Social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram (and others) provide advocates with an abundance of useful resources and networking opportunities.

Not sure where to get started on social media? Follow these tips.

**GET STARTED**

Set Your Goals
Define your motivations for using social media as an advocate. Keep these goals top-of-mind and stay consistent with what you discuss socially.

Be Yourself
Tell people about yourself by filling out a profile description and adding your photo. Let people know who you represent (self or organization) and that a retweet/follow is not an endorsement. If representing yourself, add “views/opinions are my own” to your description.

**KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**

Make Connections
Follow established not-for-profit organizations and individuals who share trusted information that is relevant to your advocacy efforts. Take note of who is following and engaging with these profiles. Consider following them to connect with users who share your goals and interests.

Find Your Crowd
Search for relevant terms and hashtags across Facebook and Twitter to find like-minded users and see who is interacting on a consistent basis. Symplur is a great website to find relevant healthcare hashtags and thought leaders.

Public vs. Private
Certain social media posts are not meant to be shared with an entire public following. When you want to reach out to an individual social media user, use the channel’s direct messaging platform. Unlike posts on your feed, direct messages are not visible to the public. This is especially useful when you are sharing personal medical details or sensitive information.
**The Rules of Engagement**

**Take Your Time**
For guidance and tips, it’s helpful to first take the time to see how others use social media. This will help you better understand how to format your messaging and craft your tone across social media networks.

**Less Is More**
When you’re ready to start posting, use your own voice and share information that you feel comfortable with. Find the right pace of sharing content. Avoid over-posting or spamming your followers.

**Start Conversations**
When relevant, begin discussions with people who share common interests or needs by including their handle (@username) in your tweet.

**Respond & Reply**
When someone engages with you on Twitter, always offer a reply. A simple “thank you” goes a long way.

**Give Credit**
Give credit when credit is due through retweets and shares, and always link to your sources. Before sharing, make sure your source is credible.

**Love #Hashtags**
When posting or tweeting, use relevant hashtags to help people find you. But don’t use more than two hashtags per post or tweet.

**Join the Conversation** @CancerDotNet