

FIGHTBACKMEDIA

GUIDE TO WINNING ONLINE IN 2026



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Module 1 – Stop Playing Middle School Games

How Personal Attacks Weaken Our Online Strategy

Lesson Overview

In politics, insults spread faster than facts. A joke about someone’s belly, bald spot, or bad haircut will travel three times farther on social media than a dry chart about deficits. That’s why campaigns fall into the trap of using them. They’re quick dopamine hits. They feel like a win.

But here’s the truth: appearance-based attacks are the candy of politics. They get a sugar rush of engagement, then they rot your credibility. By the end of this module, you’ll understand exactly why cheap shots fail — and what to do instead that actually persuades voters.

Why Appearance-Based Attacks Fail

- 1. They Make You Look Unserious**
Imagine a candidate debating tax reform and your side responds with “Look at his gut!” Who looks stronger in that exchange? Not you. Swing voters see immaturity, not authority.
 - 2. They Alienate Potential Supporters**
Every time you mock a politician’s size, weight, or looks, you’re also mocking a portion of the voters who share those traits. The insult doesn’t stop at the politician — it spills onto the audience.
 - 3. They Distract From Real Vulnerabilities**
The time you spend joking about someone’s pants size is time you didn’t spend talking about their tax hikes, botched budgets, or broken promises. You’re letting them skate past the real damage they’ve done.
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Case Study: Chris Christie

Whenever Christie enters a national conversation, the first wave online is fat jokes. Memes, nicknames, endless snark. But while people are piling on about his body, they’re ignoring his actual record: entitlement reform stances, budget conflicts, and failed 2016 strategy. Those are weak spots that matter to voters.

Lesson: Fat jokes don't hurt Christie. They shield him by drowning out the substantive critiques that would.

Case Study: J.B. Pritzker

Illinois is drowning in fiscal chaos — sky-high taxes, pension liabilities, businesses fleeing. That's devastating material to work with. But what dominates? Memes about Pritzker's weight. The policy failures get lost behind the punchlines.

Lesson: Voters feel higher property taxes in their wallets. They don't feel the sting of a meme about his waistline.

Practical Strategy

- Before posting, ask: *Would this persuade someone who doesn't already agree with me?*
 - Aim attacks at **actions, records, and decisions**, not personal traits.
 - Save humor for exposing hypocrisy and failure — not ridiculing bodies.
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Reading Assignment

1. Scroll your social feed for 15 minutes.
2. Collect 10 political posts/memes.
3. Sort them into two groups:
 - **Personal attack** (appearance, name-calling, insults)
 - **Policy attack** (facts, records, decisions)
4. Ask yourself: Which category would persuade an undecided voter?

Write your reflection: *Did you find more candy (insults) or more substance?*

Quiz – Module 1

Multiple Choice

1. Why do appearance-based attacks fail?
 - a) They are too subtle
 - b) They look unserious and alienate voters
 - c) They are factually incorrect
 - d) They cost too much money to spread

True/False

2. True or False: Making fun of an opponent's looks is a reliable way to win undecided voters.

Short Answer

3. Rewrite this post into a policy critique:

- Original: "Pritzker can't run a mile, let alone a state."
- Rewrite: _____

Application

4. Draft two tweets about Chris Christie:

- One that fails as a personal attack.
- One that succeeds as a policy-focused critique.

Key Takeaway

If the first bullet you fire is about someone's looks, you're already out of ammo. Serious campaigns aim higher: facts, failures, and records. That's how you win the undecided — not with playground burns, but with credibility.

Module 2 – Facts Beat Fiction

Why Exaggeration Destroys Credibility Online

Lesson Overview

If Module 1 was about avoiding cheap insults, Module 2 is about avoiding cheap numbers. Exaggeration is the quickest way to light yourself on fire online. Why? Because fact-checkers and opponents are always waiting to catch you stretching the truth. One inflated claim can erase months of credibility.

The good news is, you don't need to exaggerate. The real numbers are almost always shocking enough on their own.

By the end of this module, you'll know how to:

- Spot exaggeration traps.
 - Source and use credible numbers.
 - Package facts so they travel online just as far as fiction.
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Why Exaggeration Backfires

1. **It Hands Ammo to Fact-Checkers**

One bad stat, and you've given your opponent a free talking point: "See, they lie." It doesn't matter if you're right 99% of the time — the 1% exaggeration becomes the headline.

2. **It Distracts From the Real Problem**

"Crime has tripled overnight!" is easy to debunk, but "violent crime rose 18% in one year" is harder to dismiss. The real number may be less dramatic, but it sticks.

3. **It Undermines Trust**

If your followers catch you inflating the truth, even by accident, they'll doubt your future posts. Credibility is slow to build, fast to burn.

Case Study: Crime Statistics

A viral post claimed: “*Crime has tripled overnight in Chicago.*” The claim spread like wildfire. Within hours, every fact-check outlet debunked it. The real increase? 17% year-over-year — still a serious jump, but the exaggeration gave opponents an easy out: “Fake news.”

Lesson: The 17% rise was enough to worry voters. Tripling was a distraction.

Case Study: Federal Deficits

In 2024, some voices claimed the U.S. deficit was “spiraling out of control into the hundreds of trillions.” That hyperbole was mocked. But the actual Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projection of a \$22.6 trillion deficit over the next decade was plenty alarming.

Lesson: Stick to the official numbers — they’re devastating enough without embellishment.

Practical Strategy

- **Always source from credible outlets:** CBO, Census Bureau, FBI, state budgets.
- **Simplify without distorting:** Translate a 200-page report into 3 killer stats.
- **Keep screenshots handy:** If you post a number, show where it came from.

Rule of thumb: *If you can't back it up in one link, don't post it.*

Reading Assignment

Take one exaggerated claim you’ve seen online (e.g., “the dollar collapsed overnight,” “crime tripled,” “unemployment at all-time highs”). Research the real statistic using official sources. Write two versions:

1. The exaggerated claim.
2. The fact-based version.

Compare them. Which one has more staying power once a skeptical voter hears it?

Quiz – Module 2

Multiple Choice

1. Which is the most credible data source?
 - a) A meme page
 - b) Congressional Budget Office (CBO)
 - c) A satirical news site
 - d) A viral influencer rant

True/False

2. Exaggeration strengthens your credibility because voters expect politicians to stretch the truth.

Short Answer

3. Why is exaggeration a “gift” to fact-checkers?

Application

4. Rewrite this exaggerated claim into a fact-based post:

- “Unemployment has tripled overnight.”
- Rewrite: _____

5. Draft a two-sentence tweet about the national deficit using a real number instead of spin.
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Key Takeaway

Exaggeration feels powerful in the moment, but it’s self-sabotage. The truth is damning enough. Be sure to fact-check so you don’t get fact-checked.

Module 3 – Don’t Feed the Circus

How to Starve the Clowns and Control the Spotlight

Lesson Overview

Not every opponent wants to debate policy. Some thrive on chaos. Their strategy is to create a spectacle so the conversation revolves around their antics instead of their failures. If you play into that, you’ve already lost.

The online world rewards outrage and entertainment — but outrage isn’t persuasion. Every minute you spend reacting to a sideshow is a minute stolen from hammering home the issues voters feel in their daily lives.

By the end of this module, you’ll know how to:

- Spot “circus acts” designed to bait you.
 - Mention antics briefly without amplifying them.
 - Redirect the conversation toward policy where your opponents are weak.
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Why Feeding the Circus Fails

1. **It Gives Them Oxygen**

Clowns thrive on attention. The more you talk about their behavior, the more relevant you make them.

2. **It Pulls You Off Message**

Instead of talking about gas prices, taxes, or schools, you’re talking about someone’s shouting match in a committee hearing. That doesn’t win votes.

3. **It Makes You Look Obsessed**

If half your feed is dunking on the same personality, voters start to wonder if you have anything else to say.

Case Study: Jasmine Crockett

Representative Jasmine Crockett is known for loud, combative exchanges during hearings. Clips of her shouting often go viral. Her supporters love the energy; her opponents pile on with ridicule.

But here's the trap: every reaction keeps the spotlight on her theatrics, not on her record. Meanwhile, issues in her district — crime, failing schools — get buried under the noise.

Lesson: A quick nod to the circus is fine — but the pivot must be immediate:

“While Rep. Crockett shouts in hearings, violent crime continues to rise in her district.”

That flips the frame from entertainment back to policy.

Case Study: The Twitter Troll Effect

Think of the countless online personalities who provoke with wild takes. Their goal isn't to win an argument — it's to keep you replying so they stay relevant. Every retweet, every clap-back is free advertising for them.

Lesson: You don't win by “owning” a troll. You win by redirecting the conversation to what actually matters.

Practical Strategy

- **Identify circus bait:** Is the opponent's behavior meant to distract from real issues?
- **Acknowledge briefly, then pivot:** One line on the behavior, then a hard turn to policy.
- **Keep voters' lives at the center:** Always land on costs, safety, education, or jobs.

Rule of thumb: *If the story entertains more than it informs, don't camp on it.*

Reading Assignment

Find one viral clip of a politician or activist making a spectacle of themselves. Do two things:

1. Write a personal-attack response (what the internet usually does).
2. Rewrite it into a policy-focused response that ties back to voters' real concerns.

Compare the two. Which one persuades someone outside your bubble?

Quiz – Module 3

Multiple Choice

1. Why is focusing on antics dangerous?
 - a) It's too boring
 - b) It gives oxygen to sideshows
 - c) It builds your credibility
 - d) It persuades undecideds

True/False

2. True or False: Spending time mocking clowns is an effective way to expand your audience.

Short Answer

3. Rewrite this:

- Original: "Crockett is an embarrassment."
- Rewrite: _____

Application

4. Take this headline: "*Fiery Outburst in Congress Goes Viral*"

- Draft two versions of a response:
 - A personal-attack dunk.
 - A policy-focused pivot.

Key Takeaway

You don't beat clowns by juggling with them. You beat them by turning the spotlight away from their antics and onto their record.

Module 4 – Hit Where It Hurts

Turning Policy Failures into Winning Ammunition

Lesson Overview

If Modules 1–3 were about what *not* to do — insults, exaggerations, circus distractions — this module is about what *to do*. This is where your attacks land and actually move voters: policy failures that hit them directly.

Voters don't stay up at night worrying about someone's weight or a shouting match in Congress. They worry about the bills they can't pay, the schools failing their kids, and the crime creeping into their neighborhoods. Hit those pressure points, and your message connects.

By the end of this module, you'll know how to:

- Identify an opponent's most vulnerable policy failures.
 - Translate dense policy into plain, shareable points.
 - Deliver critiques that stick with voters long after the meme scroll ends.
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Why Policy Hits Work

1. **They Connect to Daily Life**
Gas prices, rent, taxes, school scores — people feel those things in their bones.
 2. **They're Harder to Deflect**
A politician can laugh off an insult, but they can't joke away the fact that crime is up 20% in their district.
 3. **They Build Credibility**
Sticking to facts and records positions you as serious and informed, not just noisy.
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Case Study: Illinois' Budget Crisis

Instead of mocking Gov. J.B. Pritzker's appearance, imagine hammering these three bullets every week:

- Illinois owes \$140 billion in unfunded pension liabilities.
- Property taxes are among the highest in the nation.
- Businesses continue to flee the state.

Those three facts do more damage than a thousand memes about his waistline.

Case Study: Border Policy Failures

Endless personal attacks on border officials get attention but not persuasion. Meanwhile, these points are devastating and verifiable:

- Border encounters hit record highs two years in a row.
- Cities are overwhelmed by the costs of migrant housing and services.
- Criminal activity linked to cartel smuggling has surged.

These are numbers and realities voters can't ignore.

Practical Strategy

- **Boil it down:** Take complex issues and shrink them to 3 clear points.
- **Visualize it:** Use charts, infographics, or short videos. Policy becomes memorable when it's seen.
- **Repeat it:** Voters remember what they hear often. Keep hitting the same weak spots until they stick.

Rule of thumb: *If it doesn't connect to someone's wallet, safety, or kids, it won't connect to their vote.*

Reading Assignment

Choose one opponent you expect to face online in 2026. Research their record. Write down three weak points that:

1. Directly impact voters (taxes, safety, schools).
2. Can be stated in one sentence each.
3. Can be backed by a credible source.

Bring those three points into your online toolkit.

Quiz – Module 4

Multiple Choice

1. Which issue connects most directly with voters?
 - a) Opponent's hairstyle
 - b) Taxes rising
 - c) Clothing choices
 - d) Height differences

True/False

2. True or False: Broken promises and failed policies make stronger attack points than mocking appearances.

Short Answer

3. List three weak points from an opponent's record that you could use in an online campaign.

Application

4. Take Illinois' budget crisis. Draft three bullet points that make the problem clear to a casual reader scrolling social media.
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Key Takeaway

Real persuasion comes from hitting where voters actually hurt — their wallets, their safety, and their families. Anything else is noise.

Module 5 – Putting It All Together

Building a Winning Online Strategy Week

Lesson Overview

So far, you've learned what to avoid (insults, exaggeration, circus bait) and what to attack (policy, records, failures). Now the question is: how do you turn all that into a disciplined online presence that doesn't just sound smart but *wins*?

This module shows you how to structure a campaign week online. Strategy beats noise. Consistency beats virality. And credibility beats clickbait every time.

By the end, you'll know how to:

- Balance facts, humor, and visuals in your posting.
 - Build a weekly posting calendar that keeps you consistent.
 - Blend different formats (charts, memes, videos, Q&A) into one strong presence.
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Why Consistency Wins

1. **Algorithms Reward It**
Social platforms push content from consistent voices. Sporadic outrage posts get buried.
 2. **Voters Need Repetition**
A message isn't remembered until it's heard several times. Weekly discipline ensures your message sticks.
 3. **It Builds Brand Credibility**
When your posts always lead with facts and focus, people begin to trust your voice. That's persuasion currency.
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Sample Campaign Week

Monday: Post a chart about the budget deficit with a short caption: *“Here’s where your tax dollars are going.”*

Tuesday: Release a one-minute video explaining how inflation impacts grocery prices.

Wednesday: Share a meme contrasting an opponent’s campaign promise with the reality of their record.

Thursday: Host a short livestream Q&A: *“Ask me about education policy.”*

Friday: Post a recap infographic: *“5 Ways Their Policies Hurt You This Week.”*

That rhythm blends information, humor, and engagement while staying anchored in facts.

Case Study: Two Campaigns

- **Campaign A:** Spends all week posting insults, viral memes, and clap-backs. They get engagement — mostly from their own side.
- **Campaign B:** Posts daily fact-driven content, with charts, short videos, and weekly Q&As. They build a following of undecideds and get cited by local press.

Lesson: Insults make noise. Strategy builds power.

Practical Strategy

- Mix formats: videos, infographics, memes, and live Q&A.
- Stick to one theme per week (economy, education, border).
- Track engagement, but don’t chase only virality — look at what earns shares beyond your base.

Rule of thumb: *The goal isn’t applause today — it’s persuasion by November.*

Reading Assignment

Draft your own 5-day posting schedule.

- Pick one theme (e.g., inflation).
- Plan one chart, one short video, one meme, one Q&A, and one recap post.
- Keep every post free of insults and exaggeration.

Quiz – Module 5

Multiple Choice

1. What matters most for online success?
 - a) Volume of posts
 - b) Consistency and substance
 - c) Memes only
 - d) Personal insults

True/False

2. True or False: A single viral insult post is more valuable than a consistent week of fact-based content.

Short Answer

3. Why does consistency matter more than virality in online political strategy?

Application

4. Draft a 3-day mini-campaign calendar on the topic of border security. Include at least one chart, one video, and one meme — all grounded in facts.

Key Takeaway

Winning online isn't about being the loudest voice. It's about being the most consistent, credible, and focused voice. Strategy beats noise.

Module 6 – Course Integration & Strategy

The Playbook for Winning Online in 2026

Lesson Overview

The first five modules gave you the tools: avoid playground tactics, stick to facts, starve the circus, hit policy failures, and keep consistent. Now it's time to integrate everything into one disciplined strategy you can carry into the midterms.

This final module is about combining the rules into a playbook that's simple, repeatable, and powerful. It's about building habits that protect your credibility, grow your reach, and put opponents on defense where they're weakest — reality.

The Five Rules of Online Strategy

1. **No Cheap Shots**
 - If your attack is about looks, you're out of ammo.
 2. **No Exaggeration**
 - Be sure to fact-check so you don't get fact-checked.
 3. **No Feeding the Circus**
 - Mention antics once, then pivot to policy.
 4. **Hit Where It Hurts**
 - Wallet, safety, schools — the issues voters feel every day.
 5. **Stay Consistent**
 - Daily presence beats one viral post.
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Case Study: Two Campaign Paths

- **Path A:** A campaign leans on insults, exaggerations, and clown-bait. They go viral now and then but struggle to move undecideds. By October, they're written off as unserious.
- **Path B:** A campaign posts fact-based critiques daily, sticks to one theme a week, and builds trust with charts, short videos, and Q&A sessions. By October, they're cited by local media and trusted by undecideds.

Lesson: Viral moments burn quick. Consistency builds staying power.

Practical Integration

- **Pick one issue per week** (inflation, education, border). Build your content around it.
- **Apply the filters:** No cheap shots, no exaggerations, no circus oxygen.
- **Mix your content:** One chart, one short video, one meme, one Q&A per week.
- **Measure impact:** Are your posts getting shared beyond your base? That's the sign you're persuading.

Rule of thumb: *Ask before posting: Does this persuade, or just entertain my own side?*

Reading Assignment

Draft a 7-day online strategy calendar. Each day should have:

- One clear post tied to your weekly theme.
- At least one fact or statistic from a credible source.
- No personal insults, no exaggerations.

Quiz – Module 6

Multiple Choice

1. Which principle is NOT part of the course?
 - a) Stick to facts
 - b) Avoid personal attacks
 - c) Exaggerate claims
 - d) Stay consistent

True/False

2. True or False: Feeding clowns attention helps persuade undecided voters.

Short Answer

3. What's the danger of focusing on circus antics?

Application

4. Draft a 7-day online posting plan around one theme (e.g., inflation, crime, border security). Include different content types (charts, videos, memes) and apply all five course rules.

Key Takeaway

This isn't about being the loudest voice in the room. It's about being the most disciplined. Stick to facts, hit where voters feel it, and stay consistent. That's how you win the online battle in 2026.

Final Exam

1. Why do appearance-based attacks weaken online strategy?
2. Provide an example of exaggeration backfiring politically.
3. Rewrite: “Candidate X is a clown with no discipline” into a fact-based critique.
4. List three weak points in an opponent’s record that connect with voters.
5. Draft a 3-post campaign plan avoiding insults and exaggeration.
6. Why is focusing on circus antics a waste of strategy?
7. Write 3 bullet points on a policy failure of your choice.
8. Plan a 5-day online content calendar following course principles.
9. Essay: Compare personal-attack politics to policy-focused politics. Which persuades more, and why?
10. Capstone: Build a 7-day online campaign plan for 2026 that applies all modules.