



Royal College of Occupational Therapists

How should we use social media?

We have created our top ten tips for how we should be using social media, but if you have any questions about the topics covered or anything else, please drop us an email socialmedia@rcot.co.uk

1. Professional vs personal

We understand that there is likely to be some intersection between your personal and your professional lives on social media, but our advice is to keep this to a minimum where possible. If you reference your role with RCOT on your personal accounts, be aware that anything that you say or post reflects on the organisation and if you take a position on anything that is contrary to RCOT's official position, then it could cause conflict.

If you manage one of our branches social media accounts then again, please remember that you are representing RCOT so all thoughts and opinions need to reflect the organisation. On professional accounts, please keep personal information to a minimum and only include it if it benefits your professional life, e.g. activity for a relevant charity. Share your thoughts and insights, but keep it professional and broadly aligned to your role. If you believe that you need any additional social media accounts, please agree the requirement with your internal contact and then ask the social media team who will create the account for you.

Please do not set up social media accounts for subgroups of branches: there should only be one Facebook and one Twitter presence for each of the 10 specialist sections and 13 regions. If you need to categorise posts because they are only relevant to a small section of your audience (for example a specific geographic sub-region, or a clinical forum) then please use hashtags. These are searchable on both Facebook and Twitter. It is a good idea to decide what recurring hashtags will be used on your accounts and to let your followers know by noting this in your bio or using a pinned post. The Digital Team are always happy to advise on the best use of hashtags so please contact us to discuss your requirements.

All social media channels related to RCOT must be set up by the digital team and these channels will remain the property of RCOT if you leave the organisation. You may not take your RCOT social media account or contacts with you when you leave. Please ensure that RCOT have admin rights to all of your accounts.

2. Engage at the level you feel comfortable

If you are interested in using social media professionally, but this is new to you, then take your time to get familiar with it. Join, follow a few key personalities/organisations in your field of interest and watch, listen and learn for as long as it takes for you to feel that you understand that platform. When you feel more confident you can get involved by commenting and sharing your own thoughts and relevant content. Equally, social media is not for everybody and if you feel that you do not want to use it, then there should be no obligation for you to do so.

Social media works most effectively with people who want to be using it. If you are already an experienced user of social media then you may be keen to get started. This is great, but before you do, please take some time to have a look at our channels and understand the organisational culture, tone of voice and the way in which we use social media because each organisation is different. Please ensure that you engage in social media training provided by RCOT

3. Be responsible for your words and actions

Anything that you write or post is your own personal responsibility, and this also applies to reposting the content of others. The same rules apply online as offline. Even if you use the common disclaimer 'all opinions expressed are personal and do not reflect those of the organisation' please be aware that, if you state that you are representative of RCOT, your opinions will be considered to reflect the organisation. Never post confidential or sensitive business information, or share member-only content.



4. Think 'am I sure?'

The blessing and the curse of social media is its instantaneous nature. Once something is out there, it can't be taken back (screen grabs, reposts, caches all ensure that deleted content remains lurking in dark corners!) With this in mind, before you post anything, just have a quick 'am I sure?' check. If you have any hesitation, ask someone, perhaps a colleague or a manager. We have a social media team who are always happy to advise on any aspect, including checking individual messages, so you are always welcome to email them on socialmedia@rcot.co.uk.

If you are retweeting someone's content, consider whether they are a credible source, just as you would when including content in a report. Lots of followers is no signifier of quality of information. Finally, don't forget to check your posts before you publish – check for factual errors, and check for spelling and grammatical mistakes. If you want to spellcheck posts, you can write them in Word first, or install a social spellchecker, such as Grammarly. Please don't share links with no text – engagement happens when you add a short caption. Please don't share surveys – requests to participate in research is required to have RCOT ethical approval prior to being shared. Ensure that the RCOT Research and Development team has been consulted before sharing or posting.

If you agree to sponsorship that includes social media engagement please do get in touch with the RCOT Digital Team to ensure the content is in line with brand guidelines. Retweets do imply indorsement, so don't retweet commercial tweets unless there is a clear gain for members in your region and it doesn't create a commercial conflict of interest for RCOT – if in any doubt, please contact David Agyei in our commercial team - David.Agyei@rcot.co.uk.

5. Assume that everyone can see everything.

Privacy settings can be flouted by a simple screen grab so do not make any assumptions that anything you post will be restricted to any one audience. It is safest to assume that everyone can read everything, from your mum to your manager. This means that you need your messages to be consistent at all times. It's good to tailor posts to particular audiences, but keep them broadly aligned.

6. Balance and time management

Although social media can be a great way to augment your work, it should never get in the way of your main role and objectives within the organisation. It can have a way of swallowing up time, so please ensure that you prioritise your day-to-day work and carefully manage any time spent on social media accordingly.

At the same time, please do not leave accounts dormant – if you are unable to use your accounts for a long period of time, please get in touch with our UK Membership Engagement Officer, Stacey Abraham – Stacey.Abraham@rcot.co.uk who can help advise us on how we can schedule posts in your absence to ensure you remain active.

7. Use these resources to help you find and create content!

If you want ideas on what to post, or who to follow and retweet, then we have resources to help you. There are a number of public lists created by @theRCOT on Twitter that you can follow, including RCOT Staff, RCOT Regions and RCOT Specialist Sections which will keep you updated with activity across the organisation.

In addition, there are well-established #s on Twitter which draw together interesting and relevant content:

- #ValueOfOT
- #occupationaltherapy
- #OT365
- #OTalk

Following and tagging your own content with these labels will bring your content to a wider audience. Most large events have their own hashtag and you should consider creating your own event # as standard practice at event-planning stage to enable delegates to promote and discuss your event and topics. Use your account to promote your events, work, newsletters and who your committee members are.



Participate in social media initiatives from the college – we may ask you to share or get involved in campaigns and to use supporting apps and services. We will provide full help to support you doing this, if needed.

8. When you encounter a tricky situation...

If things get tricky on social media, which they sometimes do, please don't panic and don't feel the need to respond immediately. Take your time to decide on the best approach. There are, broadly speaking, three response options:

- Ignore.
- Engage (respond).
- Refer.

Here are some suggestions on ways to handle the most common tricky situations:

A trolling or abusive post - This may be characterised by rude language or profanities, or it may be attempting to draw you into a discussion on an inappropriate or controversial topic. In most instances, ignoring will be the best course of action. No good will come of entering into an argument online, so do not do it. If a person is persistent and creates a problem, they can be blocked from social media across the organisation, but please speak to the social media team about the situation before taking action.

A negative or complaining post - If someone directs a grumble about something related to RCOT at you, then the best course of action is usually to take the conversation out of the public domain as quickly as possible. Find out who the best person is for them to speak to about their issue, or if it's you, you could send them a quick message saying you are sorry that they are unhappy, would they like to give you a call, or drop you an email to discuss it in detail. Then you can send them your contact details by direct message (DM). The ball is then in their court to take the matter further. If it's more urgent, or a serious complaint, then ask for their contact details so that we can proactively follow up with them.

An ill-advised post on an RCOT work account - In the event of an ill-advised post, this should be removed by the author as soon as it is discovered. If it's serious enough (i.e. something that is likely to attract the attention of any media outlets) then it needs to be referred to the Media Officer or the most senior member of the communications team immediately to formulate a response.

If this happens, then please inform the social media team as quickly as possible and don't post anything else to any social media channels until the matter is resolved.

9. Keep your information up-to-date

Remember to keep your profile up-to-date. If you have included contact details or a web link in your bio, ensure they are accurate as well as any images/ backgrounds. If you have a LinkedIn profile where you list your role at RCOT, please ensure that your information is accurate and please remember to remove RCOT as your current employer when you leave.

10. Have fun and be smart!

So, be transparent, be authentic and most of all, be yourself. Use your channels to interact with members whenever you have the opportunity. Support and encourage other branches of RCOT (Regions and Specialist Sections.) You are representing RCOT because you are great at what you do and our experience to date shows that our people have great instincts when it comes to judging what is appropriate. RCOT branches and employees are some of our greatest advocates on social media and are doing a fantastic job at connecting with members and positioning themselves as the key voices of the occupational therapy industry.

Use your common sense, have fun and ask for help when you need it. If you choose to get involved in the social side of RCOT then we look forward to your content!



Should our social accounts be open or closed?

RCOT social media accounts, including those belonging to the branches, should always be open.

RCOT social media is intended to be promotional; its purpose is to keep members informed about RCOT's latest news, activities and products, and to make non-members aware of the membership benefits that they are missing out on. You can link to relevant member-only content, providing it is behind the member login on the RCOT website.

Social media is not considered to constitute a member-only benefit. For consistency and privacy, social media should not be used to communicate privately among member groups or to share member-only files or information. RCOT cannot meet the expectation of privacy that closed groups would require and this presents a risk to the organisation.

If members would like to communicate in a semi member-only environment, then there is a [private RCOT LinkedIn group](#) which members can join.

In order to join, they need to email their RCOT membership number to the Digital Team, who cross-reference this on Integra before granting access to the group. There is, however, no facility to remove lapsed members, so we are unable to offer assurances that it is restricted to current RCOT members.

If you require further information on this, or if you wish to discuss a requirement for private networking or file sharing, then please contact Trevor White, Director of Finance on Trevor.White@rcot.co.uk.