Social Media: The Promises and the Pitfalls
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Digital Ethics
- Maintain your privacy settings
- Protect patient privacy
- Adhere to professional standards and guidelines
- Know your organization’s policy
- Keep your professional and personal social media separate
- Use common sense and be civil

ANA’s Principles for Social Networking
- Nurses must not transmit or place online individually identifiable patient information.
- Nurses must observe ethically prescribed professional patient – nurse boundaries.
- Nurses should understand that patients, colleagues, institutions and employers may view postings.
- Nurses should take advantage of privacy settings and seek to separate personal and professional information online.
- Nurses should bring content that could harm a patient’s privacy, rights, or welfare to the attention of appropriate authorities.
- Nurses should participate in developing institutional policies governing online conduct.

NCSBN Guidelines
- Nurses must recognize that they have an ethical and legal obligation to maintain patient privacy and confidentiality at all times.
- Nurses are prohibited from transmitting by way of any electronic media any patient-related information or image that is reasonably anticipated to violate patient rights to confidentiality or privacy or to otherwise degrade or embarrass the patient.
- Nurses should not share, post, or otherwise disseminate any information, including images, about a patient or information gained in the nurse-patient relationship with anyone unless there is a patient care–related need to disclose the information or other legal obligation to do so.
- Do not identify patients by name or post or publish information that may lead to the identification of a patient. Limiting access to postings through privacy settings is not sufficient to ensure privacy.
- Do not refer to patients in a disparaging manner, even if they are not identified.
- Do not take photos or videos of patients on personal devices, including cell phones. Follow employer policies for taking photographs or video of patients for treatment or other legitimate purposes using employer-provided devices.
- Maintain professional boundaries in the use of electronic media.
- The nurse has the obligation to establish, communicate, and enforce professional boundaries with patients in the online environment. Nurses should use caution when having online social contact with patients or former patients. Online contact with patients or former patients blurs the distinction between a professional and personal relationship. The fact that a patient may initiate contact with the nurse does not permit the nurse to engage in a personal relationship with the patient.
• Consult employer policies or an appropriate leader within the organization for guidance regarding work-related postings.
• Promptly report any identified breach of confidentiality or privacy.
• Be aware of and comply with employer policies regarding the use of employer-owned computers, cameras, and other electronic devices and the use of personal devices in the workplace.
• Do not make disparaging remarks about employers or coworkers.
• Do not make threatening, harassing, profane, obscene, sexually explicit, racially derogatory, homophobic, or other offensive comments.
• Do not post content or otherwise speak on behalf of the employer unless authorized to do so, and follow all applicable policies of the employer.

Resources
- *The Nurse’s Social Media Advantage*, by Robert Fraser.
- Pagana K. Facebook: Know the policy before posting. Nurse.com. (CE module)
- Health on the Net Foundation [http://www.hon.ch/Global/copyright.html](http://www.hon.ch/Global/copyright.html)
- Copyright [http://fairuse.stanford.edu](http://fairuse.stanford.edu)
- Social Media Governance [http://socialmediagovernance.com](http://socialmediagovernance.com)