Teaching Tools: Twitter

by Sarah Milner, Asst. Professor, HPE

*What is Twitter?*
Twitter is a free social media website used for posting information. It allows you to post or “tweet” short messages, 140 characters in length. You have “followers” or what other sites call “friends.”

One sentence that perfectly describes twitter for me states, ““Twitter...is like the ticker at the bottom of CNN -- only a ticker populated with information about those people or things you care about, want to learn from, or want to know about.” [http://www.nea.org/home/32641.htm](http://www.nea.org/home/32641.htm)

*What is a “Tweet”?*
A tweet is an expression of a moment or idea. It can contain text, photos, and videos. - [https://about.twitter.com/what-is-twitter/story-of-a-tweet](https://about.twitter.com/what-is-twitter/story-of-a-tweet)

*What are hashtags?*
Hashtags assign a topic to a Tweet. So, for example Tweets that contain #WorldCup are about just that. Click on a hashtag to see tweets related to that topic. - [https://about.twitter.com/what-is-twitter/story-of-a-tweet](https://about.twitter.com/what-is-twitter/story-of-a-tweet)

*Where do Tweets live?*
When you follow people, their Tweets instantly show up in your timeline. Similarly, your Tweets show up in your followers' timelines. To see interesting Tweets, follow interesting people: friends, celebrities, news sources, or anyone whose Tweets you enjoy. - [https://about.twitter.com/what-is-twitter/story-of-a-tweet](https://about.twitter.com/what-is-twitter/story-of-a-tweet)

*How to use the tool:*

- Post reminders – assignments, quizzes, post extra credit opportunities
- Have your students follow professional organizations associated with your field and discuss current events, controversial topics, or links to studies they find interesting.

FOR EXAMPLE

Mike Favre of U-M writes on Becoming a Strength and Conditioning Coach. Full Story ow.ly/ANYee #HappyLaborDay

DYK bils.gov job growth 13% trainers ow.ly/ANTGp & 15% coaches ow.ly/ANTOh #HappyLaborDay #GetCertified

JSCR Most Popular: Comparison of Pectoralis Major and Serratus Anterior Muscle Activities During Different Push... bit.ly/1tTxAa6
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• Blog.tophat.com suggests these 5 ways to use Twitter in the classroom:

1. **Professional Development** – have your students follow politicians, thought leaders, or industry experts. That way, course content becomes more relevant to the world outside of the classroom.

2. **Collaborative Learning** – Encourage your students to follow one another. Even better, create a hashtag for your class, so it is easy for your students to find one another and to share interesting and pertinent content.

3. **Student-initiated questions** – set aside the last few minutes of class to address students’ questions on Twitter. This allows even the most introverted students to have a channel to ask any unanswered questions at the end of a lecture.
   a. **Pro tip** – Stop class occasionally to manage the class hashtag throughout the lecture and identify the best questions!

4. **“Office Hours” on Twitter** – tell your students you’ll be on during certain times after class. Instead of fielding emails, you can answer students’ concise and direct questions for the rest of the class to see.

5. **Research** – use Twitter’s “Explore” search engine to see every related tweet, providing a way for students to collect ideas, opinions and movements in real time.

*In Conclusion:*

My students have commented that they enjoy following me on Twitter. They add that they think the concept of using Twitter is “cool,” and because they typically have their phones with them at all times, they actually read my posts and remember to complete assignments, prepare for quizzes, and class activities. It is basically the same thing as posting an announcement in Blackboard but posting on Twitter seems to make class announcements more appealing to our students!