

CLARITY BUILDS COMMUNITY

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SEO, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND
DIGITAL VISIBILITY FOR NONPROFITS



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1. WHY THIS EXISTS

I have zero formal education in SEO, marketing, social media management, or analytics. My high school technology teacher gave me a D minus, and honestly, it was a gift.

A generous one.

I'm telling you this because if you're sitting there thinking, "I'm not a tech person," "I don't have time for this," "I don't even know where to start," I want you to know: you can learn what you need to know.

Here's the secret nobody tells you: **nobody gets this right the first time.**

Web management... is ongoing.

SEO... is ongoing.

Learning... is ongoing.

Creativity... is ongoing.

What matters is showing up and getting a little better each time.

I refused to let a lack of knowledge stop me from creating things I cared about. So I stayed consistent. I learned. And the turning point came when I finally understood what was actually possible.

Once I saw the creative potential, I was hooked.

The problem wasn't that I wasn't capable. It was how it was taught. I didn't need mechanics first. I needed to see the possibility first. That's all it took. Perspective matters.

This guide exists because education is one of our pillars at Chautauqua, and this is what it looks like in real life.

Not theory. Not trends. Just clarity and understanding things in your language.

Here is what clarity does:

Clarity builds confidence.

Confidence builds visibility.

Visibility builds attendance.

Attendance builds community.

And isn't COMMUNITY the whole point?

2. SEO FOR BEGINNERS: WHAT SEO ACTUALLY IS

SEO stands for ***Search Engine Optimization***.

That phrase alone is enough to make some people shut down. So let's simplify it, because it's really not that complicated.

SEO is simply helping search engines understand what your page is about. That's it.

- It's not coding.
- It's not manipulation.
- It's not gaming a system.

It's clarity.

How Google Actually Works:

When someone types something into Google, they're asking a question. Not in the way they'd ask another person, but Google reads it as a question that needs an answer.

For Example:

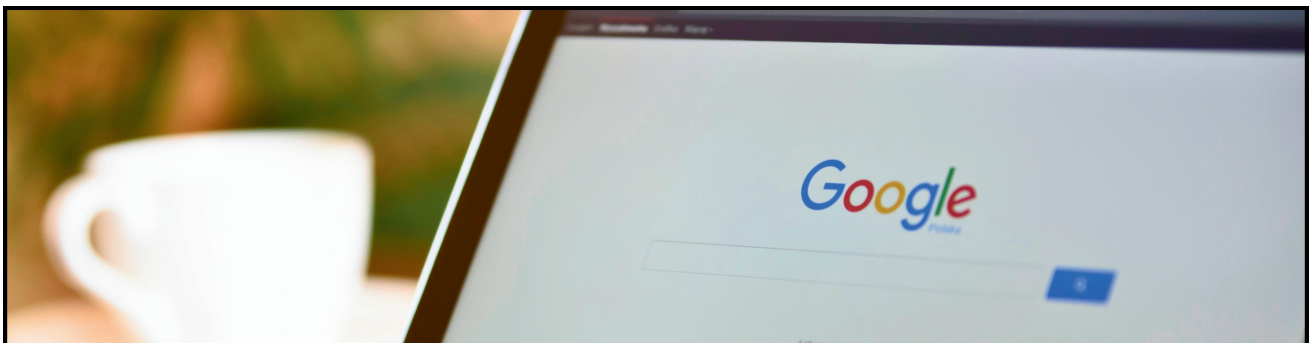
- Free concert near me
- Things to do this weekend
- Easter service times
- Kids activities in Syracuse Indiana

Google's job is straightforward: match the question to the clearest answer.

If your page clearly answers the question, it has a chance to appear in search results. If your page is vague, poetic, or missing important details, Google simply won't recognize you as the answer.

That's the whole game.

Clarity wins.



3. HOW GOOGLE READS YOUR PAGE

Google does not read your website the way a human does. It doesn't admire your graphics. It doesn't feel inspired by your mission statement. It doesn't get the vibe you're trying to convey. **It scans.**

Search engines look for signals - patterns in your content that help determine what your page is about and whether it matches someone's search.

The Primary Signals Google Looks For:

- Page title
- Headings
- Repeated key phrases
- Image descriptions (alt text)
- URL structure
- Clear hierarchy

Google is looking for patterns and structure. If those signals are strong and consistent, your page becomes easier to understand.

If they're missing, inconsistent, or buried inside graphics, Google struggles to recognize what you're offering.

Think of It This Way

Imagine someone walks into your building and every door is unlabeled. They might find what they need eventually, but it will take effort. Search engines experience your website the same way.

Clear labels help both humans and search engines navigate quickly.

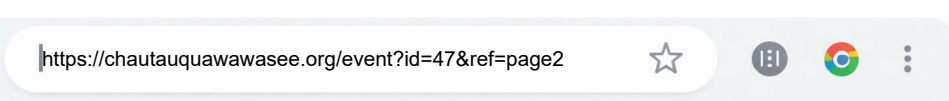
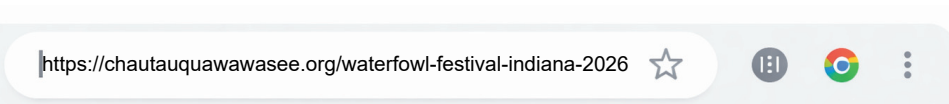
A Practical Tip

Open one of your event posts and check:

- Does the page title clearly state what the event is?
- Are there clear headings dividing the information?
- Are important details written in text, not just inside images?
- Does the URL make sense when you read it out loud?

If you hesitate on any of these, you've found an opportunity to improve clarity.

You don't need advanced tools to start improving SEO. **You need clear labels.**



4. THE THREE THINGS YOU MUST CONTROL

If you do nothing else with SEO, control these three elements on every page. Not ten things. **Three.**

If you consistently improve these three areas, your visibility will improve over time.

1. Post Title

This is the most important signal on your page. It tells search engines, clearly and directly, what the post on your web page is about.

Many organizations accidentally disappear here because they choose titles that sound welcoming but say very little.

Not helpful:

- Spring Event
- Community Gathering
- Annual Program Series

Clear and searchable:

- Spring Plein Air Painting Workshop in Syracuse Indiana
- Free Community Concert at Oakwood Resort
- 2026 Palm Sunday Hymn Sing in Wawasee

Be specific. If someone could search for it, say it plainly.

Quick Checklist for Page Titles

- Does the title clearly name the event?
- Does it include location if relevant?
- Would someone realistically search that phrase?

 **If the answer is no to any of these**, rewrite it more directly.

2. Meta Description

The meta description is the short preview text that appears under your page in Google search results. It doesn't directly affect ranking, but it absolutely affects clicks. Think of it as a two-sentence invitation.

Your meta description should answer three questions:

- What is this?
- Who is it for?
- Why should I care?

Example:

Join us for a free family concert at Oakwood Resort in Syracuse, Indiana. Live music, lake views, and fun for all ages. That's it! **Clear. Direct. Inviting.**

Quick Checklist for Meta Descriptions

- Is it under two to three sentences?
- Does it describe the event clearly?
- Would you click on it?

3. URL Slug

The URL slug is your page address. Clear URLs help both search engines and real people.

Bad example: yourwebsite.org/page123

Better example: yourwebsite.org/2026-hymn-sing-syracuse-indiana

If someone copies and pastes that link, it should make sense without explanation.

Quick Checklist for URL Slugs

- Is it readable?
- Does it include the event name?
- Does it avoid random numbers or vague words?

Why These Three Things Matter So Much

If you control *these three elements*:

- Your page title
- Your meta description
- Your URL slug

You have already improved clarity significantly.

You do NOT need advanced SEO tactics or skills to begin seeing improvement.

You need consistency. That's it!

Point to Ponder



Think of your website as your front door to the world.

When you look at it that way, it feels a little more important, doesn't it?

If someone else is maintaining it, that's fine. But when you understand the basics, you're no longer just nodding along.

You know what a page title is, you know what a meta description does, and you understand why your URL matters. **That's a win.**

A basic understanding of SEO gives you confidence, helps you ask smarter questions, and helps you recognize when something is actually working.

It helps you protect the integrity of your organization. You don't need to be the technician. You just need to understand the conversation.

5. CONSISTENCY, ALT TEXT, AND WHY IT MATTERS

Why Consistency Matters

Clarity is not only about writing one good page. It's about saying the same thing the same way everywhere. Inconsistency confuses search engines. It also confuses people.

Consider this: if your event is called:

- Spring Art Workshop on your website
- Painting Class on Facebook
- Creative Experience in your newsletter

Search engines see three different things. People may not realize they're the same event.

You've essentially hidden your own event from both Google and your audience.

Consistency strengthens visibility. When you choose a name for an event, use it consistently across every platform:

- Website pages
- Blog posts
- Calendar listings
- Social media posts
- Email newsletter

The Compound Effect-

 *Clarity builds authority.*

 *Authority builds trust.*

 *Trust builds attendance.*

**Each small element builds on the previous one to create a larger outcome.*

Create a Simple Habit

Before publishing anything, ask yourself:

- Am I using the same event name everywhere?
- Am I using the same date format everywhere?
- Am I using the same spelling of our organization name everywhere?



These small details compound. They add up over time to create a web presence that's not only easy to find but also **easy to trust.**

Image Alt. Text is NOT optional

Generic filenames like:

"image1.jpg" or "concert-photo IMG_4589" -tell search engines nothing about your image. Search engines cannot see images-they can only read text.

That's where **alt text** comes in. **Alt text is a brief, descriptive label for every image on your page.**

It's essential for two reasons:

1. It helps search engines understand your content
2. It provides crucial accessibility for visitors using screen readers.

Good alt text improves both discoverability and inclusivity.

EXAMPLE:

WEAK ALT TEXT- "image493.jpg" OR "painting"

STRONG ALT TEXT- Artists painting by Lake Wawasee during plein air workshop at Chautauqua Wawasee Paint Out 2026



Don't forget to name your photos when saving them to your files



artists-painting-lake-wawasee-plein-air.jpg

Alt Text: Artists painting at Lake Wawasee during plein air workshop at Chautauqua Wawasee Paint Out 2026



BE DESCRIPTIVE AND LITERAL

Write alt text that clearly describes what's happening, where it's happening, and who is involved. Don't overcomplicate it-you're not writing a novel. (Use your organization's name if possible. This is another chance for Google to find you.)

Your goal is to be specific enough that someone who cannot see the image would understand exactly what's taking place.

In most cases, one clear sentence is all you need.

6. FINDING YOUR DATA: MAKING DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

Many organizations post based on preference. We promote what we worked hardest on. We share what we personally like. We assume what will perform well. Without checking the data, this is a **BIG mistake**.

Data simply shows us what our audience actually responds to. It's not criticism. It's information. When we look at data, we are not surrendering creativity. We are learning what connects.

Why Data Matters

Without data, we guess. And guessing feels productive in the moment. But over time, guessing costs more energy than adjusting. Nonprofits don't have unlimited time, volunteers, or budgets. We simply cannot afford to build a strategy based on assumptions.

If your Facebook post about a concert reached 3,000 people and your workshop post reached 200, that's not random. **That's information.**

Data protects passion. It helps you focus your effort where it will matter most.

PART 1: HOW TO FIND WEBSITE DATA

If you use Google Analytics:

1. Log into Google Analytics
2. Click Reports
3. Click Engagement
4. Click Pages and Screens
5. Sort by Views

That's it. You don't need advanced reports to start.

What to Look For

Ask yourself:

- Which event page received the most traffic?
- Which page received the least traffic?
- Did homepage traffic increase or decrease this month?
- Are people finding us through search or social media?

You are looking for patterns, not perfection.



PART 2: HOW TO FIND FACEBOOK DATA

If you use Facebook:

- Open Meta Business Suite
- Click Insights
- Click Content
- Sort posts by Reach or Engagement

This shows you:

- What people saw
- What people interacted with
- What people ignored

Don't guess. **Check.**

What You May Discover

You might notice:

- Photos of real people outperform graphics
- Posts with clear dates get more clicks
- Simpler wording performs better than formal language
- Some posts receive very little engagement

That is not failure. That is direction.

A Simple Monthly Rhythm

You don't need daily tracking. Once per month, answer:

- What was our most visited website page?
- What was our least visited page?
- What was our highest performing social post?
- What type of content received the most engagement?

Then make one small adjustment next month. One. That is enough.

Interpreting What You See

If traffic is low, that may be a visibility problem.

If traffic is high but people leave quickly, that may be a clarity problem.

Before data, we guess. After data, **we adjust.**

Adjustment is far less exhausting than guessing, in the long run.

7. SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES FOR NONPROFITS

Social media is not a bulletin board.

Posting is not the goal.

Visibility is the goal.

If no one sees the post, it doesn't matter how beautiful it is.

Social media builds familiarity. Your website builds credibility. SEO builds visibility.

These pieces support each other.

1. Timing Matters

You can write a strong post and still limit its reach if you post when your audience is offline.

If you use Facebook:

1. Open Meta Business Suite
2. Click Insights
3. Click Audience
4. Look at "When your audience is most active"

Post during those windows whenever possible. The first 30 to 60 minutes after posting matter the most. If people interact early, the platform shows it to more people.

If no one interacts, reach slows dramatically.

Practical Tip

Before posting, ask:

- Is my audience likely online right now?
- Can I share this during a higher activity window instead?

Small timing shifts can increase visibility significantly.

2. Engagement Drives Reach

Every like, comment, and share increases visibility. Encourage engagement by:

- Asking a simple question
- Inviting a one-word response
- Sharing behind-the-scenes photos
- Highlighting real people

People respond to people more than graphics.



Keep in mind...

YOU will learn what your followers want to see in time. For example "Patriotic Themed Posts may go over well no matter when you post them. This is your chance to experiment and find out. Our communities are unique to us.

Practical Tip

Instead of only announcing an event, try:

"What are you most looking forward to this weekend?"

Or

"Tag someone who would love this concert."

Simple prompts increase interaction.

3. Your Team Should Interact

Board members, staff, and volunteers should:

- Like posts
- Share posts
- Leave meaningful comments

This signals relevance to the platform. If your own team doesn't interact, the platform assumes the content isn't important. **One share** can extend reach beyond your current follower base.

4. Use Photos With Purpose to Promote Events

Photos of real people or places in YOUR town consistently outperform text-only graphics.

Strong nonprofit posts often combine:

- A real photo
- A simple graphic overlay
- Clear date and time

Attention spans are short. A photo draws the eye. Clear text removes confusion.

Design Checklist

- Use high contrast text
- Keep wording simple
- Avoid overcrowding
- Avoid heavy use of script fonts
- Use headings and subheadings
- Make the event clear at a glance

Design is not decoration. It has a purpose beyond aesthetics. It is **communication**. Make sure it's sending the message that aligns with the followers you want, as well as the ones you have.

5. Repetition Requires Strategy

Posting once about an event is rarely enough. But repetition must feel helpful, not exhausting. Posting excessively about an event, no matter how excited you are, will cost you followers.

Most followers see only a fraction of your posts. Instead of reposting the same graphic repeatedly, try:

- A Save the Date post
- A behind-the-scenes photo
- A reminder with clear details
- A testimonial or quote
- A final 24-hour reminder

Variation keeps attention.

6. Social Media Should Support Your Website

A social media post is *temporary*. A website page is *discoverable*.

Every major event post should:

- Include a direct link
- Drive traffic to your website
- Lead somewhere permanent

Social media creates interest. Your website needs to hold it.



IMPORTANT:

Contact regarding events, tickets, or participation should NEVER be routed through a volunteer or board member. By doing this, you are denying your organization web traffic vital to your growth. Social media should always point people in the right direction, and that direction is **to your website**.

A Final Reminder...

You don't need to post daily. You need to post predictably.
Consistency builds recognition. Inconsistency builds confusion.

Small structured actions, repeated consistently, create growth.



8. INCLUSIVE VS. EXCLUSIVE: FIRST IMPRESSIONS ONLINE

When someone lands on your website or social media page, they are not studying it. They are scanning. Within seconds, they are asking:

- Is this for me?
- Do I understand what this is?
- Do I feel comfortable here?

If the answer is unclear, they leave. Not because they dislike you.

Because **confusion feels like exclusion.**

Accidental Exclusivity

Most nonprofits do not intend to appear exclusive. But online presence can unintentionally communicate:

- Private community
- Member-only culture
- Insider language
- Long-standing tradition without explanation
- "You should already know what this is"

If a new visitor feels like they need background knowledge before attending, see posts directed at residents stating "annual dues need to be turned in by January 1st," friction is created.

Friction reduces attendance.

Language Matters

Instead of: "Members are invited to attend our annual program series."

Try: "Everyone is welcome this Saturday, June 7th at 4 PM, for a free community concert at the lake."

Specific. Clear. Direct. Assume the reader has never heard of you. Because many have not. It sometimes helps to look at our social media pages through the lens of a brand new person seeing our page for the very first time. You WILL lose them if your page is full of random announcements that don't pertain to them.

You've accidentally excluded them and all you were trying to do is be informative.

A great question to ask yourself if you don't know what to do is:

Should this be an email? Does anyone three towns over care?

That will give you your answer.

Make the Invitation Obvious

Your organization's page should clearly answer: What can I do here?

A visitor should **NOT** have to search to find:

- Upcoming events
- Dates and times
- Location information
- How to attend
- Whether it is free or ticketed

If someone must investigate, **most will not**.

The easier you make it, the more likely they are to attend.

Tradition Needs Context

Many organizations are built on decades of history. That is powerful. But history without explanation can feel closed.

Briefly explain:

- What your organization is
- What happens there?
- Who it is for?

Clarity does not diminish tradition. **It opens the door to it.**

Design Signals Inclusion

Clean layout. Readable fonts. Strong contrast. Mobile-friendly design. Clear hierarchy. These are not aesthetic luxuries. They communicate credibility before a single word is read. If a website feels outdated or confusing, visitors may assume the experience will feel the same. That perception matters.

Remove Friction

Make it easy to:

- Find events
- Understand pricing
- Know where to park
- See what to expect
- Feel confident and WELCOME showing up

The less someone has to guess, the more likely they are to attend. Uncertainty feels risky. People avoid what confuses them. But when everything is crystal clear (the date, time, location, cost, what to expect, who it's for), people feel confident. Confidence turns curiosity into commitment. They don't have to think twice. **They just show up.**

The Goal

- Healthy SEO brings new people to your door.
- Social media lets them peek inside.
- Your website determines whether they feel invited.

When someone thinks:

"I understand this. I feel welcome. This looks worth my time."

You have done your job.

Because when they attend and feel like they belong, **that is structure supporting passion.**

9. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

Websites and social media are not just information systems.

They are emotional signals.

Tone, clarity, images, layout, and consistency all communicate something before a single event is attended.

People do not fall in love with your calendar. They fall in love with how you make them feel.

The Emotional Signal

If your page feels:

- Confusing
- Overly formal
- Outdated
- Inactive

The emotional signal is: "This may not be for me."

If your page feels:

- Clear
- Current
- Human
- Organized

The emotional signal is: "My family and I belong here."

That difference matters.



First Impressions Are Fast

Visitors decide quickly whether to stay. You have only **seconds** to:

- Show that you are active
- Show that you are organized
- Show that you are relevant
- Show that you are welcoming

Getting someone to your website through SEO is only half the work. Making them want to stay is the other half.

Structure Supports Feeling

This is where many organizations misunderstand digital communication. They assume structure removes warmth.

In reality, structure reduces anxiety.

When information is easy to find, people feel confident. When people feel confident, they feel comfortable. When they feel comfortable, they are more likely to attend.

Clarity is kindness.

A Practical Test-

Open your homepage and ask:

- Can I tell immediately what this organization does?
- Are upcoming events easy to find?
- Does the site look active?
- Would a new visitor understand what to expect?

If the answer is no to any of these, you do not need a redesign. You need clearer signals.

Small improvements compound.

10. BRANDING AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

BASICS

This is not about becoming a professional designer. It is about communicating clearly at a glance. Good design is not decoration. It is speed. People scroll quickly. Your graphic has seconds to communicate what something is and whether it matters.

1. Use Quality Images

Clear. Bright. Real.

Whenever possible, use:

- Photos of real people
- Photos from your own events
- Images that feel current

Avoid:

- Pixelated graphics
- Screenshots
- Outdated photos that no longer reflect your audience

If an image looks like it was pulled from a 2009 brochure, people will feel that. Authenticity builds trust.

2. Use Clear Text Hierarchy

Hierarchy simply means not all text should look the same.

- Large text tells people what this is
- Medium text tells them when
- Small text provides supporting details

If everything is the same size, nothing stands out.

HEADING
Subheading
Body

Quick Graphic Checklist

Before posting a graphic, ask:

- Can I tell what this is within two seconds?
- Is the date easy to see?
- Is the location visible?
- Is the text readable on a phone?

If not, simplify.

3. Prioritize Contrast and Readability

High contrast is not optional. Especially if you serve an older demographic. Light gray text on a pale background may look modern, but it reduces clarity. Readable always wins.

4. Branding on Graphics

Branding matters most on:

- Event promotions
- Fundraising posts
- Major announcements

For smaller, everyday posts, your voice can carry the identity. **You do not need to place your logo on every image.** Consistency of tone and style builds recognition over time.

5. Avoid Overcrowding

More information does not mean more clarity.

If a graphic contains:

- Too many fonts
- Too many colors
- Too many details

It becomes harder to process.

Remember:

- Clear beats clever
- Simple beats busy

A Final Reminder About Graphics

A beautiful graphic that no one understands is not effective.

A simple graphic that communicates clearly is.

Design should support your message. It should never compete with it.



Always check your graphics
on **both** PC and mobile!

11. TYPOGRAPHY AND VISUAL HIERARCHY MATTER MORE THAN YOU THINK

Typography is not decoration. It is communication speed.

When someone lands on your page, they do not read every word. They scan.

Typography - the choice of fonts, sizes, spacing, and styles - **determines what they notice first and what they skip.**

Why Typography Matters

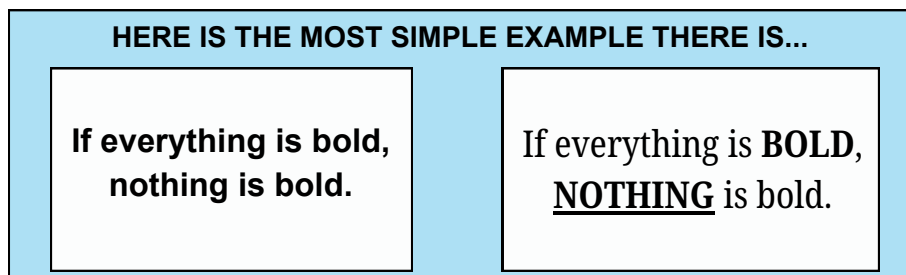
A headline in large, bold text tells people what the page is about.

Smaller text under it provides details.

Even smaller text gives supporting information.

When hierarchy is clear, people understand your message instantly.

When everything is the same size and style, nothing stands out. Your message gets lost.



Font Choices Signal Tone

Sans-serif fonts (Arial, Helvetica) feel modern and clean. Serif fonts (Georgia, Times New Roman) feel traditional and formal. Script fonts can feel elegant but are often hard to read.

Choose fonts that match your organization's personality. Then use them consistently across all your pages and posts.

Size Creates Importance

Your page title should be noticeably larger than the supporting text. Subheadings should be larger than body text. This visual difference tells people what matters most before they read a single word.

Spacing Reduces Confusion

Cramped text feels overwhelming. Space between lines and paragraphs makes your content feel inviting and readable. White space is not wasted space; it's breathing room for your message.

A Practical Checklist

Before publishing any page or graphic, ask:

- Can someone understand the main point by reading just the headline?
- Is there clear size difference between headline, subheadings, and body text?
- Can I read this comfortably on a phone?
- Are my fonts consistent across pages?
- Does the spacing feel organized, not cramped?

Strong typography does not call attention to itself. It makes your message impossible to miss.

Keep It Simple

For most nonprofit graphics, you only need:

- One primary font for headlines
- One secondary font for details

That's it.

More fonts do not increase interest. They increase confusion.

The 3-Level Rule

Every event graphic should clearly show three levels:

- What is this? (largest text)
- When is it? (medium text)
- Where or details (smallest text)

If those three are not obvious within two seconds, simplify.

Practical Typography Checklist

Before posting, ask:

- Can I tell what this is instantly?
- Is the headline clearly larger than the details?
- Am I using more than two fonts?
- Is the date easy to read on a phone?

If you hesitate, adjust.

Typography is not decoration. It is direction.

12. EDUCATION AND TRAINING: FREE & LOW-COST LEARNING RESOURCES

You do not need a degree in marketing. You need access to tools and the willingness to learn a little at a time. Everything below is either completely free or offers strong free options. This section exists so that when you think, "I wish I understood this better," you know exactly where to go.

How to Use This Section

Do not try to learn everything.

Choose:

- One tool
- One lesson
- One hour per month

That is enough. Small bursts of learning, repeated consistently, compound.

LINKS TO FREE RESOURCES

CANVA DESIGN SCHOOL

Cost: Free with a Canva account

Best For: Layout, typography, branding basics, color, social media design

Access here: canva.com/designschool/

You will find short tutorials on:

- Font pairing
- Color psychology
- Branding basics
- Clean layout
- Social media design

This is ideal for nonprofits who want more polished graphics without hiring a designer.

META BLUEPRINT

Cost: Free

Best For: Understanding Facebook and Instagram insights

Access here: facebook.com/business/learn

Create a free account and explore:

- Understanding the algorithm
- Reading insights
- Content strategy basics
- Audience targeting

You do not need to run ads to benefit from this. You just need to understand what the data means.

GOOGLE SKILLSHOP

Cost: Free

Best For: Google Analytics and search fundamentals

Access here: skillshop.withgoogle.com/

Look specifically for:

- Google Analytics 4 beginner course
- Fundamentals of Digital Marketing

Even completing one beginner module builds confidence!

GOOGLE ANALYTICS HELP CENTER

Cost: Free

Best For: Quick, task-specific answers

Access here:

support.google.com/analytics/

You can search:

- How to see most visited pages in GA4
- How to find traffic sources

You do not need a full certification to find one answer.

HUBSPOT ACADEMY

Cost: Free

Best For: Content marketing, email basics, social strategy

Access here: academy.hubspot.com/

Strong beginner topics include:

- Content marketing basics
- Email marketing fundamentals
- Social media strategy

Watch one or two modules related to your immediate challenge.

YOUTUBE, USED STRATEGICALLY

Cost: Free

Best For: Specific, quick tutorials

Access here: youtube.com/

Search specific phrases such as:

- How to write a meta description
- How to add alt text in WordPress
- How to use Meta Business Suite Insights

Filter by videos under 15 minutes for more focused instructions.

WORDPRESS AND SEO PLUGIN TUTORIALS

If you use WordPress, most plugins provide guided walkthroughs.

Yoast SEO Beginner Guide:

yoast.com/academy/free-seo-training-seo-for-beginners/

A NOTE ON AI TOOLS

Many people ask about using AI to help with digital communication tasks. We've devoted an entire section to this topic - Section 13: Using AI Tools Wisely - where we explore how AI can help (and where it shouldn't replace your voice). If you're curious about AI, head there.

If you're not ready for that yet, **you don't need it to succeed** with the strategies in this guide.

13. USING AI TOOLS WISELY

Many people are afraid of AI. That's understandable. But AI is simply a tool - like email or Canva. It can help you work faster and think more clearly. It should not replace your voice, your mission, or your judgment.

This section is for people who are curious. If you're not ready to explore AI yet, that's perfectly fine. Everything in this guide works without it.

A WORD ABOUT AI TOOLS

AI can help with:

- Writing meta descriptions
- Formatting blog posts
- Generating outlines
- Improving clarity

You can also upload a graphic and ask for a critique if you are unsure whether your design is clear or appropriate. AI can identify contrast issues, text hierarchy problems, or overcrowding that may not be obvious at first glance.

Use AI for structure. Edit with heart.

Always remember that you know your followers best. AI feedback should be taken with a grain of salt. Structure can be assisted. **Voice cannot be automated.** People notice!

DIFFERENT AI TOOLS FEEL DIFFERENT

Not all AI platforms behave the same way. Each tool has its own personality. Choosing the right one for the task can absolutely reduce frustration.

ChatGPT

More conversational. Strong at brainstorming, drafting, refining tone, and helping you think through structure.

Best for:

- Outlines
- Rewriting copy
- Explaining complex ideas
- Improving clarity
- Design critique with explanation

It will often elaborate unless you tell it to be concise.

Perplexity

Shorter and more direct. Strong at research-style questions and summarizing information. AI “Search and Answer” engine.

Best for:

- Quick factual answers
- Source-backed summaries
- Concise explanations

Google Gemini

Integrated with Google tools. Helpful when working inside Google Docs or searching for structured information.

Best for:

- Quick drafting
- Simple explanations
- Basic summaries

Claude

Known for thoughtful, structured writing and longer-form responses.

Best for:

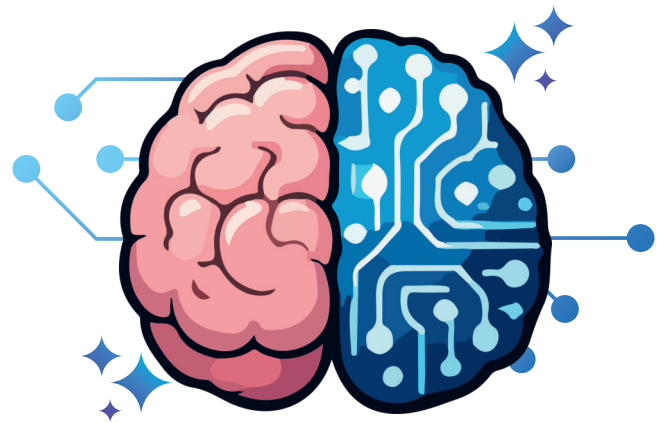
- Editing longer documents
- Polishing tone
- Structured refinement

Microsoft Copilot

Integrated with Microsoft products. Good for working within Word, Excel, and other Office tools.

Best for:

- Editing in Microsoft Office
- Quick suggestions within familiar tools
- Document refinement



CLEAR PROMPTING MATTERS

Many frustrations with AI are actually prompting problems. If your request is vague, the response will be vague.

Weak Prompt: "Write a post about our event."



Strong Prompt: "Write a 150-word Facebook post promoting our free Palm Sunday Hymn Sing in Syracuse, Indiana. Audience is families and retirees. Tone should be warm but not overly wordy. Include date, time, and location. End with a gentle call to action."



Specific input produces specific output.

IMPORTANT: PROTECT SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Never enter:

- Personal data
- Private donor information
- Financial records
- Payment details
- Passwords
- Confidential internal documents



AI tools are powerful, but they are not secure storage systems. If you would not post it publicly, do not paste it into an AI tool!!!

USE AI FOR STRUCTURE, CRITIQUES, AND CLARITY - NOT FOR HANDLING SENSITIVE INFORMATION.

A PRACTICAL TIP

When using AI:

- Start simple
- Refine the result
- Clarify what you want adjusted

Iteration is normal. You are not failing if the first version is not perfect. You are shaping it.

THE BOUNDARY

AI is a tool. It can help you organize your thoughts, clarify what you are trying to say, and work more efficiently.

IT SHOULD NOT REPLACE:

- Your voice
- The relationships gained from interacting with followers. (ChatBots)
- Your understanding of your audience
- Legal advice

Use it wisely, intentionally, and ONLY as support, not authority. AI can make mistakes; always double-check what it says prior to using information obtained from it.

FINAL REMINDER

AI is optional. You can build a successful digital presence without ever using it. But if you're curious, these tools can help you work smarter, not harder. The choice is totally up to you!

A CRITICAL NOTE: AI HAS A RECOGNIZABLE VOICE

AI-generated copy often sounds generic, overly polished, or impersonal. Your followers can tell. The same is true for AI-generated images - they have a distinctive look that feels artificial.



Don't Forget: Use AI for structure and outlining. But then rewrite it in your voice. Edit it with your personality. Make it sound like your organization, not a robot.

The best use of AI is as a starting point, not a final product.

Your authentic voice is irreplaceable. Protect it at all costs.

BAD VS. GOOD AI PROMPTS-

Bad AI Prompt Example

Prompt:

Make a post about a patriotic speaker series.

Why this is a bad prompt-

It gives the AI almost nothing to work with. No audience, no tone, no location, no event details, and no purpose.

Typical AI Outcome (Bad Result)

Patriotic Speaker Series

Join us for our Patriotic Speaker Series, where we will celebrate patriotism and hear inspiring speakers talk about America and its history.

This exciting event will feature engaging discussions, meaningful stories, and opportunities to learn more about our nation's heritage.

Come be inspired and celebrate the spirit of patriotism with us.

Good AI prompt example:

Prompt:

Write a Facebook post promoting a community event called the Patriotic Speaker Series: Voices of Service.

The event takes place Thursday, July 10 at 7:00 PM at the Heritage Hall Auditorium in Bloomington, Indiana. The featured speaker is retired U.S. Navy pilot Commander James Whitaker, who flew humanitarian missions after Hurricane Katrina and later helped train new rescue pilots.

The audience is families, veterans, and community members who enjoy history and meaningful stories about service and leadership.

Tone should be warm, respectful, and community-focused, not overly formal or political.

Include:

- a short opening that draws people in
- a brief introduction of the speaker and why his story matters
- clear event details (date, time, location)
- an inviting call to action encouraging people to attend

The post should be 150–200 words, written for Facebook, and easy to read.

Avoid clichés and generic phrases like “don’t miss this exciting event.” Focus on storytelling and connection instead.

Typical AI Outcome: (Good Result)

 Patriotic Speaker Series: Voices of Service


Some stories remind us what service really looks like.


On Thursday, July 10 at 7:00 PM, we welcome Commander James Whitaker, a retired U.S. Navy pilot whose career included search-and-rescue missions during Hurricane Katrina and years spent training the next generation of rescue pilots.

Commander Whitaker will share firsthand experiences from the cockpit, moments of courage and teamwork, and the lessons he carried from those missions long after the flights ended. His story is one of service, leadership, and the quiet determination that often defines those who serve.

Whether you’re a veteran, a history enthusiast, or simply someone who values hearing real stories from people who have lived them, this evening promises to be meaningful and memorable.

 Heritage Hall Auditorium

 Thursday, July 10

 7:00 PM

Bring a friend and join us for an evening of reflection, gratitude, and community.

14. MONTHLY RHYTHM AND CHECKLISTS

You do not need to post or track analytics daily. You need rhythm.

Growth online does not come from intensity. It comes from repetition. When something is repeated consistently, it compounds.

YOUR MONTHLY DIGITAL RHYTHM

Once per month, set aside 30 to 60 minutes and do the following:

- Look at your website traffic
- Look at your Facebook or social media insights
- Improve one page
- Improve one recurring post
- Check that your homepage is still clear
- Confirm your next event has its own dedicated page

That's it. Not everything. One page. One post. One improvement.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 30 MINUTES

Start here:

1. Open Google Analytics
2. Look at your most visited page
3. Look at your least visited page
4. Adjust one thing on one page

Small adjustments matter.

WHAT TO IMPROVE

If traffic is low: Work on visibility.

Improve page titles, keywords, and clarity.

If traffic is high but engagement is low: Work on clarity.

Improve structure and readability.

If social posts are underperforming: Review timing and simplicity.

Do not guess. Adjust.

THE RULE OF COMPOUNDING STRUCTURE

One small improvement per month equals twelve meaningful improvements per year.

Most organizations attempt a full overhaul and then stop.

Steady improvement builds momentum.

15. COMMON MISTAKES NONPROFITS MAKE (AND HOW TO AVOID THEM)

Nonprofits operate differently from large companies. Your community is your strength. But that same passion can sometimes work against your online presence if you're not careful. Here are the mistakes many nonprofit organizations make - and how to fix them.

MISTAKE 1: POSTING OUTDATED PHOTOS

The Problem: You find a beautiful photo from your event five years ago. It looks professional. The lighting is perfect. So you use it. But people notice. A photo from 2019 signals that your organization is not active now. Even if you are.

Why It Matters: Nonprofits rely on community trust. If your website or social media looks dormant, people assume you are. They question whether your programs are still happening, whether volunteers still care, and whether you're still needed.

The Fix: Use photos from this year.

Even a slightly imperfect photo from last month beats a perfect photo from five years ago. If you don't have recent photos, take some. Ask a volunteer to snap photos at your next event. Phone cameras are good enough. Authenticity beats perfection.

MISTAKE 2: BROKEN LINKS AND OUTDATED INFORMATION

The Problem: You create an event post for your Spring Concert. The link works perfectly. Six months later, the page is still live, but the event has passed. Someone finds it through Google search and arrives at information from 2024.

Why It Matters: Trust erodes quickly online. If someone shows up to an event that ended months ago, or calls a phone number that's no longer valid, they won't come back. They'll tell others your organization is disorganized.

The Fix- Set a monthly reminder to:

- Remove or archive old event posts
- Update contact information if it changes
- Check that all links still work
- Delete outdated announcements from your homepage

One page from this month is better than ten pages from last year.

MISTAKE 3: INTERNAL JARGON WITHOUT EXPLANATION

The Problem: You write: "Join us for our annual Hymn Sing at the Pavilion during our summer retreat."

But someone reading this has no idea:

- What a Hymn Sing is
- What the Pavilion is
- When the summer retreat happens
- Whether they're invited

Why It Matters: Nonprofits have a deep history and inside knowledge. But new people don't. You're trying to grow attendance, which means reaching people who have never heard of you.

The Fix: Write for someone who knows nothing about your organization.

Instead of: "Join us for our annual Hymn Sing..." Try: "Everyone is welcome for a free outdoor hymn sing - bring your voice or just listen. Saturday at 6 PM at Oakwood Pavilion by the lake."

Include:

- What it is
- Who it's for (everyone, families, experienced singers?)
- When (specific date and time)
- Where (specific location)
- Cost (free or ticketed)

MISTAKE 4: ASSUMING PEOPLE KNOW YOUR MISSION

The Problem: Your homepage says, "Promoting lifelong learning and cultural enrichment since 1987." But nowhere does it say what you actually DO.

Why It Matters: Your mission statement matters to your board and your long-time supporters. But new visitors need to understand what happens when they show up. Do you offer classes? Concerts? Workshops? All of the above?

The Fix: Your homepage should answer immediately:

- What is this place?
- What can I do here?
- When can I come?

Then you can just put your mission statement somewhere, but **don't let it be the only explanation.**

Make it easy to find:

- A calendar of upcoming events
- A description of your main programs
- How to get involved
- Contact information

MISTAKE 5: MIXING PASSION WITH UNCLEAR CALLS TO ACTION

The Problem: You write a beautiful post about why your organization matters. It's heartfelt. It's genuine. It moves people, but it doesn't ask them to do anything.

Why It Matters: Nonprofits live and die on attendance and participation. You need people to show up, sign up, donate, or volunteer. Don't assume they'll figure out what to do next.

The Fix: Every post should have a clear next step.

Instead of: "We believe in the power of community art." Try: "Join us for a free painting class this Saturday at 2 PM. All levels welcome. Sign up here: [link]"

Make it specific:

- What to do (attend, register, donate, volunteer)
- When (specific date and time)
- Where (specific location or link)
- How (click here, call this number, email this address)

MISTAKE 6: POSTING ABOUT INTERNAL CONFLICT OR DRAMA

The Problem Your board had a disagreement about programming. Staffing changed. Money is tight. A volunteer left unhappy, and somehow this ends up in a Facebook post or newsletter.

Why It Matters: People want to support organizations that feel stable and united. Internal drama on social media makes donors and volunteers nervous. They wonder if their time or money will actually make a difference.

The Fix: Keep internal conversations internal.

On social media and your website, show:

- Unified vision
- Progress being made
- Community impact
- What's coming next

Save complaints, disagreements, and challenges for board meetings and staff meetings. Not for public platforms. If you need to acknowledge change (leadership transition, program shift), frame it positively: "We're excited to announce..." or "As we grow, we're adapting our approach to better serve..."

MISTAKE 7: INCONSISTENT COMMUNICATION ABOUT TIMING

The Problem: You announce an event in multiple ways:

- Email: "Join us Saturday"
- Facebook: "This Saturday at 2 PM"
- Website: "Saturday, June 15, 2026, 2:00 PM"

Or even worse:

- First post: "Summer Concert Series starts in June"
- Second post: "First concert is July 12"
- Third post: Just a photo with no date

Why It Matters: People are busy. They don't read every post. They might see one announcement and remember "sometime this summer." Then they miss it.

The Fix: Decide on one format and use it everywhere.

- Always write: "Saturday, June 15, 2026, 2:00 PM" (not "next Saturday" or "this weekend")
- Always include the location
- Always say if it's free or ticketed
- Always include how to register if registration is needed

When in doubt, over-communicate the details.

MISTAKE 8: POOR CONTRAST OR HARD-TO-READ GRAPHICS

The Problem: You create a beautiful event graphic with white text on a light blue background. It looks elegant on your computer. But on a phone, it's nearly impossible to read.

Why It Matters: Most people access social media on their phones. If your graphic can't be read on a small screen, people skip it. You've done the work to create it, but no one sees the message. Additionally, older adults (who may be your core audience) struggle more with low contrast. You're accidentally excluding the very people you're trying to reach.

The Fix: Always ask:

- Can I read this on a phone?
- Is there strong contrast between text and background?
- Is the font large enough to read from arm's length?
- Can someone with vision challenges read this?

Test every graphic on your phone before posting.

MISTAKE 9: ONLY POSTING WHEN YOU NEED SOMETHING

The Problem: Your social media is silent for weeks. Then suddenly: "We need volunteers!" or "Please donate!"

Why It Matters: People connect with organizations, not just causes. If your only posts are asking for help, it feels transactional. People are less likely to respond.

The Fix Use the 80/20 rule:

- 80% of posts should be about what you do, who you serve, stories of impact, behind-the-scenes moments, and upcoming events
- 20% can be asks (volunteer, donate, attend fundraiser)

When you've built a relationship with your audience, they're much more likely to say yes when you do ask.

MISTAKE 10: IGNORING COMMENTS AND MESSAGES

The Problem: Someone comments on your post asking when you're open. No one responds. They wait. Then they give up and go somewhere else.

Why It Matters: Nonprofits survive on relationships. Ignoring someone who reaches out tells them you don't care about their interest.

The Fix: Set a simple rule:

- Check comments and messages every day
- Respond within 24 hours
- Even a simple "Thanks for your interest! Here's our hours:" shows you're listening

You don't need to respond to every comment, you can always just leave a reaction, but if someone asks a question, answer it.

A QUICK CHECKLIST: BEFORE YOU POST

- Is this current information?
- Would a new person understand this?
- Does it have a clear call to action?
- Is the date, time, and location specific?
- Can I read this on a phone?
- Is this something that represents my organization well?
- Have I fact-checked it?

One extra minute before posting can save you from confusion and missed opportunities later.



Remember: Your organization does important work. Your online presence should reflect that - clearly, consistently, and in language the entire community understands.

16. Final Thoughts

SEO does not replace creativity.

- It supports it.

Data does not replace passion.

- It protects it.

Design is not decoration.

- It is clarity at a glance.

Healthy SEO gets people to your door.

Social media helps them recognize you.

Your website helps them say yes.

When people find you and understand you, they are more likely to attend.

And when they attend and feel like they belong, your structure has done its job.

This is **not about perfection.**

- It is about clarity.
- It is about visibility.
- It is about making sure the right people can find what you are already working so hard to build.

Remember... education is one of our pillars, and this is what it looks like in practice.

Not theory.

Not trends.

Just steady improvement in service of something bigger than us.

That is how visibility turns into attendance, and attendance turns into community.

Isn't that our goal?

17. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Alt Text: Alternative text that describes an image. Search engines and screen readers use alt text to understand what an image shows. Alt text is crucial for accessibility and SEO.

Example: "Family participating in outdoor art workshop at Lake Wawasee" instead of "image1.jpg"

Analytics: Data about how people interact with your website or social media. Analytics show which pages people visit, how long they stay, where they come from, and what they click on. (Google Analytics is a free tool that tracks this information.)

Audience Insights: Data that shows who is following you, when they are most active online, and what content they engage with most. (On Facebook, you access this through Meta Business Suite under the Insights section.)

Branding: The visual and verbal identity of your organization. This includes your logo, colors, fonts, tone of voice, and the overall feeling people get when they interact with your content.

Call to Action: A clear invitation asking someone to do something specific. Examples: "Register now," "Tag a friend," "Learn more," or "Click here for details."

Clarity: The quality of being easy to understand. In digital communication, clarity means using simple language, clear structure, and obvious calls to action so visitors immediately understand what you offer.

Contrast: The difference between text color and background color. High contrast (dark text on light background) is more readable than low contrast (light gray text on pale background).

Conversion: When a website visitor takes a desired action, such as registering for an event, signing up for a newsletter, or making a donation.

Engagement: When people interact with your content by liking, commenting, sharing, or clicking. Higher engagement signals to social media platforms that your content is valuable.

Google Analytics: A free tool from Google that tracks website traffic and shows you which pages people visit, where they come from, and how long they stay.

Google Search Console: A free Google tool that shows how your website appears in search results and provides data about search traffic.

Hierarchy: The visual organization of information, where important elements are larger or bolder than supporting details. A clear hierarchy helps readers quickly understand what matters most.

HTML/Website Code: The technical language used to build websites. You do not need to understand code to improve SEO - plugins and website builders handle this for you.

Impressions: The number of times your social media post appears on someone's screen, whether they interact with it or not.

Keywords: Words and phrases that people search for on Google. Example: "free concert near me" or "kids activities in Syracuse Indiana." Using these keywords on your website helps Google match your page to relevant searches.

Meta Business Suite: Facebook's management platform where you can schedule posts, view insights, and manage both Facebook and Instagram from one place.

Meta Description: A short text summary (usually 150-160 characters) that appears under your page title in Google search results. It's your chance to invite people to click on your link.

Mobile-Friendly Design: A website that displays clearly and works well on phones and tablets, not just desktop computers. Most people access websites on their phones, so this is essential.

Optimization: Making improvements to increase performance. SEO means optimizing your pages so search engines understand them better.

Organic Traffic: Website visitors who find you through search engines or social media, rather than through paid ads.

Reach: The total number of people who see your social media post.

Rhythm: A consistent pattern of activity. Digital rhythm means posting at predictable times and checking analytics monthly, rather than sporadically.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization): The practice of helping search engines understand what your website is about so they can match your pages to relevant searches. SEO includes using clear page titles, headings, alt text, and keywords.

Search Engine: A website like Google that helps people find information online. Search engines read your website and show your pages to people searching for related topics.

Slug (URL Slug): The part of a web address that you create. Example: in "yourwebsite.org/2026-spring-concert," the slug is "2026-spring-concert." Clear slugs help both search engines and people understand what the page is about.

Social Media Insights: Data from Facebook or Instagram showing how many people saw your posts, engaged with them, and what type of content performs best.

Text Hierarchy: Using different font sizes, colors, and styles to show what information is most important. Large text for headlines, medium text for subheadings, small text for details.

Typography: The art of arranging text using fonts, sizes, spacing, and styles to make content readable and visually appealing.

URL: Your website address. Example: www.chautauquawawasee.org. The URL is how people find your website.

Visibility: How easily people can find you through search engines and social media. Better SEO and consistent social media activity increase visibility.

Web Host: A company that stores your website files and makes your website available online. Your web host is like the landlord of your online building.

Website Traffic: The number of people visiting your website and which pages they visit.

Yoast SEO: A popular WordPress plugin that helps you optimize pages for search engines by checking for keywords, readability, and other SEO factors.