# A brief guide to participating in Twitter Chats

### What is a Twitter chat?

A Twitter chat is a live, real-time discussion that takes place via Twitter messages, also known as tweets. Connected by use of a specific hashtag, those contributing to the discussion can add their comments in 140-character increments. While it may seem an odd way to participate in a conversation, you may be surprised at the benefits the platform provides, and at the growth of this format among educators at all levels. Twitter chats are a different way of having a conversation around topic intteast os of a webinar or conference calls. They are also a fun way to meet people interested in the same thing as you are, regardless of location, which lets you grow your own network.

### What to Expect

Twitter chats feature a general exchange of ideas, opinions, recommendations, and resources. Most are open to the public, and anyone interested in the topic is encouraged to attend. There are four common components of these live conversations you should look for:

* **Moderator:** An individual or group that organizes the event and facilitates the conversation. For this chat, the organisers are AECT and e/Merge Africa. The moderators will be @tutaleni , @tadousay, @MrRileyjo
* **Central topic:**Most chats are organized around a central theme of interest, as well as a more detailed topic for each “meeting.” For example, the topic for this twitter chat is “Opportunities and challenges with using social media for professional development and cross-border collaborations”. A recent May session sought input on the question: “How important is it to teach critical thinking and how do we do it?”
* **Hashtag:** The # symbol used with a series of letters and numbers is known as a “hashtag” and adding the chat-specific hashtag to each of your tweets allows you to participate. The hashtag is searchable and creates a way to filter the tweets that are part of the chat. Hashtags are also increasingly part of other social platforms, including Tumblr, Instagram, Google+, and Flickr.
* **Time and date:**Many Twitter chats are recurring events scheduled monthly, weekly, or another pre-determined interval. The joint AECT & e/Merge Africa chat will be on 25th August 2016 at 16h00 GMT

### Best Practices

**How do I participate in a Twitter chat and what are some of the best practices?**

1. Sign up for a free Twitter account if you do not already have one
2. Fill out your profile, add a picture and follow at least the leader of the Twitter chat you want to participate in.
3. If you’re relatively new to Twitter, you can begin with a basic approach: enter the designated hashtag into Twitter’s search box and start interacting with people there. If you want to get a little more advanced, tools such as TweetDeck allow you to follow the conversation with more flexibility.
4. When someone organizes a tweet chat they choose a hashtag related to the event and a time to hold the chat. For our chat the hashtag is #aectchat
5. Most moderators use a Q&A format to designate questions and answers, with anywhere from 5-10 questions tweeted out over the course of an hour. The moderator will pose questions (designated with Q1, Q2…) every 6-8 minutes to prompt responses from participants (using A1, A2…). Make sure to include the chat hashtag in your tweets, otherwise participants won’t be able to engage with you.
6. One of the three moderators will welcome participants, ask questions and generally keep the conversation on track.
7. Introduce yourself and where you’re tweeting from at the beginning of the chat.
8. If you ask a question or respond to someone in the chat, use the hashtag so everyone can be in on the conversation
9. Feel free to share tweets from within the chat with your network, perhaps by re-tweeting or with comments, but don’t forget to use the hashtag so people can follow along
10. Twitter chats can move at a quick pace, but don’t let this deter you. It can be intimidating at first, but don’t be afraid to jump in and participate. Remember: you don’t have to answer every single question. You can engage as little or as much as you want.
11. You might want to let people know you’ll be participating in a chat in advance. This lets your network know you may be a bit noisy during the chat time, but ut is also nice way to support/promote the event.
12. Some Twitter clients allow users to “mute” a particular tweeter or hashtag.
13. Do NOT sell your product or service! Twitter chats are for networking and sharing knowledge.
14. The conversation doesn’t end just because the chat comes to a close. Chances are, you’re going to meet a ton of interesting new people and even get some new followers during the chat. So, take the time to build relationships by following up with fellow participants.

### Resources

1. **Check out a past AECT twitter chat to see how others have participated**
   * https://storify.com/jweeble/cool-tools-for-learning-aectchat
2. **The links below are to videos with more information on participating**
   * How to participate in a Twitter chat by Ashley Hurley - <https://youtu.be/c2sHb_PUTfs>
   * How to join a Twitter chat by Cool Cat Teacher - <https://youtu.be/ayfu0s3ypX4>
   * How to Participate in a Twitter Chat by Bellevue Techies - <https://youtu.be/qYPnpXwkC38>
3. Most of the information in this guide were compiled from the following websites (visit them for more information)
   * A Beginner’s Guide to Twitter Chat Participation - <https://etcjournal.com/2013/06/19/a-beginners-guide-to-twitter-chat-participation>
   * The Social Media Coach - <http://janetfouts.com/how-to-participate-in-a-tweet-chat>
   * A Quick Start Guide to Participating in a Twitter Chat by Tom Murray, @thomascmurray - <https://s3.amazonaws.com/fi-communications/A+Quick+Start+Guide+to+Participating+in+a+Twitter+Chat.pdf>
4. **Generally on Twitter use in Academia**
   * **Twitter in Academia – Interview with Sukaina Walji, Research on Open Educational Resources for Development (ROER4D), University of Cape Town:** [**https://youtu.be/Q69mw5arHEA**](https://youtu.be/Q69mw5arHEA)