

What can you do in 140 characters? (Education re-mix by jspohrer)

*Adapted from a [collection of ideas](#) posted by Jane Bozarth, author of *Social Media for Trainers* (2010). posted to [slideshare.net](#). Bozarth writes for trainers working in the business sector, but many of her ideas are just as applicable for classroom learning.*

As you will no doubt notice, most of the things mentioned below can be done with the digital tools you are probably already using: e-mail, a class discussion board, etc. The primary advantages of Twitter are convenience and speed. Students can tweet on the mobile devices they carry around with them. It's much faster than logging on to a computer, opening a browser, and setting up a post or e-mail. Twitter also requires brevity, which in certain contexts can be a very good thing.

*Of course, many students use Twitter for all kinds of messages, so you may worry that you would be speaking on a very cluttered communication channel. For most of us, the same could be said about e-mail, but while I worried about cluttering my students' inboxes (something I resent), I discovered **they** actually preferred e-mail over discussion boards, because any replies to posts came directly to their inbox. (You can set up discussion board to do this now.)*

Twitter for Teaching and Learning

Use Twitter to kick off a class or a discussion topic. Think of the questions you use in class to elicit information about your students, their goals, or their prior knowledge. Having students tweet answers to questions like these before a class could 1) produce ideas to jumpstart discussion for the next meeting, 2) ensure everyone's voice is heard, 3) help you in planning that introduction.

- What do you find most difficult about X?
- Tell us one thing you already know about this topic.
- Tell us one thing you'd like to know about this topic.
- What is your favorite book or movie about this historical period?
- Share your best study tip for this subject.
- What are your goals for this class?

Tweet logistical messages, instructions, and reminders. Among other things, this forces you to be brief and clear. Instructing your students to tweet rather than e-mail requests for clarification, allows you (or perhaps other students) to reply to the entire class.

- I've posted a new article for Thursday's class. Please read and be ready to discuss.
- Note 2 assumptions the authors make in "article X". Are they reasonable?
- Remember homework this week is trying to live by Kant's categorical imperative. Keep notes on your progress.
- Be ready to talk about parallels between Mann's "Mario and the Magician" and the Le Bon text.

Tweet after class as formative evaluation and/or to get students to reflect collectively on a discussion or course material. This can help you get a sense of what students did and didn't understand. Studies also show that the process of recalling and articulating a response to information can also help students retain it. Tweets can also be a mechanism to get students to reflect on their thinking or learning, or a means of continuing a conversation about a long-term assignment. Yes, the format is brief, but that very brevity forces them to be succinct.

- What did you find interesting or surprising in today's lecture? What did you find confusing?
- Summarize the argument of the article you presented in yesterday's class.
- How would you summarize today's discussion? Did we reach any resolution?
- Has your interpretation of Nietzsche's phrase "God is dead, and we have killed him" changed? What did he mean?
- Tweet one key concept from the section of the course that just ended (no repeats!).
- How have you applied X to your current work?
- Tweet a weekly status report on your research: Discoveries? Roadblocks? Next steps?
- What is your next step for your paper, given the feedback you received in workshop?

Hold a Twitter round robin (bluebird?) or debate: Assign students numbers. For a round robin, number 1 asks a question based on course content, number 2 answers it and asks a new question, and so on. The last person answers and asks a question for student number 1. For a debate, student number 1 makes a proposition related to course content. Student number 2 either offers concrete evidence to support that assertion, or offers a counter-proposition. Students continue in turn, either offering *new* evidence to support a proposition (it helps to have students number or letter propositions to keep track), offering a *new* proposition, or offering an alternative reading of evidence previously offered.