

## The Art of Taking Notes

There isn't a steward who hasn't had to take notes on a grievance and refer back to them later on; it's a basic part of the job. But it's the exceptional steward who understands what a vital role note-taking can actually play, and how to make the most of notes in his/her work on behalf of the union.



Your notes are more than just a list of facts and details. They're also an important tool for thinking through your case, examining your logic, and testing your assumptions. In fact, approaching note-taking as a critical tool of analysis removes the sense of drudgery and makes it easier to tackle the task.

Whatever the source of the notes, your case will depend on them. So even before you have filed a grievance, think of your notes as your key to victory.

The first challenge is to get the story from the grievant. The skill of taking good notes at this point may conflict with your need to listen. So, separate the tasks: first, let the grievant tell the story so that she/he feels genuinely heard, then go back over the story, chronologically, writing it down and checking the details. Keep in mind that spoken language is less precise than written language. Ask for clarification. Review parts of the story that don't make sense to you. Before you finish, it's a good idea to have the grievant read over your notes. Be open to making changes, even if they do not seem important to you. Later on, they may be.

Every experienced steward intends to review his notes as soon as possible after a meeting, but it takes fierce determination to actually do it. Even spending a few minutes shortly after a meeting tidying up your notes and inserting bits that clarify the text can save you a lot of grief later on. If you don't do a quick review you may find later on that you have written something that no longer makes sense and cannot be checked and it will be important.

It is a good idea to develop a system for writing your own notes. Wide margins and spaces between lines leave you room to add details and put reminders to yourself about what you need to do or check

on. Highlighters are useful for marking important points or tasks to be done. Remember these notes should be useable by someone else. Think what you would need to successfully use someone else's notes and make sure you meet that standard.

Rely on the five W's - the who, where, when, what and why of the case. And don't forget the "how." Note that this information is the beginning not the end point.

If you cannot find the weaknesses of your case in your own notes, you aren't finished yet. Ask yourself, "What am I missing?" and "Who sees it differently" and "How will management spin the story?" Do your notes reveal the logic of the other side?

Make sure your notes distinguish between the facts of the case, the proof of those facts, and the opinions of all parties involved. Also, be sure that your own thoughts are separate from the facts and from others' views.

Another person should be able to see the following from your notes:

- \*What the case is about, in general,
- \*What proof exists and where it is,
- \*Who the witnesses are, how credible they are, and if they are willing to come forward,
- \*What action has been taken on the case,
- \*Your thoughts on the case.

On a final note: as a steward you always need to be mindful of confidentiality. As your notes become complete, you may have information that alleges that an informant, management or even the grievant has lied. Be careful with the storage of your notes, who reads them, and how they are used.





# The Dangers of Social Media: How One Tweet Can Ruin Your Life

by Morici & Morici, LLP



Social Media outlets have become a huge issue pertaining to employer/employee relations, including relations amongst students and school administrators. It is so important to keep in mind the impact your words can have once made public through a social media outlet, even if they are posted in an innocent or joking matter. It is not uncommon for jobs to be lost or legal cases to be damaged as a result of an insensitive comment posted on social media.

Additionally, an increasing number of employers are using information that they find via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to impact hiring and employment decisions, which make what seemed like a fun app or website to be a career/case damaging instrument. Just because your information is private, restricted, or deleted does not mean that it cannot be viewed. Anything that is posted online is capable of being discovered and can even be produced and disclosed to your adversary upon court order. One tweet, post or picture in the wrong hands can result in the ultimate damage to your good name and reputation.

If you have an active legal dispute, such as a personal injury action or a divorce case, information found on online social networks is "discoverable" information. This means that the opposition in your case could potentially use information found on social media against you in your case.

Here are a few tips to remember about online social media usage while you have pending case:

- 1) Never post anything to your profile or someone else's profile that talks about your case. For example if you are involved in a personal injury case, do not discuss your injuries or liability.**
- 2) Make sure to check your profile's privacy settings and alter them to private so that only your "friends" or at most "friends of friends" can view them to prevent unwelcomed people seeing your profile.**
- 3) Keep track of your "friend" list and delete anyone who you do not recognize.**
- 4) Never accept "friend" invitations from people who you are unfamiliar with. Also be wary of certain family members, friends, employers, and colleagues because you never know if someone is trying to view your profile to obtain incriminating information against you.**
- 5) Do not post and remove any photos that show you engaging in unfavorable activities that could damage your case. For example, if you are charged with a DUI, never post and remove any pictures showing you out at the bar or with alcohol and never discuss your night's escapades.**

By following these tips, you can limit the disclosure of information that could cause harm to you and your legal matters.

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## The 8 Best "How to" Web Sites as rated by PC World

### 1. Yahoo Answers

You can write in your questions, and site users offer helpful answers. Then other users rate how useful the answers are.

### 2. HowStuffWorks.com

Explains in simple terms what things are and how they work.

### 3. Lynda.com

A better approach to learning software than sitting through training or reading the manual. For a subscription fee, you can tap into online videos to learn how to use design and development software.

### 4. FixYa

Your iPod just went dead. Instead of tossing it, post a message at FixYa. A team of experts and a large group of users can address the breakdown. You can get tech help by having a web chat with an expert.

### 5. Treehugger

Find actionable advice on being a wiser, greener consumer. The site covers everything from food to business to recreation to fashion.

### 6. Dictionary.com/ Thesaurus.com

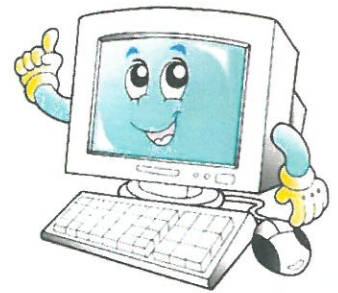
Bookmark these sites for everyday advice on language.

### 7. Instructables

Learn how to make anything from a corsage to a catapult. Users write in about what they do or have invented and how they did it.

### 8. Livemocha

A new approach to learning languages by setting up learning alliances with language buddies from around the world.



### TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS

**1. Stand while on the phone. You'll finish the call more quickly.**

**2. Minimize interruptions. Turn off the ping alerting you to new emails.**

**3. Do the "ugliest" thing first. Everything else will seem easier.**

**4. Make time for the important things, not just for time-sensitive matters.**

**5. Recognize that the best reason to save time in your work is to increase time with your family.**



# UPSEU Local 1222 Shop Talk

## UPSEU Local 1222 SCHOLARSHIPS



Do You Need Money for School?

Applications are available on our website at [www.local1222.org](http://www.local1222.org).  
For members who are registered on the website,  
you may complete an application on-line.

You may also call the UPSEU Local 1222 office at 631-738-8773  
and we will mail an application to you.

**Deadline for Applications:**  
**July 1, 2015**



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