FACEBOOK ADS
MASTERY

PUBLISHED BY **Lurn**

WORDS & PHRASES TO AVOID IN YOUR FACEBOOK ADS

Words & Phrases to Avoid in Your Facebook Ads

If you're a media buyer, either for your own business or someone else's, Facebook Ads can serve you well. But as the platform gets more robust, the number of potential tripwires that can *ruin* your ad campaigns keeps going up.

There are *loads* of phrases, content, and even specific *words* that can cause your ads to get rejected by the algorithm. And often, it's something tiny you didn't even know was a violation!

And even worse—if that happens too much, **you run the risk of getting BANNED from the platform entirely!**

Now, you might be thinking that keeping up with the [Policies Guidelines](#) would be enough… But the guidelines change every quarter, *and they are extremely vague!*

We don't want you to get rejected or banned. We want you to be able to create quality ads that drive traffic to your business and get results… While also keeping them in line with Facebook's requirements.

That's why we've put together this handy little guide for you with as many topics, phrases, and specific words you should avoid as we could possibly find. Keep this document handy and also make sure to keep the Policies document open whenever you're writing ads.

If you do those two things, you should be just fine.

Nothing Illegal

This first one might seem obvious, but you can't promote anything that's illegal in your ads… That includes products, services, and even general content that talks about illegal activities.

They even get more specific in their guides and point out you can't target minors with any ads that, while they may be promoting legal products and services, are *illegal* for minors to buy or consume.

Some of the specific words and phrases that trigger the "illegal" label include…

- Hacking software
- Cracking software
- Spying
- Spy cam
- Trackers
- Destroy

- Surveillance
- Jammer/Scrambler
- Radar detector
- Cheat/Cheating
- Counterfeit
- Gambling

- Murder
- Crime
- Convict
- Trafficking
- Theft

- Prison/Prisoner
- Criminal
- Kill
- Attack
- Lottery

Don't Discriminate

Another obvious one, but you can't run ads that actively discriminate against anyone OR indirectly encourage discriminatory behavior by other people. That includes these specific personal attributes:

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Color
- National origin
- Religion
- Age
- Sex

- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Family status
- Disability
- Medical condition
- Genetic condition

Also, because of the horrible connotations these words have from past events in history, you also want to avoid the following…

- Slave
- Master
- Blacklist
- Whitelist

No Smoking, Please

Your ads will get rejected (and lead to immediate bans in some cases) if they promote the sale or use of anything related to tobacco consumption. ***Your ads cannot include pictures, video, or text*** of any of the following:

- Cigarettes
- Cigars
- Chewing tobacco
- Tobacco pipes

- Hookahs or hookah lounges
- Rolling papers
- Electronic cigarettes (E-cigs)
- Vaporizers

There are two exceptions to this rule, however.

You CAN promote *anti-smoking* ads for anything related to helping people quit or preventing them from ever starting.

Oddly enough, you can also create ads that connect people to blogs or groups about tobacco-related topics _as long as they don't lead to sales of these products_. But that's a really gray area you should just avoid.

Bottom line: don't promote smoking of any kind.

No Drugs

You might think this falls under the "Nothing Illegal" section, but there are plenty of drugs out there that are perfectly legal. And Facebook will still reject your ads anyway.

This also includes other types of supplements and substances you might not think of as "illicit". Their list includes:

- Anabolic steroids
- Chitosan
- Comfrey
- Dehydroepiandrosterone
- Ephedra
- Any human growth hormones

- Cannabis (legal or not)
- Heroin
- Cocaine
- CBD
- Hemp
- HCG

It also includes paraphernalia that goes with it like syringes, bongs, rolling papers, pipes, or anything else one might use to ingest drugs of all sorts.

Just say no (and don't promote drugs).

No Guns

You can't run ads that promote the sale or use of weapons of any kind. That includes guns and knives, but also the ammunition and accessories for guns, and explosives of any kind.

There are a _lot_ of exceptions to this rule in the [official guide](), including toy weapons and even safety courses that teach people how to hand weapons properly. But in general, avoid…

- Gun
- Pistol
- Rifle
- Weapon
- Knife

- Ammo
- Ammunition
- Bomb
- Explosion
- Explosives

Avoid Being Overly "Salesy"

This is another big one that people run into. You're trying to sell SOMETHING, right? Otherwise you wouldn't be running ads. So you should try to get the sale… RIGHT?

Unfortunately, that's not something Facebook will like all that much. There are lots of different "salesy" words and phrases Facebook will reject.

Selling Terms

- Sale
- % Off
- Order
- Discount
- Buy
- Marked Down
- Coupon

Deals

- Free
- Freebie
- Giveaway
- Deal
- Win
- Enter
- Contest

Time Limitations

- "Today Only"
- "Ending Soon"
- "While Supplies Last"
- "Limited Time"
- "Only X Days Left"
- "Doors Close at…"

You Can't Sell Sex

Facebook has a strong stance against any ads that promote sex in any way. Specifically, they target "sexual pleasure" when you run your ads.

You can run ads promoting sexual and reproductive HEALTH, like contraception (if you target people 18+). But even then, the algorithm will probably still reject your ad.

This also includes adult content of any kind: nudity, pictures or videos of people that might be construed as sexual or suggestive, or anything obviously pornographic.

Avoid these specific trigger words:
- Pleasure
- Sex

- Sex toys
- Sex life

- Sex tips
- Condoms
- Lube
- Lubricant

- Adult/Dirty Magazine
- Adult Dating Service
- Mail Order Bride/Husband

"You", "Your", "You're", & "Other"

One of the longest prohibition articles in the [official guide](#) is the one on "Personal Attributes". It's also one of the most confusing.

In general, you can run ads that reference people's race, religion, sexual orientation, and other things mentioned in the "Don't Discriminate" section. **You just can't reference your audience as possessing those traits** when you're writing your ad copy.

Sounds confusing, right? Here's what that means:

- You can run an ad that says *"Meet Black singles online!"*
- You **can't** run an ad that says *"Meet **OTHER** Black singles online!"*

So what's the difference? The word "Other" in the second headline implies that the person reading the ad is also a Black single person. Even if that's true, you can't make those sorts of implications about the people reading your ads.

So, when you're writing your ad copy, **DO NOT** use the words *"You", "Your", & "Other"* if it's at all possible to avoid it.

Here are some examples of OK/Not OK:

Not OK	OK
"Meet Other Christians"	"Meet Christians"
"Manage Your Diabetes"	"New Tool Helps Manage Diabetes"
"Find Other 25y/o Women Who Like Golf"	"Find Golf Fans"
"This Product Is For Men Like You"	"New Product Designed For Men"
"John Doe, Get This T-Shirt"	"Get This T-Shirt"
"Are You A Black Single?"	"Meet Black Singles"

Spammy & Profane Text

This one has two parts: your grammar has to be excellent when you write, and **you can't use ANY PROFANITY** at all. Yes, that includes profanity that you self-bleep by writing *"f*&%ing"* instead of the other word…

This also means that you can't have lots of random symbols or even multiple emojis in your ad. A few emojis will pass, but more than one or two will flag the algorithm and get you banned.

Here are some examples of things to avoid

- Any and all swear words (even if they are obscured)
    - F*&%ing
    - S#!%
    - D@#^
- ALL CAPS
    - "STOP WHAT YOU'RE DOING"
    - "CLICK HERE!"
- Lots of punctuation ($$$, !!!, ???, ?!?!)
- Stuff that looks like this:
    - "♧ ♥ ♡ ◊ ◊ *Buy Now* ♔ ♕ ♔ ♕ ♌"
    - Whÿ wónt yòu clîck mé?
    - Buy Ga.rcin-ia Camb,ogia here

Don't Insult Their Health

You can definitely run ads that promote products and services on Facebook. As a matter of fact, it's one of the most common ads you'll see.

But what you *can't* do is write copy that insults, denigrates, or puts down people based on certain physical health characteristics. That means you can't call people fat or tell them to get six-pack abs.

You also can't promise them specific results in a certain period of time. Don't make claims about what your product or service is capable of.

Specific words and phrase examples include…
- Are you fat?
- Overweight
- Out of shape
- Six-pack abs
- Get help with (something related to health)
- Want a body like…
- Lighter skin
- Whiter smile
- Bigger arms
- Smaller waist
- "She did this, so you can too."

- "He lost 90 pounds of fat in just 30 days."
- "Tired of Diets That Don't Work?"

- "Tired of being fat?"
- "Want to Lose Weight Without Counting Calories?"

Essentially, don't talk about changing people's physical appearance if you're running ads about health products or services.

If you really want to make ads in this space, the best way to do it is to focus on the positive feelings people will have after they engage with your product.

Instead of, *"Lost 30 pounds in time for summer,"* you could say, *"Feel strong and confident at the beach this summer!"*

The First Rule of COVID…

Is not to talk about COVID. Even though the world has been turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic, it's not something you can really talk about in your ads.

Some stuff will get past the algorithm, like running ads about the changing nature of work because of the pandemic… But most of the time (at least right now in 2022), your ad will get rejected. So avoid…

- Vaccine
- COVID-19
- Pandemic
- Corona
- Coronavirus

- Infection
- Disease
- Confirmed cases
- Positive case
- Social distance

Loan Sharks

Whether you believe it or not, most short-term loan offers are just a tiny step up from full-blown financial scams. You can't promote anything related to helping people in a bind with quick money. So avoid these terms:

- Payday
- Payday Loan
- Paycheck advance

- Bail bond
- Get money now
- Money now, pay later

You Can't "Get-Rich-Quick"

This is one of the most common types of rejections people receive. Usually it involves promising a certain amount of money to people or money within a certain time frame. Sometimes, it's a combination of the two.

If you promise people that they'll make a certain amount of money, or that they can make money with little time, effort, or financial investment, you'll get rejected. Your ads have to be very clear about what people can expect in terms of compensation. In fact, it's better just not to make any promises at all (especially those that can't be independently verified by trusted sources).

Within this same boat is the idea of "MLM" or "Multi-Level Marketing". A lot of businesses that run ads promising people a certain amount of money get flagged as multi-level marketing businesses. You might know them as pyramid schemes, where the main way you make money is by recruiting other people to sell stuff (rather than selling it directly). Then THEY have to recruit more people to make any money (think Cutco, Amway, or Mary Kay).

You have to be very clear about how your business opportunity makes money, and you can't make any claims about results.

- "Make $XX.XX"
- "Earn $30,000 in Just 12 Days"
- "I did this, so you can too."
- "We've made millions of dollars in the new Creator Economy."
- Cutco
- Amway
- Mary Kay
- Herbal Life
- Oriflame
- Money (yes, money)
- Cash
- Quit your job
- Work from home
- Wealth
- Laptop lifestyle
- Financial freedom
- "Hustle-Free"
- "No-sweat"
- "Easy Money"

No Crypto

You can't run ads about cryptocurrency. Facebook is extremely stringent about this. There are maybe two or three businesses they've recently allowed to run ads (Coinbase is one of them), but if you try to run ads about cryptocurrency, you will get rejected. Avoid…

- Bitcoin
- Ethereum
- Blockchain
- Crypto
- Cryptocurrency
- Crypto Investing
- Mining
- Crypto Mining
- Dogecoin
- NFT

No Lies, Exaggerations, or Specific Numbers

Few things will get you banned quicker than making claims that aren't supported by any real evidence. If you can't point to real data (on your landing page, no less) about the claims you're making, your ads will get rejected.

And if you feel that you just might be exaggerating a little bit or stretching the truth just a touch, stop yourself immediately and rethink your copy. This also goes for making promises you can't really back up with data or making predictions about what will happen in the future.

- Cure X Disease
- Prevent X Disease
- Beat X Disease
- Protect Against…
- Guaranteed
- "In Only X Days…"
- "3 Shocking Tips to Lose All Your Belly Fat"

- "1 Crazy Tip to Lose Weight"
- "Earn 15% Profits Every 2 Weeks"
- "You can earn an extra $10,000 a month with our franchise."
- "Double X/Y/Z" (they hate it when you promise to double something)
- "Double your growth"
- "Double your revenue"

Don't Say Facebook

Oddly enough, Facebook doesn't want you to use "Facebook" in your ads. The same goes for Instagram and all other apps that fall under the Meta corporate umbrella.

You CAN use the names *if you are referencing content or sources they themselves created*. But even that is a bit of a gray area. Play it safe and don't write "Facebook".

Conclusion

There really are way too many words and phrases to list out there with the potential to cause a rejection in the Ad Manager. But the information you have here is a great resource for examples of what not to write.

The bottom line is this: *be honest, clear, and genuine with your audience* when you're writing copy for your ads. Don't be negative, don't lie, cheat, or exaggerate, and avoid the topics listed here.

If you do that, and have some skill in "Googling", you'll have nothing to worry about when thinking about compliance.