MSconnection.org User Guide

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Appreciating
If you are a member of MSconnection.org, and are logged in to the community website, you will be able to appreciate content posted by other members of the community simply by clicking on the Appreciate this link that shows up discussions, blog posts and the My Story section of people’s profiles.

Appreciating someone’s post or image lets them know that you find it valuable, and let’s other community members know which information on MSconnection.org resonates with the most people.

Discussions (blue)
The Discussions section of the MSconnection.org website is where you can read comments and questions from other members of the community on a variety of topics related to living with MS.

Browsing and Finding Discussions
All discussions on the website will fall into the main categories below:

- **Symptoms of MS**
  For questions and general discussions around the symptoms of MS
- **Treating MS**
  For questions and general discussions around treatments for MS
- **Research**
  For questions and general discussions on MS research topics
- **Newly Diagnosed**
  For questions and general discussions from members newly diagnosed with MS
- **Ask an MS Navigator – Questions**
  Use this discussion to ask questions of the National MS Society’s MS Navigators
- **Ask an MS Navigator – Answers**
  Once an MS Navigator has answered a member’s question, the topic will move here. Look in this discussion section first to determine if someone has already ask a similar question.
- **Daily Life**
  For questions and general discussions on living your life with MS
• **Health Insurance**  
  For questions and general discussions on health insurance

• **Employment and MS**  
  For questions and general discussions on employment and ADA issues

• **Family and Friends**  
  For questions and general discussions from family and friends of people living with MS

• **General Discussion**  
  For questions and discussion topics that just don’t seem to fit in any of the other discussion areas

• **Get Involved**  
  For questions and discussions on getting involved in helping raise money or awareness for people living with MS. This discussion area may include topics that cover Bike MS, Walk MS, Challenge Walk MS, MuckFest MS or Society events.

• **Technical Support**  
  Use this discussion area to ask questions about how to use this website or to let us know about any technical issues you’re having with the website.

Once you find a discussion area that looks interesting, click on that discussion area to view a list of topics covered by it. You can sort discussion topics by name, newest, most discussions (topics), or most comments.

When you click on a discussion topic, you will see the list of comments on that topic. The first one you see will always be the question or comment that started it all, with the replies listed from newest to oldest.

If you are looking for something specific, use the search bar at the top of the main *Discussions* page.

You can also use the search box that is at the top of every page.
Starting a New Topic
If you have looked at all related topics, or searched for related topics, and don’t find anything that matches what you’re looking for, you can start a new topic. To do this:

1. Log into MSconnection.org (if you’re not already). If you don’t have an account, you can easily set one up (see Registering for an Account).
2. Select a main discussion area where your topic would fit best (see above for the list of discussion areas)
3. Click on the Start a New Discussion button at the top of the topics page

4. You will be asked to enter in a name for your discussion topic and your question or comment.
5. Once you click the Submit button. The discussion topic will be post on the site.

Replying to a Discussion Topic or Comment
If you find a discussion topic that you want to reply or contribute to:

1. Log into MSconnection.org (if you’re not already). If you don’t have an account, you can easily set one up (see Registering for an Account).
2. Click on the ‘Reply’ link that is in the bottom right of each comment (it doesn’t matter which comment in a thread you reply to, your reply will always post to the end of the list of comments).

3. You will be asked to type in your comment and then click the ‘Submit Comment’ button to add your reply to the thread.

Following a Discussion
You can follow a discussion that you’re participating in or that is of interest to you. To do this:

1. Log into MSconnection.org (if you’re not already). If you don’t have an account, you can easily set one up (see Registering for an Account).
2. Click the Follow this Discussion button that is at the top of the Discussion page.
Once you are following a discussion, it will now appear in your profile. See the section of User Profiles for more information.

**To un-follow a discussion**, you can remove it from your My Discussions list under your Dashboard, or click on the *Un-Follow Discussion* button on the discussion itself.

**Groups (green)**
The Groups area of MSconnection.org is where members can create smaller, interest driven mini-communities. Groups can have their own discussions, and document and photo libraries. Groups may be open to everyone, only to members who’ve been ‘approved’ or private (where you have to be invited to join).

Groups will fall into four general categories:

1. **Support Groups**
   This category is for support groups, led by trained National MS Society volunteers and serving people affected by MS. They are usually set up by local National MS Society Chapters/offices, but there are also national topic-based support groups you can join.

2. **Local Groups**
   This category of groups includes any group that is for members living in a specific area of the country.

3. **Interest Groups**
   This category of group is for groups that are related to a specific interest or hobby. For example, artists with MS or community members that use wheelchairs or power scooters.

4. **Other Groups**
   This category is for any groups that don’t fit under one of the three categories above.

**Browsing and Finding Groups**
To find a group, you can browse the Groups page where current groups are listed in alphabetical order, but you can view these groups according to Group Types: *Interest, Local, Support* and *Other groups*.

You can also search for a group by entering a word in the search bar on the main Groups page.
You can also use the search box that is at the top of every page.

Joining a Group

To join a group:

1. Log into MSconnection.org (if you’re not already). If you don’t have an account, you can easily set one up (see Registering for an Account).
2. Find the group you’d like to join and click the **Join Group** button at the top of the group page.
3. You will be asked if you are sure you want to join – click on the **Join** button to join or **Cancel** if you change your mind.
4. If the group is open to everyone, you will automatically be added to the group; otherwise, you will need to wait until the group administrator has approved your request.

All groups you’ve joined and are a member of, will display in the right column of the main Groups page and on your dashboard.
**Group Members**

Once you have joined a group, you will be able to do any of the options below (if allowed by the group admin):

**Post to a group discussion**

Every group has one discussion area. To view all comments in the discussion, click the discussion.

If you see a comment you would like to reply to, click on that comment. At the bottom right of each comment is a link for ‘Reply’ that will allow you to post your comment. Once you submit your comment, it will be added to the end of the list of comments.

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**Add a photo**

1. To add a photo to a one of your groups, either click on the *Choose File* button on the Photos page.

2. This will open a new window that will allow you to browse your computer for an image.

3. Select an image, and then click the ‘Open’ button, which will take you back to the Group Photo page.
4. You will then need to click the ‘Upload’ button to add your image to the group.

**Upload a document**
To upload a document to share with your group:

1. Click on the **Choose File** button.
2. Browse your computer and when you find the document you want to upload, click the **Open** button.

**Create a New Group**
If you have searched through all the current groups, and none match what you are looking for, you can create your own group that other members of MSconnection.org will be able to join. To create a new group:

1. Click on the **Create new group** button that located at the bottom right of the main Groups page
2. Next, fill in the information on the Create a New Group form. This form has options for:
   a. Group name: this is the name that will appear for all members of the community.
   b. Group description: this description will display when community members are browsing or searching groups.
c. Approve members: this option lets you decide if your group will be completely open, so that any site member can join, or only approved members can join. If you select *Only approved members can join* a group admin must approve the request before the member will be allowed to participate in the group.

d. Content access: use this option to set the privacy of the group. Options are:

   i. Anybody can view the content – this option makes the group completely public. All members and content will be viewable by anyone visiting the MSconnection.org community.

   ii. Only MSconnection.org members can view the content – this option will protect the content of the group so that only people who are members of MSconnection.org can view group content.

   iii. Only members of this group can view the content – provides additional privacy so only approved members can view content.

e. Group Visibility – provides additional privacy so the group is not searchable to other users and is hidden from public view. We do not recommend this option for most groups, as it makes it difficult for people to find and join your group.

### Managing a Group

Once you have created a new Group, you will be directed to the Manage Group page. There are two tabs within the Manage Group page: *General* and *Members*.

![Manage Group](image)

The following features are available to manage within the *General* tab:

1. Invite others to join your group
   a. Select the ‘Invite’ button to invite non-MS Community members to your group, by entering their email addresses with a comment (message)

   ![Invite](image)
   
   Those individuals will then receive an email with the subject line “*Invitation to group*...”

2. Group Description
   a. Provide a brief summary of what your group is about

3. Group Photo
   a. Upload a group photo which appears with the Group Description

4. Approve Members
a. Control group privacy through several approval level options (See Create a New Group section above.)

5. Content Access
   a. Determine if the content will be available publicly or privately (See Create a New Group section above.)

Click on the **Members** tab to edit, delete, approve or reject people who have requested to join your group. These options are listed beneath the *Actions Column*.

![Manage Group](image)

As outlined in the General tab, you may also invite new non-MSconnection.org members as well. However, they will need to join the community prior to joining your group.

You can filter group members by status (awaiting approval, approved, rejected) to make it easier to find group members who are awaiting approval. You can also search for group members by Screen Name.

**My Dashboard (orange)**

*My Dashboard* is where you can view your own activity, your connections’ activity, find and make new connections, and add or update your personal information. Providing a complete profile will enable you to experience the most of the MS Connection site.
To get to *My Dashboard*, click on your nickname at the top of the community website.

Hovering over your nickname in the header area will allow you to go directly to specific sections of your account, including your Dashboard, Profile, and Connections.

The *My Dashboard* page provides easy access to your profile information:

- Recent activity will be indicated by numbers next to the following areas in the left-hand navigation:
  - Profile
  - My Messages
    - Inbox
    - Outbox
  - My Connections
    - Connection Requests (requested connections sent to you)
    - Add Connections (search for people to connect with)
  - My Discussions (discussions you are following)
  - My Groups (groups you are a member of)
- View your Activity feed displayed in the main content area for recent
  - Personal Messages
  - Connection Requests
  - Connection Photo Updates
  - Comments
  - Appreciations
My Profile

Fully completing your account profile provides your connections with a better understanding of who you are. Additionally, the information you share enables the MS Connection team to provide you with a better experience by suggesting relevant Connections, Blogs, Discussions and Groups.

Accessing your profile may be done several ways:

- From any page within the site, hover your mouse in the upper right corner by your name to find the My Profile option and select it.
- Within the My Dashboard or My Connections pages, you can select the My Profile link from the left navigation.

Edit My Profile

Select the orange Edit My Profile button from the upper right-hand navigation to update your information. Additionally, by hovering the mouse over your user-name, you can select Edit My Profile from the dropdown menu.
**About Me**
In the main content area of the *My Profile* page, there are four tabs to add information to: *About Me, My Connection to MS, My Story,* and *Interests.* The *About Me* tab is the default.

**Profile Picture**
Profile pictures are also known as avatars. Your profile picture appears throughout MS Connection in places where you are active, such as in groups, discussions and the blog. It is also visible on your member profile.

Your profile image can be any size, but images that are square, will look better. You will be able to resize your image to the required height and width after you upload it into the system. It is not necessary to crop your photograph to a square format prior to uploading.

1. From your *Edit My Profile* page go to the first section in the *Set up your profile area* and beneath the *About Me tab,* select the *Edit Profile Picture* button.
2. A new window will pop up. Select the **Upload Photo** button. You will then browse your computer to find your image. Please use only .**JPG** or .**GIF** images as the system does not allow .**BMP** files.

3. After you make your file selection, choose ‘Open’ from the pop-up window.

4. Two images will now appear in the preview screen
   a. The image on the left provides the ability to crop your image using the dashed-line marquee to adjust
   b. The image on the right is your preview and will adjust in tandem with changes you make to the left-hand image

   ![Image Preview](image.png)

   ![Save Profile Photo](save-profile-photo.png)

   c. Once you are satisfied with your image, select the **Save Profile Photo** option at the bottom of the screen.

d. Your image will then appear in your Profile page on the left side of the screen and in the upper right corner of the screen, above the **Search** field.

   ![Profile Page](profile-page.png)
Additional ‘About Me’
Fill out the remaining fields, if you choose to for: Gender, Date of Birth, Relationship Status, Location, Website, Twitter Username, and Profile Visibility.

Choose the Save and Continue button to save your changes and advance to the My MS Connection tab OR the Save and Exit button at the bottom of the page to return to your My Profile page.

My Connection to MS
Select various options that apply to you for the following topics: Connection to MS, Type of MS, I first experienced symptoms in, I was first diagnosed in, Symptoms, and Treatments

Choose the Save and Continue button to save your changes and advance to the My Story tab OR the Save and Exit button at the bottom of the page to return to your My Dashboard page OR the Back button to return to the About Me tab.

My Story
This page provides the opportunity to share your story, in your own words. Two examples are provided if you need help getting started.

Choose the Save and Continue button to save your changes and advance to the Interests tab OR the Save and Exit button at the bottom of the page to return to the My Profile page OR the Back button to return to the My Connection to MS tab.

Interests
Select various interests within these categories: Living Well with MS, Getting Involved, and Research. If you don’t see anything relevant to you, feel free to type your own interest in the Hobbies and other interests text field.

When you have finished, select Save and Exit to return to your My Dashboard page OR Back to return to My Story.

Once you have completed your profile, you can visit your My Profile page to view what other people will see when they visit your profile. You can update your profile at any time to add new information or change existing information.
Messages
Your inbox provides a way to send and receive private messages to other MS Community members. If you have new messages, a number appears next to the inbox link on your profile page. Click *Inbox* to view your messages.

**Inbox**

1. From your member dashboard, click *Inbox*. Your Inbox screen appears. All emails to your community account will be listed.
2. From this screen, you will be able to:
   - View a message
   - Delete a message
3. If you click the check box to the left of each message, you will be able to perform actions on all checked messages including:

- Marking them as read
- Marking them as unread
- Deleting all checked messages

Compose a message

1. From your My Dashboard page, click Inbox. Your My Inbox page appears.
2. Click New Message. A compose message screen appears.
3. Select your recipients.
   - Click the Select button to access your list of connections.
   - Select each connection you want to send a message to and click Add. The selected friends appear in the To field.
   - If you want to add or delete friends from the recipients, click the address book again, then select friends you want to add or delete.
   - Select Send to all Friends in order to message every confirmed friend.
4. Enter a subject.
5. Enter a message.
6. Click Send. A confirmation message appears.
**Outbox**

Your Messages Outbox tracks messages you have sent to other community members. From the Outbox page you can:

- View, forward, delete your messages in the *Actions* column
- Select several messages at once using the left-hand checkbox column to delete groups of messages
- Confirming the date they were read by the recipient
- Control how many messages display per page through the *Items per page* dropdown menu in the lower right corner of the screen
- Send a *New Message* by clicking the orange button next to the *Outbox* header

**Connections**

The connections section is where you can find other community members to connect with and view profiles of people you’re already connected with.

**Connection Requests**

When another user sends you a connection request, it will be indicated to the right of the *Connection Requests* option on your profile page. Clicking on this section will allow you to accept or deny any requests. The person who requested to connect with you will receive a notification if you accept his/her connection request, but not if you reject it.
Add Connections

The Add Connections section is where you can search for other community members to connect with. To find other people to connect with, you can:

- Browse through current community members
- Search for members based on a keyword

My Discussions and My Groups

Both My Discussions and My Groups feature the same functionality, separately, for discussions and groups. Select either option within My Dashboard to display all of the discussions you are following or groups you are a member of. You can then easily access either a group or discussion, depending on which feature you choose.
Find Support (purple)

In the main navigation, at the top of the page is Find Support. This section is intended to help you find and connect with other community members as well as the National MS Society’s support services.

The main content area provides large purple buttons to easily access suggested resources for:

- **Find Connections** - Connect with Others Like You. This will take you to the “Add Connections” section (see Add Connections above).
- **View Support Groups** - Join Volunteer-led Support Groups. You will find support groups based on a variety of topics, in addition to local support groups. All support groups are led by experienced National MS Society volunteers. If you don’t see a support group you’re interested in, be sure to check back periodically as we will be adding new groups throughout the year.
- **View Peer Support Profiles** - Connect with a Peer Support Volunteer One-on-One. The Society’s trained volunteers can provide you with helpful tips, suggestions and emotional support for the challenges that MS throws at you.
  - Click on the **View Peer Support Profiles** button to pick your own peer from a list of peers from many different walks of life.
  - When you find someone you’d like to connect with, click on the **Request to Connect** button and fill out the form. You will be contacted within a few days to get connected with your peer.
  - You will then connect with your peer by email at your convenience. You can have ongoing confidential conversations you may not want to have online and develop a relationship with your peer overtime.
- **Ask an MS Navigator** - National MS Society Information and Referral Specialists provide answers to your questions and access to information about all of the options available to you.
  - Click on the **Ask an MS Navigator** button to ask your questions and view MS Navigator responses to other members’ questions.
- **Start Learning** - Talk to MS Friends by Telephone and check out MS Learn Online Resources
Blog (pink)
In the main navigation, at the top of the page is Blog. This section is where you can read stories of people living with and affected by MS as well as experts in the field. You can comment on and appreciate blog posts, as well as search for posts by a certain author (click on author’s name) or by a specific topic (see tags on right column). You can also subscribe to receive email alerts when a new blog is posted.

Browsing and Finding Blogs
Featured blogs appear at the top of the Blog page. Navigate using the left and right arrows on the side of the page to view three featured posts.

There are a variety of ways to look up additional blogs are available in the right-hand column. Search by Tags, Popular Blog Posts, and Other MS Blogs.

If you are looking for something specific, use the search bar at the top of the page.
**Subscribing to Blog updates**

From the main *Blog page*, click on the button beneath *Subscribe* in the right-hand column to receive updates of new blog entries. If you are already in a *Blog*, press the *Join Our Newsletter* option in the upper right corner to find and select the *Subscribe* link. When logged in, the process will be automatic. If you are not logged in, enter your email to subscribe.

**Twitter**

The *MS on Twitter* feed, also in the right-hand column, provides updates on the latest tweets from the National MS Society (@mssociety). Click on one of the pink links within each of the boxes to go to blogs, websites and tweets (tweets are indicated by the hash-tag (i.e. #MSblog)) and you will be redirected to the original web page featuring your selection.

**Have additional questions?**

Please visit the [Technical Support Discussion](#) or contact us at [community.nmss.org](#).