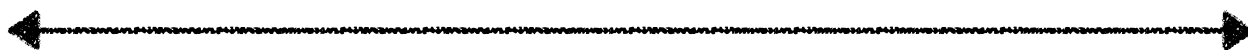


# Teens on Twitter: Library Program Plan



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## **BASIC INFORMATION**

Teens today are using Twitter more and more. Many teens tweet about their daily lives, jokes, quotes or song lyrics, or retweet from a growing number of teen related accounts (some which many money from every click). However, some teens (like Freddy Amazin' [see article by Lindsey Weber in resources at end of document]) believe that Twitter is boring if you have no followers. For those of us who are on Twitter, we know Twitter is not boring. As blogger Dave Charest said in his post "A Simple Approach to Effectively Use Twitter," you can think about Twitter as one giant cocktail party. There are many, many conversations going on and you can decide what you narrow in on and listen to. This makes Twitter an exciting place to be!

The goal of this library program is to challenge the way teens use Twitter. By doing this, we begin to challenge their assumptions and show other ways to engage in conversations on Twitter. Through their involvement on Twitter, by creating, retweeting, and critically thinking about Twitter, we will hopefully be helping them be critical consumers of media while also becoming more active producers. This library program plan is designed for older middle school students and high school students. Ideal age range would be around the ages of 15-18. This program is designed to be spread out over several weeks, with each week focusing on different aspect of Twitter and how to use it. The idea is that this could be done over a month or perhaps during one week (if you're ambitious!). Each session could be an hour long — just long enough to give teens lots of information and the chance to tweet, but not too long that they become bored or distracted.

This workshop series would require you to be somewhat well versed in Twitter. If you're a Twitter extraordinaire, awesome! But don't worry if you're not; I've included links at the end of this document for finding out more about the basics of Twitter and getting started yourself. Also consider collaborating with the staff member(s) in charge of social media at your library; they could be a great resource and might even be interested in helping out! This workshop will also require that all teens involved have access to a computer, tablet, or smart phone that can get to Twitter. If you can reserve part of your library's computer lab, that might be the best ideal set up.

Since we are trying to get the teens both thinking about Twitter as well as creating their own tweets, it will be important for the teens to have their own individual accounts. To create an account requires one email address. Be prepared for teens who are not on Twitter and might not have an email address as well. You might need to explore the option of creating emails ahead of time so teens can create accounts without worrying about seeing up an email address. This will all be based on the demographics of the teens you work with.

## ACTIVITIES

The following topics in italics show the various conversations and workshops you could engage the teens in with Twitter. I would recommend using Twitter 101 as the first session but then the other topics are interchangeable and can be used to how you see fit and what your teens would be interested in.

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### *Twitter 101*

The first session would try to cover the basics of using Twitter. Here are a list of topics and potential questions to spur conversation. You could begin the session with a conversation about how the teens use Twitter (and if they don't use it currently, why aren't they using it). The layout of this first session might be 40 minutes devoted to conversation and discussion and 20 minutes could be used for creating Twitter accounts and exploring Twitter's layout. If you wanted more time for exploration, a 30/30 split would also work. Another approach would be an interactive approach, where you integrate exploring Twitter with explaining and discussing the various functions and uses of the site.

#### **Topics to cover (in no particular order, many overlap and connect with each other):**

- How people use Twitter, in terms of types of accounts and purpose to have Twitter
  - Personal
    - Private or public profile?
    - Privacy and who can see your profile discussion.
  - Professional
  - Business
  - Why have a Twitter? What do you gain by tweeting?
- Setting up Twitter
  - Creating a memorable handle (what comes after the @). Perhaps come prepared with some clever ones.
  - Adding an image and background image to your page (if you so wish).
  - Creating a catchy one sentence bio.
- Finding people to follow
  - Celebrities.
  - News sources.
  - Entertainment (TV shows, movies, music, theater, etc).
  - Town/local/national government.
  - Friends/family.
  - Misc accounts (quotables, spoof accounts, memes, etc).
- How does who you follow bias the information you receive?
  - **ACTIVITY:** Find two news sources covering the same story. Read both articles and see what similarities and differences appear. How might following one particular news source influence how you think about and respond to events?
  - Ask how the people you follow might influence or impact the news you see. What might you miss by following only certain people? Is that good or bad?
- Twitter is a SOCIAL media platform. So what does that mean?
  - Engaging in conversations with others about things you're passionate about.

- Retweeting interesting content or showing others to articles/sites/games you enjoy and think others should know about.
- Using hashtags to unite with others talking about the same thing and to gather opinions.
- So how/what do you tweet?
  - Quotes (make sure to give credit where it's due!).
  - Articles you are reading or find interesting.
  - Ask questions you want the Twitter-verse to (hopefully) answer or respond to.
  - Report on your daily life.
  - Report on an event happening near/around you.
  - Share your opinions and ideas.
  - Share photos or videos to create a more multiple media tweet.
- And what are these hashtags?
  - Hashtag is a "tag" that allows users connect with other users over the same topic.
  - It's a way to unite conversations, gather opinions, and share ideas.
  - It can also be used more informally as the undertone of a tweet. Such as using #sorrynotsorry when you might apologize in the regular text of the tweet (see how irony and sarcasm being used).
- Tweets can only be 140 characters in length.
  - Advantages?
  - Disadvantages?

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### *Creative uses of Twitter*

This hour long lesson would focus on how people have used Twitter in a more creative scope. Conversations could revolve around how to tell a story in only 140 characters or the ways to engage an audience in a story stretching out over many tweets (or across several users). I've included some resources below about where to find some examples of creative activities on Twitter and I would also recommend checking out [Storify](#) as another spot for inspiration and recaps on past Twitter related events. Perhaps devote 15 minutes to exploring various Twitter storytelling techniques and then devote 35 minutes to creation and experimenting with various techniques. The last 10 minutes could be discussion based, wrapping up the workshop. Perhaps at the beginning of the workshop the teens could decide on a hashtag of the day to unite their tweets and conversation.

#### **Examples of storytelling on Twitter to show teens:**

- Twitter Fiction Festival: First held in 2012, authors used Twitter to share stories and interact with others on the social media platform. The festival returned in 2014 with funding from the Association of American Publishers and Penguin Random House and will be returning again in May 2015. This website has ways to tell stories on Twitter, archives from previous festivals, and even a Twitter fiction generator for teens to use to get some inspiration!

- In 2013, [the New York Public Library](#) sponsored a poetry contest on Twitter during [National Poetry Month in April](#). On their website, they showcase the winning poems and teens could see how formatting a poem looks like on Twitter. Also consider looking at the Twitter account for an organization like [Poets House](#) as a way to see how poetry translate to Twitter.
- [SMITH Magazine's "Six Word Memoirs"](#) lends itself well to a tweet format. The general website gives you information on the project and other six word memoirs already written. There is also a special section for [Six Word Memoirs written by teens](#).
- [Choose Your Own Adventure](#): Author Terence Eden created a choose your own adventure story that uses multiple Twitter accounts to create a short but interesting story.

### **Activities for the teens to do:**

- Have the teens look at some of the resources listed above. Discuss how effective storytelling is on Twitter. Ask questions such as "What is gained by telling stories on Twitter?" or "What is lost by telling stories on Twitter?" You could also discuss how word choice becomes crucial because of the character limit. After trying some storytelling on Twitter, ask for the teens feedback. What was easy about writing stories using a tweet? What was complicated and why was it complicated? Could they perhaps use this technique in other aspects of their life — perhaps in school, home, or when they are hanging out with friends?
- Have the teens use the fiction generator at the Twitter Fiction Festival website or have them create a short, one sentence story. If teens are stuck, consider finding Twitter stories prompts, such as these [25 found on GalleyCat's website](#).
- Have teens create their own Six Word memoir and share on Twitter, making sure to either tweet at SMITH's Six Word memoir handle or use a hashtag.
- For writing poetry on Twitter, haikus lends themselves well to this platform. Have teens write haikus on a certain subject or a free for all. The five, seven, five syllables make it easy to fit within 140 characters. Have teens connect haikus from multiple handles together using a hashtag they agree upon (or one they find on Twitter that is related to either poetry or haikus).
- Experiment with [Inklewriter](#), a website to write interactive stories to write a choose your own adventure tale. While it might be outside the scope of time to actually execute the choose your own adventure tale on Twitter, perhaps if all the teens were interested the story could be shared and created across multiple users.

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### *Using Twitter Intentionally — How Business Incorporate Social Media*

This workshop is a great opportunity to draw in members from the larger library staff and the community the public library is a part of. For teens, they are using Twitter as a purely personal social media platform. The conversation in this workshop shows another perspective of using Twitter — to promote a business, interact with their clientele, and gather new customers. This workshop could be a panel or two discussions from two different organizations about how they handle and create their social media image,

focusing specifically on Twitter. Have the teens tweet during the event and encourage your guests to tweet as well. Once again, either use the workshop's overarching hashtag (if you decided to create one) or one the teens create day-of.

### **Pre-workshop preparation**

- Contact two (or more) community organizations' social media coordinators to see if they might be interested in coming to the library to discuss their Twitter strategy with teens. One suggestion for an organization might be finding the library staff member who is charge of social media. This might be especially interesting if the library doesn't have a designated person to do social media and instead it's incorporated into a librarian's daily tasks (among the other things they do). Then reach out to the community and find a business or two that might like to come in. Getting a variety of businesses would be interesting (for instance, how does a restaurant use social media vs. a museum vs. business vs. start-up vs. a non-profit in the area).
- When contacting these social media coordinators, see if they would be willing to show some of the software they use to manage their social media presence. This might be showing off [HootSuite](#) to see how they schedule tweets or what hashtags they actively follow. When the presenters are preparing their speeches, see if it would be possible to talk about why they think Twitter is or isn't effective for their business and how being intentional about using Twitter and other forms of social media helps their business in today's world.
- Another way to do this workshop would be to have a panel with several social media coordinators. This would require some pre-question write-ups (or challenging the teens to come up with some questions before-hand and during the panel) or giving the panelists some concrete ideas to cover. This becomes a little tricky for the fact that you don't know how the dynamic of the panel would be. There is a potential for one panelist to be the majority voice but a panel would create the opportunity to see many perspectives on using Twitter in a business setting.

### **Some potential questions:**

- How did you become the social media coordinator? What are rewarding aspects of this job and what are some challenging aspects?
- How do you engage with your customers on Twitter? How important is it to engage with them?
- What benefits do you see by using Twitter as one of your social media platforms?
- Is there a certain voice or style your company uses on Twitter and across other social media platforms? If so, why is that important?
- Is there someone who approves all tweet or social media posts before they are officially published?
- What does a typical day on Twitter look like for your business? Are there certain things you consistently tweet about or promote?
- How do you decide who to follow?
- What does a "good" tweet look like to you? And why?
- What advice do you have for teens who are just getting into using Twitter?

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## *Tweet Chats*

Tweet Chats are yet another way to engage in a conversation in the larger Twitter world. This hour long workshop will look at what tweet chats are all about, why or why not they are effective, and even engage in a tweet chat! Tweet chats can happen in two ways. The first is a formal conversation, like #critlib (for us librarians) that happens at the same time each week. Then there are the more informal tweet chats, where people are united by the hashtag and can express their ideas and opinions. These hashtags might last a couple of hours (trending topics) or might last for several months (#BlackLivesMatter).

A potential activity would be to contact a neighboring library and see if their teens might be interested in taking part in a tweet chat about something (an issue the teens are interested in or some facet of a teenager's life [school, sports, music/arts, books, preparing for college, etc]). If a neighboring library isn't interested, you could contact other local businesses that might be interested in communicating with teens on a certain topics. Another option would be to watch a short film or read a short article and host a conversation on Twitter among the teens in the workshop. Whatever option you end up choosing, make sure to choose a common hashtag so you can follow the conversation.

### **How the workshop would work:**

- You would aim for a tweet chat that would be about 40 minutes long (especially if you're talking with someone outside the library). That gives you 10 minutes at the beginning to prep the teens on tweet chats (what they are and the purpose) and 10 minutes at the end to debrief (what worked well, what didn't work so well, and do you think it's an effective way to hold a conversation?)
- At the beginning, it would be great to show teens how tweet chats work. This would require finding some previous Twitter chats. I would recommend using [Storify](#) as one option to find those conversations or searching hashtags. The trick will be finding twitter conversations that relate to teens. Based on the interests of your teens, [Twitter Chat Schedule](#) might be a good place to go to find examples that you would cultivate and prepare ahead of the workshop.
- If you have access to a projector, you can project the tweet chat conversation through the website [TweetChat](#). Once a hashtag is entered, you could project the conversation so everyone can easily see what is going on.

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## *Live Tweeting*

The final workshop option I'll propose revolves around live tweeting an event. It would be great to get the teens to pick an event to live tweet. Some options would be a school, village, or library board meeting, a library event, or even just a local event going around town. Not only would this allow the teens to see an aspect of their community they might not have exposure to, they are also then required to talk about on Twitter. Hopefully, you could engage others physically around you during the meeting or perhaps people who didn't know about the meeting or were unable to make it.

### **Pre-live tweeting:**

- Meet with the teens to talk briefly about live tweeting. Show a few examples from previous events (immediately thinking of the Super Bowl, the Oscars or Grammys, SNL's 40th show, etc).
- Decide on hashtag that you will use during the live tweeting event.
- Decide if the teens want to have different responsibilities. Perhaps a couple only tweet quotes from people, while others give descriptive information about what is happening, others tweet photos or short video clips, and others use a laptop to search the website to link to articles or other things mentioned in the event. If teens aren't interested in that, then maybe talk about what sorts of things would be good to tweet about when live tweeting (really no wrong answer).
- Send with the teens a letter to their parents/guardians about the event. Since the event is most likely outside the library and not during the normal workshop time, the event is most definitely optional (but of course it would be great to see them there). I'm not sure about issues around transportation to site location (which why the library board meeting is an attractive option since it would be at the library most likely).
- Contact the head of the event/meeting/activity to let them know what the teens are doing. Perhaps for a library, school, or village board meeting, they could distribute the hashtag out before the meeting starts so others at the event could take part.

#### **During (and after) the live tweeting event:**

- If you have your own personal Twitter account, contribute to the conversation alongside the teens. Encourage teens by retweeting their tweets and replying to stir conversation (and perhaps reach as well since you follow a different group than the teens do).
- If possible, see if the library would be willing to retweet teen tweets or if you and teens could "take over" the library's Twitter account for a night. If you used the library's Twitter account, perhaps have one or two students in charge of that account and they could retweet other teens' tweets.
- Once the event is over, ask the teens to tweet their thoughts about live tweeting. See if any would be interested in working with you to create a Storify story. If no one is interested, perhaps (if you have time) put one together that could be shared through the library's various social media platforms. This Storify story could also be shared with the organization's event you attended for a larger reach and showcasing the good work the teens did.

## **MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL IDEAS**

Once you decide on the layout of the workshop, you should begin to promote it. Tweet about it, blog about it, create fliers, and most importantly, talk to teens about it. See if you can incorporate it into a social media week or in conjunction with something going on at the local schools. Especially if you decide to live tweet an event, finding a way to have the workshops lead up to the live tweet would be really cool. You could also explore Twitter and see if any of the teens you work with are on and are using Twitter. If so, talk to them in person about the workshop and see if interest is there. If your library has a teen advisory

board, bring the idea up with them and see if those teens would be interested in participating.

## **EVALUATION**

There would be a few ways to assess if the workshops were successful or not. Hopefully you were able to retain a large core of the teens from workshop to workshop and (with luck) add some newbies in as the program kept going. Post-workshops, you could monitor how the teens use Twitter over the next several months. This could be done informally on Twitter, checking once a week about how much the teens are tweeting and what the context of their tweets contain. You could also look more formally using the application Tweet Deck, where you could create columns of the users and see their stream of tweets more easily. See if you see an increase in their tweets and if the content of their tweets has changed at all. Additionally, you could see if they are engaging in conversations or using common hashtags. Even a month or two later, you could informally check in with the teens when you see them at the library to get their insights on the workshop a few months later.

Formal evaluation could be done through a *brief* survey, either at the end of a session or at the end of the entire workshop series. I might recommend a survey that includes both scale questions (ex: on a scale of 1-5, how much did you like the workshop) as well as questions requiring short answers. These short answer questions might be able to provide some insight into what the teens are thinking about and if their views of technology or Twitter have changed at all due to their involvement in the workshops.

## **RESOURCES AND ARTICLES TO CONSIDER:**

Charest, Dave. "A Simple Approach to Effectively Use Twitter." Constant Contact blog. 30 January 2013.

Eden, Terence. "Writing a 'Choose Your Own Adventure' Story on Twitter." Eden's personal blog. 13 January 2015.

Exum, Bradley. "7 Habits of Highly Effective Twitter Users." Klout blog. 13 September 2013.

Fitton, Laura. "How to Retweet the Right Way on Twitter." HubSpot Blogs. 1 November 2011.

Hische, Jessica. "Mom This is How Twitter Works."

Spreeuwenberg, Kimberley. "The Significance of Twitter." Masters of Media. 8 October 2009.

Stauch, Shari. "Twitter for Authors: Favorite, Retweet, or Reply?" Where Writers Win. 23 July 2013.

Weber, Lindsey. "Freddy Amazin': The Follow Back Expert." New York Magazine. 20 April 2014.

Weber, Lindsey. "That Time I Tired to Figure Out How Teens Use Twitter." Medium. 7 August 2014.

Wilson, Bradleigh. "The Composition of a Good Tweet — Not as Simple As You Think." Endorphin Advisor Blog. 16 July 2013.

## **RESOURCES ON TWITTER:**

- Getting Started on Twitter.
- The Twitter Glossary.
- Teens: Privacy and Safe Tweeting.