

TWITTER

Effective Twitter users engage in two-way conversations and build relationships. Twitter is a great tool for breaking news, tracking specific topics, engaging with people in your field of study, and sharing your information. Here are some tips to help you get tweeting!

CONVERSING ON TWITTER

Character Limits

A tweet can only be 140 characters. If you want to make your tweet easy to share, try to keep it even shorter. A tweet of about 100 characters is ideal, or even 80 if you are attaching an image.

Mention a User or Reply to a Tweet



To bring your tweet to the attention of another user, mention their username in the body of your tweet. You can do this by either starting a new tweet or replying to one of their tweets. To reply, scroll over the tweet and click on the “reply” arrow. You’ll see a new tweet that starts with @username, ready for your response. Respond to additional people with the same tweet by including @username2 in your message.

NOTE: When you start a mention or a reply tweet with @username, it will not appear in your followers’ timelines unless they follow both you and the person you are mentioning or responding to. This can be helpful because they are public but spare followers from spam. However, if you’d like the reply/mention to be seen by all of your followers, add a period before @username, or find another way to work that username into the body of the tweet. Mentioning users or replying to their tweets is a great way to thank partners for sharing your content or talking about your issue.

Retweet



To share someone else’s tweet with your followers, scroll over the tweet and click on the “retweet” double arrow. You can also type “RT @username” and the rest of their tweet in your “What’s Happening” box. This is like an attribution for the original tweet. “MT” stands for “modified tweet” and is similar to retweeting. When you retweet you typically lose 20 characters, so “MT” says you’re copying but shortening the original tweet.

Direct Messages

You can send private messages to your followers by clicking on Messages on the top menu bar and clicking “New Message.” This is useful in advance of a promotion or event to alert supporters and encourage participation and tweets.

Use Hashtags

Join or create a conversation about a specific topic by adding a hashtag to your tweet. Add # before a word, phrase, or abbreviation. This is a great way to engage with people before, during, and after an event. Some important hashtags to follow and use for Afterschool Alliance are:

- [#afterschool](#)
- [#education](#)
- [#edchat](#)

- [#summerlearning](#)
- [#invest3to6](#)

You cannot follow hashtags using Twitter in an ongoing way. You can use Twitter's search function to see how people are using a hashtag. If you want to follow the conversation on a hashtag on an ongoing basis, use [TweetDeck](#) or another social media monitoring tool to add that hashtag as a column.

Add and Subscribe to Lists

Go to Me>Lists to create lists of any people or topics you want. You can subscribe to others' already-created lists by visiting their profile, clicking "lists" and "subscribe." Lists can be private or public. Private lists are helpful when planning promotion efforts and public lists are a great way to show others that they are important to you.

TWITTER PRINCIPLES

Shorten URLs

Use [bit.ly](#) to help keep your character count down. Bit.ly has particularly good analytics, which allow you to see how many people have clicked on your shortened link.

Use Twitter Dashboards

Twitter clients like TweetDeck allow you to triage incoming tweets more effectively. Specifically, TweetDeck will help you follow conversations of interest and weed out some of the "noise" of irrelevant tweets.

Follow on a 1:1 or Slightly Lower Ratio

Following a near 1:1 ratio (that is, following nearly as many people as follow you) is a data-backed way to consistently and steadily grow your following. Users see that you're more likely to follow them back and retweet their content; users can direct message you; and users will see you're interested in engaging, rather than just broadcasting.

It's Very Hard to Tweet "Too Much"

Twitter is more like a newspaper than email; most users don't read all of their tweets, electing instead to drop into the stream periodically during the day. Tweeting frequently is acceptable and useful because it increases your chances of being seen.

Thank All Users who Mention or Discuss Your Organization or Work

Reciprocity is Twitter's currency. By thanking those that share or talk about your work, you show them that you care and help them get more attention at the same time.

Interactive and Visual Content Succeeds

You get more clicks and shares with photos or videos than you do with the same tweet that doesn't include a visual asset. Pulling a screen-grab of a photo or chart from an article is a great way to add visual content.

Twitter Tracking Tools

These are just a few of the free tools that can help you see how your tweets are performing:

- [Hashtracking.com](#)
- [Topsy.com](#)
- [Socialmention.com](#)