



Applying to College? Facebook and Twitter May Affect the Decision.

Almost every university has some sort of social media presence. For even the mascot of your favorite college, Facebook and Twitter are second homes online. So it should come as no surprise that social media is now an influencing factor in the college application process.

What may surprise you is *how* social media plays a role. This article is all about ways to benefit from it and how to avoid common pitfalls. There is even a "How To" section for changing important privacy settings.

So whether you're a "friend", a "tweet-peep", or some other "connection" to Go See Campus, read on and learn why social media matters.

Connect to a College: Facebook, Twitter, and Other Media

All colleges handle communication with high school students differently. For example, many schools encourage students to have direct contact with admissions representatives.

For this type of college, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media can help with admissions. In 2008, almost 50% of schools considered a student's demonstrated interest of moderate to considerable importance in the admissions decision (*NACAC Admission Trends Survey*). "Demonstrated interest" could include contact by students with the admissions office.

Here are good ways to make that connection online:

- Comment on a link shared by a college
- Facebook "Like" a college's page
- Participate in a tweet chat about a school
- Share your relevant achievements
- Post questions for the college (Facebook is a good platform for this)

"Demonstrated interest" does not mean posting links to the school every five minutes or retweeting everything written by a college. Facebook and Twitter are ways for you to make real connections and help admissions get to know you better.



How to Avoid Social Media's Downside When Applying to College

Facebook and Twitter have had explosive growth. So, it's only natural for more and more people to use it, including the college admissions counselors making decisions on your application.

This may concern some high school students. Before social media, they really only had to focus on the materials that they chose to send to a college. Facebook and Twitter can make much more of their lives public to admissions counselors and to everyone else online.

Transparency can be a good thing. A high school student might be teetering on the verge of college acceptance. However, the application materials alone might not be enough to help a college make the final decision. By reviewing the student's social media profile, admissions could find out that the person behind the application is a great fit for the college.

Right now, the chances are slim that a college—Facebook—active or otherwise—would review the social media profiles of every student who applied. About 12 million students attended four-year colleges in Fall 2010 (NCES). That's way too many applicants to scrutinize individually.

Still, posting objectionable content on social media can come back to haunt you. That's because some admissions offices *do* review social media profiles. In 2007, the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) found that 32% of colleges surveyed would revoke a student's admission based on an inappropriate website posting. One of the colleges to which you are applying could be among them.

Getting Ready for College: Facebook

There are some challenges to preparing your social media accounts for college. Facebook privacy is tough to manage in particular. Privacy settings change often, new features are added regularly, and announcements about changes sometimes come late or not at all.

Several good resources on managing privacy settings are available to those applying to college. Facebook guides include:

- Facebook's "Controlling How You Share" (<http://www.facebook.com/privacy/explanation.php>)



Plan Campus Visits Online and Make the Most of the College Search at <http://goseecampus.com>



<http://facebook.com/goseecampus>



| <http://www.twitter.com/goseecampus>

- "The Always Up-to-Date Guide to Managing Your Facebook Privacy" (<http://lifehacker.com/5813990/the-always-up+to+date-guide-to-managing-your-facebook-privacy>)
- AllFacebook.com (<http://www.allfacebook.com>)

Where to start:

1. Log into Facebook and view your privacy settings. You will find them by clicking "Account" at the top-right of the screen (<https://www.facebook.com/settings/?tab=privacy>).
2. Limit or loosen the rules about who can view what information that you have shared. Pay particular attention to how "tagging" photos can make your pictures visible to others.
3. If for some reason you need to delete your account and start fresh for college, Facebook provides this option. Search "Help" for the best link, or go to http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=delete_account

Getting Ready for College: Twitter

Twitter is meant to answer, "What's going on now?" As a result, past posts are less searchable than on Facebook, which works in your favor if there are tweets that you wish you hadn't shared. Plus, you can always delete a tweet by hovering over it and selecting that option.

However, deleting a tweet from your own account may not permanently remove it from the internet. Search engines might archive your tweet for months. Or, other users may have retweeted it manually, cutting off your ability to edit it.

To keep Twitter posts private for all but those who you manually approve.

1. Log in to your Twitter account.
2. Visit "Account Settings".
3. Scroll down and check the box next to "Protect my Tweets".



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Only You Can Prevent Embarrassing Posts

Common sense is the first, best, and only 100% secure way to prevent having something online you might regret. That's because only you are responsible for your actions and words offline. If you do something that could reflect poorly on your college application, you may be wise enough not to share photographs of it on the internet. However, your "friends" might end up posting them anyway.

So be remembered for the great things you do. Be recognized for everything you can offer a college. And know that now, more than ever, what you do matters.

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High school students, parents, and professionals: share your opinion about applying to college, Facebook, and other social media at <http://www.facebook.com/goseecampus>.