



Easy Read Edition

They Work For Us:

A Self-Advocate's Guide to Getting Through to your Elected Officials

Part 7: Social Media

7. Social Media



Social media is any website that you can use to talk to or share ideas with other people.



There are 2 major social media websites that you can use to talk to your elected officials. These websites are Facebook and Twitter.



You can use social media to talk to other people who care about the same problems that you do.



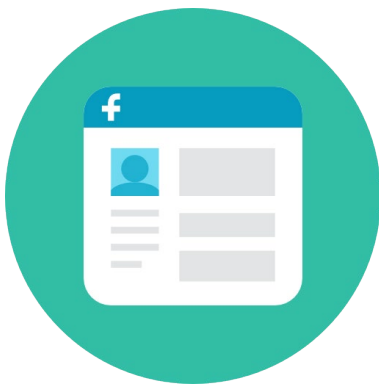
You can also use it to spread the word about problems you care about so that other people can learn about them. Or you can use it to learn about problems you didn't know about before.



Facebook

Personal profiles and friends

More American adults use Facebook than any other website.



On Facebook, you can make a private page for yourself and post whatever you want on it. This is called a **Facebook profile**.



If you have friends who use Facebook, you can add them as a friend. Then, you can see each other's posts and make your own posts on each other's profiles. This helps people stay in touch with people they know, and share things that they care about.



You can also use Facebook to talk with people you don't know in real life. You can do this by creating a Facebook page or group.

Pages



A **Facebook page** is a public profile for a person or group. For example, a famous person might have a Facebook page to let their fans know what they are up to.



If you like a page, you will follow it and see updates from that page. Pages are good for sharing blog posts, articles, events, and news.



Elected officials often have their own Facebook pages. You can like their page to keep up with what they are doing. You can also leave comments on their page, but they usually won't respond to them.

Groups



Facebook groups are places where people can talk to each other about things they are interested in.

There are three different privacy settings for groups:

1. Secret
2. Closed
3. Public



Secret means no one can find the group unless they are invited to join.



Closed means anyone can find the group and see its members, but no one can see posts in the group unless they are invited.

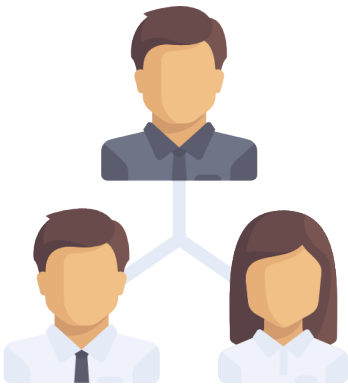


Public means that anyone can find the group, see the group's members, and see the posts in the group.

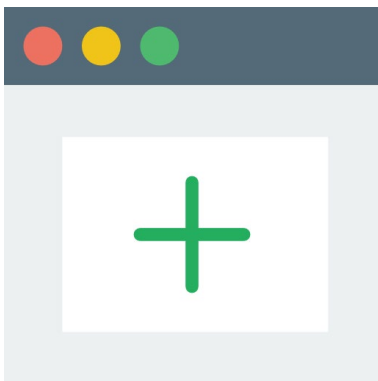
Why use Facebook?



There are a lot of ways you can use Facebook to get involved in advocacy.



You can tell people about topics that are important to you on your Facebook profile, or in a Facebook group. Facebook groups and pages let you reach a lot of people quickly.



You can create a page if you are a part of an advocacy group. You can use the group to let people know what you are doing and give them chances to get involved.



You can also follow pages or join groups for other organizations to learn what they are doing.



Lots of people and pages on Facebook post news about policies and laws. Just by checking Facebook, you can learn more about problems that matter to the people you know.



Facebook is also a great tool to work together with other advocacy groups. That's because it can be easier to send a message on Facebook than to make a phone call or meet up in person.



You can use Facebook to organize group activities. You can get a group of people together to write letters or make phone calls to elected officials.

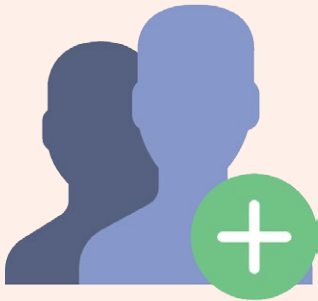


As we talked about before, elected officials also sometimes have their own Facebook pages. You can post on these pages how you feel about important issues and see what other people in your area think.

Example: Using Facebook to Stop the Bees



Let's say Sally wants to spread the word about the Stop the Bees Community Group. She wants to organize a letter-writing campaign to Representative Smith.



Sally could make a Facebook group for the Stop the Bees Community Group. Then, she could invite her friends and family to join the group.



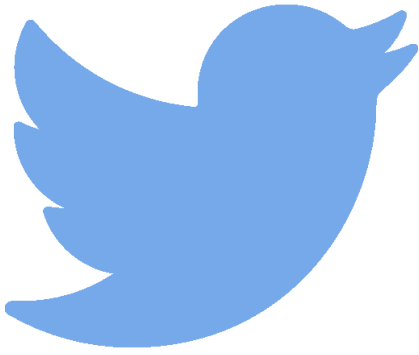
Sally could also post the group on Representative Smith's Facebook page. That way, other people who want to stop the bees could join the group.



Sally could post information in the Facebook group about what people should put in their letters to Representative Smith. That way, the letters people send will be clear about the bee problem and how to fix it.



This helps make sure that Representative Smith understands how important the problem is.



Twitter

Twitter does not have pages or groups like Facebook. Each person on Twitter just gets their own profile.



Tweets

On Twitter, posts are called **tweets**, and posting is called **tweeting**.

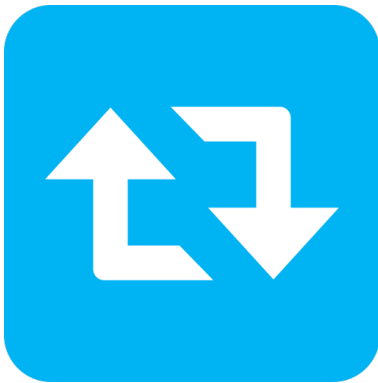


Everything that someone tweets has to be 140 letters or less, which is about 25 words. This can be hard for some people to do. But, it also helps make sure everything people post is short and to-the-point.

Following and re-tweeting



You can follow people on Twitter to see what they are saying.



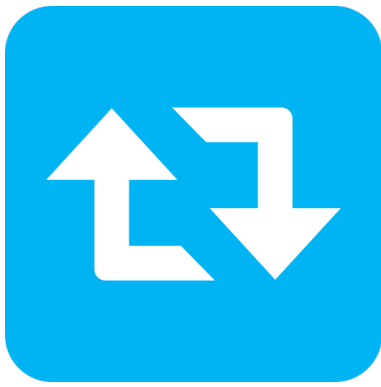
If you want the people that follow you to see a certain tweet from someone else, you can **re-tweet** it. Re-tweeting something makes the tweet show up on your own Twitter page.



Re-tweeting is easy to do. This makes it easy for important tweets to spread around Twitter really quickly.



Many elected officials have a Twitter account. Following them can help you learn about what they are doing.

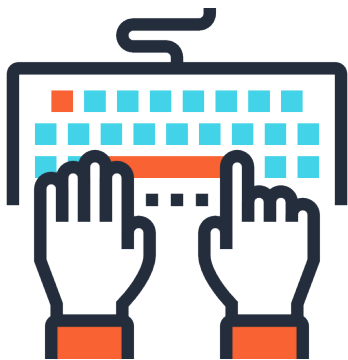


You can re-tweet things elected officials post to spread the word to other people who care.



#Hashtags

People on Twitter can put something in their tweets called a **hashtag**. Hashtags are a way to let people group tweets into categories.



To use a hashtag, type the hashtag symbol (#). On most US computers, you can do this by pressing the shift key and 3. Then type a word or phrase with no spaces.

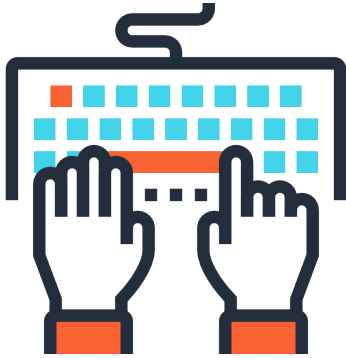


When a lot of people use the same hashtag at once, that hashtag begins **trending**. That means the hashtag will show up on the front page of Twitter, and a lot of people will see it.



@Tagging

You can also tag a person in a Twitter post, which means that they will see the tweet.



To tag someone, type a period (.), then the @ symbol, and enter the Twitter username of the person you want to tag. You can type the @ symbol by pressing the shift key and 2.

Twitterbombs



Hashtags are a big reason why Twitter can be a good tool to get the attention of elected officials.



When people work together to come up with a hashtag and get it trending, it is called a **Twitterbomb**.



Twitterbombs make it so lots of people see tweets with that hashtag. You can use this to help people learn about a problem that they may not have known about before. You can give people ideas for how to solve a problem.



If an elected official has a Twitter, you can organize a Twitterbomb and tag them in all of the tweets. That way, whenever is in charge of their account will definitely notice what you are saying.

Live-tweeting



Another helpful thing that people on Twitter do is **live-tweeting**.



Live-tweeting happens when someone goes to an event. The person posts on Twitter what is going on at the event for people who can't be there.



Live-tweeting can be helpful for things like a town hall with an elected official. This is because not everyone is going to be able to go talk to their elected official.



Live-tweeting helps people learn about what is going on while it is happening.



That way, people can take action for anything that needs to be done quickly after the event is over. For example, organizing a phone call campaign to an elected official.

Example: Using Twitter to #StopTheBees



Let's say Sally decided to use Twitter to show Representative Smith that the bees are a big problem. She organized a Twitterbomb using the hashtag #stopthebees.



People used the hashtag to share their personal stories about how the bees have hurt them.



They tagged the Twitter account of Representative Smith in all of the tweets. That way, Representative Smith and everyone who followed her Twitter would also see them.



Some people who saw the tweets even made their own tweets about the bees afterwards.

Here are some examples of tweets that might use the #stopthebees hashtag:



Sally Jones @StopTheBees · 35s

.@RepAnneSmith I shouldn't be afraid to go outside! 🐝 #stopthebees



Sally Jones @StopTheBees · 3s

.@RepAnneSmith My son had an allergic reaction to being stung last week. He is still in the hospital. 🏥 🐝 We need to #stopthebees! ❌ 🐝



Sally Jones @StopTheBees · 4s

.@RepAnneSmith It isn't fair that only your office is bee-proof. What about all of us? What are you doing to #stopthebees?



Glossary



Closed (Facebook group)

If a Facebook group is “Closed”, anyone can find the group and see its members. But, nobody can see posts in the group unless they are invited.

elected officials



Politicians that we elect to the government are our elected officials. Elected officials listen to the problems that people have. Then, they make laws to fix these problems.

Facebook profile



A private, personal page on the social media site Facebook. You can make posts and add people to be your Facebook friends. Then you can see each other's posts.



Facebook page

A Facebook page is a public profile for a person or group. For example, a famous person might have a Facebook page to let their fans know what they are up to.



Facebook group

Facebook groups are places where people can talk to each other about things they are interested in. You can control who is allowed to see posts in the group.



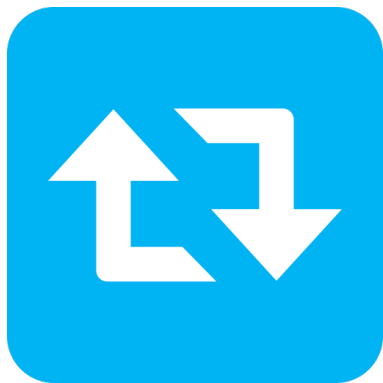
hashtag

Hashtags are a way to group tweets into categories, using the # symbol. For example, #stopthebees.



Public (Facebook group)

If a Facebook group is “Public”, anyone can find the group, see the group’s members, and see the posts in the group.



re-tweet

Re-tweeting something makes the tweet show up on your own Twitter page.



Secret (Facebook group)

If a Facebook group is “Secret”, nobody can find the group unless they are invited to join it.



social media

Social media is any place online where people can interact with each other. Some examples are Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr.



trending

When a hashtag on Twitter is trending, that means a lot of people are using that hashtag at the same time. That hashtag will show up on the front page of Twitter.



tweet

A short post made on Twitter. Tweets have to be 140 characters or fewer. “Tweet” can also be used as a verb.



Twitterbomb

An organized effort by many people tweeting using the same hashtag.

Twitterbombs make it so lots of people see tweets with that hashtag.

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