

Think of the message of the email as an accompaniment to the image. Emails should ideally be anchored by one image that connects easily to the content of your writing. It's OK to have a couple of images in an email, but don't go overboard with too many images. Don't make the body of your email just an image with a link leading somewhere else either. Images don't always show up in other people's emails, and this will also make it more difficult for people to search for your messages later. You want to alert your audience to the point of your email, and the images should provide some visual clues, sort of like a journalistic article. Without much context, people tend not to click through on the links.

Do not use press release language! Press releases are designed to spell out the specifics of an event or exhibition for press who may write a story about an artist's work. This language wouldn't be very exciting to an audience who is looking to engage with you and your work on a more intimate level. Instead, we suggest more personal and down-to-earth language. Communicate to your audience as you would email your friends and family about your work.



Email is typically used for personal or professional communication, and when you are looking through email, you expect to see writing that matches either of these kinds of tones. Think about giving your email audience a special window into your practice that they wouldn't get through a typical gallery release or event announcement—the tone should be personal, but also respectful and professional. Share updates about the development of new work in progress through previews and teasers, or discuss challenges you are facing, or breakthroughs you have reached. Make your audience feel like they have a direct connection to your work.

Keep It Short and Punchy

You should also weigh the economy of your words. People making their way through their inbox are typically pressed for time, so get to the heart of the matter as quickly as possible. If something requires a longer, more in-depth description, consider building out a special landing page on your website where readers can click to learn more. These clicks will also help you better understand who is really interested in taking the time to read about your work.

Finally, spend a good amount of time thinking about the subject line because it is often the most important part of an email. Subject lines are the key factor that determine if your audience opens or ignores your messages. If your subject is bland or vague, emails tend to be deleted or remain unopened, whereas those that tease out the content will be opened more frequently. You want to be upfront about what the email is about—don't mislead—but make it enticing to open at the same time. Try to keep the subject line at 50 characters or less, as longer subjects tend to get cut off.

Keep the format for the body of the email simple, easy to read, and mobile-friendly. Try not to add too many image elements or columns, which can jumble information or make the email take a long time to load. Before you send the email, you can send yourself a preview of it, which most email marketing platforms allow you to do, to make sure nothing is getting cut off. The various email providers that your contacts use (like Gmail or Outlook) will display emails differently, so keep the design as simple as possible.

How Often Should You Send an Email?

The question of how often to send an email is tricky, and can depend on the volume of new work or initiatives. If emails are too seldom, your audience might forget about you, but if you email too often, you risk more contacts unsubscribing from your list. If you're an institution with regular and consistent programming, a weekly email might be welcome in the inboxes of people looking for new ways to see art. Generally, if you're an individual artist, we recommend sending at least a seasonal update. If you have more to update, a monthly email is probably enough to keep your audience informed.

As new platforms continue to evolve, they rise and fall in popularity. It's difficult to keep up with the different algorithms that will favor or hinder your content from being seen. Above all, we find that because digital companies have to monetize their platform, it's the individual user, and just as often artists, that loses out. Because email has a practical use, it has become the go-to way to reliably keep in touch with an audience. As you build a database of email contacts, you can move from provider to provider with your audience.



Creative Capital

Instagram Best Practices
for Artists



Instagram for Artists

With hundreds of millions of active users, Instagram can be a powerful tool for building your network and a loyal digital following. Because it is a visual platform, many artists already use Instagram to share their work. Even if you do not work with visual elements in your practice, it can be a helpful for marketing events or other announcements you have coming down the line. While Instagram can be overwhelming to start, with a little knowledge and consistency, it can become a natural extension of what you already do creatively as an artist. This guide will provide an overview of best practices to optimize your Instagram account.

Building a Follow-Worthy Profile

On Instagram, your profile is where people go to learn more about you and your work, so it is important to make sure this page is representative of that at a glance. Think about what your audience can glean from your feed, your bio, and your profile image. A strong profile can make all the difference in whether or not someone who stumbles upon your page decides to follow you.

Think carefully about the purpose you want this profile to serve. Do you want to use your Instagram primarily as a tool to promote your work, upcoming events, and other activity? Do your persona and personal life play a large role in your artistic practice? Many artists use their personal accounts to promote their work, but unless your practice revolves heavily on your role as a public figure, we recommend that you create a separate account. This not only makes it easier to appeal to people who may be interested in the specific disciplines or themes you work with, but also keeps your posts more in line with what your audience actually wants to see. If your focus is too scattered—if you have images of your dinner, your cat, vacation photos, and your art on the same profile, for example—you risk building an audience that is less engaged with your work. It's best to narrow down each profile to a specific focus so that you can grow your audience in that niche. You can always link to your personal profile, or any others, in your bio.

If your goal on social media is to attract new people, make sure that your username is easily searchable. Try to avoid complicated spellings, and choose a username that ties back to your practice. If you meet someone at a networking event, will they be able to find you by looking up your name later? If your username does not explicitly state your name or alias, make sure it is entered in the “Name” field of your profile. This ensures that regardless of what your username is, you can still be found by those looking. It may also be helpful to add your title next to your name, such as “John Doe (Artist/Writer/Filmmaker/etc),” making it much more likely you will appear in a search with that phrase. If the person who is interested in your work doesn't know how to spell your last name for example, but remembers that you're a filmmaker, it could make their search much easier.



Additionally, make sure your bio states what you actually do. Remember that people looking at your profile don't necessarily know you. If your profile represents your overall brand, your bio is your one-sentence elevator pitch or mission statement. Instagram only allows 150 characters, so be succinct, yet memorable. If you have other affiliated accounts, you can list them here by tagging (@) that account.

If you have not switched to a professional, or business, profile, we recommend you do so. To do this, go to your settings, select "Account," then "Switch Account Type." This will allow you to see more in-depth analytics for each of your posts, as well as provide you with a weekly overview of how your content is performing. You will also have the option to put money behind posts that you want to reach more people, such as an event you're promoting, or a new project release. The business profile broadly expands Instagram's user capabilities without affecting anything you've already posted.

Think Visuals First

Instagram is a highly visual platform, therefore, you should think carefully about your visuals before posting. What makes your posts stand out in an endless feed of images? Is it a bright color that is consistent throughout your visual identity? A specific typeface? Your actual face? Get creative with it and see what your audience responds to most—but always keep the grid in mind. Although Instagram allows you to post images up to a 1.91:1 ratio, think about how it would look on your profile center-cropped as a square. You don't want any important information, such as heads or text, to be cut off. When posting videos, remember to choose an interesting cover image. You have the option to choose any still from the video on the same screen where you can apply filters. If you forget, Instagram will automatically choose the first frame—which sometimes ends up being just a black screen! Having a curated grid that is full of interesting visuals—and not black squares—can make a difference in audience engagement and attracting new followers.

So what image ratio works best on the feed? The 1:1 square is still king. Not only does it take up just the right amount of real estate on your home feed, filling most of the screen and leaving enough room for captions, but also ensures a neatly cropped profile grid. If you want to go with a vertical orientation, Instagram allows a 4:5 ratio at most. And although horizontal images can go up to a 1.91:1 ratio, we recommend keeping it at 5:4 when you can, so that your image fills more of the screen. Keep your image resolution at least 1080px on the shortest side to make sure your image doesn't get pixelated.

Being Strategic With Captions

Captions should work in tandem with your images, since both the ideas and the visuals of an Instagram post encourage your followers to engage with your content. Use captions to provide more context for your image—what are people looking at and why should they care—and forge a more personal connection with your followers. Let your personality shine, and write as if you were talking to a friend—this increases your chances of getting people to engage with your content. After all, people feel most at ease, and more willing to engage, when they know that there is someone behind the screen that they can relate to.



Captions get cut off with a “read more” prompt at 125 characters, so choose your first 5-10 words wisely. If your post is promoting an upcoming event, put the most pertinent information in the first sentence. Or, a quippy one-liner related to what will be happening to encourage people to click through to read the full caption. Try to avoid captions that play too heavily off of previous posts, as your audience may have missed them. Instagram does not display posts in chronological order on the home feed, so there’s no guarantee that your followers even saw or read those! And think about people who may be seeing your content for the first time. Does the caption have enough information to keep them interested and coming back for more? You’re allowed a maximum of 2,200 characters, but shorter captions—one to three sentences—usually work best for those of us with short attention spans.

Making Accessible Content

Social media allows you to connect with people from all walks of life—the more accessible your content is, the larger your potential audience can become. Think proactively about addressing needs of people with disabilities—this may include, but is not limited to, people with vision impairment, color blindness, and those who are hard of hearing. Incorporating a few extra practices allows groups that are often marginalized to access your content and spread awareness of the need to improve accessibility in digital spaces.

Adding image and video descriptions to your copy will enable people with vision impairments, or those using text-to-speech readers, to visualize your content. In a few sentences, detail what is happening in the image you shared, painting a clear picture with just words. The key to great descriptions is to concisely mention the most important visual aspects of the work, without being superfluous with your language or adding extra context—that is what the copy, or your web link, is for. Image descriptions are not to be confused with text which describes your work’s media, dimensions, or year created. An example of an image description would be: “a 7x6 grid, on an orange-to-white gradient background, showing circular headshots of the 2021 Creative Capital Awardees. On the bottom, white text reads ‘2021 Creative Capital Awards.’”

Instagram now also allows you to add alt text to your images under the “advanced settings” when posting. We always recommend adding alt text when there is an option to do so. This will allow screen readers to pick up the image and describe it to the user.

For videos, it is important to add embedded captions, not only for those who are hard of hearing, but also for those who aren’t. Most users don’t watch videos on Instagram with their sound on anyway, and captions can add more context to your content. Sometimes it can even make people take a pause just to see what is happening in the video. The text should be large enough to be easily read on a mobile screen and have high contrast, like white type on a black background. Use a simple, easy to read font—one without unnecessary flourishes or serifs, like Helvetica.

For Instagram Live videos, you may also consider describing yourself and your surroundings at the start of the broadcast so those who are unable to actually see the broadcast have a visual in their minds that they can build upon. It is also a caring gesture to acknowledge that people with disabilities may be tuning in.



Making Your Event Stand Out

While it's tempting to post a quick screenshot of a webpage to promote an upcoming event, this method may not garner much attention from your audience. When scrolling through feeds, images with a lot of text and no visually captivating element can easily get lost, go unnoticed, and be confusing. Instead, think about creating a simple template with vivid colors and large text to catch people's attention.

In your template, add a cool image, headshots, and info about the date and time. Keep the template consistent so that your branding has a distinct look and feel. This will make your posts immediately recognizable to your most loyal followers. If you don't have fancy software, use free tools that are available to you, like Google Slides, to get started. [We created a template sample that you can use and adapt to your own style.](#) You can quickly switch out images and change dates and titles to fit your needs. There are also many free apps for download that make it easy to design a graphic image for your feed or Stories.

Instagram feed posts can continue being served to your followers up to three days after being published. Keep this in mind as you promote events and give your post some cushion room to saturate others' feeds. That means don't post about an event coming up "tomorrow," and always be clear about the date an event is taking place. Utilizing Instagram Stories could be a good strategy for more immediate announcements, especially since their countdown sticker sends reminders to those who opt-in for them.

Getting the Clicks

Although people are less likely to click a link on Instagram, having a weblink on your bio acts as a resource for people who are looking to find out more about your work. Social media serves as a gateway for directly connecting with your fans and building stronger relationships. If followers are invested in your posts, you can potentially convert them to your mailing list, for example. The more places your audience sees your content, the more likely they will engage with what you have to offer and share with their friends. When they receive an email from you, they will also be more willing to click through your links than on Instagram.

Often, people switch out this weblink based on their posts or upcoming events. If you do this, make sure the URL or your bio clearly states where this link will take your audience, since not everyone will find you through the same post. Even if a post that promotes the link in your bio receives a lot of engagement, you might find not many people clicked through because of the extra effort it takes to get to your profile page. You want to make this as easy as possible for those who take this extra step to find the link they're looking for.

If you have a long link, you can use an url shortening service, such as [Bitly](#) to abbreviate and rename it. If you tend to share many links over the course of a week, check out landing page tools like [linktr.ee](#) or [Later's linkin.bio](#) to keep everything organized and save followers the confusion of being taken to a webpage they were not expecting. These tools usually come with analytics of their own, so you can track how many people actually clicked each of these links.



Hashtags and Tagging

Hashtags can play a role in reaching new people, but don't have too high expectations about how much they can actually do. To get the most mileage out of hashtags, you have to do some research. Think about what you post about most often, and who you are hoping to reach. It helps to do some legwork, and maintain consistency as you post.

The right hashtags can put you in front of a community of artists gathered around a specific location or discipline. If you are a dancer in San Diego with a live event coming up, you may hashtag posts with themes around your dance genre or performance, such as #SanDiegoDancers, #SanDiegoEvents, or #hiphopdance. Make a list of relevant words and phrases that could work as hashtags—something someone may search for on social media, or communities you can be part of—and actually search them and note how many current posts each hashtag has. Do the current posts seem related to your practice? Sometimes what you see as top posts might not actually be what you expected to see. Look at what your peers, or organizations you are part of, are using. Think of different hashtags that fit within three categories: broad (800,000+ current posts), narrow (between 50,000 and 800,000 current posts), niche (less than 50,000).

Hashtags in the “broad” category are fast-moving, which means many people will be using the same tag, and that people are more likely to search it. However, there is a good chance yours will not stay at the top of the page very long, and therefore might not actually get seen. The “niche” category is very specific to what you do and your specific practice. You may create a very specific hashtag just for a project you're working on, that no one else is using—known as a “branded hashtag.” People are less likely to search these phrases, however, those that do are more likely to engage, and your post will stay at the top of the hashtag page much longer. The “narrow” group is a happy medium, not too specific, yet broad enough to encapsulate people who may not already be following you but are interested in the same things.

Use a mix of these to try to capture audiences in each. Try not to use the exact same group of tags in each post, as Instagram may end up flagging frequent posts with the same tags as spam. Likewise, don't flood your posts with too many hashtags. Although Instagram allows up to 30 tags per post, too many can look spammy to your followers. Stick to 5-12 good ones and keep a running list of these, catering your selection to the topic of each post. If you want to hide your hashtags, you can include them in a comment after posting, rather than in the captions.

Tag other people and organizations in your images and captions (@) if they're featured, but don't spam them if they have no relevance to your post. There is a possibility that they will share your content with their own followers, especially if the reason why you are tagging them is apparent. Geotagging galleries and venues where you are exhibiting, performing, or have an event is also a good way to target people in your area with specific interests.

Additional Features

Instagram Stories has become a staple feature of the platform, especially to those who like to keep their feeds organized. Allowing for snippets of images and up to 15 seconds of video, polls, stickers, and countdowns, it is usually a more casual and immediate way to interact with followers



than the feed. While a feed post can be seen up to three days after posting, Stories are only up for 24 hours, making them ideal for timely announcements.

If you have a business account and over 10,000 followers, you will also be able to utilize the “swipe up” function, allowing you to directly link your Story to other sites, eliminating the cumbersome need of going through a link in your profile or leaving the Instagram app.

Stories Highlights can be a great addition to your profile as well, categorizing all your projects into easily digestible, evergreen content—another way for new followers to discover what you’re about.

Instagram Live is a fun way to engage in real time with your followers. It allows for a more casual interaction as you go about your day or share behind-the-scenes footage of your work. You can even invite up to three additional participants and have a conversation with them on camera. Since Instagram can send out a notification to your followers that you are live, it is a great way to increase engagement and reach with your content. You will also display first in your followers’ Stories banner, temporarily giving your content more visibility. After you have gone live, you have the option to save the video into your IGTV tab, making it additional content for your actual page. We recommend that your Live video be at least ten minutes, as it takes time for followers to join. This will also give people a chance to catch up with what is happening if they join in the middle of a broadcast. Interaction is also important—you will be able to see the comments and hearts left by your fans, so address any them and any questions, and give those engaged followers a shout out!

The recently released Instagram Reels is great for low-stakes, casual content as well. We recommend testing it out and seeing how you can fit it in your practice. Instagram tends to push these features a little more heavily in the initial stages, so you may see increased reach by using it, and other new features that they roll out. They can help you build an audience, but are by no means necessary for enjoying the use of the platform.

Instagram is always adding new features and ways to share content. Sometimes it may be hard to keep up, but try experimenting with what you can do with them as they come out. Early adopters usually have the upper hand and can even influence how that feature is used by their communities and peers.

Consistency is Key

Whether you prefer Instagram feed, Stories, IGTV, or Reels, one of the most important things to remember about social media is to be consistent with your posting frequency. You don’t have to post everyday, but try to stick to a schedule of at least three times a week. We recommend posting no more than once a day to get top mileage out of each post—too many posts in a short amount of time can spread your audiences’ attention too thin. Create a schedule for yourself with post ideas to take some of the pressure off. Be mindful of when your followers are online—Instagram’s built-in analytics displays this data for you as a breakdown of hours and days. Once you’ve nailed a frequency that works for you and your audience, you’re already halfway there.



Be Social and Engage

Instagram's algorithm works by showing posts that you are more likely to interact with first in your feed. Therefore, the more your audience interacts with your posts, the more often you will show in up other people's feeds. Social media is *social*, so also make an effort to engage with others. Respond to people who comment on your posts, and like and comment on other posts. Instagram rewards you for interacting with others on the platform by sharing your content with those followers. This also makes your followers feel more connected with you, and more likely to keep engaging with your content.

All digital platforms are interconnected. Let people who already love what you do know that you have an Instagram. Put your handle on your website, your emails, and your business cards. You already have a dedicated fanbase ready to engage, you just have to let them know how to find you.

Finally, remember that the digital landscape is always in flux and that algorithms can change quickly without notice. Don't be afraid to experiment and have fun with it. As with art, the joy in social media is in the act of creating, of embracing the unknown, of making new discoveries along the way.



Creative Capital

Twitter Best Practices
for Artists



Twitter for Artists

For those using Twitter for the first time, there can be a high barrier of entry to start using it. Those who use it frequently already know the benefits of Twitter, but unless it's already a part of your practice, it can be difficult to know where to begin. Because of the nature of the platform, Twitter favors writing, news, links, and humor—so it's a natural fit for journalists, writers, and comedians. If you're new to Twitter, or don't fall into any of these categories, we have some simple procedures you can follow to make sure you're on it, and not missing the conversation.

Is Twitter Right for You?

In a list of the top most used social media outlets, Twitter doesn't even rank in the top ten. However, it's typically recognized and linked to as a premier location of a person's digital identity because of the versatility of content that people can share. Many of the world's top leaders, thinkers, and writers choose Twitter because it's simply the quickest way to share their thoughts and content with a direct audience.

The volume of Tweets published in a single day can make the platform daunting when starting off. An active user can spend all day on it, and single, one-sentence tweets can drive entire discussions, even mobilize thousands of accounts to converse about a single issue. Meanwhile, even if you spend a fair amount of time on Twitter, you might find that people are not clicking on the links or seeing your work as much as you would like. Simply because it's a very busy platform, the return might be far lower than the time you are spending.

However, unlike any other platform, Twitter allows an open conversation forum—and that's precisely what can be volatile or exciting about the platform. You might consider the time you spend on Twitter more like a research and brainstorming part of your process. Twitter is also a great place to directly share the links and ideas that are about your work—for instance, gallery shows, screenings, Q&As or other events, or news items about the topics that you are interested in. Whereas other platforms make it harder to post direct links, Twitter encourages it, and you can join the conversations around certain topics, adding your own work to the mix.

If your work addresses a specific topic, like climate change, you might want to follow the accounts, art-related or not, that are sharing information about it. You can use the platform to test out ideas and thoughts you have with an audience already engaging with that subject.

Post Consistently, But Eccentricity Helps

Like with other social media platforms, posting consistently and regularly will help you build an audience. If you engage a particular topic, or handful of issues, you can gain new followers who will look forward to hearing your take on those topics. On the other hand, you never know what might



get attention on Twitter. Even if you post about something way off-topic compared to what you usually post, that's exactly the kind of thing that your audience might appreciate.

Twitter is the open forum of ideas par excellence. More than other social media platforms, Twitter is where people come to air their opinions, expertise, and spin on a variety of issues regardless if they're professionally involved in that topic. Actors talk about politics, while politicians share their opinions on movies—conversations take place between people across a wide array of backgrounds on Twitter. It's important that artists are represented in this forum, so if you have the time and bandwidth to maintain a consistent Twitter presence, do it!

Twitter has changed and evolved over the years, so the mannerisms and mechanisms that were popular two years ago, aren't necessarily used today. Retweeting, or sharing someone else's Tweet, to your followers is still a common practice, but perhaps less so than it was a couple of years ago. Twitter allows users to "Quote Retweet," which allows you to put your own message above the Retweet of someone else's post.

Images and Links

Twitter is a platform for writing and sharing links, but images go a long way to helping drive engagement. When posting a single image, Twitter has a particular image ratio that does well—16:9. If you are using an image that doesn't fit that aspect ratio, Twitter will use its algorithm to determine how to crop the image, and it may not appear on your feed as you expected it to.

Posting a series of images will change that. Play around with the different aspect ratios used for different numbers of images, and you can research best image sizes for Twitter—this often changes as Twitter updates its platform, so just make sure the post you are looking at is recent.

When sharing a link, it can be helpful to see if Twitter is able to pull an image from the website you have posted. An image that relates to a link, or "card," can help with engagement, and will give your audience an idea of what you are sharing. It's often less tempting to click through links that don't offer this preview. To test if the URL you are about to share has a card that will be pulled automatically, you can use this "[card validator](#)."

If you are posting about an event, including details of the event in the image will allow you more characters to talk about the content of the event in the Tweet itself. We've created [this simple template](#) for you to copy and use in your own style. Since the image is often what the user's eyes are first drawn toward, they will clearly see where and when the event, exhibition, or discussion you're referring to takes place.

Content of Your Tweet

Twitter only allows for 280 characters per Tweet, not counting images or links—but it's just that limitation that has allowed the platform to blossom over the years. This short amount of writing basically fits a sentence or two per Tweet, and forces you to be economical about what you say.



When crafting a Tweet, remember that your audience will see it amid a feed of many other Tweets discussing a myriad of topics. It's important to be clear and thoughtful, considering that your audience may not immediately know what you're talking about. You should also get to the point fairly quickly. If you're new to Twitter, you might consider writing your first Tweets on a computer, instead of a phone, for easier drafting, writing, and editing. Well-crafted Tweets will go a long way to communicating your message.

One way that Twitter has allowed for longer forms of communication is by creating the "thread." The thread is a series of Tweets, anchored by a lead Tweet, which often introduces a certain topic. You can create a thread by clicking the "reply" button on your own Tweet, as you would if you were responding to someone else. Sometimes, users will end each Tweet thread with a consecutive number paired with the total number of Tweets in the thread (ie, "2/14" to distinguish it's the second Tweet in a thread of 14). Later, if one of the Tweets gets shared out of its context, it will be clear that that Tweet belongs to a series in a thread. If you continue to post to the thread days, weeks, or even months after publishing the initial Tweet, the thread will put that initial Tweet back on people's feed, which can be helpful if they have missed it.

Like with any social media platform, hashtags are a good way to enter into a platform with other people that you may not know. However, because Twitter limits how much you can write, it's better to use one or two strategic hashtags, rather than as many as possible. Tweets with too many hashtags will look like spam, and cause people to glance over them. But if you're engaging in a specific conversation, or talking about a specific event, you can use hashtags strategically to gain new followers.

Use the tagging function by typing @ and a person's Twitter handle will make your Tweet show up in their notifications. You should use this function when it makes sense, for instance, when you're naturally mentioning a collaborator, or referring to another artist's work. But you shouldn't wholesale tag people who you want to read your Tweet as it also might read like spam, and just makes it generally difficult for your general audience to see the message of your post. Consider that a well-written Tweet that is more generally interesting to a wider audience will get more views if it's Retweeted and replied to than if you just tag a bunch of people.

Pinned Tweets is an option that will help new followers or potential followers learn about a specific campaign you want them to know about. For instance, if you have a solo exhibition, you can Tweet about it, and pin it to the top of your page, so it's always at the top of your feed on your profile. These Tweets often will get more attention while they're pinned than the normal ones that will stop gaining visibility after a few hours.

[Tweetdeck](#) is another powerful tool that Twitter has created to manage posting. This allows you to schedule Tweets, so that you spread out your content across the calendar, and receive notifications about which Tweets users are engaging with. Using Tweetdeck can also make it easy to monitor posts made toward a specific hashtag conversation. And, if you have different Twitter accounts, Tweetdeck can help unify your control over all of them.



Honing Your Twitter Account

The best way to use Twitter strategically is to use it regularly. Everyone uses Twitter in different ways, and the way that people use it has evolved over the years. Follow people in your circle and see how they use it. Pay attention to what works and what doesn't work. As you scroll through Twitter, notice what makes you slow down, and what makes you glance over a post. Think about what made one Tweet engaging, and the other not. This could be helpful as you make your own Tweets promoting your practice.

Twitter also offers a fair amount of analytics that show you how well you are doing from month to month. These analytics show an executive summary, top-level stats about your overall performance on Twitter, showing you your growth, top followers, and top Tweets.

While it's easy to use Twitter, using it strategically, especially toward the goal of promoting your practice, requires thought and time. Twitter rewards more frequent posting, and is more forgiving of the platforms, allowing you to experiment with the medium. If you're new to the platform, consider using it for a few months to see what works for you, then announcing that you're on it through other channels later.



Creative Capital

Facebook Best Practices
for Artists



Facebook for Artists

Facebook continues to be one of the most used and influential social media platforms today in spite of facing many criticisms over the recent years around privacy breaches, data collection, and the spreading of false information. This history has led many to leave the platform in favor of others, and has also led Facebook to change its algorithm and functionality many times over a short period. Although many artists and organizations are shifting their focus and digital presence to other platforms like Instagram and Twitter, having a public Facebook profile can still provide advantageous tools to help expand your digital marketing capabilities. The platform continues to have one of the most robust ad platforms, and a plethora of other functions like Marketplace for selling items and Events to promote online and in-person gatherings. If your time is limited, however, and you do not plan on running paid ads, we suggest checking out our other guides to see what other platforms can better suit your social goals.

To begin, decide whether or not you want to make your page a public business account, keep a personal profile, or both. Controversy over Facebook's display of false and misleading news in the recent years have pushed the platform to display less content from "Pages," or business profiles, on the feed in favor of more personal content from friends. While you are more likely to get more engagement if you have a personal profile with a large following already, [creating or converting your current profile](#), into a Business or Public Figure page can provide other benefits. It will unlock extra features such as advertising capabilities and post insights, providing you with a foundation to understanding your unique audience. It will also track how each post performs, as well as changes in your overall performance over a period of time. We suggest weighing the pros and cons based on your individual goals. What we discuss in the following sections will apply to business accounts.

Post Types and Creating Content

Eye-catching visuals play a large role in whether or not your content gets attention on Facebook and choosing the right post type can affect the engagement you get in return. Facebook has multiple post formats to choose from, including image and video posts, links, and live. The goal is to use visuals that stand out to get people to stop scrolling through their feed, read your caption, and potentially engage with your content. You, therefore, want to use the optimized image sizes to make the most of the space provided.

When creating content, always think about how it would appear to a user on a mobile device first, since most users of social media are using their phones to browse. Luckily, in the [Content Studio](#) of your business profile, Facebook allows you to preview your post on both desktop and mobile as you draft it. This feature also allows you to schedule posts, search through your posts, and more.



We recommend using this feature and always saving the post as a draft before publishing, just to make sure all the assets display properly.

Don't forget to list your website and updated bio in the "about" section. Upload a recognizable profile image and a cover image that is related to what you do. Cover image sizes vary whether you're viewing on a mobile device (640x360 pixels) or computer (820x312 pixels). Use an image that would work for both, leaving the most important information in the center. You can also insert a 20-90 second video as a cover banner. This could be useful if you have a professional short film reel, or other videos which showcase your work. According to Facebook, it is best to use 1250x463 pixel videos, with a 2.7:1 aspect ratio.

Images in posts should be at least 1200x630 pixels, however, square images tend to display better on mobile. You can also post multiple images in a single post, just be aware that Facebook crops the image preview depending on how many you add and the image ratio of each. Save your post as a draft first to make sure nothing of importance is cropped off.

The recommended size for videos is 1280x720 pixels, for both portrait and landscape. When creating a video, be sure that it is interesting even without sound. Most people watch videos on Facebook on mute, so add closed captions for any parts with audible speech. Additionally, the first five seconds of your video are vital. If you can hook your audience in within that time frame, they are more likely to watch your video to the end—that means you avoid extensive credits or title screens. Facebook recommends uploading videos that are three minutes or more, but you don't need to push for that length. It is most important that the content in the video is engaging throughout the whole run time.

A link post is created when you insert a link into the copy of your post. Facebook will automatically pull in an image and headline, and display these as a hyperlink to that page. When making link posts, you have the option of deleting the actual link from your caption to make it appear cleaner, or keeping it in the caption as another clear call-to-action point for the post.

Facebook Live posts, like Instagram Live, can be used for longer, more informal videos. If you're showing the backstage of a performance, a studio tour, or your process for creating work, this is a post type you may consider. As you go live, your followers will automatically receive a notification to join you. You should aim for your live video to be at least ten minutes long to give your followers time to join, as well as keep those who join in the middle of the broadcast engaged. Audience members are able to make comments, so give them shout outs and answer questions! People love to be acknowledged as they are commenting. You can save the broadcast onto your timeline after you have completed it.

There are many more interactive post types available for Facebook ads, such as carousels and instant experiences, and Facebook is always adding and changing these formats. Sometimes these features go from being exclusively for ads to usable for everyone, and vice versa. It is good to try out different ways of posting to see if there is anything new—both for paid and unpaid posts—that would suit your content better.



Gain Visibility with Events

Facebook can be a useful tool for getting your events more visibility. The advantage of using their in-platform events feature is that you can reach people outside of your personal following for free. Use your current following to your favor—invite them to join and if they accept, this will show up on their timeline, reaching their followers and increasing the visibility of your event quickly. But keep in mind that Facebook limits invites to 500, so be sure to invite your most engaged followers and friends, or people you know would accept your invitation. Facebook also sends reminders to those who marked themselves as “Interested” or “Attending” the day of the event. You can also post updates or reminders in the “Discussion” section of the event to build up excitement.

Advertising on Facebook

Business profiles have the option of using posts as advertisements. It is a relatively inexpensive way to reach more people. But with boosting and the more detailed targeting options in Facebook Ads Manager, starting off using paid advertising on Facebook can be extremely complex. If this is your first time advertising on social media, we recommend trying to do a few simple boosts on existing posts first to get a general idea of how advertising works. To do this, you will simply need to select a post on your timeline and click the “Boost” button. It will bring up options to select a call-to-action button, a targeted audience, duration, budget, and placement. With any type of marketing, it helps to determine your goals before going in.

Facebook Ads Manager has the same capabilities, but you are able to get more detailed with targeting, budgeting, and setting duration of your ads. It is also a place to see all your ads in one place, and serves both Facebook and Instagram advertisements. The platform can be extremely complicated for beginners, so go into it only after you are comfortable with boosts. We won't go into detail here, but if you think you're ready to dive into the platform, [we recommend checking out Facebook's basic guide to learn more](#).

If you are planning to run paid ads, experiment with Instagram as well. Instagram is also owned by Facebook, so you can actually run ads on both platforms with the same assets (although you should create platform-optimized versions) on their Ads Manager platform. With social media changing so quickly, and so many variables at play with ads, it is difficult to pinpoint which platform will work better for you at a given time. Test them out regularly. You always have the option to stop running the ad, or adjust the parameters, if it is not performing well.

Consistency, but with Purpose

As with all social media platforms, consistency is the key to success. Post regularly, even if it's just once a week—but no more than once per day. Aim to achieve a balance between posting regularly to stay on people's radar, but not too often as to spam their feeds and risk them unfollowing you. Think carefully about what you post. Facebook is best for sharing information, or entertaining content. The best posts are shareable and have something to offer your audience.

Ultimately, whether you use Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, it is becoming increasingly important to have a social presence online. Social media enables you to build a devoted audience, gain visibility within your field, and give you a way to keep people engaged with your practice.

Send us your feedback!

We hope you found this guide useful. If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, please let us know using **this form**.