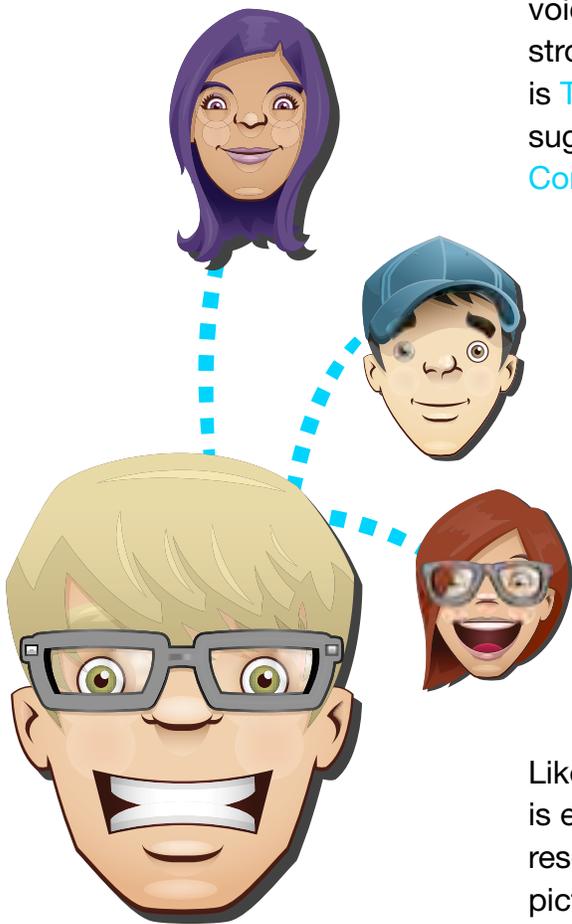


**Twitter Handbook  
For Teachers**

Powerful Learning  
Practice

# Growing Your PLN With Twitter

Powerful Learning Practice is passionate about transforming education in the 21st century. [We believe](#) in helping educators create a strong **personal learning network** (PLN) where their voice and ideas can be shared. When you set out to create a strong PLN, one of the easiest (and most productive) platforms is [Twitter](#). With Twitter, you can quickly share an idea or ask for a suggestion in a matter of seconds. This video below (created by [Common Craft](#)) provides a good introduction:



Like all social networking tools, how you decide to use Twitter is entirely up to you! For example, some educators choose to reserve Facebook for the sharing of personal information and pictures with only close friends and family. On the other hand, for many educators, Twitter is the place to share and exchange professional information and pictures. Some folks choose to sync the two platforms so that when a post is made on Facebook it will automatically be added to their Twitter page (and/or vice versa).



Regardless of your preference, we encourage you to start using Twitter today (if you aren't already). We (and other educators) want to celebrate in your success, learn from your mistakes and become inspired with how you are forging ahead and making a difference. We want you to be comfortable in the [self-promoting and sharing](#) of your hard work and that of your students!

To help you leverage your 140 characters and make the most of your time, here are a few tips and tricks:

1. Create a username that will make it easy for others to find you (i.e. `plpnetwork` instead of `P123L5Pcdyp`).

- Usernames can be changed (without loss of data), but it's better to stick with one from the beginning so you don't confuse your followers.
- If you choose something short, it will make it easier for others to retweet your posts.

2. Add a photo and information to your profile.

- People are more likely to follow you if you have a photo, information about who you are and a few tweets.

3. Use Twitter to keep abreast of who and what's trending in education.

- Twitter is full of innovators and leaders in the field of education. You'll want to think about following leaders and companies who will expand your content area knowledge, showcase new technologies, introduce uses for Web 2.0 tools in the classroom, provide inspiration and more!
- Need some help getting started? Start your journey into Twitter by following these people and companies:

@plpnetwork, @snbeach, @willrich45, @WendyDrexler,  
@karlfisch, @jackiegerstein, @lamoreaux, @anmic,  
@hrheingold, @johncroftnorton, @chris10dodd

- Look at who these people are following (chances are you will also be interested in who they are following).



4. Not everyone you follow will follow you back. Don't take it personally.

- Ready for people to follow you? Let people know you are on Twitter and ask them to follow you.
- Add your information to this [PLP Twitter List](#) (Google Doc) to entice people to start following you.

5. Challenge, expand and share your professional philosophies and pedagogies.

- Ann S. Michaelson (@anmic) recently [posted](#) a blog in which she stated "If you only listen to people you agree with you will not go far! If you do not promote your own work or that of others, we will continue to listen to the same voices."

6. Let's face it; sometimes 140 characters are not enough.

- If you have a blog or web link that can add additional information to your tweet, use sites like <http://bit.ly> and <http://goo.gl/> to shorten the URLs. Research suggests that tweets with links get more attention.

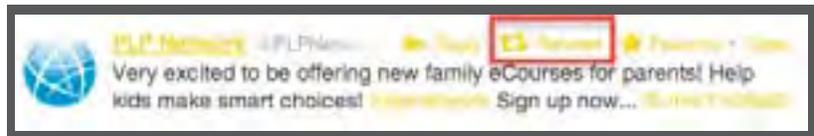
7. Recommend educational resources.

- Think about sharing your favorite blogs, Web 2.0 tools, books, online interactives, classroom activities, etc.

8. Find and enter contests to win free prizes.

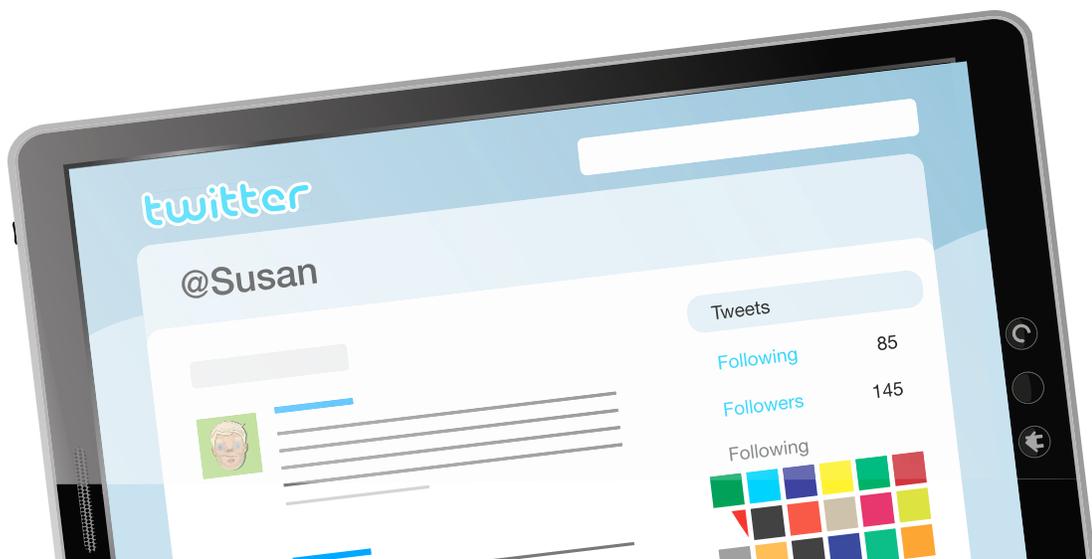
Many individuals and companies will announce contests for free webinars, books, computers and more on Twitter. Keep an eye out, as most only require tweeting something out about the contest to be entered.

9. Download the Twitter mobile app, so you can tweet whenever you are inspired.
10. When you see a post you want to share with others, click Retweet or post RT @ person's name (i.e. RT @plpnetwork).



11. Don't be afraid to miss a post. Twitter is open 24/7 and it's impossible to see everything.

Programs like [TweetDeck](#) and [HootSuite](#) make it easier to filter and manage the people you are following. And they shorten URLs for you!



12. Set aside time each day for reviewing posts and adding new information.

Many educators find it easier to do it at the same time so it becomes part of their daily routine.

13. When you are first starting to use Twitter, it's ok to lurk.

But don't wait too long before you add your first tweet!

14. Want to know more about Twitter?

Sue Waters created a comprehensive [blog](#) on getting started with Twitter



# Leveraging Your PLN With Hashtags

Now you know that educators just like you are using Twitter to create a strong personal learning network (PLN). To harness the full power of this tool, we encourage you to not only follow leaders and innovators, but understand how to use and leverage hashtags. Twitter [defines](#) a hashtag as “the # symbol, used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet. It was created organically by Twitter users as a way to categorize messages.” Hashtags have also become a popular way to create interest-networks within Twitter. The following video, by [Johni Louise](#), provides a good overview to hashtags.



Using and following hashtags isn't complicated but there are a few 'rules' seasoned Twitters will recommend. Here are a few of our favorites:

1. Use programs like Tweet Deck or Twitterfall to keep track of the hashtags you want to follow.
2. Track and follow hashtags that are educationally relevant.

- See what [hashtags](#) PLP recommends and enter your favorites at the bottom of the document.
- [Edublogs](#) has a list for the Best twitter hashtags of 2011
- [Cybrary Man's](#) comprehensive hashtag list is another frequent source used by educators

3. Avoid making your tweet look like spam.

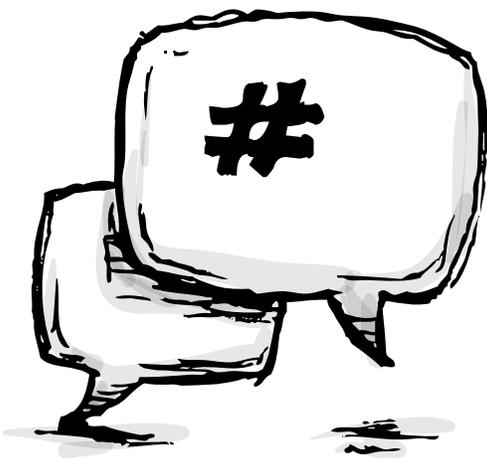
Although there isn't an official etiquette for the use of hashtags, it's best to avoid using too many in one post. Seasoned tweeters don't like to read a post that looks like spam, just like people don't appreciate reading "ALL CAPS" messages.

4. Promote your upcoming conference or event with a new hashtag.

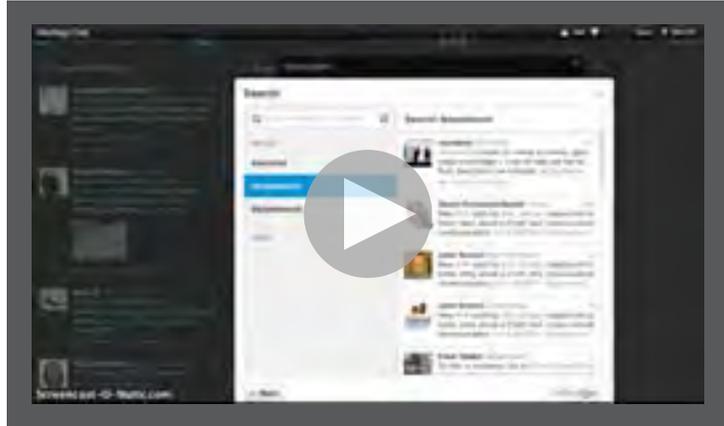
Just make sure it isn't already in use and makes sense to your group. Example: [#ISTE12](#) is a popular hashtag associated with the annual ISTE conference.

5. Join a live Hashtag Chat.

A hashtag chat is a live event where tweeters go online to discuss topics (created by the host organization). During the event (usually 30-60 minutes) participants will read and add posts all using the same hashtag. A popular chat is usually fast paced (i.e. speed of live auctioneer or race car), full of great ideas and



a ton of fun! Organizers of chats often curate the conversations at a webpage archive (e.g., [#ntchat](#)). To keep the live chats from becoming overwhelming take a minute to watch this quick tutorial.



## 6. Use hashtags for professional development

Elementary teacher Patti Grayson wrote about the benefits of [Hashtag PD](#).



# Twitter In The Classroom



I WILL  
TWEET  
DURING  
CLASS

As educators, we are preparing students to succeed in the real world. That's why it's imperative for students to be taught not only the 'fun' parts of social media, but how to be responsible. Prior to integrating social media in the classroom, it's crucial to understand both its power and limitations. We've discussed the advantages for [using Twitter to create a strong network](#) and how to [leverage your PLN with hashtags](#). Once you understand the power of Twitter for your own professional needs, the next step is to think about how it could be best utilized in the classroom. The following video (created by the University of Minnesota) showcases students from Roosevelt High School who are being engaged via social media.



This is just one example for how social media can be used to increase student interest and keep parents informed. Twitter is not only a viable option for those teaching older students, but primary as well. Below you will find some of our favorite ideas for how to use Twitter in the K-12 classroom and model the responsible usage of social media:

## 1. Announcements.

Post information regarding upcoming projects, deadlines, and activities to stay engaged while on break from school.

## 2. Research.

There is a wealth of experts on Twitter who are eager to share their knowledge. MLA now outlines how to properly [cite a Tweet](#).

## 3. Host a Book Study Twitter Chat.

Create a hashtag chat for students to discuss a novel they're reading. Use open-ended questions regarding the author, plot, characters, etc. to encourage students to respond.

## 4. Start a monthly/quarterly Twitter Chat with parents.

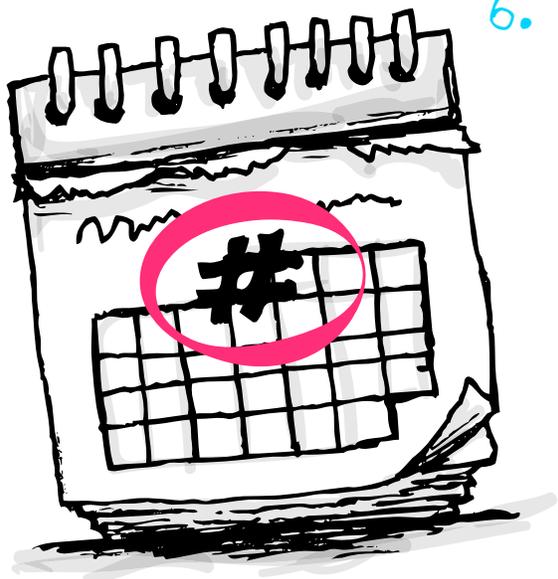
Encourage your parent/teacher organizations to co-host twitter chats about issues of interest to them (bullying, relevance/ amount of homework, grading procedures, etc.).

## 5. Debate.

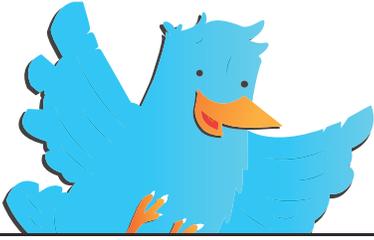
Encourage students to defend their position and use appropriate responses for their classmates' arguments.

## 6. Vocabulary.

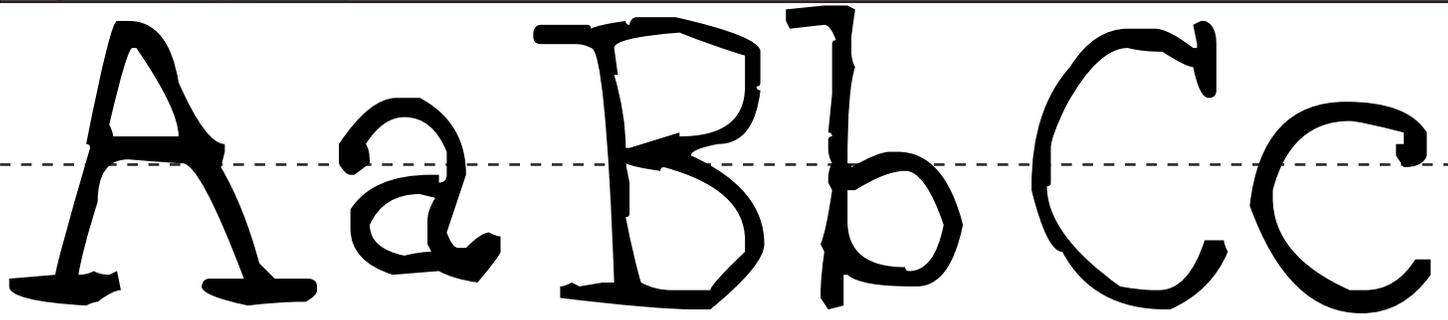
Encourage students to tweet a sentence using their vocabulary words.



## 7. Alphabet Study.



Have families take pictures of objects from their environment that start with the letter of the day. Have them post on Twitter and include your class hashtag.



## 8. Teach Effective Searching Techniques.

Post a daily question on Twitter that requires students to search online for the answer(s) using effective searching techniques.

## 9. Use Backchannels.

Encourage students to post comments, questions or ask for clarification during classroom instruction and presentations by tweeting with your class hashtag.

## 10. Promote the Class Blog.

Create a class blog that showcases the work of students. If students are older have them create individual blogs. Then encourage others on Twitter to leave comments for students.

## 11. Encourage Learning.

Keep curious students stimulated by pointing them to additional research and learning opportunities.

**When integrating Twitter into the classroom, you may also want to try out these tips:**

## 1. Create multiple accounts.

If you are going to mix business with pleasure (i.e. following celebrities) it may be wise to create a separate account for your class conversations. If you teach multiple classes, you may want to create an account for each class.

## 2. Stay Organized.

Create a classroom hashtag to keep posts organized.

**For additional ideas for how others are using Twitter in the classroom, we recommend reviewing these additional resources:**

1. [Turning Tweets into Narrative Tales](#)
2. [Tweet, Tweet, Go the Kindergartners](#)
3. [Twitter goes to college](#)
4. ["I am twittering and blogging!"](#)
5. [Twitter spectrum](#)
6. [100 Ways To Use Twitter In Education, By Degree Of Difficulty](#)
7. [36 Interesting Ways to Use Twitter in the Classroom](#)

Do you have another way to use Twitter in the classroom? Don't forget we're always eager to learn and share ideas with you on Twitter: [@plpnetwork](#) or hashtag [#plpnetwork](#).



tweet your  
tailfeathers off!