



## 10 Strategies for Engaging Learners with Social Media

### Overview

This document outlines 10 strategies for engaging learners with social media. This is not a how-to document; we simply describe some of the types of activities and strategies that may be useful in your course.

### What is Social Media?

Social Media refers to websites where individuals can interact through the creation, sharing, or exchanging of information in virtual communities or networks. This practice can be used in both face-to-face courses and, of course, in fully online classes.

### 10 Strategies for Engaging Learners with Social Media

#### Strategy #1: Create dynamic student introductions

*The basics:* It can be difficult to encourage students to post introductions in a forum such as D2L discussions and it can be even more difficult to get students to interact with each other. The use of social media for student introductions can provide better visual representations of the users and intuitively encourage participation in a familiar setting. Building a social presence in the class is particularly important for online or large classes where interactions can be either asynchronous or logistically prohibitive. Starting an introduction thread in a social media site, like Yammer, will give students an opportunity to share brief but informative introductions while at the same time allowing them to quickly scan and respond to classmates' posts.

*Variations on the approach:* Other social media can be used for introductions. Hashtags (#hello) can be used to create a running archive of related posts. Students can create quick video introductions with sites like Vine or Youtube and share them via Hashtag on your chosen social media (Yammer, Twitter).

#### Strategy #2: Connect students with industry professionals

*The basics:* It is never too early for students to start building an online professional presence and resume. Students can practice refining their online portfolio and credentials in private sites like Yammer or jump in and start connecting with industry professionals on sites like LinkedIn. Not only do students have an opportunity to practice resume writing skills, but they have an opportunity to explore job options in their future field and to connect with professional learning networks where they can learn and share information.

*Variations on the approach:* Ask students to search their preferred social network site for professional

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contacts. Students can report back to the class or keep a journal or log on the publications, news, or trends that they see from this source. Alternatively, ask students to follow other topic experts on Yammer. Ask them to bring back discussion points from current events, topics or other discussions held by the experts. Students can keep a journal or log of points of interest or discussion introduced by these individuals. You can also use Twitter or LinkedIn and ask students to follow experts in the field. Have them chime in to current discussions and report back to the class.

### **Strategy #3: Create electronic portfolios of student work**

*The basics:* Social media sites like Wordpress or other blogging tools, Google Sites, or LinkedIn can allow students to keep an archive of their work as part of an eportfolio.

*Variations on the approach:* Even if only for one class, students can complete writing assignments on social media sites like blogs or wikis. Peer review and editing can be facilitated by using these types of media for sharing and display of work. When sharing student work in a public forum, students should have the option to opt out of the assignment if they are not comfortable working in social media. Offering students, the option to control the privacy settings of their social media may be another option.

### **Strategy #4: Assess students' content knowledge in 140 words or less**

*The basics:* For quick knowledge checks or to assess whether a student can really explain the essentials of the content, ask them to tell you in 140 words or less. Summing up information or briefly explaining a concept is a skill that students can practice on sites like Yammer and Twitter.

*Variations on the approach:* Students can upload photos or videos of an assignment, field trip or event with real-time commentary that they tie into the content. For more ideas on using Twitter check out [50 Ways to Use Twitter \[or Yammer!\] in the Classroom](#)

### **Strategy #5: Create a professional learning community**

*The basics:* Create a professional learning community for yourself or your students using Twitter. Encourage students to reach across disciplines and invite experts in other fields to share and collaborate. Students can share resources, learning or teaching material, share what they have learned in other courses, and start discussions.

*Variations on the Strategy:* Students can use academic social networks like [Mendeley](#), [Academia.edu](#), [ResearchGate](#) or [Zotero](#) to collaborate, share, and organize references and research tools for research projects and papers. They can also connect with professionals in their industry to explore the latest research being done in their field.

### **Strategy #6: Update or remind students of assignments and activities**

*The basics:* Use social media to remind students of an upcoming quiz, assignment, or activity. Send an announcement or message to the group a day or two before the due date.

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*Variations on the approach:* Use social media to activate prior knowledge and prep students for in-class activities. Send a poll question, discussion starter, video, or other item that you will use as a starting point for the in-class assignment.

### **Strategy #7: Conduct informal social research**

*The basics:* Ask students to conduct informal social research using Yammer. They can send a message, poll, or discussion to the entire organization or to select groups. The results can be used for projects, discussions, comparisons or other assignments both in and out of class.

*Variations on the approach:* Students can use Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter to poll friends, family, or connections on various topics. Data can be collected for use in projects or discussions. Even the most informal question can lead to relevant discussions in the classroom. (Ex: Which foreign language did you take in school (if any)?; What was the hardest interview question for you to answer?; Where were you when... [the Berlin Wall fell/ September 11th/ Boston Marathon Bombing])

### **Strategy #8: Collect resources on a given subject**

*The basics:* Social Media provides an archive space to collect resources on any given subject. Web links, article citations, videos, and other media can all be collected and archived on a social media site. Ask students to research a topic and bring the resources back to a discussion or file page in your Yammer group.

*Variations on the approach:* Use Pinterest to create a visual list of web resources for a given project. You can create a Pinterest board for your class or project and students can share links and images related to a topic.

### **Strategy #9: Write a collaborative story**

*The basics:* Post a story prompt on Yammer. Ask each student to move the story forward by writing one line of the story. The student then nominates the next person in the class to add the following line of the story. You can also assign students numbers and have them go in order, creating the story one line at a time.

*Variations on the approach:* Twitter is another useful tool for collaborative storytelling. By using hashtags, you can preserve the class story and check in on student progress.

Examples: [Tim Burton's #Burtonstory](#)  
[Neil Gaiman's Interactive Collaborative Storytelling](#) #bbcawdio  
[Richard Kadrey's Twitter Fiction](#) #TwitterFiction

### **Strategy #10: Flip your classroom**

*The basics:* Record your lectures using one of our recommended [lecture capture tools](#). Post your lectures on your course Yammer page. Ask students to watch the video and respond to discussion

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prompts or polls based on what they heard, as a warmup for the in-class activities.

*Variations on the approach:* Look for TED Talks or other videos that are relevant to your topic. Link those videos to your Yammer or other social media site and provide a discussion prompt. Ask students to search for and post relevant videos on your course Yammer page and to moderate a discussion surrounding the video.

## References

- [50 Ways to Use Twitter in the Classroom](#)
- [What the heck is Yammer?](#)
- [Social Media Best Practices](#)
- [How to use Social Media in Education](#)

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