

GradLife **McGill** Instagram Handbook

Table of Contents

Mission.....	2
Your Responsibilities.....	2
Ethical Judgement: What (Not) To Post	2
Content.....	3
Photo Scheduling	3
Creating a Scheduled Post	4
Recommended Practices	6
Photo Stylistics.....	6
Hashtags.....	6
Tagging Users and Locations.....	6
Comments	7
Sharing and Reach	7
We're a Team.....	7
Professional Benefits	7
Sponsors.....	8
Appendix: Resources	9

GradLife McGill Instagram Handbook

Mission

The mission of GradLife McGill is to showcase graduate students' own experiences through their voice and to foster a sense of community across departments and disciplines. Instagram posts portray students' personal reflections, aspirations, triumphs, challenges and resources associated with their graduate journey.

Your Responsibilities

- Contribute 4 Instagram posts per month for 1 year.
- Create visually-engaging snapshots pertaining to graduate life using relevant captions and hashtags.
- Photograph your experiences and reflections to maintain a student voice on campus.
- Show autonomy in decisions pertaining to the creative and stylistic content of each post.
- Show ethical judgment, respect of copyright and professionalism in representing McGill University.
- Follow the guidelines and feedback provided by the GradLife McGill Coordinators.
- Actively engage with the GradLife McGill team members online and through meet-ups to maintain a sense of community.

Ethical Judgement: What (Not) To Post

DO:

- Be creative and independent in choosing the content of your posts.
- Compose your posts carefully and thoughtfully.
- Remember that you are posting on a McGill-run platform, and for a specific audience.
- Ask yourself whether what you have posted could offend or harm your own reputation or the reputation of the University, other students, alumni, colleagues or Faculty members.
- Keep it clean, folks! No swearing, no vulgarity, no political messages, no hate speech.
- Follow McGill guidelines for any photo content.
 - Any subject of a photo must be accompanied by a [consent form](#) signed by the person.
- Use discretion for photos portraying substance use (e.g., alcohol, tobacco) and everyday life (e.g., partying). Our goal is to portray real graduate life while maintaining credibility through posts.

DON'T:

- Post anything that you would not present publicly.
- Divulge confidential information about the University, other students, alumni, colleagues or Faculty members.
- Post during international, national, provincial or civic emergencies.
- Post while you are angry or frustrated. Negativity and emotionality does not equate critical thinking; instead hold off on publishing your work. Wait a few days and reread your post and/or consult with the GradLife McGill Coordinators.
 - When in doubt about a topic or theme, please speak to the GradLife McGill Coordinators **before** publishing your post (gradlife@mcgill.ca).

GradLife **McGill** Instagram Handbook

Content

- Followers are curious about GradLife and they want to hear your stories. Be honest and authentic.
- Your experiences are important and photographing them is fun! If you're excited about the subject, your readers will be too.
- Themes: Follow the weekly theme when posting. Feel free to get creative with the theme – many of them have multiple meanings and can encompass different content within them.
 - All of the themes are posted in advance, and can be viewed online.
 - If you need inspiration to stick to the weekly theme, you can brainstorm content with other instagrammers (through meet-ups or secret groups, or consult the GradLife coordinators.
 - If you would like to submit a theme for future use, please [click here](#).
- **Please avoid:** blurry images, very dark images, personal images that you are not okay with strangers seeing, photos of people without their permission.
- **Formats:** Photos (landscape, portrait, square, collages), graphics with text, short video clips, time-lapse videos, animated GIFs. Get creative!
- You are free to use any tools and Apps at your fingertips for photo-editing, filtering, collages, etc.
- Your audience is mostly fellow grad students and post-docs at McGill and beyond. However, McGill Faculty, staff, service units as well as alumni also follow the GradLife instagram.

Photo permissions - McGill guidelines:

- Any subject of a photo taken at McGill must be accompanied by a [consent form](#) signed by the person. No consent is required when using a person's image in a manner that is incidental to the photograph of a public place (e.g., someone who happens to be walking on campus as a photo is shot of the Roddick Gates) or if an image of a crowd where there is no single dominant figure. If you do get a photo release, be sure to forward a copy to the GradLife Coordinators (gradlife@mcgill.ca) to be properly filed.
- To get electronic signatures, you can use the [Adobe Fill & Sign App](#).
- Use of McGill insignia is not permitted without the University's [official consent](#).

Photo Scheduling

- All photos are scheduled using Hootsuite, and must be scheduled in advance.
- GradLife posts a maximum of 4 posts per day (8am, 12pm, 4pm, 8pm). Please select a timeslot in advance and schedule your post to come out at one of those times.
 - The 8am posts are pushed to Facebook to reach a larger and more diverse audience!
- Feel free to schedule posts in advance! Since the themes are posted beforehand, you don't have to wait until the week of a specific theme to schedule a photo. If you have relevant photos ready, you can schedule them at any time!

GradLife McGill Instagram Handbook

Creating a Scheduled Post

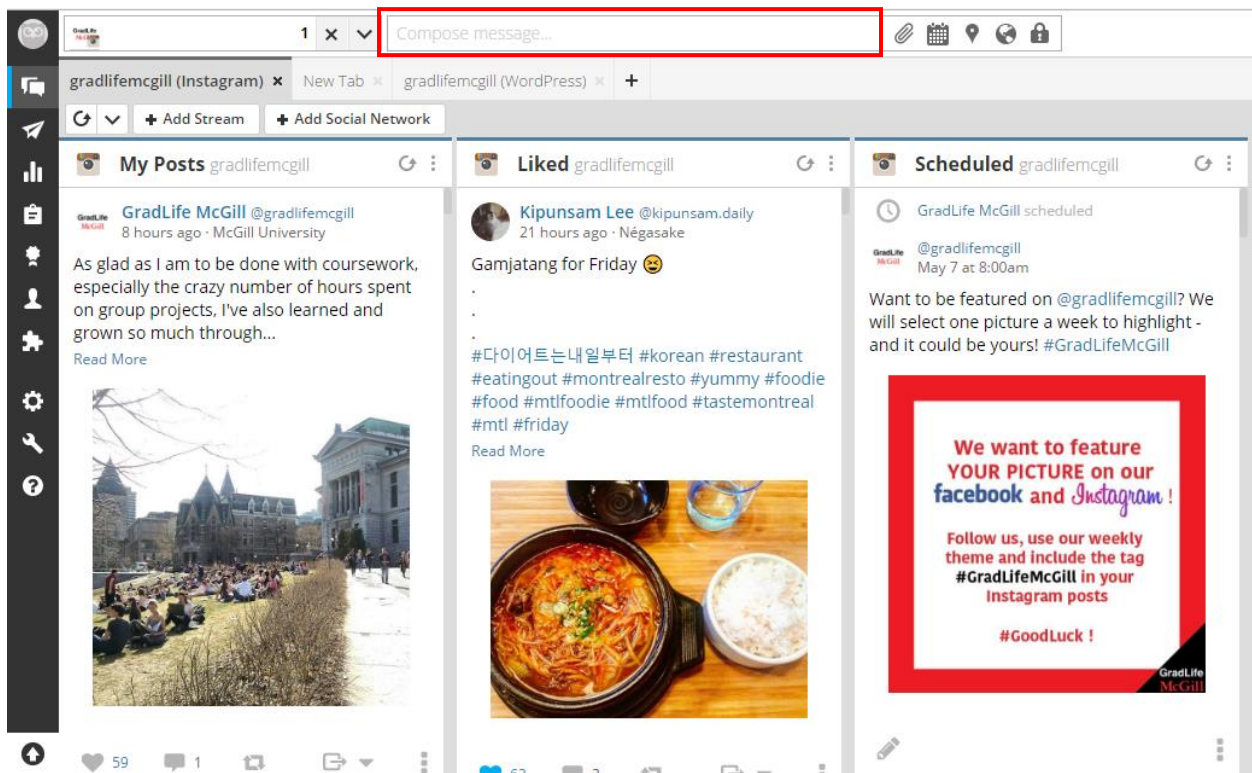
Hootsuite is an easy-to-use platform to schedule posts. Below is a step-by-step guide on how to post.

Please be aware that these instructions are for the desktop version of Hootsuite (i.e. on your computer). The mobile version is slightly different, but has the same general structure.

Step 1: Compose a new message

This is your dashboard. Click on “Compose message” on the top navigation bar.

Here you can see all of the previously published posts (under “My Posts”), all of the photos that @GradLifeMcGill has liked on Instagram (under “Liked”), and all of the upcoming scheduled posts (under “Scheduled”).



Step 2: Write your caption

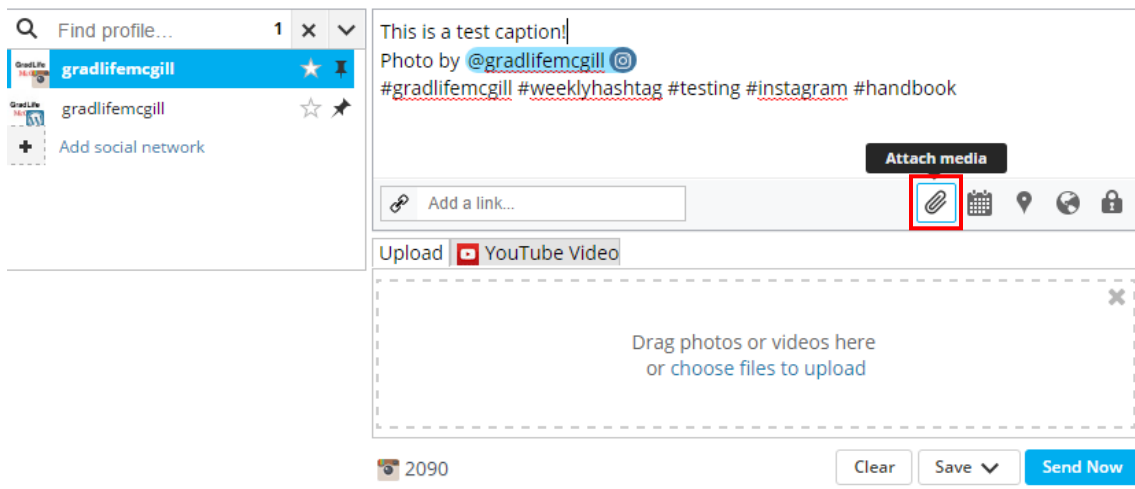
Once you click on the “Compose message” box, the window will expand. This is where you write your caption. Please make sure your caption:

- Is engaging for the audience
- Is an appropriate length (our followers don't want to be reading a novel in our photo captions)
- Includes “Photo by @yourusername”
- Includes #gradlifemcgill and all relevant weekly hashtags (as well as any others you can think of)

GradLife McGill Instagram Handbook

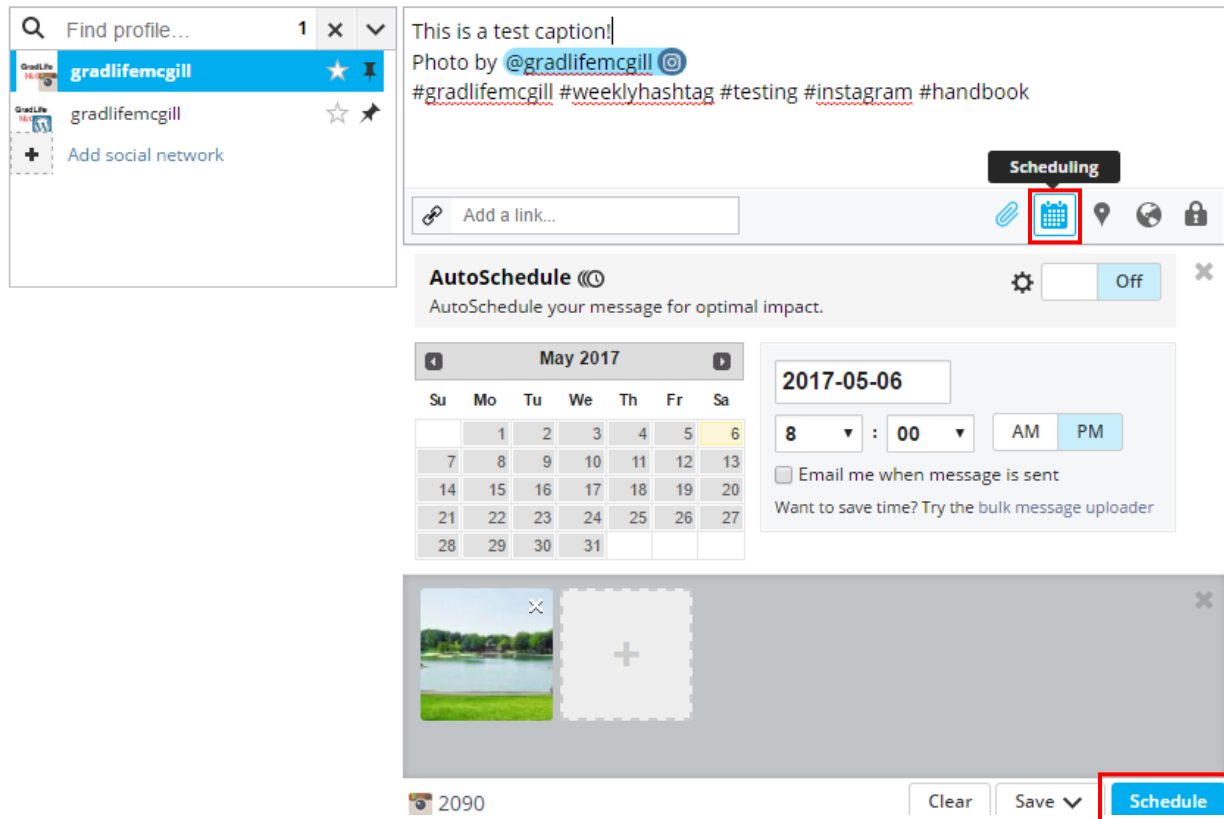
Step 3: Upload your photo

To upload your photo, select the “Attach media” button. You can then choose which file you would like to upload from the pop-up window on your device.



Step 4: Schedule your post

To schedule your photo, select the “Scheduling” button. This is when you can choose the date and time at which you would like your photo to be posted.



GradLife **McGill** Instagram Handbook

Notes on scheduling:

Please remember to select from the pre-determined times for posting (8am, 12pm, 4pm, 8pm). You can check if other instagrammers have already scheduled posts for a certain time by looking through the “Scheduled” section on the dashboard. Please do not overlap posting times with other instagrammers.

Once you’ve selected the date and time, press the “Schedule” button on the bottom right. Your post is now scheduled, and will be posted at the time you specified!

Recommended Practices

Now that you’ve got the hang of how to publish your post on Hootsuite, take a minute to review some of our recommendations and tips on [Photo Stylistics](#), [Hashtags](#), [Tagging Users and Locations](#), [Comments](#), and [Sharing and Reach](#).

Photo Stylistics

- We encourage you to develop a personal style in your photos, and to make use of editing tools.
- To create visually appealing photos, please consider the following elements:
 - **Framing:** Where is the subject within your frame? What is your angle or perspective? Does your photo need to be cropped or resized?
 - **Lighting:** Is your photo under- or over-exposed? Do you need to adjust your highlights or shadows?
 - **Colours:** What is the texture and saturation of your photo? Does the entire photo need to be saturated or will you bring out only one colour?
 - **Subject matter:** Does your photo fit into the weekly theme and represent graduate life?

Hashtags

- Each post should have a minimum of 5 hashtags to reach relevant audiences.
- **Mandatory hashtags:**
 - #GradLifeMcGill and all weekly theme hashtags.
- **Suggested hashtags:**
 - Feel free to get creative! You can search Instagram for relevant hashtags to your posts and see the number of posts associated with each one. The more popular, the better.
 - Example: If your post is about a café in Montreal, you can use the hashtags: #coffee #cafe #montreal #mtlcafecrawl #mydailycoffee #latteart #goodmorning
 - Use similar hashtags as your fellow Instagrammers! This help builds consistency in voice and dynamic interaction between team-members.

Tagging Users and Locations

- Tag your personal account when publishing a post (“Photo by @username”)
- Tag relevant channels to cross-promote members of the community (e.g., if you are at an event @PGSS or an establishment in Montreal)
- Please let the GradLife McGill Co-ordinators know the location of your post, if necessary. Tagging the location allows other users to see our posts after visiting the same location.

GradLife **McGill** Instagram Handbook

Comments

- Keep an eye out for comments on your posts and respond to them, both on the Instagram channel and on Facebook. Responding to comments makes commenters feel good and it will make them more likely to continue following and engaging with your future posts.
- Please let the GradLife Coordinators know if you would like a comment deleted, or if it is spam.
- Unsure of how to respond to a comment? Or if a comment is spam? [E-mail](#) the GradLife McGill Coordinators. We're here to help.

Sharing and Reach

- Enhancing the visibility of the GradLife McGill Instagram channel is important for its Instagrammers. Sharing your posts on your personal channel(s) (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, etc.) is encouraged.
- GradLife McGill will share and promote your work on the Facebook page. The authors, photographers, and topics posted on our Facebook will vary to allow for diversity of content and equality of exposure.

We're a Team

- There is no "i" in team. As an Instagrammer, you should be engaging in a dialogue with the audience and other members of the GradLife McGill team.
- Read, comment and support other bloggers' and Instagrammers' posts. It fosters a sense of community and makes our work more fun.
- Add to our content library or suggest a weekly theme. If you get a fun idea for a post from comments you receive, send it to the GradLife McGill Coordinators!
- Attend meet-ups to get to know your fellow team-members offline.

Professional Benefits

- Develop Instagram experience (training, ongoing coaching, feedback and resources offered).
- Build your digital communication portfolio.
- Learn about and apply your knowledge on responsible social media contribution.
- Develop soft-skills and obtain valuable volunteer experience.
- Be eligible for leadership opportunities (e.g., Apply to be a team leader after 3 months).
- Connect with people from other departments who share similar goals.
- Have a creative outlet within academia.
- The Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies will provide you with a recognition letter if you have fulfilled the 4 post/month, 1-year commitment.

GradLife **McGill** Instagram Handbook

HAPPY INSTAGRAMMING!

Questions?

Get in touch with us (gradlife@mcgill.ca) if you have general questions, uncertainties or if issues arise.

Have a more specific question?

For specific questions related to editing, content, or how to use Hootsuite:

Please contact the GradLife Instagram Team Lead: Saima Ahmed (saima.ahmed@mail.mcgill.ca)

With personal questions about your commitment or ethical questions related to Instagram:

Please contact the GradLife Blog Coordinator: Aleks Budarick (aleksandra.budarick@mail.mcgill.ca)

Sponsors

Contact:

[Sophia Kapchinsky](#)

[David Syncox](#)

Office:

[Teaching and Learning Services](#)

[Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#)

GradLife **McGill** Instagram Handbook

Appendix: Resources

- **McGill guidelines**
 - [Newsroom Social Media Guidelines](#)
- **Instagram guidelines**
 - [Terms of Use](#)
- **Tips and tricks for Instagram and photography**
 - [21 Instagram tips and tricks you can't afford to miss](#)
 - [How to Get More Followers on Instagram: 16 Tips From the Pros](#)
 - [8 Killer Photography Tips From Instagram Superstars](#)
 - [Instagram Update Adds More Sophisticated Photo Editing Tools](#)
 - [The Instagram Rules: The Good, the Bad, and the Very Boring](#)
 - [Instagram Visual Storytelling Strategies](#)
 - [#NextLevel Instagram Workshop presented by GradLife McGill in collaboration with Skillsets](#)
- **Strategies for engagement**
 - [14 tips for getting more followers and likes on Instagram](#)
 - [52 Tips: How to Market on Instagram](#)