Table of Contents

Your Guide to Creating Your Own COVID-19 Prevention Materials .......................... 3
Step 1: Know your audience ..................................................................................... 4
Step 2: Choose topics to focus on ........................................................................... 5
Step 3: Choose the right format ............................................................................... 7
Step 4: Create your materials .................................................................................. 9
  Choose trustworthy sources .................................................................................... 10
  Explore resources from other colleges and universities ...................................... 10
  Include people who are at risk of getting very sick ............................................ 11
Creating social media content ................................................................................. 14
Design eye-catching materials ............................................................................... 16
Step 5: Get feedback from other students .............................................................. 17
Step 6: Revise your materials .................................................................................. 19
Step 7: Share your materials .................................................................................... 20
Your Guide to Creating Your Own COVID-19 Prevention Materials

You can help your campus community stay healthy by creating educational materials about COVID-19. Educational materials can include anything from social media posts to campus newspaper articles, posters, and more. This guide has tips to help you create your own communication materials. Or if you’re short on time, check out our library of easy-to-share graphics.

This communication plan is part of the American College Health Association’s (ACHA) COVID-19 Student Ambassador Toolkit. You can use the toolkit to start a student ambassador program on campus, or just use the materials provided to educate your campus community about COVID-19.

This plan was updated in July 2022. For the latest information about COVID-19, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 webpage.
Step 1: Know your audience

The first step is to decide who you want to develop educational materials for. You can choose to make your materials available to all students or create materials with a specific organization or group on campus.

Here are a few examples:

- Fraternities and sororities
- Cultural or religious organizations
- International student organizations
- Transfer or first-year student organizations
- Other organizations or clubs based on common interests
- Athletic teams
- Residence halls

You can even partner with campus organizations to create educational materials that meet their needs.
Step 2: Choose topics to focus on

Next, it’s time to decide what topics you want to focus on in your materials.

Know your audience

Think about the people who are going to see your materials. What do they want to know about COVID-19? For example, maybe students have questions about vaccines and boosters, or maybe they want to learn more about COVID-19 tests. If you’re not sure what your audience wants to know, ask them! You can get input from other students by:

- Posting a question or poll on your university’s social media accounts
- Asking student organizations to post on their social media accounts — or talk to members at their next meeting
- Talking to friends and acquaintances on campus

If you have several questions you’d like to ask, consider creating a survey. It’s easy to make one using an online tool like SurveyMonkey or Google Surveys. You can post a link to your survey on social media or ask campus organizations, academic departments, or professors to spread the word.
Choose topics that meet students’ needs

Then, consider how you can answer your audience’s questions about COVID-19. Here are a few example topics to consider:

**Socializing safely:** Offer tips to help students set COVID-19 safety boundaries, choose safe social activities, and support friends at risk of getting very sick from COVID-19.

**COVID-19 vaccines:** Explain why it’s important for students to stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccines and where to get vaccinated.

**How to make health care decisions:** Provide tips to help students make their own health care decisions, like when to go to the doctor or get a COVID-19 test.

**Taking care of yourself and others:** Offer strategies to help students care for their mental health and their community as they readjust to campus life.

**Campus guidelines:** If your campus has COVID-19 guidelines in place, explain the guidelines and how they help keep your campus safe.

You can choose to address one or more of these topics in your materials.

---

**Educate your campus community about getting vaccinated**

If you’re working on communication materials about getting vaccinated, check out our VaxForward digital toolkit. It’s full of talking points to address some of the most common questions and myths about COVID-19 vaccines.
Step 3: Choose the right format

Once you’ve chosen topics to focus on, you’ll need to choose a format for your educational materials. How will you share your message?

**Social media posts**

As things continue to shift and change with the COVID-19 pandemic, social media is the fastest way to share up-to-date information. There are many different ways to spread the word on social media, including:

- Text-only posts on Facebook and Twitter
- Graphics or GIFs to share on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- TikTok videos
- Instagram stories and reels

**Other digital materials**

Get creative with other types of digital communication, like:

- Posts or articles on campus media sites
- Ads on campus radio stations
- Announcements or videos to play during athletic events
- Digital signs for TV screens or campus shuttles
**Print materials**

Print materials may seem old school, but they’re a great way to make your message stand out. Consider creating posters or flyers to draw students' attention in common areas like the student union or cafeteria. Or write an article or ad for your campus newspaper.

Have a link you’d like to share? Consider including QR codes in your materials. When students scan the code with their smartphone, they’ll instantly be taken to your website.

**Giveaway items**

Giving away small freebies can help students remember to follow campus guidelines. Giveaway items could include hand sanitizer, tissues, or thermometers with your campus name or logo.

---

**Check out our easy-to-share digital graphics**

ACHA has created social media graphics and digital signs about getting vaccinated, wearing a mask, and other ways to stay safe from COVID-19. Check out our graphics.
Step 4: Create your materials

Now that you've learned about your audience and decided on a format, the next step is to create your educational materials.

Choose trustworthy sources

When you're communicating about COVID-19, it's important to make sure you're sharing information from sources you can trust.

- **Learn the basics about COVID-19** from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- **Find key facts about COVID-19 and vaccines** in our VaxForward toolkit.
- **Explore more COVID-19 resources** for college and university campuses.
- Check your state and county health department webpages for information on the latest COVID-19 policies in your area.

[We] worked with a student intern who created a documentary featuring students sharing their COVID stories of loss and survival.”

—ACHA grantee
**Explore resources from other colleges and universities**

Here are a few resources that campuses across the country have created to slow the spread of COVID-19 on campus. You can look to these for inspiration as you create your own materials.

- [Washington State University: TOGETHER Workshop](#)
- [University of North Carolina Asheville: Student Health Ambassadors](#)

**Short on time? Check out our easy-to-share materials**

Share these posters, social media graphics, and digital signs to help your campus community stay healthy. You can add your school’s logo or just download and post!
Include people who are at risk of getting very sick

People are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19 if they:

- Have disabilities or chronic health conditions
- Are going through cancer treatment or taking medicine that affects their immune system
- Are pregnant
- Are age 65 or older

Chances are many people in your campus community fall into those categories — so it’s important to include them in your COVID-19 communication. For example, if you’re communicating about changes to campus COVID-19 guidelines, you can acknowledge that some people may still need to wear masks and take other steps to protect their health — even after guidelines have been lifted.

If your campus has a disability organization, a disability services office, or a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) office, ask for their advice about how to make your communication materials inclusive. They may have some guidance to share, or they may be able to put you in touch with students who would be happy to share their opinion.
As people learn more about any topic, it’s normal for language to grow and change. For example, when’s the last time you saw a news article about “the novel coronavirus”? That phrase was common when the pandemic began, but now we all call it “COVID-19.” The same goes for disabilities and chronic health conditions. The way we talk about disability is evolving as we learn more and social attitudes change. It’s helpful to keep this context in mind when you’re communicating about COVID-19 and people who are at risk of getting very sick.

**Person-first language** is often the go-to approach — think “people with disabilities.” But over the past few years, more people have started using **identity-first language**, like “disabled people.” And some disability communities have strong preferences. For example, many Deaf and autistic people prefer identity-first language.

As the way people think and talk about disability evolves, terms that were once accepted may become outdated and offensive. The most common example is the “R-word,” which is now considered a slur. But sometimes language choices aren’t so clear-cut. For example, some disability advocates have criticized euphemisms like “special needs,” which are still widely used.
Disability and identity are deeply personal, and people in your campus community may not agree about the most respectful words to use. When you can, it’s best to ask the experts — people who actually have disabilities and chronic health conditions — and use the language they prefer. Here are a few places to start:

- Check with your campus disability organization, disability services office, or diversity, equity, and inclusion office.

- If you’re writing about a specific disability, you can also look for resources created by and for people who have that disability. For example, if you’re creating materials for Deaf students, you could visit the National Association of the Deaf website to learn more.

- For more guidance on writing about disability, check out this helpful page from Syracuse University’s Disability Cultural Center and this style guide from the National Center on Disability and Journalism.
Creating Social Media Content

Learn how to create engaging social media content with these resources from ACHA and Youth Marketing Connection (YMC), a marketing agency focused on reaching Gen Z and Millennial audiences.

| Establishing a social media presence | • Recorded webinar  
| | • More resources  
| Social media campaigns 101 | • Recorded webinar  
| | • More resources  
| Paid social media campaigns | • Recorded webinar  
| | • More resources  
| Social media analytics | • Resources  
| Social media best practices | • Recorded webinar  
| | • More resources  

Explore more helpful resources from YMC and ACHA.

Need More Social Media Inspiration?

Our VaxForward toolkit is full of COVID communication tips and sample messages you can share on social media.

Also, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health shares accessible and engaging COVID-19 content on Instagram @johnshopkinssph.

Check out ACHA’s interview with Nick Moran, director of audience development at Johns Hopkins.
**Stay safe and manage conflict on social media**

Social media conversations about COVID-19 can get heated. If you manage campus social media accounts, try these steps to turn down the temperature:

- Enforce your campus social media moderation or comment policy
- If your campus policy allows, use the moderation tools available on each social media platform (e.g., hiding comments or banning users)
- Share accurate information from trusted resources
- Ask students or staff who work on campus social media accounts to post and upvote positive comments
- Report misinformation or false reviews to the social media platforms
- Report any threats to campus police or local law enforcement
Design eye-catching materials

Once you’ve decided what you want to say and written your content, it’s time to add some design elements. Not a graphic design major? No problem! Try these easy tips to make your materials visually appealing and easy to read:

- **Put the most important information first.** That way, if people don’t read the whole thing, they’ll still get the main idea.

- **Use visual cues to highlight key ideas.** Try a bigger font size, a different text color, or a callout box.

- **Leave room for white space.** White space is where there isn’t any text or pictures, and it can make your material less overwhelming.

- **Use bulleted or numbered lists.** Lists are easier to read than blocks of text, and they help people remember key details.

- **Add some icons, photos, or illustrations.** Make sure your images are related to the topic at hand.

- **Try sans serif fonts.** Sans serif literally means fonts that don’t have “feet,” like Verdana or Calibri. These fonts are easier to read, especially online.

- **Make sure your text isn’t too small.** Aim for 16 pixels (px) or larger for the web and 12 points (pts) for the body of a print document.
Step 5: Get feedback from other students

So you’ve got a first draft ready. Now it’s time to get feedback from other students. By sharing your materials with others, you can get suggestions to improve your materials and make sure they meet your audience’s needs.

Host a focus group

A focus group is a meeting where several people share their thoughts on a specific topic or material. You can host your own focus group by inviting 5 to 10 students to review your materials and give feedback. If you’re creating materials for a specific organization, you can ask members to join your focus group.

If you’re creating materials for all students on campus, be sure to invite students of different races and ethnicities, majors, age groups, and students with chronic illnesses or disabilities. Including a diverse group of students can help you make sure your materials are accessible to everyone.

Consider bringing snacks or offering incentives — like a gift card to the campus bookstore or a restaurant near campus, for example — to encourage students to participate in your focus group.
Other ways to get feedback
You can send materials to student organizations and ask them to gather feedback from their members. And if you’re short on time, you can always share your materials with friends to get their feedback.

What to ask
Here are a few questions to get the conversation started:

• What’s your first impression of this material?
• Is there anything specific you like or don’t like about it?
• Is there anything that’s confusing or hard to understand?
• Do you have any questions about [topic of the material]?
• Is there anything you would add to this material?
Step 6: Revise your materials

Next, it’s time to revise your materials. Take a look at all of the comments you’ve received from your focus group, student organizations, or friends on campus.

Are there any common themes that came up in your discussions? For example, maybe several people had the same question about campus guidelines. Or maybe a few were confused about the same sentence. Keep these themes in mind as you revise your materials.

You don’t have to take every single suggestion that people provide. Your goal is not to make everyone happy — it’s to make your materials easier to use.

Once you’re finished revising your materials, ask someone to proofread to make sure they’re error free.

Health promotion staff and student workers noted what COVID social media posts were most well received and then they turned those images into lawn signs and banners. Lawn signs were so popular that graduating students took them home to keep.”

—ACHA GRANTEE
Step 7: Share your materials

So your materials are ready to go. Now it’s time to choose the best way to share them with students. Here are a few ways to share:

- Post print materials and hand out giveaway items in common areas — like the student union, cafeteria, academic buildings, or residence halls
- Ask student organizations to share your materials with their members
- Ask campus media organizations to share your materials
- Ask public health, nursing, pre-med, or related academic departments to help spread the word
- Amplify your social media posts by sharing them on your own personal account and asking friends to share