Social media made easy

Creating effective social media can be easier than you think. With this guide you will have the tools you need to get started.
A beginner’s guide to social media

Many STEM advocates are interested in bringing social media into their suite of communications efforts, but starting from scratch can seem daunting. Even if you’ve been on social media before, the quick evolution of social media technology means best practices and strong social media strategy require some explanation.

But don’t give up! We’ve pulled together a quick-start guide to get your Twitter and Facebook accounts running smoothly. Use them to connect with interested individuals, stay current on news and developments in STEM learning, and of course, engage policymakers.
Considering your social media capacity

Doing social media right takes time, energy, and content. Don’t have the time to post daily? That’s okay! Scheduling programs like Hootsuite can help you turn social media maintenance into a quick, once-weekly task. Here’s how often you should post:

**Twitter**
- **Best Practice:** 3-5 times per day
- **Minimum:** No fewer than 2 posts per day

**Facebook**
- **Best Practice:** 5-7 posts per week
- **Maximum:** No more than one post per day

Carefully consider whether your organization has the capacity for a quality social media presence. A poorly-maintained social media account is worse than none.
Tracking success

While social media analytics may sound intimidating, it can be easy to get helpful feedback on which content performs best among your audience. By accessing Twitter Analytics and Facebook InSights, you can gain helpful understanding of how to optimize your timing, media, and language.

To dive deeper into using metrics to up your social media game, check out this Afterschool Alliance webinar. There are also hundreds of freely available analytic webinars hosted by brands, such as HootSuite, Sprout Social, etc.
Twitter is a great tool for breaking news, tracking specific topics, interacting with people in your field, and sharing your information.

Active engagement is KEY—this means retweeting, replying, using hashtags, and mentioning others in your posts. Read on to find out how.
Setting up a Twitter account

**Handle:** Choose a handle that is succinct and aligned with your organization’s brand. Try not to use multiple acronyms, though if you do, separate them with an underscore.

**Followers:** Start with following your partners and known experts in your field, and then look at who *they* are following. To ensure you follow quality accounts, look for a blue check mark next to their name, indicating it has been “verified” by Twitter as a public figure or major organization. Consider following your key legislators as well.

**Profile photos:** Your profile icon is next to all of your tweets, and should therefore be clearly branded to your organization (i.e. your logo). When considering your larger banner photo, focus on finding a high-quality, high-resolution photo.
Look to partners for examples of strong page design to get inspired!
Brevity is the soul of success!

A tweet is limited to 280 characters. But because Twitter started out with a shorter limit, 140-character tweets still tend to perform better — people are more used to it! Consider using your newfound character limits to add line breaks for visual interest.
Retweet and share someone else’s tweet with your followers to add to the amount of content you’re sharing with your audience. Retweeting is a powerful way to show support of a viewpoint or amplify a partner’s message. Unless otherwise stated, a retweet can be considered an endorsement of a user/their content.

**How to do it:** Click on the “retweet” double arrow at the bottom of a tweet. You can also type “RT @username” and the rest of their tweet in your “What’s Happening” box.
Replying will bring your tweet to the attention of another user. Replying to their tweets is a great way to thank partners for sharing your content or talking about your issue!

**How to do it:** Scroll over the tweet and click on the “reply” bubble. You’ll see a new tweet that starts with @username, ready for your response. You can respond to additional people with the same tweet by including their usernames in your message.
Mentions

When you mention or tag another user’s account with @username, it will not appear in your followers’ timelines unless they follow both you and the person you are mentioning. If you begin a tweet with a mention, place a period before @username, or find another way to work that username into the body of the tweet - otherwise Twitter considers that tweet a reply, and it will not appear in your followers’ Twitter feed.
#Hashtags on Twitter

*Hashtags* are essential to using Twitter effectively! Hashtags create searchable key phrases that are then tracked by Twitter to see what conversations are most popular or “trending.” By using popular hashtags, you’re amplifying your voice by joining popular discussions of the day!

**How to do it:** Add # before a word, phrase, or abbreviation. You can include a list of hashtags at the end of your tweet, or find clever ways to work the hashtag into your message.
Popular hashtags

Give your content traction with these hashtags! Type the hashtag in the Twitter’s search box to get a sense of how it’s being used. If you don’t see one that that fits, create your own. Combine hashtags to gain even more visibility, but don’t overdo it!

#afterschoolSTEM #summerlearning #AfterschoolWorks #k12 #edchat #educat #CSequity #STEM #STEAM #STEMlearning #STEMed #STEMedChat #STEMchat #GirlsInSTEM #scichat #mathchat #CSforALL #kidscancli #girlswhocode #edtech #WeDoSTEM #KeepKidsLearning #InvestInKids #21stCCLC #21CCLC #edpolicy #edgap #RepresentationMatters
Tweetchats

Tweetchats are virtual discussions of specific topic during a predetermined window of time. Participants and the host(s) are able to locate each other by choosing a predetermined hashtag, which is used in every question and answer (e.g. #AfterschoolCS). Each question is marked Q1, Q2, etc., and each response with A1, A2, etc.

In the most successful Tweetchats, users interact with one another’s answers and exchange ideas, rather than simply publishing pre-approved responses.
Plug and go for Twitter

Use these examples to plug in and go. Don’t forget to add your own links and graphics!
• ALL kids are math & science kids and ALL need #STEMlearning programs in school and out of school! Investing in their #21centuryskills in STEM = a strong future for us all!
• #KeepKidsLearning by connecting them with hands-on #STEM before and after the school bell! Get more info: https://samplelink
• #CitizenScience connects youth to #STEMed by connecting them w/ opportunities for hands-on learning! Learn more: https://samplelink
• More than 70% of students in #afterschoolSTEM programs express more interest in and knowledge about careers in science. #AfterschoolWorks #CTE
• We believe #KidsCanCode if given the right resources to bring #CSforall to under-served programs. Learn more: https://samplelink
• All kids have what it takes to light up from science, technology, engineering & math. Let’s make sure all have enough outlets to plug into #STEMeducation, so they can brighten our future as innovators, critical thinkers, leaders. Here’s how: http://samplelink #afterschoolSTEM

• #AfterschoolSTEM braids together: curiosity/problem-solving/exploration. What other skills do kids need to weave strong skill ropes for the 21st century? #STEMedChat

• Just as an ecosystem relies on a variety of plants and animals to thrive, #STEMlearning relies on a variety of opportunities to learn—in school and after school, on the weekends, and in summer. #AfterschoolSTEM

• #InvestInKids and tell your elected officials you support #21CCLC and the #STEMlearning opportunities they provide! Act now: http://samplelink
Facebook is an online social network that connects people and organizations. Users connect by “friending” each other or “liking” public figures and organizations. Communication happens through direct messages, personal status updates, and public wall posts.
Establishing an organizational page

1. **Create your page.** Create a Company profile under Facebook’s “Pages” feature, selecting the appropriate industry for your organization.

2. **Customize It.** Add your branded logos, photos, and boilerplate language.

3. **Recruit supporters.** Invite partners, allies, and friends to like your new page.

For more tips, check out [Knowhow Nonprofit’s How to Set Up a Facebook Page for Your Organization](#).
Creating a Facebook post, part 1

Facebook is all about posting good content to encourage engagement from your followers. Get started with these tips:

- **Share links to articles, petitions, surveys, and slideshows.** If the link offers photo options, be sure to pick the one that works most effectively with your content.

- **Post photos:** Large, colorful images can make users pause in their newsfeed. You can use free software like Pixlr or the iPhone app Over to add text to your photos and solidify a key message.

- **Videos:** Aim for less than 3 minutes.
Creating a Facebook post, *part 2*

Your next step is to encourage engagement with your content. Within your posts, there are lots of ways to keep engagement high:

- **Tag** other users or specific places.
- Make your messages *conversational and brief.*
- **Ask questions!** This is one of the easiest ways to get audience members to comment.
- Don’t be afraid to **share other parties’ tips, news, or information.** This shows you’re informed, collaborative, and not only focused on self-promotion.
Maintaining engagement

*Wall posts* allow you to check in with organizations and people by reading their updates and posting information they might find interesting. Make sure wall posts are enabled on your organization’s page, or your audience may think you don’t care about what they have to say.

*Engage with your audience* just like in a verbal conversation. Reply to comments on your post or posts on your wall. You want to encourage conversation and keep people coming back to your page. However, be careful with how you engage with people who are trying to cause issues. Avoid responding to posts by “trolls”—individuals who are just posting to annoy people. Feel free to correct factual inaccuracies in a polite and engaging tone.
Hashtags on Facebook

These work differently than they do on Twitter. While hashtags on Facebook still do function as searchable hyperlinks, they are not major drivers of trending conversations. It’s best to use hashtags in Facebook posts only when:

- You’re maintaining consistency in your branding (e.g. the post is part of a larger campaign).
- It’s cohesive with the other language in the post.
- It’s visually appealing.

Example: 70% of students in afterschool STEM programs express more interest in science careers — #AfterschoolWorks.
Plug and go for Facebook

Use these examples to plug in and go. Don’t forget to add your own links and graphics!
• Good opportunities for STEM learning are like charging stations - but the system is patchy. Some areas need our support to power up our students learning.

• Citizen science offers kids opportunities to explore the world & engage in STEM. Check out opportunities for getting your students involved:

• Jobs in STEM are driving global economic growth, and afterschool & summer learning programs are preparing 7 million students for the jobs of the future.

• Our students need more opportunities to explore computer science in order to achieve #CSforAll. Check out how [example program name] is engaging kids in [city] with creative computing:
• 69% of kids in afterschool programs are getting some form of STEM learning. But for every child in an afterschool program, two more are waiting to get in. Learn more.

• 75% of Nobel Prize winners in the sciences say that their passion for science was first sparking in non-school environments. Learn about afterschool & summer learning opportunities that ignite interest in STEM.

• Science centers, afterschool & summer learning programs, and public libraries are like pollination points: STEM knowledge gets carried from place to place in this learning ecosystem.

• Students who participating in afterschool STEM program improve their test scores, take more science & math courses, and have higher rates of graduation. Plug in.
Using visuals

Using photos, graphics, or video help drive up viewer engagement. For both Twitter and Facebook, all posts should contain visuals whenever possible. But be careful to ensure they reflect and strengthen your intended message.
These are just a few tips are excerpted from Framing with visuals: A guide to using photos, graphics and video.

1. **Avoid stock photos.** They can reinforce stereotypes, so tell a stronger story with real program photos.

2. **Show context.** Look for photos that show students active and engaged in hands-on STEM learning, not just posing for the camera.

3. **Spotlight diverse ages.** Teens are often viewed as disengaged – counteract this narrative by showing them working in the community. The public also assumes that STEM involves advanced subjects that aren’t appropriate for pre-K and early elementary. Show them that's untrue!
Other photo considerations

- **Have all necessary waivers been signed?** Before posting a photo of students, it is required by law to obtain parent/guardian permission, which usually comes in the form of a signed waiver. If you *do not* have permission, no students faces can be recognizable in your photo.

- **Is this photo high-quality?** Does the photo have a clear subject, and is it in-focus and of appropriate dimensions (both size and orientation)?

- **Is this photo high-resolution?** For digital purposes, aim for a minimum of 1000 pixels wide.
Resources for graphics and videos

Afterschool STEM Hub’s “Share It” graphics & videos

America After 3PM infographics
(National and state-level data)

“Afterschool Works” video series
Make your own social media cards

Images with social media help boost your posts. But it doesn’t take expensive photo editing software to make great social media cards for Twitter and Facebook! Presentation software like Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Slides can help you create one.
Step 1: Set up your “slide”

Every social media platform has particular requirement for image sizes (see [this tool](#)). Whether you’re designing in Google Slides or Microsoft PowerPoint, you are going to need to resize your slides with the right dimensions. PowerPoint slides are only formatted with inches, while both inches or pixels can be used in Google Slides.

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Formatting in Microsoft PowerPoint

Step 1: Go to DESIGN

Step 2: Select Slide Size

Step 3: Click Custom Slide Size

Click to add title

Click to add subtitle
Formatting in Google Slides

If you don’t have access to Microsoft Office products, Google Slides is a free web-based alternative. Follow these instructions to adjust your slide’s dimensions:

**Step 1:** Go to File  
**Step 2:** Click Page Setup  
**Step 3:** Select Custom

“Page setup…” will open a modal window where you can select “Custom” to change the dimensions of your slide.
Step 2: Design your social media card

1. **Get inspiration from others.** Check the accounts of partners and colleagues for design ideas. In the following examples from the Afterschool Alliance, you’ll see they use pretty simple templates.

2. **Keep text short, and large.** Many people read social media on their phones!

3. **Watch out for colors.** Using bright colors can be a great way to grab attention, but they can also make text difficult to read.

4. **Learn the basics.** Design fundamentals like the rule of thirds, color theory, bleeding, and introductory typography can elevate your design to the next level. We like this book for non-designers: [Presenting Data Effectively: Communicating Your Findings for Maximum Impact](#).
Example A: Text overlay

Enroll today for the spring semester at [Program Name]!

Tip: Busy photo? Try adding a semi-transparent white or grey rectangle behind it.
**Example B:** Color-blocking

Afterschool STEM inspires young people, builds their confidence, and ignites a passion for learning.

#AfterschoolSTEM
**Example C:** Color-blocking plus icon

**The Afterschool Lab Report**

**Sign Up Now**

Receive the quarterly newsletter with tools & resources to advocate for afterschool and summer STEM programs!

**Tip:** Many websites offer free, modern icons for download.
Example D: Infographics

INSPIRE

78% of students said they had a more positive attitude about STEM because of their afterschool experience.

#AfterschoolWorks

Tip: Social media cards are images, so any hashtags or @username callouts you use will not be tracked. Be sure to also include text to increase the visibility of your content.
Step 3: Save your slide as an image

Once you have design your social media card, save your image as a JPEG or PNG. How to do this is similar in both Google Slides and PowerPoint.

**Step 1:** Go to File

**Step 2:** Select Save as… (PowerPoint) or Download as… (Google Slides)

**Step 3:** Select file type JPEG or PNG
More platforms and tools to consider

**Instagram** - Share your story visually

**LinkedIn** - Cultivate a reputation as a thought leader in your field

**Pinterest** - Find, collect, and share creative ideas

**Thunderclap** - Reach a wide range of people with a unified message

**ClickToTweet** - Share messages far and wide by enlisting your audience to tweet them out themselves

**HootSuite** - Pre-schedule posts to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and more
With these tools, you can make the most of your social media presence!

Are we missing something in this guide? Let us know at STEMhub@afterschoolalliance.org.