

GUIDE TO PLANNING TWITTER CHATS

Twitter chats are a great way to host conversations with people in different places. Similar to town halls or community forums, Twitter chats are large conversations that take place online through—you guessed it—Twitter. Hosting chats can help your organization to position itself as a leader within its field, increase its Twitter following, and amplify its key messages. Here's how to get started planning your next chat.

Choose a topic, then create a hashtag.

- First, choose a topic that you want people to discuss during your chat. You can choose a broad topic, such as “suicide among teens,” or you can narrow your chat’s focus to a more specific topic, such as “primary care doctors’ role in suicide prevention.”
- Once you’ve settled on a topic, choose a hashtag that fits within that topic, is related to your topic, and isn’t already being widely used. You’ll want to choose a hashtag that isn’t too popular. For example, if you search for #TeenSuicide on Twitter, you’ll see that a ton of people are already having conversations using this hashtag. But if you search for #TalkYouthSuicide—a hashtag being used for an Awareness Day 2019 Twitter chat—you’ll see that it’s easy for people to follow this conversation during the chat because the chat organizers created a hashtag that other people weren’t using.

Create your questions.

- Looking at your topic, consider the following: What is your goal? Who do you want to participate in the chat? What do you want them to take away from this conversation? Asking these questions will help you to determine what you want people to talk about. From there, you can develop 7 to 10 questions that will guide the conversation.
- Typically, Twitter chats are about an hour. To fit all of your questions into that hour, you can develop a “script” to determine the timing of each question you post.

TIME	QUESTIONS/CONTENT
2:00 PM	Hi everyone! Thanks for joining today’s discussion! #TwitterChat
2:02 PM	Let’s get started! Q1: Why is children’s mental health important? #TwitterChat
2:10 PM	Q2: What role do schools play in SOC communities? #TwitterChat

Chat Script Example

Build your dream team.

- As the chat host organization, your organization will lead the chat and tweet questions from your Twitter account. Build your dream team by recruiting colleagues to fulfill different roles in the chat. If you are a mighty team of one, that’s okay. But having multiple team members to offer support during chats is always helpful.



- You can partner with other organizations or individuals to serve as chat co-hosts. These co-hosts can help with promotion of your chat or can fill a gap in expertise that your organization may be lacking. If your co-hosts are in a different location than you, you can talk over a conference line during the chat.

Spread the word.

- After you have selected a hashtag, date, and time for your chat, it's time to spread the word! Here are some ideas for promoting your chat:
 - Create a graphic with essential information about the chat.
 - Post about the chat on your social media channels.
 - Create sample promotional social messages to share with chat co-hosts and your organization's partners.
 - Include information about the chat and how to join in your newsletter and on your website.

TEAM MEMBER ROLE	CHAT RESPONSIBILITIES
<i>Moderator</i>	Tweets the chat questions and your organization's own responses to the questions. Tracks the timing of questions.
<i>Retweeter</i>	Monitors chat for opportunities to retweet chat participants.
<i>Question Monitor</i>	Monitors Twitter feed for questions directed to your organization and your co-hosts.
<i>Question Responder</i>	Develops responses to questions that are directed to your organization.
<i>Subject Matter Expert</i>	Supports development of responses to questions that are directed to your organization or co-host organization.

Keep the conversation going!

- Relevant resources and interesting perspectives are offered during chats. After your chat ends, keep the conversation going by repurposing the chat content in other communications. Here are a couple of ideas:
 - Include a chat recap in your newsletter with highlights of what was discussed.
 - Compile resources from the chat to share through your website, newsletter, or a new resource sheet.
 - Discuss insights shared during the chat with your colleagues to identify community concerns that your organization can address.
 - Identify organizations that participated in the chat that could be potential partners or collaborators in the future.



Chat Promotional Graphic Example