

# A Naysayer's Introduction to Social Media

---

Participating in online communities can seem intimidating. Where do you start? How do you join? Who's already there, and how do you find them? We encounter these questions any time we join new communities, not just online ones. Thinking about how you participate in offline communities can make navigating online communities less intimidating.

This brief resource helps you think about three common worries when people think about starting a new social media account. Each worry is paired with questions and suggestions about how to get started.



## **I don't know what to share or how to engage!**

What do you contribute to offline communities (e.g., neighborhood, volunteer group, professional orgs)? How do you connect with people in these offline communities?

Social media is fundamentally a way to connect and build community. You are already doing this in other areas of your life. What practices can you replicate online that you already do in person?



## **Too many people! How do I get noticed? How do I find people?**

When was the last time you joined a new community? How did that happen? What or who helped you get socialized and acclimated?

Social media communities are not so different from offline communities. Your existing relationships can get you introduced and help you make new connections. Positive interactions help you build a reputation as someone others want to connect with. And you won't get very far if you don't invest any time in this new community, either through online or offline interactions.

Not everyone has the same goals for how big they want their social networks to be or who they want to connect with. What kinds of communities of sharing do you want to participate in? Do you want local tight-knit communities (e.g., within your university or your academic subfield), or really broad communities (e.g., within your city or your discipline), or a mix?



## **I could never be like Audrey, or as good as Andre, with social media**

What do you enjoy about your connections to your professional or other communities? What do you like to give to these communities? What do you like to get from them?

Social media is all about you being yourself. You get to decide what you value, what you want to get out of it, and how you want to contribute. Not everyone needs to be the big influencer; it doesn't have to be a popularity contest. Instead of trying to live up to some ideal, set your own goals for what your online connections look like.