

LTET Community Instagram: Guidelines and Best Practices

Purpose of LTER IG:

- 1) Raising awareness about the research and outreach activities of people in the LTER network, and the types of ecosystems and processes we study.
- 2) Humanizing the science by featuring the people behind the research and other science activities at LTER sites.
- 3) Build a sense of community among LTER sites, graduate and undergraduate students at these sites, and with other scientists and potential collaborators.

Intended Audiences:

1) current and prospective ecology students, both affiliated with and outside LTER; 2) the entire LTER community and affiliates; 3) the broader scientific and science communication community, and 4) people who are really interested in field work, ecology, learning about science.

Guidelines for posting on LTER IG:

1. Voice and Tone

The **voice** of the LTER IG account should be relatively consistent across posts and participants. We encourage a voice that is inclusive, engaging, and professional (i.e., respectful, honest, science/academic focused).

The **tone** can vary between sincere, positive, playful, and humorous depending on the subject and content of the post, but please be sure to avoid any statements that could be considered offensive, off-color, or otherwise inappropriate in a professional academic context.

2. Types of Posts:

- **People takeovers.** One day to one week take-overs (1-3 posts) by an individual or group of individuals at an LTER site, depicting their research or other activities related to that site. Graduate students will be highly encouraged to lead these take-overs and posts.
- **Site features.** Some posts can highlight specific sites and we can give facts and stats about that site to share across the entire network and make sure every site is eventually represented, not just ones that have enthusiastic people. These posts can be created by the LTER IG administrators or individuals from the site itself.
- **Other posts.** We can encourage the LTER community to send in other “random” interesting photos that we can queue up to use during gaps between the other two types of posts. These photos might feature special excursions, interesting findings, synthesis work, etc.

3. Spelling, Grammar, and Punctuation

- Always double-check your spelling and grammar before posting

- Avoid jargon (or if use a special term, define it)
- Don't use emojis in place of actual words, but you can add a few relevant/appropriate emojis throughout the post if you want to (e.g., at the end of sentences or to divide paragraphs)

4. Formatting

- Short paragraphs are preferable to one long paragraph, depending on how long your post is.
- Always include a photo credit at the end of your post
- Add suggested and relevant hashtags at end of post or in a comment directly after posting (include roughly 10-20 hashtags with your post)
- Tag other accounts only if they are directly connected or related to the post/image

5. Images

- Types of images: Photos can depict people working in the field, lab, etc., or they can depict experiments or field sites more broadly.
- Tips:
 - Choose images that feature interesting action or show an activity or person close-up (as opposed to a wide shot), or a unique image under a microscope, for example.
 - If possible, try to edit your image so that the lighting and colors are vibrant (you can use 'auto' adjust in any editing software as an easy starting point)
 - In IG you can crop and edit your image further. Think about how to crop your image to draw the viewer toward the most interesting point of the photo
 - If people other than yourself are in the photo, please be sure to get their permission to post to social media
 - If you have more than one photo you really want to share with a given post, you can share multiple photos at one time – but make sure they are all relevant to the post and represent an interesting addition.

6. Videos: If the person(s) tasked with drafting a post wish to share a video rather than an image, they should follow the same general guidelines to ensure the content is appropriate and fits the goals and tone of the LTER IG account.

- Videos must be under 1 minute in length
- They can contain audio or be silent – if audio is used make sure its relevant and not disruptive or inappropriate
- Videos can depict site research activities, feature students/staff describing something on site, etc. Be sure to pay attention to video quality when recording.

7. Process for posting:

- Site admins will ask for volunteers to sign-up for a take-over or to send in relevant content; volunteers must have their content ideas approved/vetted prior to posting.
 - Site Admins or volunteer(s) from LTER site choose a photo (or series of photos) and draft a post.
 - Site volunteers can either send in their photos and post drafts to the IG admins, are may be given the IG login info if they are comfortable posting themselves.
 - If volunteers are interested in sharing short video updates via IG Stories, they must ask for prior approval to ensure that content will be relevant and appropriate.
8. General maintenance of account (replies, planning, scheduling, building up audience)
- Designated grad student reps (currently Brian and Anna) will regularly check the IG account in order to: respond to comments as appropriate, verify that content is following designated best practices; build online community by connecting with/following other accounts
 - The LTER-NCO will provide support to the grad student admins in periodic reviewing of posts, collection and organization of content, and assistance building the online community of followers.
9. Suggested Hashtags to use generally (use those most relevant to each post):
 #scicomm #longtermresearch #lternetwork #ecology #STEM #STEAM
 #womendoingscience #laboratorylife #fieldresearch #research #phdlife #gradlife
 #scientistswhoselfie #thisiswhatascientistlookslike

Plus you can use hashtags relevant to your field or area of study (#botony, #climatechange), or to the day you are posting (#fossilfriday), and others.