

YOUR DIGITAL FIRST IMPRESSION: THE COLLEGE SOCIAL MEDIA SCRUB

A **good social media scrub** for a college applicant is a professional clean-up and self-audit of all digital footprints to ensure every public (and semi-public) post reflects maturity, respect, and readiness for higher education. Colleges—and increasingly scholarship committees and employers—often check applicants' online presence.

Here's what an effective scrub should include:

Step 1: Search Yourself

- **Google your name** (and nickname) with variations: "*Jane Doe*," "*Jane M. Doe*," "*Jane Doe Reno*," etc.
 - Check **Google Images**, **YouTube**, and **News** tabs.
 - Try searching with your **Instagram handle**, **TikTok username**, or **gamertag**.
 - Note anything that appears unprofessional or that you don't control.
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Step 2: Review Your Accounts

Platforms to check: Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat (public stories), X/Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, YouTube, Discord, LinkedIn, and any older accounts.

For each one:

- **Delete or archive** posts that include:
 - Inappropriate language, slurs, sexual content, or suggestive jokes
 - Posts mocking others or controversial memes
 - Political rants, substance use, or illegal behavior
 - Disrespect toward teachers, coaches, employers, or peers
- **Remove tags** from questionable photos or comments.

- **Update your bio** to reflect your real interests, goals, or values (keep it simple and positive).
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Step 3: Adjust Privacy Settings

- Set older posts or personal content to “**Friends Only**” or **Private**.
 - Turn off “tag review” so you must approve any tagged content.
 - Audit who can view or comment on your posts.
 - On TikTok and Instagram, use the “**View as Public**” option to double-check what strangers can see.
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Step 4: Add Positive Presence

Rather than just deleting, **curate**:

- Share photos or updates from:
 - Volunteering or service work
 - Athletics, clubs, or creative projects
 - Academic interests, mission trips, or community engagement
 - Create a **LinkedIn** or digital résumé page highlighting achievements.
 - Use consistent profile images and handles for a professional look.
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Step 5: Don't Forget Secondary Spaces

- Check the **comment sections** on public videos or posts you've replied to.
- Review **Reddit history** or **gaming profiles** (Discord, Twitch, etc.).

- Delete unused accounts with old usernames that could resurface.

Final Check

Ask a parent, mentor, or counselor to “audit” your pages with fresh eyes and tell you honestly what impression they get in five minutes. The rule of thumb:

“If you wouldn’t want your college admissions officer, your coach, or your grandmother to see it—delete it.”