

## Using Social Media

Social media are interactive technologies that can be used to help connect individuals or communities. Content shared on social media platforms or networks is intended to engage participants, creating interactive participation. You're probably active on some form of social media using popular platforms such as Facebook, X, LinkedIn, or YouTube.

Within the amateur radio community, some have called ham radio "the first social media." Hams turn to the airwaves to make new friends, to communicate around the world, to engage each other in learning about radio technology and radio communications, or for public service purposes.

ARRL uses social media to have an interactive dialogue with members, or anyone who might be interested in learning what amateur radio is all about. Together, our use of social media can help expand interest in amateur radio and grow our ARRL community of active hams.

### Why Social Media Works

The purpose of social media is to create timely engagement about a particular topic or subject matter of interest to a community. Content for social media can include information that is relevant and of interest to prospective hams, prospective members, current members, and even like-minded communities. Examples of social media can include a post about a current happening, an invitation to participate in an event, a video about a new product, or a photo from a Field Day site. Users engage with these posts by "liking" or commenting, adding their ideas and opinions, and sharing the post with others.

### Find ARRL on Social Media

Please visit the ARRL Social Media web page - <http://www.arrl.org/arrl-social-media> - where you will find links to the social media feeds managed by ARRL HQ, as well as the social media feeds administered by ARRL volunteers at the Division and Section levels. *We rely on individuals within the Divisions and Sections to provide ARRL HQ with up-to-date information on the social media accounts they have and the links to those accounts, so please review this and let us know if this information needs to be updated.*

### Social Media Platforms

**Facebook:** Facebook is a social media platform where users can share text, photos, videos, and stream live videos. It's popular for connecting with family and friends but is also used by organizations like ARRL to share information and content that will cause users to want to "follow" ARRL's future posts. This grows ARRL's audience.

In addition, on Facebook, you can establish groups, where people with similar interests can come together, allowing group members to share photos, videos, and posts. For example, ARRL has groups for ARRL Field Day, the ARRL Collegiate Amateur Radio Program, and others.

ARRL uses its Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ARRL.org>) to share information about upcoming events, share photographs from ARRL-sponsored or ARRL-affiliated events, and highlight other ARRL-related milestones.

#### *ARRL Facebook pages*

- ARRL: [@ARRL.org](https://www.facebook.com/ARRL.org)
- On the Air: [@ARRLOTA](https://www.facebook.com/ARRLOTA)

#### *ARRL Facebook Groups*

- Field Day: [groups/arrlfd](https://www.facebook.com/groups/arrlfd)
- Collegiate Amateur Radio Initiative: [groups/ARRLCARI](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ARRLCARI)
- SKYWARN Recognition Day: [groups/skywarnrecognitionday](https://www.facebook.com/groups/skywarnrecognitionday)

**Instagram:** Instagram is a social media platform where users can post photos, videos, and stories. You can connect your Instagram posts to Facebook as well. ARRL uses Instagram to show photos and videos that highlight ARRL activities and member participation.

*ARRL's Instagram Account:* <https://instagram.com/arrlhq>

**X (formerly Twitter):** X is a social media platform where you can also share text, photos, and videos. ARRL uses its X account primarily to share links to stories from the ARRL News feed and timely information. This is done by having a really simple syndication (RSS) feed connected from [www.arrl.org/news](http://www.arrl.org/news) to [twitter.com/arrl](https://twitter.com/arrl).

We also have **ARRL ARES** and **W1AW** Twitter accounts where we share news relating to emergency preparedness or disaster response (in the case of the ARRL\_ARES Twitter feed), and news relating to bulletin schedules and station operations (in the case of the W1AW Twitter feed).

**LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is a professional networking social media platform. Posts here are mostly educational in nature or business-related (such as employment opportunities). We also post items to promote *QST* articles or ARRL podcasts. Here we can connect with other professionals and companies.

*ARRL's LinkedIn page:* <https://www.linkedin.com/company/american-radio-relay-league/>

**YouTube:** YouTube is a video-based platform. ARRL uses YouTube to host a variety of published videos, from short form introductions and tutorials about various membership benefits to longer-form videos supporting ARRL magazine content, product reviews, promotions for new ARRL products, and presentations made at hamfests and conventions. For many people, YouTube is the most valuable reference tool for finding videos on nearly any topic.

*ARRL's YouTube channel:* <http://youtube.com/ARRLHQ>

Use of Hashtags (#) and @ to Leverage Attention

Social media accounts allow the ARRL to connect and engage with those who directly follow those accounts.

The proper use of hashtags and the @ symbol within one's messages on those platforms gives those messages greater reach by allowing them to be seen by anyone who is following or searching for those hashtags. It allows ARRL to leverage and amplify a message so that it is seen by more people (via hashtags) or by specific targeted audiences (via the @ symbol).

### Hashtags (#)

Using hashtags is like using search engine optimization (SEO) in online communication/marketing; it helps make sure that the post is seen by people who are following the topics that are highlighted in a hashtag.

Hashtags that the ARRL's Communications endeavors to use in every social media post are:

- #hamradio
- #amateurradio
- #arrrl

Then there are hashtags that are used that are specific to the item that is being posted, such as #ISS or #NASA or #DIY.

Remember that many events create their own "official" hashtags so that the event organizers can collect, or view posts written about them, such as #Hamvention2024 or #ARRLFD (for ARRL Field Day). We strongly suggest finding out what those hashtags are and including them in your posts.

There are also hashtags for specific days (#ThrowbackThursday or #FlashbackFriday) and these hashtags can be abbreviated to #tbt or #fbf.

There are also national "days" such as #NationalUglyChristmasSweaterDay or #NationalPiDay that ARRL works to find ways to connect with amateur radio.

*(Note: Hashtags are always written as one word without spaces, even if it is a multiple-word phrase.)*

### The @ Symbol

The use of the @ symbol, followed by a specific user's name, such as @redcross or @weatherchannel, allows ARRL to make sure that a specific user is aware that it has been mentioned in an ARRL social media post. This is particularly valuable in targeting news organizations or media outlets to make them aware of the stories that we have to tell.

To find out an organization's social media @ name, it is best to first look at their website for their official account. If it isn't present, you can search for an account within the social media platform you are creating a post for. An organization's name may vary by platform, or not be exact to their

actual name. For example, The Weather Channel is the name of an organization, however their name on Twitter is @weatherchannel. On Facebook, their tag is @theweatherchannel. Twitter tags show the @ symbol followed by the social media name, whereas Facebook shows the full name with spaces. Both ways link to the corresponding accounts.

To tag an organization in a post or comment, type the @ symbol followed by their social media account name. You will be able to type the full name or click the name from the list.

For official accounts, there will be a checkmark next to the organization's name. This means it has been verified as the official account. This is the same process for Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

(Note: While hashtags and @ symbols should be used on most social media platforms, there is no purpose to using those symbols on a YouTube post since YouTube uses very different algorithms.)

### **Be Aware of the Pros and Cons of Engagement on Social Media**

ARRL has social media accounts to engage with people who have an interest in amateur radio and with our members. There is a lot to be gained by being able to share information and have conversations with people through social media.

However, there is also a downside, and that is when people use social media to spread misinformation or to post rude, insulting, or inappropriate comments in response to a post. People who like to complain or have self-serving interests find a social media post to be a willing forum for this type of behavior because they can do it from the safety of their computer or smartphone and not have to say it directly to the person's (or organization's) face.

Each social media platform does have tools that let you hide or delete inappropriate comments. Some tools allow an individual who consistently posts inappropriate comments from posting to your social media feed. Please be aware, however, that an account manager must be judicious in using these tools to prevent the organization from earning a reputation for not being willing to honestly engage with its members.