



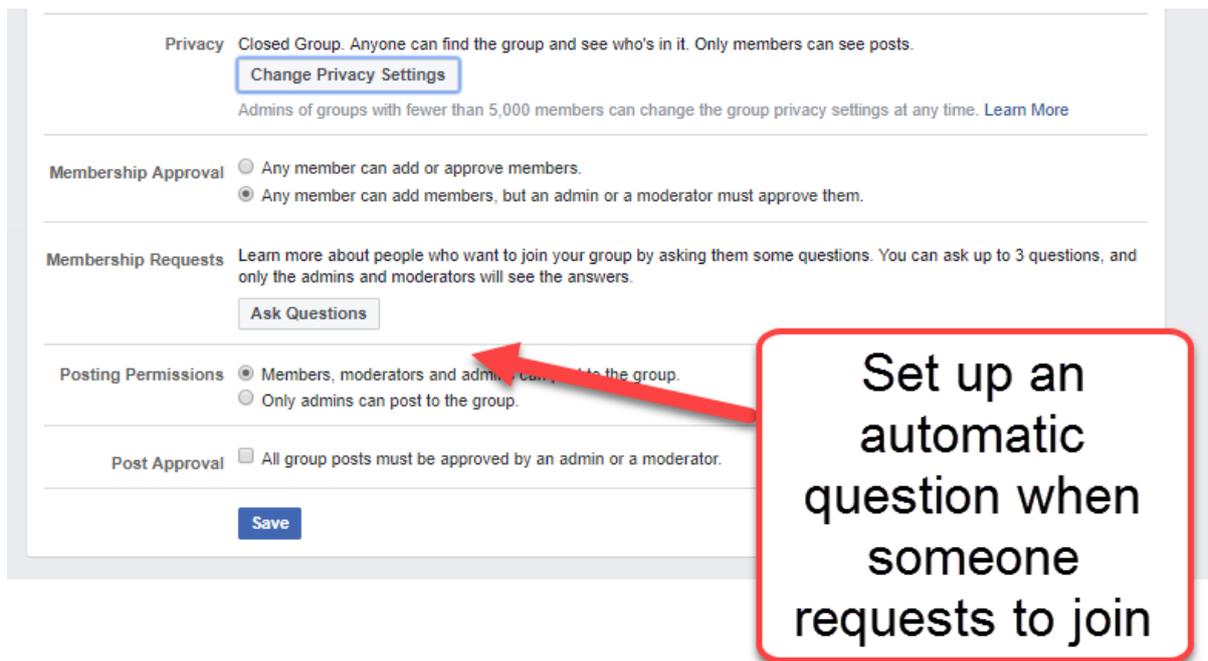
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Managing your online group

If you're thinking of starting an online group, or you already have a community but haven't set rules, you might be wondering how to get started.

Self Help UK have an example rules for online groups which you are welcome to use to adapt to your group.

- When groups are private, the content in them is intended and assumed to be private as well. Remind members that if they're going to screenshot, share, or quote content from the community they need to request permission from the original poster first.
- Strong, consistent enforcement is key to creating a positive experience for members of any online group.
- I recommend that you start by featuring your community rules upfront in the group's welcome content.
- In Facebook Groups, that could mean mentioning them in the banner image as well as the "About" description and a pinned post.
- If not, you'll want to pin your rules or create a way for each new member to be introduced to the rules as they join. You could also create a welcome video where the rules are explained.
- It's also a good idea to ask prospective members to agree to your rules upon joining.



How to address rule breakers

Wherever there are rules in life, there are rule-breakers.

No matter how clearly you outline your rules and remind community members, someone will break them.

It may be completely by accident or it may be due to complete ignorance; either way, you should be prepared to deal with these situations before they arise.

Then, when they do, you can respond appropriately and keep the spirit of your community intact and not be running around frantically.

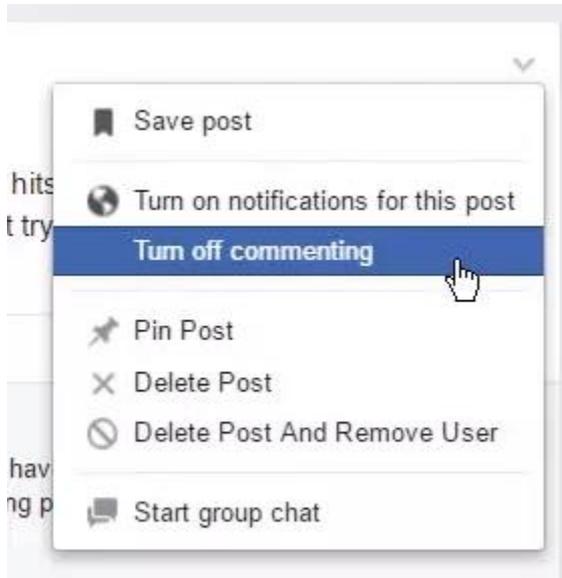
Whether it's a small rule that is broken (i.e. put an advertisement for a business) or a larger one (hate speech or bullying), you'll need to address it.

- Public messages

If the person in question is an engaged member of your community or their intentions seem good, the best thing you can do is comment publicly kindly reminding them of the rule and directing them on what to do instead.

This is a good reminder both for the offending member as well as for all members who will see it.

On most platforms, you can also turn off further commenting on this post after you've addressed it so the issue can be nipped in the bud.



- **Private messages**

In other situations, you may want to message someone privately and let them know that you appreciate their contribution but would like to help it be best received by the community.

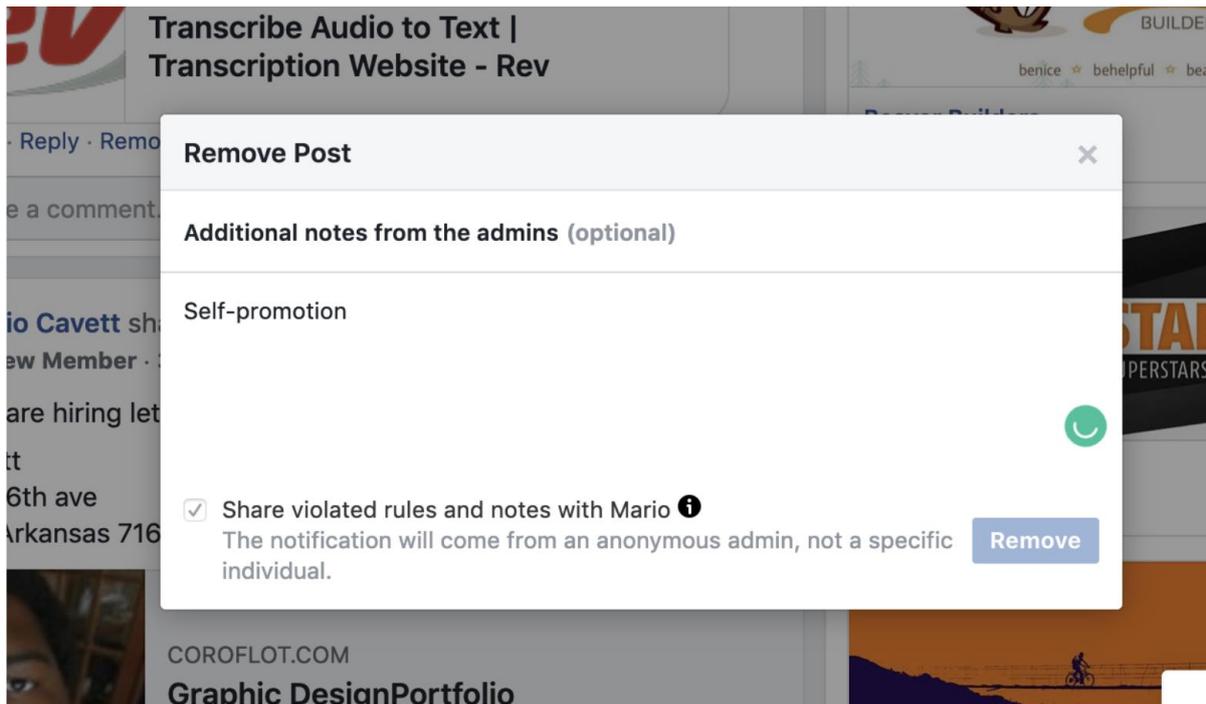
This allows you and the member to have a more personal and two-way conversation.

- **Removing the post**

Finally, you can always just remove the post entirely. This is likely something you'll only turn to in rare instances, but sometimes it does need to happen.

Some community platforms will give you the option to notify the person of the reason you're removing their content as you do so.

On Facebook, for example, when you delete a post that breaks the rules of your community, you can easily reference the related rule. Just check the box for "share violated rules" before sending the notification that you've removed the post.



However, if you find yourself doing this often, it may be time to moderate every post before it's posted live to your community.

Overall, if you choose to have a zero-tolerance policy, just be sure to make this very clear to members as they join.

- **Blocking members & reporting content**

While spammers and trolls aren't likely to be looking for your community rules, you'll still have to address spam content at some point in your community management career.

Especially since Facebook can now hold group admins *personally* accountable for not keeping group content up to Facebook's community standards.

Updating the groups enforcement policy. We remove posts that violate our Community Standards on things like hate speech, and we remove any groups that consistently violate those standards. Now, when reviewing a group to decide whether or not to take it down, we will look at admin and moderator content violations, including posts by members that they have approved, as a stronger signal that the group violates our standards.

Whenever deleting content it may be best to screenshot the offending remarks, just in case any questions arise.

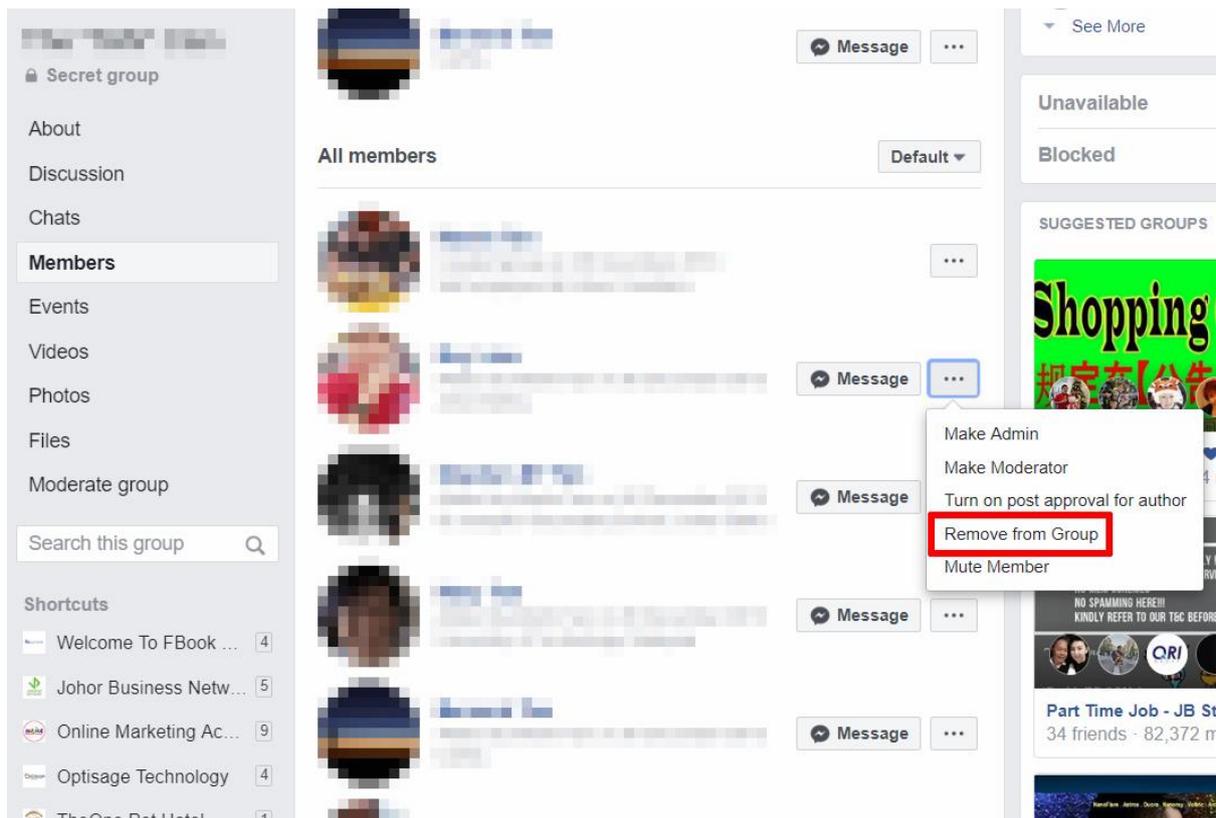
Once you've removed the content, you may also want to remove and block the person responsible for posting it.

This may be content that violates any standard community guidelines such as hate speech, bullying, spam links, and completely unrelated content.

Though difficult to face, sometimes, these things need to start addressed openly to start dialogue and prevent it from happening again in the future.

So much of what we do is subjective by nature and, at times, it requires us to address very uncomfortable topics.

If you find yourself struggling as a community manager, just remember that it's okay to reach out and talk to someone or ask for help.



- **Changing the rules over time**

While it may be tempting to make an exception or let things slide once in a while, it's a slippery slope.

As a group admin, you need to stick to your rules and enforce them consistently.

That being said, however, your rules should not be set in stone.

If your community continuously wants to do something that goes against your rules, it may be time to consider a solution or a change to the rules.

- **One final reminder**

Online groups can be incredibly powerful tools for forging new connections, deepening existing relationships learning, and getting help when it is needed.

Just because you, as a group admin, run the place doesn't mean you're exempt from the rules.

In fact, you should strive to be a shining example of a perfect community member as it will encourage others to model their behaviour after yours.

Remember, consistency is key. Create clear rules, follow them, and enforce them consistently, and you will create a community that is both a pleasure to manage AND a pleasure to belong to.