



# TIPS & TRICKS

 [legion.org/talma](https://legion.org/talma)





# THE AMERICAN LEGION **MEDIA ALLIANCE**

The mission of The American Legion Media Alliance (TALMA) is to inform and educate its members so that they can effectively promote the American Legion Family, its activities, programs and more at the grassroots level using all forms of media.

This guide contains useful tips and tricks that TALMA members can use to promote activities at the post, district and department levels.

To learn more about membership in TALMA and its other benefits, please visit **[legion.org/talma](https://legion.org/talma)**.



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## Effective communication starts with a calendar

When it comes to an effective communications strategy, the first place to start is with a well-organized and detailed calendar. It doesn't matter if the calendar is digital, on paper, a whiteboard or Post-it. What does matter is how the calendar is used.

Why is the calendar so important? Because everything we do has a deadline. Whether it's a Veterans Day, Memorial Day or an American Legion birthday event, how are the parade or dinner plans coming? How is the promotion of your post's events for the day coming? Have you sent out a press release to notify your community?

Whether you're at the post, district or department level, you need to start with a calendar. Grab the free calendar distributed by Emblem Sales, open Microsoft Word and print a calendar template, or download one from the Internet.

### Where to begin

**Step one:** Begin with your meetings at the post, district and department level. Find the date and write the description of the event, time and place. Second, list all known planned events, the time and place that are scheduled. Third, list the important holidays your post, district and department recognize for the year.

**Step two:** Take each event written on the calendar and count backward and mark 14 days, 30 days, 45 days, 60 days and 90 days out. A suggestion is that you use a different color pen to indicate that an event is coming up. Why so many reminders? It depends on what must happen for the event. If you need to invite the mayor to your



Veterans Day dinner then you may want to consider sending the invite 90 days before. It will also depend on what your media strategy for each event calls for that you should have written out when planning.

Because you are thinking about these events further out with your calendar, it creates a successful promotion.

**Step three:** Using a different color from the other events, write down the dates when your post newsletter article is due, the deadline for submitting stories to your local paper, and the deadlines for everyone you must send a press release to.

While these dates are not connected to your events, as you use different colors on your calendar you will see that based on deadlines of newspapers and such, 14 days may have to be moved to 20 days, depending on where dates fall.

Hang the calendar on the wall and have three months visible so it can serve as a reminder.

### Make friends with the calendar

Don't fear the deadlines, embrace them and never miss another one again. Stay on top of your calendar and you will stay on top of your communications strategy.



## American Legion Vimeo channel has videos, PSAs

The American Legion has an abundance of promotional videos and public service announcements (PSAs) that help tell The American Legion's story, as well as aid in membership recruiting, fundraising efforts, support for programs and events, and more. And it's all easily accessible on The American Legion's Vimeo channel at **[vimeo.com/americanlegion](https://vimeo.com/americanlegion)**.

The PSAs and videos housed on The American Legion's Vimeo channel can be shared via mobile devices or downloaded onto a computer hard drive and shared without the need for Internet connection. They too can be shared with media outlets and movie cinemas to promote what The American Legion does locally and nationally.

Example of videos on the Vimeo channel include:

- Membership Moment series on how to welcome and engage new members, recruit members and re-engage expired members.

- The centennial documentary series "To Strengthen a Nation." The series shares how The American Legion was formed, grew and continues to serve communities, states and the nation today.
- "This is The American Legion" video that gives a general overview of The American Legion and its service to veterans, their families and communities.
- A video overview of the four pillars.

These videos can be played during meetings at the post or events to recruit new members.

There are also PSAs that focus on membership recruitment and The American Legion programs such as the National Emergency Fund and Temporary Financial Assistance.



## Promote your post by localizing national press releases

National Headquarters sends out press releases throughout the year. These releases often quote the national commander about a topic of high importance to The American Legion and the veterans community in general.

Public relations and communications leaders at the post and district levels often send these out to their local media, or post on their websites or Facebook pages.

However, these rarely get used by media in their communities. Newspaper editors and TV news directors want stories to have a local angle. To satisfy this requirement, posts and districts are encouraged to localize national releases.

In the example below, the press release on the left is one from national. On the right, the yellow screens indicate the changes that were made to update it and make it relevant for the local audience.

### *Original National Press Release*

#### **American Legion national commander says budget shortfall can't stand in the way of veteran care**

American Legion National Commander (insert name) expressed frustration over testimony Thursday on Capitol Hill that the Veterans Health Administration is facing a \$2.5 billion budget shortfall this fiscal year. At the same time, (insert name) reiterated the position of the nation's largest veterans service organization, that outsourcing is not a long-term solution.

"Veterans need the Department of Veterans Affairs, and The American Legion expects VA to provide quality health care in a timely manner to those who served our nation in uniform and earned that benefit," (insert national commander name) said. "This budget shortfall, which can be attributed to higher-than-expected patient demand and increased resources to attempt to meet it, cannot prevent veterans from getting the care they need when they need it, regardless where we are in the budget cycle. VA is going through its biggest adjustment since the troops came home from World War II. As VA, the administration and The American Legion did then, we must all work together to find long-term solutions."

For more information, please visit [legion.org](http://legion.org).

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Contact:

- John Raughter, 317-630-1350, [jraughter@legion.org](mailto:jraughter@legion.org)

## **Local American Legion post provides assistance to veterans amid VA issues**

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"Veterans need the Department of Veterans Affairs, and The American Legion expects VA to provide quality health care in a timely manner to those who served our nation in uniform and earned that benefit," (insert national commander name) said. "This budget shortfall, which can be attributed to higher-than-expected patient demand and increased resources to attempt to meet it, cannot prevent veterans from getting the care they need when they need it, regardless where we are in the budget cycle. VA is going through its biggest adjustment since the troops came home from World War II. As VA, the administration and The American Legion did then, we must all work together to find long-term solutions."

In your city, American Legion Post 123 Commander John Smith said a post service officer is available to assist local veterans who are struggling to get their benefits from VA.

"We provide free consultations and resources for any veterans - not just American Legion members - so that they can receive the benefits they have earned through service for their nation," Smith said. Interested veterans may call the post at 123-456-7890 or stop by 123 Main St. to learn more.

For more information, please visit [legion.org](http://legion.org) and [yourpostwebsite.org](http://yourpostwebsite.org)

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Contact:

- John Smith, 123-456-7890, [commander@legionpost.org](mailto:commander@legionpost.org)

# Facebook: Know your audience



The first step in effectively managing your Facebook account is understanding how it works. Facebook basics, knowing who you want to reach, and knowing what to say, are three keys to an effective social media campaign.

## Facebook terminology: Get familiar with it

Facebook users should know the difference between a Facebook profile, a page and a group. They each serve different functions.

A Facebook profile is a personal account where you share your information and connect with family and friends.

A Facebook page is a public profile created for businesses, brands, celebrities, causes and other organizations.

A Facebook group is the place for small group communication where people can share a common interest, information and experience, and express their opinions.

You need a Facebook profile in order to create a page or group. Profiles should not be used to represent an American Legion post, district or department.

You should create a Facebook page for

your post. A very easy way to learn how to manage a page is to search within Facebook Help Center or [www.facebook.com/business](http://www.facebook.com/business). This is a good place for the novice to learn the basics. And it serves the experienced page manager as they expand their knowledge and when Facebook changes things up.

Those already familiar with how Facebook works will benefit from liking some of Facebook's pages. Facebook tips, Facebook business, nonprofits on Facebook, and Facebook media are all designed to educate and assist the user. For an even more in-depth look check out Facebook for developers and Facebook engineering.

## Understand your audience

People will follow content on pages that they feel is consistent with their own goals and objectives. Facebook pages are an opportunity to attract like-minded veterans to an American Legion post. The question becomes, "What is your mission?" For a post it may be to promote the four pillars of The American Legion and events and accomplishments that serve veterans, their families and the community.

Facebook posts should reach out to all members of your audience and engage them.

## Content

You need to feature useful and compelling material that will drive interaction on your Facebook page. Interaction is key to attracting page followers and American Legion members.

To start, look at your page content from a visitor's point of view. Scroll through the last several months of your page feed and determine if you conveyed the right message. Ask yourself, "Would I know if this is the place for me if I am looking to join an American Legion post?"

Make your Facebook posts relevant about engaging with the community, serving veterans and their family, and camaraderie.

Things to include in Facebook posts are American Legion post meeting times and location, programs and fundraisers. Lounge events can be promoted, but make sure that is not your focus. You want to give your audience a reason to comment, like and share what you post.

## In conclusion

- Use a professional, yet friendly, voice that positively represents The American Legion.
- Know your audience and understand your mission. And make sure that your mission reflects The American Legion's four pillars – Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.
- Post relevant content that will attract a more engaged audience.
- Be strategic about your social media channels to increase Facebook followers and members within your American Legion post.

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## Buddy Checks: connect with current and former members

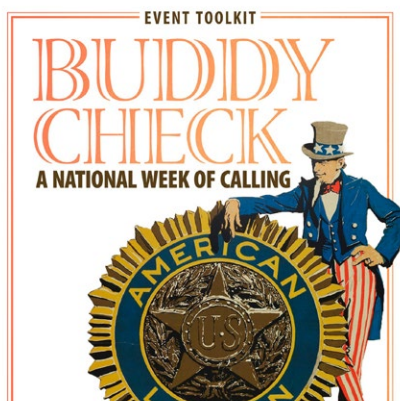
During the 2019 Spring Meetings in Indianapolis, the National Executive Committee of The American Legion passed Resolution No. 18. This resolution calls for Buddy Checks to be conducted twice a year – The American Legion's birthday and Veterans Day – but posts are encouraged to conduct them at any time throughout the year.

A Buddy Check toolkit, including how to set up a Buddy Check and sample scripts for Legionnaires to use when making personal contact, is available online at [legion.org/membership/buddycheck](https://legion.org/membership/buddycheck).

Buddy Checks serve as a way to reach out to members and former members who may need help. Your phone call may identify members' needs for

financial assistance, transportation, service officer help and visitation.

We want to hear more. Share your Buddy Check stories by posting them on [legiontown.org](https://legiontown.org). We'll highlight some of your efforts via American Legion media.



## Use LinkedIn to widen circle, fill post officer positions

Many who have heard of LinkedIn think that its purpose is to help people showcase their skillsets and to help recruiters find them for a potential career opportunity. Did you know that it could also be used to help your post locate potential new members who are looking for volunteer opportunities?

There are more than 4 million professionals on LinkedIn who have one thing in common - they have expressed an interest in joining a nonprofit board or doing skills-based volunteering - or both. Think about the different leadership opportunities that your post has to offer on your Executive Committee. What types of skillsets would you like for those post volunteers to have to be successful in some of those positions?

You have different military occupations that dovetail nicely with committee positions. For example, your post adjutant would be a great fit for someone with a background in Human Resources and someone with a supply and logistics background could work as your post finance officer. Public af-

fairs officers or journalists would make great historians.

Approximately 72 percent of younger veterans are looking for ways to give back, according to a recent article. Of that percentage, veterans who are from Generation X and the mid-career veterans represent approximately 21 percent. This generation is our next generation of leaders within The American Legion. The top skills these would-be volunteers (and potential American Legion Family members) have include management, customer service, leadership, project management and strategic planning.

How do you find those who are searching for volunteering opportunities?

Create a profile on LinkedIn. Then check the boxes for "Joining a nonprofit board" and/or "Skills-based volunteering" in the Volunteer Experience and Causes section. From there, search for volunteer opportunities in your area and identify and connect with veterans for opportunities at your post home.

## Communication tools: LinkedIn and IFTTT

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By Mark Sutton, Department of Michigan  
public relations director

Who do you think you are? It is an important question to ponder. Are you the person in charge of your post's monthly newsletter? Or maybe you are the lucky volunteer who keeps the post's Facebook page updated.

If you are either, I would say you are the communications director of your American Legion post; you are charged

to communicate to the members and to the community what is happening in your local post. This is an important job and who you associate with and how you communicate to others matters.

To help you, LinkedIn and IFTTT (If This Then That) are two tools to place in your "communication toolbox."

### What is LinkedIn?

Think of LinkedIn ([linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com)) as

the business version of Facebook. You won't find family photos or silly quotes as you do on Facebook – the content on LinkedIn is geared toward people's professions.

### How to use LinkedIn

Create an account by filling out a profile – your profile is your advertisement of why people should connect with you. With LinkedIn you make connections; you don't add friends. This social media platform allows you to connect with like-minded people, whether it's media professionals, veterans groups or people in your daily profession.

Start making connections by searching for people you may know or for groups that interest you. Then begin searching for reporters and media professionals in your area to connect with.

Lastly, like Facebook, write status updates, make comments, and provide content that is relevant to you, your profession, your Legion post or veterans. This will help educate your connections and eventually people will want to connect with you because of your knowledge.

To learn more about LinkedIn, do a Google search for "Begin to use LinkedIn" and several links will appear for further assistance.

If you start using LinkedIn, or you already have an account, connect with me at [linkedin.com/in/markalansutton](https://www.linkedin.com/in/markalansutton).

### What is IFTTT?

IFTTT means if x happens then do y. If you are like me you handle several social media accounts like Facebook, Twitter, Blogger and maybe a WordPress account. Keeping all of them updated with current content can be a difficult task to manage. At **IFTTT.com**, you can create "applets" that automate many functions for different tasks.



For example, an applet can be created so that if you tweet a status on your Legion post's Twitter account, that tweet can then be posted to your Facebook page automatically. Or if you post a Facebook message, it can be tweeted out at the same time.

Do you have a WordPress account? If you do, then the content added to your WordPress blog can then be copied to your other social media outlets.

I have found this website to save a lot of time in keeping content updated, and it eliminates me from having to constantly copy content manually to each of my social media platforms. Check it out; once you begin using it you will find other uses for it. And did I mention it was free?

Overall, technology can make our lives better or worse depending on how we use it. Using LinkedIn and IFTTT has enhanced the work that I do for The American Legion, and I believe you will find this to be true, as well, as, as you become more efficient at using these communication tools.



# No touchy

By Clara Pon, Department of France,  
China Post 1 Auxiliary

No, I'm not referring to priceless paintings thousands of years old displayed in museums, the electric fence with its warning signs, or the tall holiday displays at department stores. I am talking about what you are not supposed to do with The American Legion emblem when you are using it in a design.

No "touchy" is National Judge Advocate Kevin Bartlett's catch phrase when he gave a presentation to the 2019 National American Legion College class last November on the use of the emblem and the trademark name, The American Legion.

What does it mean? It means that nothing can be touching any part of the emblem. There is no set distance away. However, The American Legion's founding charter affords the national organization control and exclusive rights to use the emblems, badges and

other items The American Legion adopts. During its history, The American Legion has selectively granted permission on occasion to allow a design to infringe on its emblem for creative and branding purposes for special designs.

Many American Legion Family members don't think they need to concern themselves with the dos and don'ts of using the name or emblem of The American Legion. For the vast majority, that may be the case, however, knowing the basic fundamentals should be part of your American Legion knowledge.

The emblem is the organization's brand. It should be recognizable in the way most of us recognize the red wavy font of Coca Cola, lowercase font of amazon, and the child-like font of Disney. Their color, font and design are all elements that make their symbols iconic and recognized.

A few months ago, I saw a group of men wearing shirts with the wrong

Sons of The American Legion emblem on it. The Sons logo was in red, rather than light blue and somewhat round, rather than oval. It was obvious that they wanted to promote the organization by being noticed with their large, bright red logo.

However, it clearly was not the correct Sons logo.

Instead of promoting brand awareness of the Sons of The American Legion with the correct emblem, it was damaged by the change. According to the Name and Emblem Guide, the Sons of The American Legion emblem is an oval made up of four colors – gold, dark gold, light French blue and light brown – with the letters all capitalized.

Another important lesson that was shared by a National Legion College student for all to learn from was when she gave her new Legion business card to Bartlett and was told in return that she couldn't pass them out anymore – and that she didn't get approval to have them printed. Flabbergasted, she asked "Why?"

For starters, she didn't use the correct American Legion emblem. Oops! She downloaded a cool looking blue metallic version that's been floating on the Internet for some time now.

Secondly, they were professionally printed. She didn't print them off her printer, but through a retailer.

Unbeknownst to a majority of us, how business cards are produced determines whether or not you need to request permission from National Headquarters. Basically, if you go to Office Depot, Staples, Vistaprint or any of those types of vendors where

you pay for it, you need permission to reproduce The American Legion emblem.

However, if you print them off your printer on business card stock, you don't need permission. There was no exchange of money. But you still have to use a proper American Legion emblem.

To submit an American Legion emblem usage request, go to **legion.org/emblem/request**.

It seems that this particular topic has been neglected for some time now and hasn't been enforced resulting in widespread misuses, and in a way, abuse of the brand.

If you recall during the 2018 Spring Meetings, the National Executive Committee passed Resolution No. 1: Rules and Regulations Governing Use of the Name and Emblem of The American Legion to clarify the rules and regulations of its use. National continues to ensure that its brand, its most valuable asset, is properly used, marketed and promoted.

If this still doesn't make sense on how it applies to you, then think of it this way. Let's say your name is Santa Claus and you wear a red suit and have a thick white beard. You are known for bringing presents to children all over the world for Christmas. On Christmas Day, someone decides to change your name to Santa Clown, dresses up in purple and green dotted suit with a painted face sporting a goatee and delivers used presents to children all over the world. Is that the brand image that Santa Claus is associated with? No.

So, let's use the emblem correctly and with proper permission.

## American Legion style guide available for download

In all its media channels – print, Web and social media – clarity and consistency are key to successfully communicating The American Legion’s message.

*The American Legion Style Guide*, available for download at **legion.org/publications**, offers valuable tips on writing copy that’s clean and clear.

Here are a few examples from the style guide:

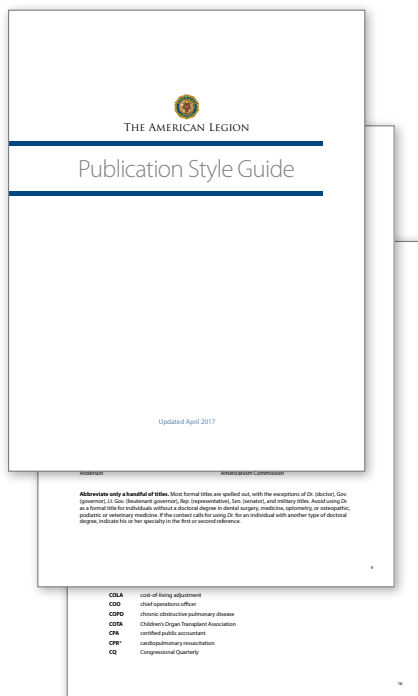
**Avoid alphabet soup by using capitalization only where it’s necessary and appropriate.** When too many words are emphasized, none stand out. Don’t write, American Legion Posts are full of Veterans who respect our Nation’s Flag. Do write, American Legion posts are full of veterans who respect our nation’s flag. Limit capitalization to the first word of a sentence, proper nouns (people, groups, places, etc.), and titles preceding names.

**Not sure when to capitalize the “t” in The American Legion?** Only when referring to the main organization or Sons of The American Legion. When the name is followed by another word or words, go with a lowercase “t”: the American Legion Family, the American Legion Riders, the American Legion Baseball program.

**Do not capitalize post except when referring to a specific, numbered American Legion post.** For example, write the Chattanooga post, American Legion Post 95 in Chattanooga or Post 95. When referring to posts in a general sense, write American Legion posts. The style guide also has a list of fre-

quently used terms, including:

- *servicemember* (It’s one word, not two.)
- *half-mast* (ships and naval stations ashore) and *half-staff* (elsewhere ashore)
- *Korean War*. (Do not use Korean conflict.)
- *Medal of Honor* (Do not use Congressional Medal of Honor. Use Medal of Honor recipient, not winner.)
- *taps* (Lowercase without quotation marks for the bugle call sounded at “lights out” and military funerals.)
- *U.S. flag or flag* (Do not use the Flag.)



# Hashtags throughout the year

Hashtags are a way for social media users to search for a particular topic of interest. Throughout the year, the following are hashtags that will be used and/or monitored by The American Legion National Headquarters team.

## January-March

#HappyNewYear  
#MLKDay  
AmericanismMonth  
#FourChaplainsSunday  
#WashConfYEAR  
#WomensHistoryMonth  
#BlackHistoryMonth  
#AmericanLegionBirthday

## April-June

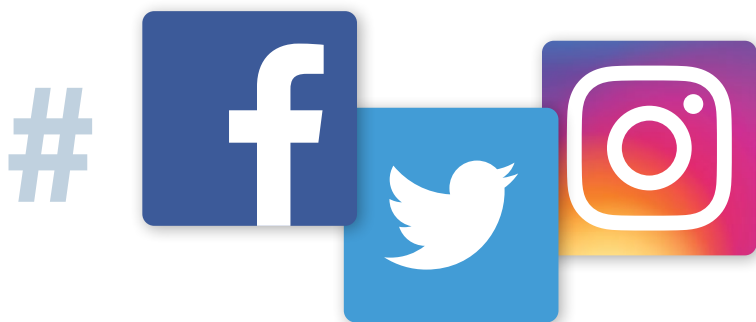
#OratoricalContestYEAR  
#VEDay  
#ArmedForcesDay  
#MemorialDay  
#PoppyDay  
#FlagDay

## July-September

#ShootingSports  
#BoysNationYEAR  
#VJDay  
#ALWSYEAR  
#LegacyRunYEAR  
#ALConvention  
#PatriotDay  
#POWMIADay  
#GoldStarMothersDay

## October-December

#VeteransDay  
#ElectionDay  
#AmericanEducationWeek  
#NationalFamilyWeek  
#Thanksgiving  
#PearlHarborDay  
#Christmas  
#Hanukkah





## Resource guide for American Legion digital media

### Websites

The primary American Legion website can be found at **[www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)**. From there, visitors can learn more about the organization, its programs, become a member and visit our online store. Here are some other notable links:

**MEMBERSHIP:** Information for members, prospective members and recruiters. **[legion.org/membership](http://legion.org/membership)**

**GET PUBLISHED!** Share military stories, post histories and more, **[legiontown.org](http://legiontown.org)**

**MEMORIALS:** We are building a digital archive of war memorials. Visit or add to the database here, **[legion.org/memorials](http://legion.org/memorials)**

### E-newsletters

The American Legion produces and distributes a dozen free e-newsletters with news and information for veterans, servicemembers and others. Sign up for which ones you would like to receive, **[legion.org/newsletters](http://legion.org/newsletters)**.

### Social media

The American Legion is active on the primary social media platforms, including:

**FACEBOOK:** The American Legion's main Facebook page has an active news feed and can be found here, **[facebook.com/americanlegionhq](https://facebook.com/americanlegionhq)**. Other sanctioned Facebook pages can be found here, **[legion.org/socialmedia](http://legion.org/socialmedia)**.

**TWITTER:** Timely news updates from The American Legion and other sources for military and veterans news. **[twitter.com/American Legion](https://twitter.com/AmericanLegion)**

**LINKEDIN:** Resource information, career advice and tips, and links to job fairs for veterans. **[linkedin.com/company/the-american-legion/](https://linkedin.com/company/the-american-legion/)**

**INSTAGRAM:** Photos from American Legion staffers. **[instagram.com/theamericanlegion/](https://instagram.com/theamericanlegion/)**

### Publications

Download and print American Legion brochures. **[legion.org/publications](http://legion.org/publications)**

## Apps

Download American Legion apps on your mobile devices,  
**[legion.org/mobileapps](https://legion.org/mobileapps)**

## Videos

Our videos are published on The American Legion website and You Tube (search for AmericanLegionHQ to subscribe). Additionally, downloadable videos and PSAs are available on our Vimeo channel, **[vimeo.com/americanlegion](https://vimeo.com/americanlegion)**

## Text alerts

To receive text messages when the president orders the American flag to be lowered, follow these two steps. First, text Flag to **534466**. You will receive a text asking for a valid email address for the two-step authorization. Once that is complete, you will receive the text alerts.



THE AMERICAN LEGION  
**MEDIA ALLIANCE**

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