



Social Media Explained

Social Media Explained is intended to bridge the gap between the entry-level “How To” guides and the mid-level Social Media 102 webinar available on the NOW Leaders page. This guide covers the purpose and benefit of hashtags (#) and Twitter handles (@) as well as proper Facebook and Twitter etiquette.

Twitter Usage

Twitter provides an equal playing field in the dissemination of information. Often our issues are ignored by mainstream media, or are not covered in a way that is inclusive of our feminist message. Twitter allows our message to reach a wider audience and gives us an opportunity to participate in a more inclusive conversation.

A great example of the power of social media is Texas Senator Wendy Davis’ filibuster of an anti-abortion bill last June. Mainstream media ignored the event in Texas until, due to the attention it received on social media, it was too big to ignore. Twitter users followed Davis for 11-hours, live-tweeting videos, commentary, and pictures of Davis’ hot pink running shoes. As a result, Wendy Davis is a household name and the Texas abortion bill she was filibustering became national news.

Twitter is your chance to spread your message no matter where you are.

What are Twitter Handles?

A Twitter Handle is the name selected by a particular Twitter user. Simply put, it is a username, and other users of Twitter can talk to (or about) you by using your handle. It is unique to individuals, companies, and organizations.

Examples:

The National Organization for Women is @NationalNOW

Texas Senator Wendy Davis is @WendyDavisTexas

President Obama is @BarackObama

Why would I use a Twitter handle?

Twitter handles service as a calling card. By using your handle that tweet shows up in your “mentions” (tweets your handle appears in). This can be a gentle nudge to get you to join the conversation (or annoy – otherwise known as “troll” – you). Using a handle in your tweet also

allows you to call out politicians, companies, or others for good or bad behavior. When you use someone's Twitter handle, they are notified that someone is talking to or about them.

Examples:

.@HobbyLobbyStores you have the freedom to practice religion, not impose it on your employees #Dirty100

.@SenOrrinHatch @SenThadCochran @MikeCrapo @SenDanCoats Condoms prevent fertilization are you against those too? #Birthcontrol #dirty100

Stand with @RepSpeier and help #PassMJIA <http://ow.ly/t2WGa> #NotInvisible

#WhatTheHecksAHashtag

What is a hashtag?

A hashtag itself is the pound sign in front of a word or a group of words. A hashtag (#) is like a label for your tweet and it groups messages about the same or similar topics.



The screenshot shows a Twitter search interface for the hashtag #EqualPay. The search results are as follows:

- ProgressTX** (4:41pm via TweetDeck): The @statesman ed board (@aasviewpoints) ran pro/con #equalpay opinion pieces this weekend. Both written my men. #smh. 2 retweets.
- 9to5Colorado** (4:37pm via TweetDeck): Did you know moms get paid < than non-moms? Moms earn 27% less and single moms earn 34-44% less than men. #Equalpay pic.twitter.com/uhihNvyFmR.
- CrossroadsCmpns** (4:31pm via HootSuite): Democrats are going for women's votes through #EqualPay. The GOP's competing narrative? How the #ACA effects women ow.ly/vdMCU.
- AAUWLA** (4:29pm via Web): AAUW LA presents an #EqualPay tour coming to a city near you! rustonleader.com/node/49949. Retweeted by mellowdia and 1 others.
- akmcquade** (4:29pm via TweetDeck): Side effect of Republicans talking about #equalpay, amirite?! RT @SarahKSilverman: I've been various degrees of queasy for 5 days. Thoughts? Retweeted by MelissaRyan.

How do I use a hashtag?

Due to the character limitations, Twitter hashtags should be short, sweet and to the point. Use acronyms or abbreviations in your hashtags to save space. Usually, hashtags about the issues you are tweeting about can be easy to find. Need a hashtag? Check out other organizations and see what they are using to talk about that issue. By using a hashtag that is commonly used – and likely widely followed by Twitter followers – you are ensuring that more people see your tweet.

We recommend that you research a hashtag before using it. Why? Well, in 2013 some in the National Action Center Communications Department thought that #Cooch – a play on the name of anti-choice Virginia gubernatorial candidate Ken Cuccinelli – would make a funny election hashtag. Turns out, it was already in use in a “not safe for work” (NSFW) way.

#McDStories is an example of a hijacked hashtag. This hashtag was started by McDonalds as a way to promote their product, but activists started using the hashtag to expose the low standards of McDonalds products. In this instance, a carefully crafted marketing campaign turned into a complete failure.

A way to avoid these potential mistakes is to check the hashtag on Twazzup. You can see who has used that hashtag and in what context. TweetDeck is another website you can use to find handles and hashtags; it also allows you to schedule tweets in advance, to keep your tweeting consistent.

Why would I use a hashtag?

Hashtags are a way to categorize your tweets. If you are using a specific hashtag for an event or topic it will group all of the tweets with that hashtag together. Individual users can track a hashtag, which will then also include your tweets, thus widening your audience!

Use @ and # every time you tweet so you reach new people

Examples:

I stand with @NationalNOW in the fight to pass the # ERANOW #RatifyERA

20% of sexual assault survivors think rape is "to be expected" in the military. Is that what you think @SenThadCochran? #PassMJIA

Tweet Chats, Live Tweeting & Twitter Storms

Tweet chats are live events on Twitter that are focused on a specific topic. Hashtags are used to filter the tweets into a single conversation. In the example below notice how all of the tweets use #sb5 and #txlege to show that they are all about the same thing.



The Texas Observer @TexasObserver · Jun 25

UPDATED: The rumored Republican effort to break @WendyDavisTexas filibuster may be underway. - texasobserver.org/live-blog-sena... #sb5 #txlege

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Reply Retweet Favorite More



Kyle Weidleman @kweidleman · Jun 25

Old white men so set on regulating women's bodies, they might end Sen. Davis's filibuster b/c of her back brace. #SB5 #StandWithWendy

Expand

Reply Retweet Favorite More



kelsey mckinney @mckinneykelsey · Jun 25

God forbid @WendyDavisTexas make a decision about her own body when there are a room full of white men to do it for her. #texlege #sb5

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Reply Retweet Favorite More

Live Tweeting is when people tweet about an event as it is happening. Again, Texas Sen. Wendy Davis' filibuster last June is a great example. Groups, including the NOW National Action Center, watched the live-streamed filibuster and tweeted their thoughts as it happened.



Texas Tribune @TexasTribune · Jun 25

One more warning & @WendyDavisTexas' filibuster will likely come to an end, @becca_aa reports: trib.it/10h0YZD #sb5 #txlege

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Reply Retweet Favorite More

Texas Tribune

Liveblog: Senators Debate Abortion Bill as Special Session Wanes, by...

Delay tactics, parliamentary maneuvers and a unified front by Texas Democrats may keep the GOP from passing one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the nation.

[View on web](#)



Twitter Storms are social media activist tactics. The goal is to get a hashtag to “trend” (most used hashtag on Twitter) or overwhelm a particular handle into responding to your concern or issue.

etiquette

When it comes to hashtags, less is more. Do not abuse #s by using too many in your tweet. #using #a #hashtag #before #every #word is called over-tagging and is frowned upon in the Twitter world.

Common hashtags #ugh [reaching more people]

Example:

This week was so long #TGIF
#Traffic was so bad on I-95 today #NOVA

If you use too many hashtags you annoy your audience and lose followers. Be strategic!

Twitter Translated

Retweets “RT”

Retweeting is when you share someone else’s tweet with your followers. It’s an easy way to keep your Twitter account fresh and up to date with very little effort. If you see RT that means retweeted.

Followers

Followers subscribe to your updates and see your tweets in their own feeds (or list of tweets from those they follow). When someone follows you on Twitter it means that when you tweet they will be able to see and share your tweets. The same thing will happen when you follow someone.

Examples

- If you want to say: “Hey City Counselor Jam support my NOW chapter in Pawnee and stand with us in support of the ACA’s Birth Control mandate because I love my birth control.”
 - Tweet: Hey @counselmanjam stand with @PawneeNOW and support the upcoming birth control bill #IHeartBC
- If you want to say: Ann Perkins my cell phone is dead. Meet me at the U.S. Supreme Court at 9:30 for the Hobby Lobby Rally.
 - Tweet: @AnnPerkins Meet me at @SCOTUS at 9:30 for the #BirthControl rally
- Don’t Tweet: http://action.now.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=9378
 - Why not? Because tweeting a link without any context looks like spam and you’re your followers might think you’ve been hacked! It also doesn’t use any hashtags, limiting your audience.
 - Instead tweet: Sign this petition and stand with @NationalNOW against the #Dirty100
http://action.now.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=9378
#BirthControl
- Don’t Tweet: I can’t believe that we still have to fight for wom’s rts. Equality shld be the norm now. Pay gap and inequal. Need to end.
 - Why not? Because you are using unnecessary short hand. Instead of butchering perfectly good words, break your long thought into two tweets, better articulating your point and keeping your Twitter page fresh with new content. Doing this also gives you the character count to include a hashtag and/or handle.

- Instead tweet two separate tweets:
 - I can't believe that we still have to fight for #womensrights.
 - Equality should be the norm by now. The gender #paygap and #inequality need to end.

Here are some sample #s to use on twitter:

#GunControl	#NEDAWeek	#TweetChat
#Immigration	#NEDAwareness	#StopRush
#4Immigrant Women	#EarthDay	#FlushRush
#Immigrationreform	#LoveYourBody	#HumanTrafficking
#RapeCulture	#ACA	#FCC
#Steubenville	#HealthCare	#MarchMadness
#1BillionRising	#HealthReform	#TrayvonMartin
#ReasonToRise	#STEM	#Superbowl
#IWD	#StudentLoans	#StopAndFrisk
#WomensDay	#ERA	
#EqualPayDay	#CEDAW	

Here are some Twitter handles to follow, RT, or tweet at:

@NationalNOW	@GvilleNOW	@Maryland_NOW
@TerryOneill	@GeorgiaNOW1	@SouthShoreNOWMa
@NOWYoungFems	@Illinois_NOW	@MassNOW
@sacnowca	@Indiana_NOW	@BostonNOWorg
@CaliforniaNOW	@NOWIOWA	@MontanaNOW1
@NOW_CT	@BaltNOW	

If you have a lot to say about a topic, Twitter is not quite the right outlet. Instead, try making a Facebook status (75 words or less) or Tumblr (blog-length, 250 plus words).

Facebook Usage

Facebook Wall

Your Facebook wall is just another name for your Facebook page or profile. It is a space where you can post your status, pictures, or videos and share them with your friends. NOW chapters should create organization pages, not individual user profiles, for their chapter.

Facebook Status

Facebook statuses are like flyers; they should include information about a topic or event that is important at the moment. Facebook statuses should not be bogged down with feelings and opinions. Instead they should communicate information like where you are and what you're doing to your followers. You can post things like links, or an event

you're attending. If you need content to keep your page fresh, check out www.now.org for blog posts, actions, or other material to post!

Facebook Events

You can use Facebook to create an event for a rally, party, book club, or chapter meeting and then send invitations to your friends. Facebook events can be public or private and are a great way to send out information to large amounts of people, who in turn can RSVP to that event. Facebook also puts events on your calendar so that you won't forget about them.

Facebook Friends/Followers/Likes

On an individual user's Facebook profile, that person has friends. Your chapter likely has an organization page, which has people who have "liked" your chapter page (i.e. followers). The more people that like your page, the wider the audience you are reaching. The more your post, the more shares you get, the more likes you have!

Tumblr

Tumblr is a free blog site. On Tumblr, you can post longer content, which allows you to go into great depth on the issue your chapter is working on. This is the most liberal form of social media because it does not have a text or character limit, and you can post a variety of media (photos, videos, GIFs, etc.) You can also have Facebook and Twitter link to your Tumblr. Like Twitter, you can gain followers on Tumblr by promoting your link through other forms of social media. You can also reblog (repost) things that you like or find interesting and relevant.

Scheduling Your Social Media

HootSuite is a free tool that allows you to manage all of your social media accounts from one platform, including scheduling posts in advance. (The free version limits the number of social media types, but your chapter can always invest in higher levels if you feel it is necessary.) While the aforementioned Tweetdeck allows you to schedule in advance, it only works for Twitter. Recent changes to Facebook allow you to schedule posts (or statuses) on organization pages in advance, as well.

General Advice

- Keep your eye on the ball – try to only post relevant content.
- Be snarky and sardonic when appropriate – the internet was made for funny stuff.
- The internet does not forget anything – think about how others will view, read, and interpret what you are writing.
- Have fun! Social media is a great activist tool and can be very rewarding.