

# Social Media Tool Kit for beginners



# Contents

© NaturZoo Rheine

Introduction .....	2
The first steps .....	3
Facebook .....	4
Instagram .....	5
LinkedIn .....	6
Youtube .....	7
Twitter .....	8
TikTok .....	9
Starting a profile .....	10
Creating content .....	11
Best Practice Guidelines .....	12
Comments and messaging .....	13
Hashtags and tagging .....	14
Get started and enjoy .....	15

This toolkit was written by Minoo Kristiansen and Sandrine Camus, EAZA Communication Officers.

Cover images © (clockwise) Katarina Gregusova, Fatima Gils, Borbala Kocsis, Nili Avni-Magnen, Cathy King, Asim Krdzalic, Nora Varga, Mara (La Tobiera)



EAZA is supported in this work by the European Union LIFE NGO funding programme. The European Union is not responsible for the views displayed in publications and/or in conjunction with the activities for which the grant is used.



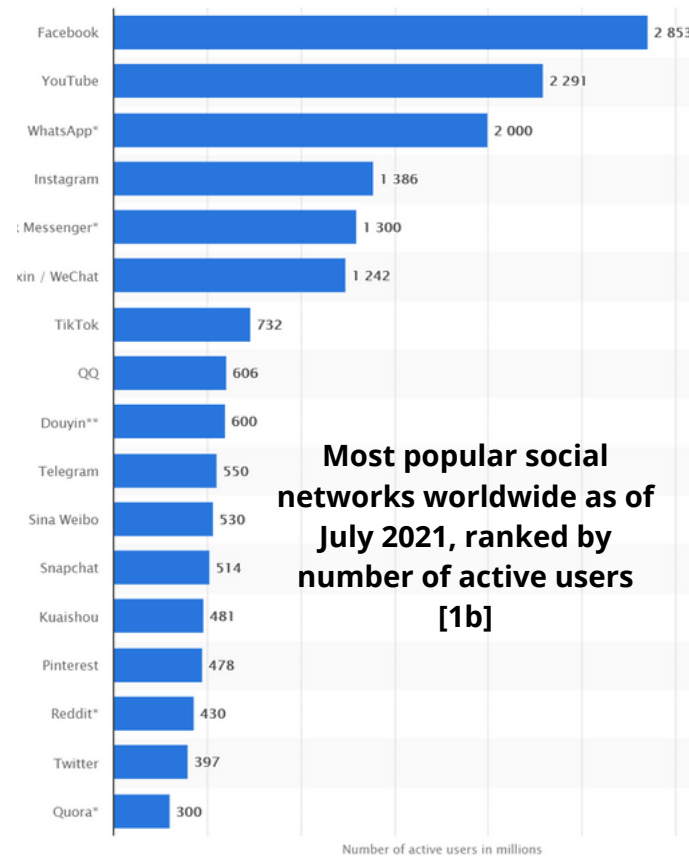
# Zoos and Aquariums on Social Media

As of early 2021, around 4.2 billion people worldwide use social media platforms to interact with fellow users and share their content [1a]. The average zoo or aquarium has multiple platforms where they delight and educate their followers with animal-centric content, with great success.

It's time to take it one step further, and invite followers behind the scenes! With more than 300 EAZA zoos and aquariums, our community is filled with dedicated and proud zoo/aquarium people, whose everyday work lives are an interesting enigma to most people.

What is it like to work with animals every day? What does your job position entail? And how does one get to where you are now? These and many more questions can be answered with social media content.

As part of the **EAZA Strategy 2021-2025**, this Tool Kit is here to help **you** get started!



## What Could You Bring to the Social Media Table?

As a proud zoo person, you can provide an inside glimpse of the culture and missions of not only your own zoo/aquarium but for zoos as a whole. Your knowledge and familiarity with the animals and your day-to-day role provide your followers with an authentic image of what working in a zoo are all about.

In a time where zoos and aquariums are frequently questioned or even attacked, it is important to show that those who work in them are trustworthy animal lovers – on all levels! Nothing delights the internet more than animal content, and those who work with animals daily are a great resource of expert knowledge and entertainment.

This tool kit will provide a step-by-step guide to choosing your social media platform and starting a profile that will fit your daily routine, as well as how to collaborate with the zoo/aquarium you work for.

[1a] <https://www.statista.com/topics/1164/social-networks>

[1b] <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>



# The First Steps

Here are a few things to consider before starting your own zoo/aquarium social media profiles

## How do I collaborate with my zoo/aquarium?

It's important to start your social media journey by contacting your communications department. As most zoos/aquariums have an official profile, it can be mutually beneficial for you to start your own. You can promote the official channel, events, and news on your own channel, but make sure to check with the communication department first. This helps avoid issues like alerting the public before the zoo/aquarium has, or touching upon subjects that can be difficult to cope with as an employee.

## What would I like to share?

Having a clear image of the kind of content you would like to create, can help streamline your profile. Although being broad allows for more variation, don't be afraid of specificity. Profiles can gain success for a myriad of reasons, including being one of a kind. Is there an animal you have a specific relationship to? Do you have a task or project that could be angled in a humorous or entertaining way? There will be examples throughout the tool kit to help you get an idea of how other zoo/aquarium people share their work.

## Who am I sharing for?

Thinking about your main target audience can help streamline your content. Whether connecting with fellow zoo people, animal lovers, or science enthusiasts, the way you write your captions will interest different people. Keep in mind your desired audience when choosing your tone and words, e.g. make sure they will be able to understand every word you use or provide a definition.

## Where should I share my content?

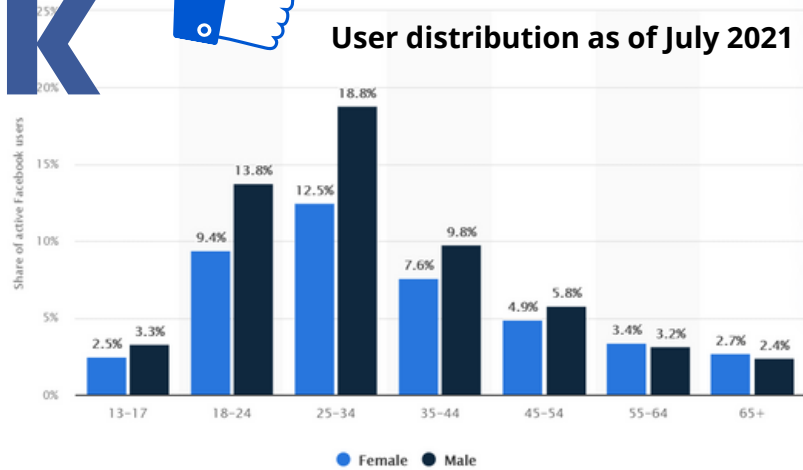
There are several options when choosing which platform, you would like to use. It can help to think about the content you prefer creating; do you like taking photos? Making videos? Or maybe writing articles? The next section of the tool kit provides an introduction to all the platforms so you can make a choice. It is also common to choose a few different platforms to use if you like creating mixed media or want to spread your content as much as possible.

# The Social Media Platforms

## facebook



User distribution as of July 2021



- 2.80 billion monthly active users
- Leading social media platform reaching 60.6% of internet users
- 63% of users are under 35 years old
- The average user spends 58.5 minutes on Facebook each day [2]

As one of the dominating social media platforms, Facebook involves a large range of users. You can choose to create a public **profile** or a **page**. Both of these options can then be followed by users, who will see your content displayed on their news feed. The page will allow you to have insights on your reach, engagement rate etc.

There is also a “**story**” feature that allows you to post content that is available for 24 hours. Facebook is a great platform for posting shareable content like videos, articles, and infographics. Engagement is key and creating posts that will encourage users to like comment, and share will make your page most visible.

## Quick Tips

- Social media rely on visuals. Choose high-quality photos for your posts but also for your **profile** and **cover** pictures.
- Versatile content is positive on Facebook. Feel free to **share** articles and posts from other profiles (especially when you don't have time to create your own content).
- Use **videos**: videos appear first on Facebook feeds, so using video content will help your profile gain attention.

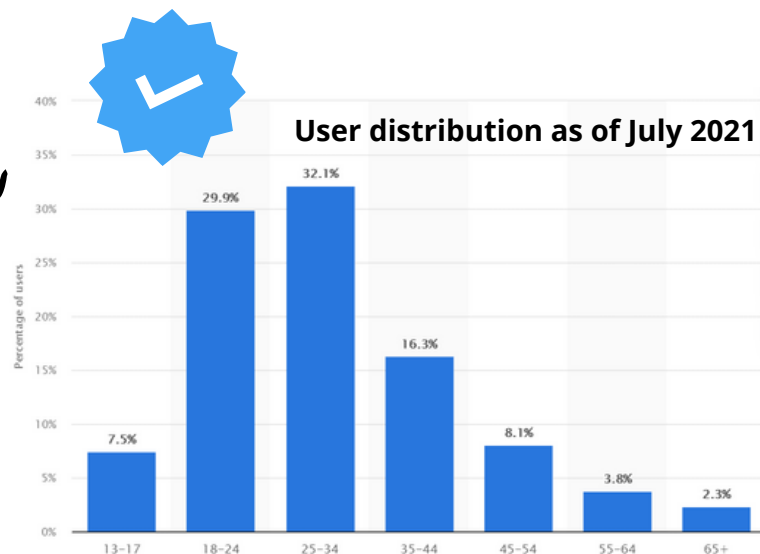


[2] <https://www.statista.com/topics/751/facebook/>

# The Social Media Platforms

# Instagram

- 1 billion active monthly users
- 500 million use the platform every day
- 70% of users are under the age of 35
- The average user spends 53 minutes on Instagram each day [3]



Instagram is a photo and video-based platform. With four times the amount of interactions than on Facebook, Instagram provides a fast-moving and visual base to share content.

Videos longer than 1 minute will be posted as an **IGTV** - the video host provided by Instagram.

Similarly to Facebook, it is possible to post content that will be available for 24 hours, called "**stories**". This is a popular tool on Instagram, as it allows to post easily and frequently content that you don't necessarily want to remain on your account (eg a temporary event). It is also common to repost other people's posts on your stories.

The use of **hashtags** is particularly important on Instagram. Users can follow hashtags and discover new accounts that use their favorite hashtags: a good way to reach a new audience (see p14).

Check out  
for inspiration!



## Quick Tips

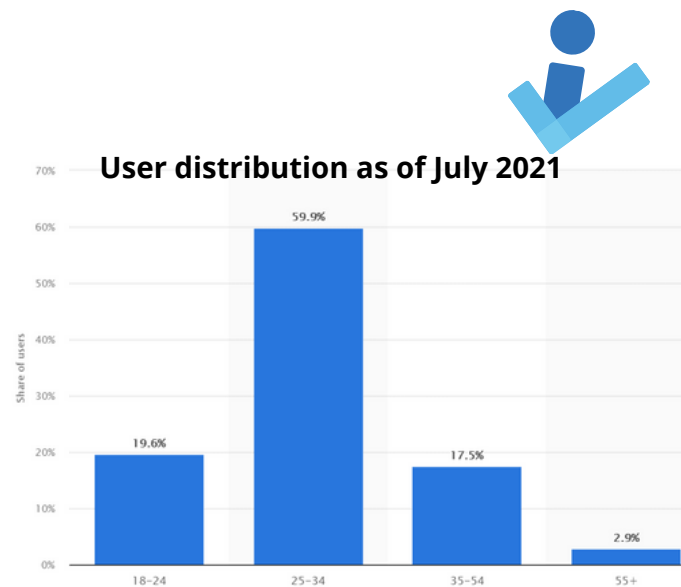
- Create a concise **bio** - text at the top of your profile, limited to 150 characters - that will let users know who you are.
- **Captions** are as important as visuals. Two lines are visible by default. But feel free to make them longer - though clear and enticing - as interested followers can click and read more.
- **Links** are not clickable on Instagram, so don't bother writing them in captions. Instead use a Linktree - collecting all relevant links - in your bio.

[3] <https://www.statista.com/topics/1882/instagram/>

# The Social Media Platforms

## LinkedIn

- There are 660 million LinkedIn users
- 59.9% of users are between 25 and 34 years old
- LinkedIn is one of the most used recruiting tools worldwide
- 43% of users worldwide are female, and 57% are male [4]



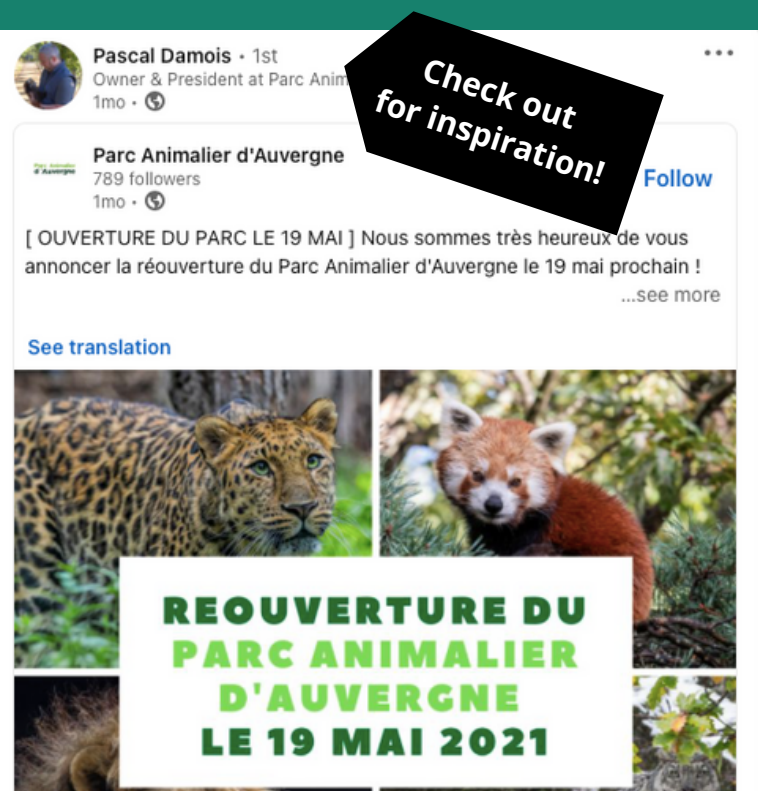
LinkedIn is a social media platform created for **professionals**. A profile on this platform presents your experience, job titles, and recommendations.

You can use your LinkedIn profile to share events, articles, and news about relevant topics, but videos and pictures are more and more frequently used too.

LinkedIn is a great platform to connect with other people in your field and network with others that have similar interests. When sharing posts, your content will be spread more easily throughout the community than on many other platforms that only share it to your followers.

## Quick Tips

- Don't be afraid to show your **personality**: although LinkedIn is a more professional platform, being authentic is always the most effective strategy.
- Experiment with the kind of **media** you would like to share. Image collages of 3-4 images perform very well on LinkedIn, as do videos of about 1-2 minutes.
- Similar to other platforms, sharing and interacting with posts from other profiles can help your own profile gain **traction**.



[4] <https://www.statista.com/topics/951/linkedin/>

# The Social Media Platforms

## YouTube

- YouTube has 2.1 billion users worldwide
- It is the second most popular search engine after Google
- 79% of all internet users have a YouTube account
- 1 billion hours of videos are watched every day [5]



YouTube is another social media giant, with a worldwide audience. Available in 80 different languages and easy to use both on the computer and on mobile, YouTube provides an opportunity to post **longer video** content.

Creating videos can be more of a commitment, as filming and editing can be time-consuming. However, if you are interested in taking on a larger project, videos are a great way to entertain and educate viewers.

If you are new to video creation, there are lots of excellent **tutorials** that can help you start with just your phone, eg: <https://natureforall.global/toolkits>.

## Quick Tips

- Start with an exciting **introduction** - a 3-second teaser - to motivate viewers to keep watching.
- Design a good **thumbnail** - the cover image seen when sharing your link - as viewers will click if intrigued.
- Our **attention span** is short, edit out all slow or unnecessary footage and keep the key message simple.
- Use relevant **keywords** in the "tags" section when uploading your video to increase its visibility.



[5] <https://www.statista.com/topics/2019/youtube/>

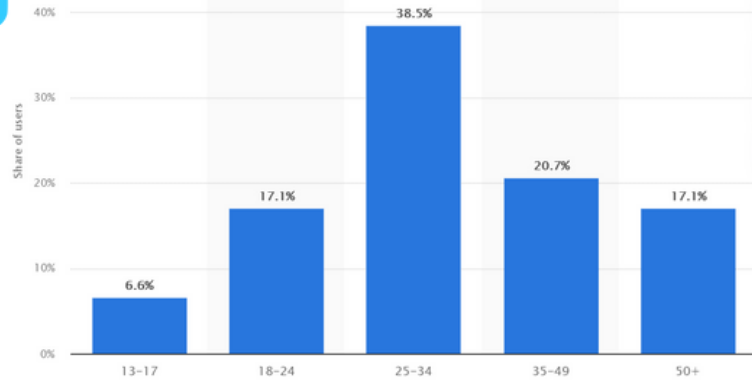


# The Social Media Platforms

# twitter



User distribution as of April 2021



- 192 million active users daily
- 17% of users are above 50 years old
- 68.1% of Twitter users are male [6a]
- Users spend an average of 3.39 minutes per session on Twitter
- 500 million tweets are sent each day (5.78 per second!) [6b]

Twitter provides a space for those who can share content in just **280 characters**. Unlike other platforms (and given the short size of the posts), it is common to tweet **several times a day**. Considered one of the most important social media sites, Twitter is an opportunity to share your opinion, news, articles, or the work of your peers.

You can quickly build a larger network by **tweeting and retweeting**, and you can easily contribute to discussions or debates worldwide.

Twitter has become an increasingly important tool in **politics**, with many elected officials, governments, and ministries making announcements and engaging with the general population.

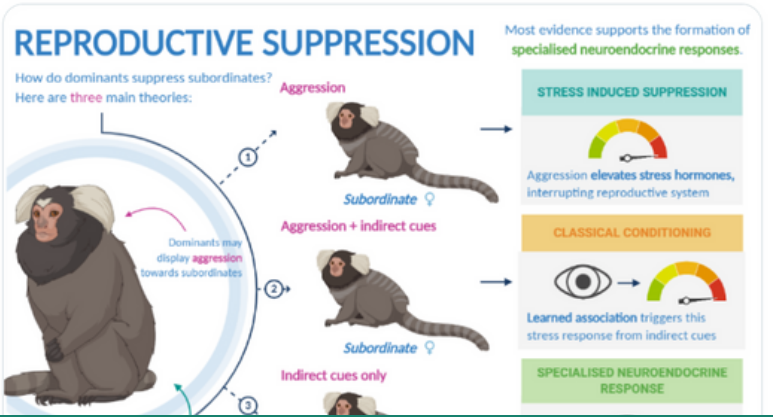
## Quick Tips

- Sharing **links** works well on Twitter, as people can easily retweet and spread the information.
- As several tweets per day are the norm, only use Twitter if you are willing to **dedicate time** to it.
- Don't start your tweet with @ or you'll send a private message instead of a public tweet.
- Pictures, videos, gif can now be used on Twitter too, as well as polls: great to create **engagement**.

Check out for inspiration!

Alice Clark | Zoologist  
@AliceZoologist

1/4 #ACCEconf20 #ACCE...  
In some mammals, females can... breeding  
by suppressing the reproduction of other females in the  
group. 🗳️ ⬇️  
Often this is linked to dominance hierarchies. 👑  
This monopolization of breeding reduces genetic  
diversity in captive populations. 🧬



[6a] <https://www.statista.com/topics/737/twitter/> [6b] <https://www.oberlo.in/blog/twitter-statistics>

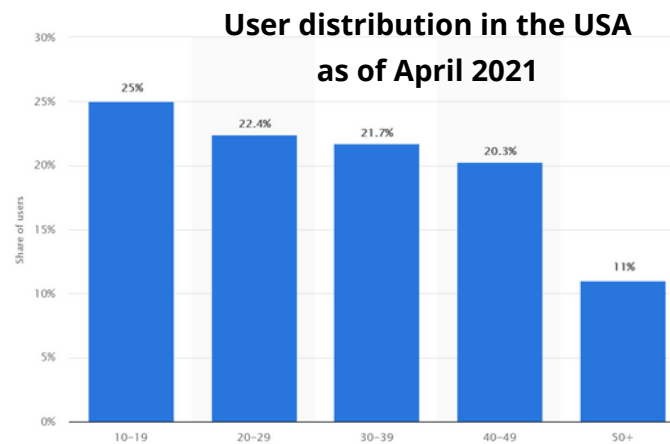


# The Social Media Platforms

## TikTok

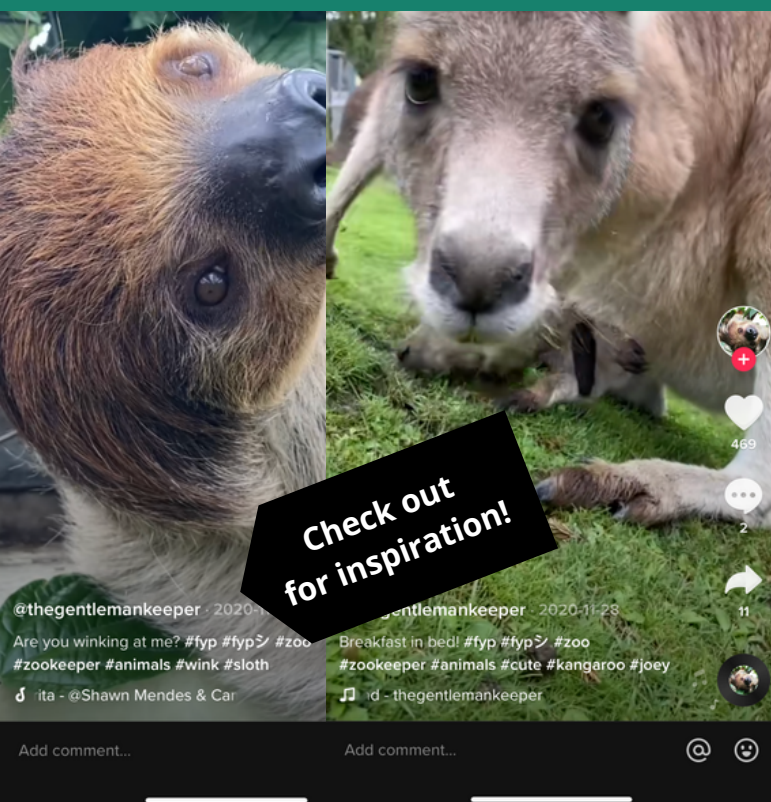


- 689 million TikTok monthly active users worldwide
- Downloads of the app increased by 58% in the first quarter of 2020
- 25% of users are under 20 years old in the USA
- Users spend an average of 52 minutes on the app per day [7]



TikTok is a newer platform, released in 2016. Its popularity has surged over the last few years and is the preferred social media for **teens and young adults**. This is THE platform to use if you would like to engage with a younger audience.

All content is in the format of **portrait one-minute videos**, optimized for mobile use. Many of which follow trends based on “sounds” - audio clips, either from songs, movies, or TikTok users going viral. TikTok is a **fast-paced platform**, but also one that allows the discovery of new content creators much more easily than on Instagram or Facebook.



## Quick Tips

- Find your **niche!** TikTok is all about obscure interests and small moments; eg check out hashtags like #booktok or #planttok to see how trends unfold on the app. Then use these trends to your advantage.
- Find the videos you like and get inspired. Click “Not interested” or “Like” depending on your **preference** and you will find like-minded creators.
- **Commenting** on other users’ videos is not only good for engagement but part of the TikTok culture.



# Starting a Profile

© Prague Zoo

Whatever the platform, the first step to creating your social media presence, is creating your profile/page. All profiles have a profile picture, a bio, and varying degrees of additional information that you can choose to add. Your bio must be simple and to the point; it must clear what your profile is about and what kind of content you will be providing. Stating in your bio that you work at a zoo/aquarium will inform the followers of your expertise on the topic.

Some people choose to stay behind the camera, and not use a profile picture of themselves. This is completely fine! Choose an eye-catching photograph that is relevant to your profile instead.

It is a good idea to have one or more posts ready, as well as an idea of how often you will be posting. Once you have started your profile, find interesting or similar profiles to follow, and interact with their content.

## Here is a checklist to help you get started:

- Talk to the communication department
- Pick your social media platform
- Have your name, bio, and first post ready
- Decide how often you will post
- Follow other relevant profiles
- Like, follow, and comment on other posts

A glowing jellyfish is shown in a dark tank, its translucent body and long, thin tentacles illuminated from within, creating a soft, ethereal glow. The background is dark, making the jellyfish stand out prominently.

# Creating Content

© Oceanario Lisboa

Working in a zoo/aquarium is a great benefit for creating content, as many people are interested in what goes on behind the scenes. Don't be afraid of playing around with different media to discover what works for your profile and what you feel more comfortable with.

Finding your angle may take some time. Get inspiration from profiles that you like, follow hashtags relevant to your topics and explore trends suggested by the platforms. A big part of creating content is enjoying the process! If you have fun making content, it's likely viewers will have fun too.

As social media is highly visual, the quality of your photos and videos is important. You can easily produce high-quality images with your smartphone.

## Here are some general rules for smartphone photography / filming:

- Put your phone on silent and make sure you have enough **battery** and memory space.
- Use **natural light** when possible: If the area you are photographing/filming is dark, you can edit the clips afterward by adjusting the brightness and exposure.
- **Don't zoom in:** when smartphones zoom in, they lose the resolution of the image. It is better to physically move closer to the object if possible.
- **Edit your content:** many smartphones come with inbuilt editing software. There are additional apps like VSCO, Snapseed, Kinemaster that are easy to use and free.
- Using too many filters is not recommended, but a good rule of thumb is to adjust the **exposure**, **brightness**, and **contrast**.

## How often should I post?

It is up to you how frequently you want to post, and starting this new project should be an enjoyable hobby, not interfering with your daily life. Spend as much time on it as you please, but remember that posting on a regular basis is better than sporadically posting large amounts of content. Feel free to take all the pictures and videos you want in one day, and then posting them throughout the week. In that way, you can aim for a few regular posts a week.



© Colchester Zoo

# Best Practice Guidelines

## Posting your interactions with animals

Beautiful photos of animals are always popular online and great tools to inspire and educate about animal care and conservation. Though human/animal interactions are part of your daily life, advertising them without a context may lead to mistaken conclusions and negative consequences. Here are some things to keep in mind when taking photos with animals.

### Photos of people holding animals

Always mention they are **trained professionals** to avoid giving the false impression that holding or being close to wild animals is not physically dangerous. Reminding that these animals are not pets nor sources of entertainment can be done by showing your zoo/aquarium **uniform** or **signage** from a professional institution. Captions explaining the context of the photo and why you are in physical contact with the animal (welfare checks, training, transport, etc.) also help signify that this behaviour is only appropriate when done by animal professionals.

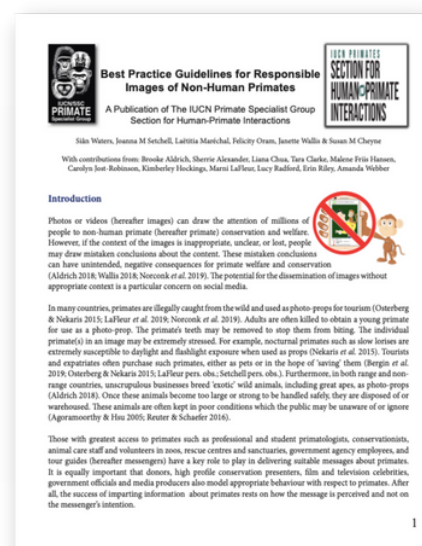
### Photos of people very close to animals

Showing yourself close to animals may provide a great educational moment, but you have to be clear in explaining the measures you are taking to **stay safe**. It is important to avoid normalizing close contact with wild animals and provide a context for your actions.

### Selfies with animals

Seeing people on social media up close and personal with wild animals make more people wish to do the same. This can **promote illegal or dangerous animal/tourist experiences**, which undermine the anti-poaching and conservation messages pivotal to zoos/aquariums. Despite the engagement brought by a selfie with an adorable animal, it's important to consider the messages you promote.

Sometimes the lines might be blurry and hard to distinguish, so feel free to reach out and ask your communications department or have a look at the [Best Practice Guidelines for responsible images of Non-Human Primates](#), written in several languages by the IUCN Primate Specialist Group.





© Gerardo Garcia

# Comments and Messages

Social media provides an opportunity to join and build communities, based on your interests and passions. Replying to comments, thanking the people who share your posts, commenting, liking and sharing other posts are the best way to keep your community engaged, reach more followers and also find interesting content. Social media are bilateral ways of communicating so pay attention to what your followers ask, like etc.

As zoos/aquariums and animals in human care are a heavily debated topic, you might also attract negative comments. This is an important topic to approach prior to creating your account when you discuss your strategy with your communications department. They can guide you in finding a way that suits both you and the zoo/aquarium. The strategy might be to avoid the potentially inflammatory topics or to not engage in comments that may seem to start a debate.

**Here are a few tips to consider:**

- Make sure you know where your zoo stands on issues before posting
- If you decide to answer criticism, be assertive and use scientific-based evidence
- Remember that oftentimes it can be hard to reason with people on the internet, so do not spend too much energy on it
- It is always possible to block people from accessing or commenting on your posts
- If you feel a comment is hurtful or making you uncomfortable, you are free to delete it or hide it. It is your personal profile.

If it becomes relevant, use the [EAZA communications crisis document](#) for further help.



# Hashtags and Tagging

You may have become acquainted with **hashtags** and **tagging** from the general use of social media. Using them helps to reach relevant audiences and go beyond your current followers.

**Hashtags** - a combination of letters, numbers, and/or emoji preceded by the # symbol - are used on all platforms to categorize content and make it more discoverable. You can choose to use general trending ones (search for them on Google, they change all the time) and ones specific to your content (eg #conservation #bear #zookeeper...).

On Instagram, you can include up to 30 hashtags on a regular post. The consensus is that about 11 hashtags is a good number to start with but it's more important to use relevant ones even if less than 11.

Here are some relevant hashtags for posts about animals:

#animals #nature #animal #conservation #wildlife #animalphotography #animalfact #endangered #eep #eaza

**Tagging** - mention of another account/page preceded by @ (which notifies them) - is another useful tool that can be used on all platforms. If the other account likes or interacts with your post, their followers will be reached as well. Plus, they will likely tag you back in a future post.


This works if you tag relevant accounts: the zoo/aquarium you work for, your national or regional zoo association, project collaborators, other zoos/aquariums when you transfer animals, colleagues, etc.

It is especially important to tag the authors/creators when re-sharing content from another account.

You can tag someone on a photo and/or in the caption.

So we can share your great work, don't hesitate to tag EAZA on:

 [@EAZA01](#)

 [@eaza](#)

 [@eaza\\_official](#)

 [@EAZAVideo](#)



© P.Roux

# Get Started and Enjoy!

The best way to get acquainted with social media platforms is to use them! Try out different kinds of content, and get inspired by others until you find your methods.

Starting your own profiles is an opportunity to show the world all the hard work, dedication, and passion you have for animals and their conservation.

**We hope it provides an opportunity for everyone to meet the proud zoo/aquarium people, and see all the knowledge, time, and dedication used in EAZA institutions to care for animals and (re)connect people with nature.**

For suggestions or questions, please contact [sandrine.camus@eaza.net](mailto:sandrine.camus@eaza.net).