



HOW-TO DRAFT: USING FACEBOOK GROUPS FOR ORGANIZING

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DRAFT STATUS: This guide is currently marked as a 'DRAFT' because it does not yet meet all of our editorial criteria, [which you can view here](#). We are actively tracking down additional content/voices to complete this guide but believe that it already contains enough useful information so are making it available to you in the meantime.

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Disclaimer / request for your help

This is a work in progress that is meant to evolve over time with input from campaigners. At the moment, the tips and ideas here reflect the voices of the [contributors/reviewers listed below](#). We are always looking to add more voices of campaigners that have knowledge and experience on this topic. If this is you, please contact us here: blueprintsfc@gmail.com.

Summary

While Facebook has come under a lot of criticism lately for its leaking of user data and its complicity in right-wing voter persuasion, dissemination of fake news... and the list goes on... it remains a social network that large segments of the population use daily and therefore cannot be dismissed as an organizing tool. For groups needing to reach out and build their base and mobilize people to come out to events, Facebook remains an important part of an organizer's toolkit.

Given that the conventional ways that organizations have used Facebook to reach out (through a Facebook Page), are generating diminishing reach (since Facebook changed its algorithm), it's important to explore how groups are making tactical use of the network through the platform's Groups option.

Who's doing it?

Almost all of the thousands of [Indivisible](#) groups across the U.S. use Facebook Groups for organizing. [ACORN UK](#) also makes use of them as a complement to their on the ground community organizing. Smaller groups organizing against racism, such as the [Coalition Against White Supremacy and Islamophobia](#) in Toronto, and Overt Bigotry Response also use Groups.



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Impact/ Why do this?

One of the big returns of using Facebook Groups, vs. Pages, is that it helps campaigners get around the changes to Facebook's algorithm, which now offers very low reach to Page followers unless paid advertising is used. [See point 6 in this article for a brief explanation.](#)

In terms of pure organizing benefits, using Facebook groups allows campaigners to:

- Recruit new supporters by reaching out where people naturally spend their time
- Establish a channel for rapid sharing daily/weekly actions and wins
- Efficient setup and management of events via Facebook Calendar
- Rapid member communication via groups and/or Facebook Messenger

When this might not work for you

Privacy and security issues

If privacy is a BIG issue given your campaigning context (see [guide on digital security](#)) then think twice before using Facebook.

Members with privacy concerns may not feel safe joining public discussions. In some areas, group members hesitate to use Facebook for fear of retribution by employers, local police or trolls who may see their Facebook activities.

If you want all members to be able to weigh in, consider using other channels.

If group work is your main activity...

On Facebook, conversations tend to be cluttered and scroll off the screen quickly. For group coordination or planning, use a limited-membership mailing list or a collaboration tool like [Slack](#).



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What this requires (people, resources, etc.)

Staff that can use their personal Facebook accounts to set up a group and moderate it

- One person with a personal Facebook account needs to initiate a Group and serve as the Admin
- Ideally, a few people should share the ongoing posting and moderation duties

Setup steps/ stages

Choosing the right group option and activating your group

- **Closed Facebook groups** can be found by search engines but they hide much of the group's information, including posts, events, files and photos. However, the group's member roster is visible. Members can post anything they want in the group without their friends and families seeing it. Closed groups are great for recruiting and for member communication and coordination. However, closed groups are poor for outreach because events and other information cannot be shared outside the group.
- **Secret Facebook groups** cannot be found by search engines or by searching on Facebook and give an extra layer of privacy. The member roster, posts, photos and all other group information is completely private and only visible to members. This makes secret groups a good choice for groups that need extra security or for team leads to coordinate.
- **Public Facebook groups** are easy to find and join, but members' identities and posts are not protected at all, making it a poor choice for Indivisible groups. For example, when a member posts something to an open group it may be automatically shared with their friends and family on Facebook, potentially



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alienating those who don't share their beliefs.

- **Consider a multi-group strategy.** Many [Indivisible](#) groups have multiple Facebook groups for different purposes. The most popular strategy is to create a Facebook page for outreach and a closed Facebook group for members. Another approach is to create a closed Facebook group for members and a secret Facebook group for leadership. These are good strategies for groups that embrace Facebook but do not want to deal with other, less mainstream solutions like Slack. Keep in mind that managing multiple Facebook groups will require more dedicated Facebook admins, and will make some tasks more complicated, like posting the same event or action in multiple groups.

Set up a group admin team responsible for management

Consistency is the key for groups of all sizes, and having the right team managing your group's Facebook presence is essential. Every group should choose a Facebook admin or admins (using their personal accounts) and set the volume of Facebook activity to a level that can be maintained over time. The admin(s) will be responsible for:

- Updating page/group info
- Publishing content
- Managing the calendar
- Moderating group content
- Vetting member requests

Vet New Members

It is vital that you vet requests to join your Facebook group. You may not want information shared within your closed Facebook group to be distributed externally and you certainly want to avoid internet trolls that seek to harass and bully people online. In some cases, exposing your group to a malicious outsider can even be a safety issue.

Here are some strategies for vetting people who request to join:



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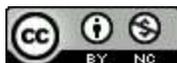


- Know them. Only let people in who you or another member knows personally.
- Meet them. Only allow people to join after they have attended a local meeting.
- Make sure they're local. Many groups want to keep membership restricted to their city, district, or region. Ask applicants for their city or zip code and redirect them to other local groups if necessary.
- Ground rules. Post the criteria for joining the group and a Code of Conduct or Posting Guidelines (see below under Facebook Etiquette).
 - Note: You can make accepting the Ground rules a prerequisite to joining a group. As in, users must answer question fields when they select "request to join". The answers are then given to mods to approve/disapprove

Maintain High Quality Posts & Post Regularly

Group admins are responsible for creating and editing group posts and events, and making sure they are high-impact and capture the attention of members.

- **Facebook Etiquette / Code of Conduct** (see further below for sample image). Clearly state the type of information that your group should and should not post. For example, many groups instruct members not to post fake news, not to vent, not to “go low,” and sometimes even not to post mainstream news articles. Trigger warnings and content warnings have become super commonplace in feminist/anti-racist community organizing groups
- **Include photos or images in posts whenever possible** because they are statistically more engaging and Facebook’s algorithm values them higher, which means more people will see them. Photos are great but you can also create custom images with text and graphics with a simple design tool such as [Canva](#).
- **Videos get the most views and engagement.** Some groups have found that they get the most engagement by creating short action videos, like a 15-second clip of people speaking out in response to a local elected official’s question or position on a topic. Facebook’s algorithm promotes video and Facebook Live above all other forms of content. If possible, include subtitles in your posting since many users view Facebook videos with audio turned off. Try to upload the video files to Facebook rather than posting a link to the video on another platform, like YouTube. Facebook prioritizes natively-uploaded videos rather than



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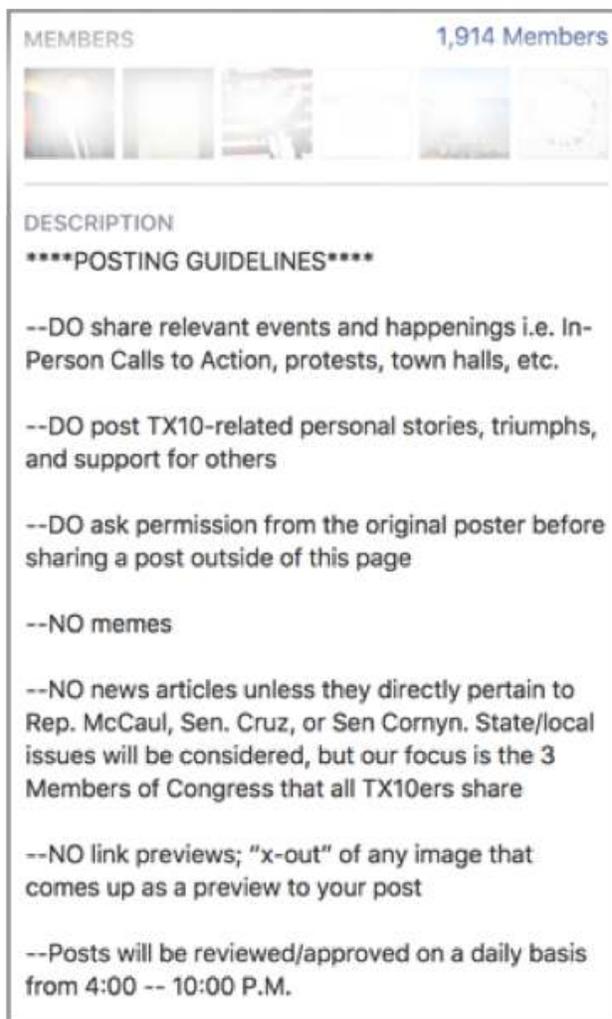
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Blueprints for Change

links to videos on other sites.

- **Post daily.** Post at least one new thing per day to keep things fresh and active. It is essential to be consistent. Facebook's algorithm rewards consistent engagement—the more your members like, share, and click on your posts, the more they will be seen.
- **Be relevant.** Above all else, post items that your members will love. Celebrate your successes and actions. Connect emotionally with your members and they will engage.



Sample code of conduct above from an Indivisible Facebook group



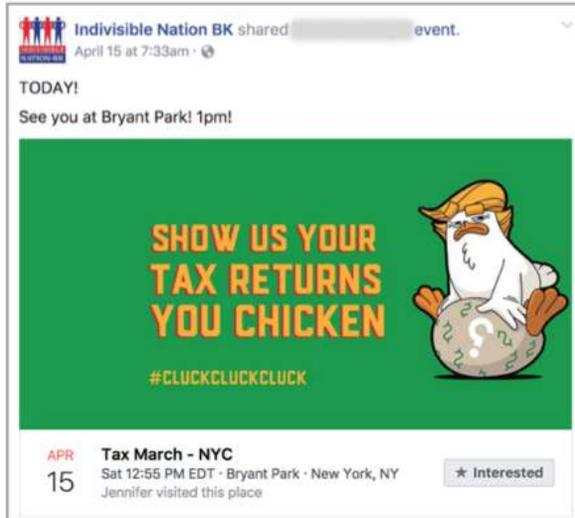
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Post Clear Calls to Action (CTAs)

- **CTAs lead to action.** Ideally your posts will ask your members to act. Sharing information is good; inspiring action is better. This is just like when you call your elected officials —voicing an opinion is good but presenting an “ask” is better.
- **Make CTAs stand out.** Make sure your CTAs are always extremely obvious and clearly visible. For example, use simple text formatting: “CALL TO ACTION: ...” or “TO DO: ...” If possible, create a standard visual treatment (graphic) for “Action” or “Let’s Show Up” requests so they stand out from everything else.
- **Place important info at the top.** Put the time, location, the action requested and other important details at the very top of the post so it won’t get clipped (Facebook only shows a couple lines of text by default).
- **Keep to a schedule.** Many groups post CTAs once a week, like on Sunday, and post additional “red alert” CTAs as needed. Other larger, more active groups may post daily actions.



(Example from Indivisible) Including a punchy image with a call to action like this event can go a long way in making it stand out in members’ feeds.



(Example from Indivisible) A photo action is an easy way to involve many group members, showcasing the group’s solidarity and amplifying its message.



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Small Facebook Group Management Best Practices

These recommendations apply to Facebook groups with less than 100 active members.

- **Group Admins.** Appoint at least one group admin to manage the group's Facebook account (using their personal accounts).
- **Always have a backup.** Make sure someone else has account access and can run the group in the absence of the main Facebook admin. Some groups have been devastated when a group admin unexpectedly lost contact with the group without transferring the account.

Tactics for Making Sure Members (and Others) See Posts

Facebook uses a complex, ever-changing algorithm to determine which posts each user sees, and how high up they are on their feed, and when they get sent out. You can use some simple tactics to increase how often your posts are seen.

- **Add comments to posts/ Sharing your posts.** Encourage members to leave a comment on CTAs (“done” or “called”), events or other important posts, or share the post itself. The Facebook algorithm will see the activity, assume it must be an interesting post, and then send it to more people.
- **Cutting & pasting posts.** Some groups instruct members to cut and paste posts and repost them. This makes it much more likely that members' friends who don't follow your group will see them.
- **Remind members to visit the group's page.** The group's page contains time-sensitive information about events and actions that may get lost on members' feeds. Actively encourage members to check back regularly with the group's page.
- **When it's really urgent, don't rely on Facebook.** The tactics above will increase your success rate, but you can never reach everyone—and even if you



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do, they won't see your post until the next time they happen to check Facebook. For rare, truly urgent messages, you still need a mailing list or another communications solution.

Large Facebook Group Management Best Practices

These recommendations apply to Facebook groups with more than 100 active members.

- **Group Admins, Editors & Moderators.** At a minimum, have 3-5 people to manage the group's Facebook Group:
 - 1-2 people managing publishing and moderating the group
 - 1-2 people vetting new recruits
 - 1 person managing the group's calendar
 - To learn more about the differences between Facebook admins, editors and moderators, see the Facebook tutorial: [Facebook roles and permissions](#).
- **Control posting.** Limit members' ability to post items and/or create an approval workflow involving admins approving new posts. For very large groups, only allow admins to post to prevent "flooding." When a group is "flooded" with messages, Facebook does not always show posts in members' feeds which may prevent important posts from being seen.
- **Heavy moderation.** Larger groups are more in need of heavy moderation to shut down the spread of fake news, bickering and other negative online behaviors. Moderators play an important role in keeping conversations friendly and should immediately intervene when people start arguing, imposing "purity tests," or other negative interactions. For groups leading discussions on sensitive topics, some choose to set all comments to "require approval" by a moderator to keep the space safe for its users.
- **Editorial calendar.** Some large groups find it useful to set up an editorial calendar to organize and optimize what posts go out when.



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- **Get another event management / calendar tool.** You can only send event invites to all members of your Facebook group if it has less than 250 members. Otherwise, it will only send the invite to members who are your friends (you can manually add more individual names but this is impractical). When your group grows above 250, consider using a more robust calendaring tool like [Google Calendar](#) or [Eventbrite](#).

Address Privacy Concerns Proactively

- **Privacy ground rules.** Clearly state the group's privacy rules in the group's information page and have moderators make sure members do not share each others' personal information or share each other's posts without permission.
- **Remind members about privacy, even if your group is secret.** Moderators should remind group members periodically that no matter how "private" or "secret" their group is, they should be careful of what they post.
 - *Example:* We treat Facebook as more-or-less private, but nothing is ever 100% secure, and being political activists makes us more of a target than the average person. So, as a personal rule, please "assume it will leak and be on the front page of the New York Times."
- **Educate members.** Encourage members to learn about Facebook's privacy settings and adjust them. Facebook Tutorial: [Facebook Privacy Checkup](#).

Tricky parts/ fixes

Your members could miss important posts.

You cannot guarantee that a post on Facebook will be seen by all your members! Even those who use it constantly will miss posts because of how Facebook's feed works. For critical communications that you want delivered promptly to every member of your group, use an email list.



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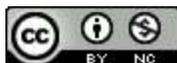
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