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# Digital identity health check for academics

## Enhance your digital identity and your career prospects

There are many benefits of having an online profile as an academic and this guide will step you through what you can do to 'health check' your own digital presence as an academic.

### How can your digital presence boost your academic career?

Digital tools and social media offer new channels to enhance your work and its reach. You can:

- Make new connections and collaborate across geographic boundaries
- Reach new audiences
- Build a reputation beyond your institution
- Promote your skills and knowledge
- Disseminate your research and ideas

When all this can be achieved it's increasingly important that you control what information is available about you online.

### Common concerns about using social media as an academic

Academics may have concerns about using social media, especially around creating multiple accounts, including:

- Finding the time to manage them
- Picking the right networks
- The potential of self-plagiarism when blogging about your research
- Harassment

However, the chances are you are already online. You may find that quotes from presentations you make are tweeted from conferences or your slides are shared after events where you have presented. So it pays to take a health check on how you appear and then take the first steps to control your own digital identity.

## A health check on your digital presence

The first step in your digital health check is to review what comes up in the results when someone (such as a potential employer or collaborator) searches for you online and note how high up in the results you are. Why is this important? Research suggests that **it takes people just eight or nine seconds to find the search result they want** and that **people do not often look past the first page of results**. So if you don't appear on the first page of results you are effectively invisible online.

### Your aim

To be as visible as possible by getting your name to appear in the top five search results or at least on the first page of results.

### The health check

Run a search on your name, trying your full name and variants.

What do you see? Is it what you'd like others to see? Consider the following:

- How close to the top of the search results do you appear?
- Do other people with the same name as you appear in the search results?
- Is your work reflected in the way you wish? Can you see presentations you've given, articles you've written or projects you've been involved in?
- Is your institutional profile visible and up-to-date?
- Can you find your social media profiles – personal and/or professional?
- Do you see anything that others are saying about you? For example has your work been referenced elsewhere, referred to on other blogs or included in any media coverage?
- Select the images tab in the search engine. Have any personal photos made it into the results for your name? Do you mind?

## Here's an example of a researcher who performs well in search results

This researcher performs well in search.

You'll see that her blog, social media and institutional profiles dominate the first page of results.

The screenshot shows a Google search for 'charlotte mathieson'. The search bar at the top contains the text 'charlotte mathieson' and a search icon. Below the search bar, there are tabs for 'Web', 'Images', 'News', 'Videos', 'Shopping', 'More', and 'Search tools'. The search results are as follows:

- Dr Charlotte Mathieson**: <https://charlottemathieson.wordpress.com/> - Welcome to the website and blog of Dr Charlotte Mathieson, researcher in Victorian literature and culture. Blog Talks ECR work Research Public engagement ...
- Charlotte Mathieson (@cemathieson) | Twitter**: <https://twitter.com/cemathieson> - 15.3K tweets • 219 photos/videos • 3161 followers. Check out the latest Tweets from Charlotte Mathieson (@cemathieson)
- Dr Charlotte Mathieson - University of Warwick**: [www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/ias/current/.../mathieson/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/ias/current/.../mathieson/) - Dr Charlotte Mathieson. I joined the IAS in October 2012 as a Research Fellow to work on a number of IAS projects while developing my research and teaching ...
- Dr Charlotte Mathieson - University of Warwick**: [www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/people/postgraduate/enseba/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/people/postgraduate/enseba/) - 2 Oct 2012 - Dr Charlotte Mathieson. I am a Research Fellow in the Institute of Advanced Study and teach in the Department of English and Comparative ...
- Charlotte Mathieson | University of Warwick - Academia.edu**: [warwick.academia.edu/CharlotteMathieson](http://warwick.academia.edu/CharlotteMathieson) - Charlotte Mathieson, University of Warwick, Institute of Advanced Study, Post-Doc. Studies Literature, Feminist Theory, and Cultural Geography. Research ...
- Charlotte Mathieson Profiles | Facebook**: <https://www.facebook.com/public/Charlotte-Mathieson> - View the profiles of people named Charlotte Mathieson on Facebook. Join Facebook to connect with Charlotte Mathieson and others you may know. Facebook...
- Charlotte Mathieson profiles - United Kingdom | LinkedIn**: [uk.linkedin.com/pub/dir/Charlotte/Mathieson](http://uk.linkedin.com/pub/dir/Charlotte/Mathieson) - View the profiles of professionals named Charlotte Mathieson on LinkedIn. There are 2 professionals named Charlotte Mathieson, who use LinkedIn to ...
- Charlotte Mathieson > The Religious Studies Project**: [www.religiousstudiesproject.com/tag/charlotte-mathieson/](http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/tag/charlotte-mathieson/) - "This post offers tips and advice for disseminating your research to a wider audience, beyond traditional academic mediums such as journals. This is based ...
- Charlotte Mathieson - Dr Nadine Muller**: [www.nadinemuller.org.uk/author/charlotte-mathieson/](http://www.nadinemuller.org.uk/author/charlotte-mathieson/) - The Research Excellence Framework (REF). by Charlotte Mathieson in The New Academic: Guides to Academia. Guides to Academia. 14261842\_I. Someone's ...
- [PDF] Read the full text here. - Victorian Network**: [www.victoriannetwork.org/index.php/vn/article/download/34/37](http://www.victoriannetwork.org/index.php/vn/article/download/34/37) - by C Mathieson - Related articles Charlotte Mathieson. (University of Warwick). Hetty had never read a novel [...] how then could she find a shape for her expectations? George Eliot, Adam Bede ...

Blog



Institutional profiles



Directory Listings - potentially where no profile exists




Guest Blog

## Ten simple tips to improve the visibility of you and your research

So what strategies can you use to make the search results for your name look just as good? The good news is that improving your position in the search results doesn't require any technical knowledge. There's a lot you can achieve by taking some basic steps in creating and maintaining your digital identity.

**Here's what we recommend:**

- 1. Create profiles on sites that rank highly in search results**
- 2. Manage your name by getting an ORCID identifier** 
- 3. Make your web addresses easy to find**
- 4. Create a single home for your online presence**
- 5. Link your online profiles together**
- 6. Write guest posts on other people's blogs to gain more visibility**
- 7. Decide if you will have a personal and/or professional digital presence**
- 8. Use appropriate images online**
- 9. Maximise the potential of your profile biographies to make better connections**
- 10. Measure your research impact online**

## 1. Create profiles on sites that rank highly in search results

There are certain sites that rank highly on search engines – for example LinkedIn, Twitter, academia.edu, Facebook and Google+. Having a profile on these sites will increase your chances of ranking highly for searches of your name. If you know you're not going to use the profile regularly then you may want to think about just filling in the bare minimum that's required, including a prominent link back to your main profile, eg your blog or institutional profile.

Academic institutions also rank highly, and it's likely that people will use your affiliations to search for you. Maintaining your profile on your institution's website will also help.

One thing you must do is to keep consistency in the format of your name. If it changes from site to site this won't help to bump you up the search results.




## 2. Manage your name by getting an ORCID identifier **ORCID**

You can get an **ORCID** which provides you with a unique identifier linked to your name. You can use it to make sure all your outputs and publications are tied to your name. Including your ORCID on your website and social media accounts means that people searching for you can verify that you're the person they're looking for.

## 3. Make your web addresses easy to find

Web addresses that you can modify to be whatever you'd like are called 'vanity URLs'. For example a standard LinkedIn profile address may be something like <https://uk.linkedin.com/in/fjsdfwoer546>, but by claiming your personalised address you can change it to <https://uk.linkedin.com/in/yourname>.

Find out how to personalise your profile's address on:

- **Facebook** 
- **Google+** 
- **LinkedIn** 

#### 4. Create a single home for your online presence

Setting up your own website or blog is an easy way to create and manage your digital identity. It also creates a home for you to develop your ideas. It's under your control what information to include on this profile. To be sure your site ranks highly for searches of your name, you must include it in the web address, eg <https://charlottemathieson.wordpress.com/>.

You can improve your ranking even further by having an 'About' page on your site that includes your name in the page title and in the content of the page.

#### 5. Link your online profiles together

Once you've created a few social media accounts, you'll want to think about how you can link all your profiles together. You can add links to your social media profiles from your website/blog and on your institutional profile. There are also third party services like [about.me](#) where you can create a simple landing page to showcase all of your accounts.

#### 6. Write guest posts on other people's blogs to gain more visibility

Writing guest blog posts can be another way to get yourself high up the rankings, especially if you're writing for sites that have a good ranking themselves. You can use this as an opportunity to link to your preferred online profile, eg your blog or website. There are many collaborative blogs out there: check your subject area or look to more general topics on research methods/practice.

**Our suggestions for collaborative blogs and websites you might write for:**

- [The Impact Blog \(LSE\)](#)
- [The Conversation](#)
- [Thesis Whisperer](#)
- [Research Whisperer](#)

**...and don't forget your own institution's blogs**

## 7. Decide if you'll have a personal and/or professional digital presence

You can choose to use social media accounts (for example Facebook) for your personal rather than professional persona, or mix the two aspects of your life into one account.

Some researchers are happy to present their whole life on one account. Others prefer to have separate profiles. One way to do this is to use different formats of your name, eg 'Charlie Smith' for your personal accounts, with a personal email address and 'Dr Charles M. Smith' with a work email address for your professional persona.




If you use the same name in both capacities then consider what additional privacy settings you may want to use on your personal accounts. Or, if they're public, leave a note to explain that you use them in a personal capacity with a link to your professional profile.

If you use a social media site for work only, then you may occasionally have to explain to friends and acquaintances why you are not connecting with them or accepting their requests.

## 8. Use appropriate images online

Don't just look at the websites tab of search results – you also need to consider what images are associated with you. Here's how: take a look at the images tab in the search results for a search on your name. Are there any images that appear there that you'd prefer had been kept private? If so, review your social media privacy settings and remove tags of yourself from other people's photos.

Use these links to find out how to remove tags on:

- [Facebook](#) 
- [Instagram](#) 
- [Google+](#) 

### Top tip

People will search for and use images of you that they find. So get a good quality profile photo taken for use online. Always load it as a high quality format and use it consistently across your digital presence. That way you control how you appear online.



## 9. Maximise the potential of your profile biographies to make better connections

Most social media accounts provide a space alongside your name for you to give people an immediate impression of whether you're someone they want to connect to, eg a Twitter biography, also known as a bio. This space is often limited and so you need to be clear and focused. Write a short bio that showcases your skills and experiences that can be used across your accounts. This can then be optimised using the features of the different services.

### Top tip

The Online Academic offers advice on [forming a good Twitter bio](#)

Get tips on how to improve your LinkedIn profile, including adding a headline, from [jobs.ac.uk](#)

## 10. Measure your research impact online

Bibliometrics and altmetrics provide a measure of the attention your research is getting. While bibliometrics track and measure citations across scholarly publications, altmetrics represent the wider attention that your publications are getting, including beyond the academic community. You can use the [Altmetric Bookmarklet](#) to find out what's being said about your published research on social media, the news and many other channels. Many publishers and institutional repositories also provide altmetric reports for individual outputs.

You can also measure the impact of your social media profiles using free tools, including:

- [Google Analytics](#)
- [SumAll](#)
- [Twitter Analytics](#)

## **Now you've completed the digital health check, you're in good shape!**

### **What next?**

The online world is constantly shifting so doing a health check of your digital identity isn't a task to be done just once. You can be certain that people will search for you - they might be potential collaborators, funders or prospective employers. So, think about setting yourself a schedule for re-running the health check. You might choose to do it at regular intervals, or you could base your schedule around key events, like conferences, funding submissions or job applications.

Whatever you decide, remember: you have just eight or nine seconds to get your name noticed in search results and it's in your power to control what they find there.



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