University of Illinois Extension
Communications Best Practices

QR Codes

Guidelines for effectively creating and applying
QR Codes to communications content

Short for quick response code, a QR Code is a scannable barcode that points to a website. It is commonly used in print marketing materials. Viewers can use the camera or an app on a smartphone or tablet to scan the code which will then open the assigned website URL.

How to use a QR code for Communications

QR Codes can be a useful tool in your communications toolbox when used in the right place. Use QR Codes on print pieces to make it easier for someone to directly access digital information from a print piece.

When and where to use QR Codes

☑ **YES**: On printed material such as signs, flyers, table displays, mailers, brochures, menu cards, fact sheets, or digital PowerPoint slides.

☑ **YES**: To get to: Registrations, surveys, a map, a fact sheet, social media accounts, a video.

☑ **YES**: To send someone directly to the content. Example: To the digital event registration form, not to the calendar listing.
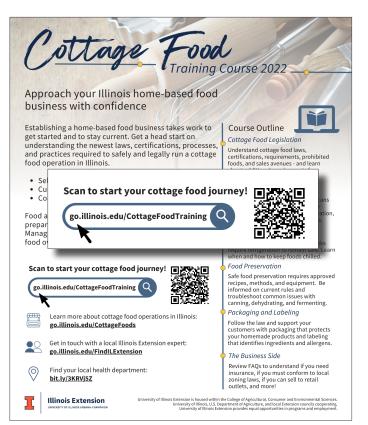
X NO: On graphics that appear in a digital format: website, social media, email, etc. On billboards.

One exception to the digital graphics rule is PowerPoint slides for in-person presentations. For example, audience members can scan a code on a slide that leads to a survey.

How to apply a QR Code

QR codes are only useful if they work. Consider where the print piece will be placed and where people will be scanning a code from.

The QR Code should	The document should
Be at least 1" wide	Only have one QR code
Be black on a solid white background	Also include the link as a short URL
Not be skewed or tilted	Have a call to action to encourage use such as "Scan this to get started"

This printed flyer uses a QR Code with clear instructions on how to use it and where it goes.

How to make a QR Code
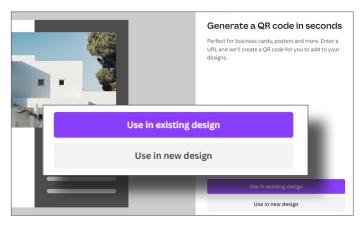
There are a variety of ways to make a QR Code. We recommend Extension employees use either WebTools or your unit's Canva account.
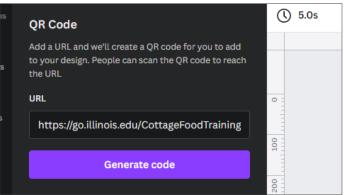
WebTools

1. From webtools.illinois.edu, navigate to the Short URL tool.
2. Select the "+Create" yellow button. In the next window, select "go.illinois.edu" as the domain and select the "Create Short URL" blue button.
3. Add the short URL text in the "name" field and add the website address in the "Long URL" field. Select the "Save" yellow button.
4. A new field will appear at the bottom called QR Code. Select the box and then select the save button. This will create a code that you can click to open and download.

Canva

1. From www.canva.com, scroll down on the left menu. Under "Tools," select "Discover Apps."
2. Enter "QR Code" in the top menu search bar. Select the first option.
3. Select either "use in existing design" or "use in new design."
4. Enter the URL in the left menu and select "Generate code." The QR Code will be added to the design.