

Hashtags

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Estimated time:	95 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [15 minutes] Activity #1• [80 minutes] Assignment Depending on the time you have allotted for each group meeting, we suggest you engage in the portion of the “Assignment” that requires participants to develop a hashtag and accompanying image in your second group convening.
Group or individual activity:	Group
Ages:	11-18 years old
Grades:	Grades 6-12
Online / offline elements:	This learning experience contains links to online resources to help facilitate a group-based discussion, with an assignment that requires computers or mobile devices with Internet access.
Areas:	Main area: Civic and Political Engagement Additional areas: Content Production, Information Literacy, Positive / Respectful Behavior
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Learning Goal

Participants will learn how hashtags have been effective in promoting social movements. Participants will also identify how hashtags on social media can help raise awareness about an advocacy issue and will develop their own hashtag and methods of promotion for a cause that interests them.

Materials

- [For participants] Computers or mobile devices with Internet access
- [At least two per group of 2 participants] Paper
- [At least one per participant] Colored pens or pencils

Resources

- Article: [Where's the Color in Kids' Lit? Ask the Girl with 1,000 Books \(And Counting\)](#) - by Meg Anderson (National Public Radio)
- Article: ['Arepa, the Taco Is with You' — the Hashtag of Solidarity from Mexico to Venezuela](#) - by Elizabeth Rivera (Global Voices)
- Article: [Social Media Plays Crucial Role in Brazil's 'Vinegar Revolt' Protests](#) - by Debora Baldelli (Global Voices)
- Article: [These 10 Twitter Hashtags Changed the Way We Talk About Social Issues](#) - by Tanya Sichynsky (The Washington Post)
- Article: [Narrative Agency in Hashtag Activism: The Case of #BlackLivesMatter](#) - by Guobin Yang

Activity #1: Activism Using Hashtags

SAY:

- While individuals often use specific social media platforms in advocacy campaigns, these platforms share certain characteristics. One helpful common feature is the hashtag. Hashtags allow us to draw attention to our ideas by connecting our posts to other posts on the same topic. For instance, if we wanted

to share videos from our recent football game where our striker performed a hat trick, we could include “#football” and “#hattrick” in the description of the video to allow other people looking for football videos to see it. This way, we could increase the chances that professional sports scouts might view our videos.

- Hashtags are especially useful for advocacy initiatives. For instance, in the United States, after the shooting of Trayvon Martin in Florida by a police officer, a number of advocates began writing posts about race relations in the country and including the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. With the increasing popularity of the hashtag, more and more people were able to see posts about individuals’ experiences as a person of color and their engagement with the police in the United States today by searching for “#BlackLivesMatter.” Through social media activism, Black Lives Matter developed into a strong advocacy movement supported by influential people.
- The hashtag is a powerful form of social media on a global scale, outside of the scope of the United States. When the terrorist organization Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls from their high school in Chibok, Nigeria, people in Nigeria tried to raise awareness around the issue on social media by posting content online with the hashtag “#BringBackOurGirls.” The issue quickly garnered global support, with powerful public figures (e.g., those in the music and / or film [movies / TV] industry, political figures, business leaders) supporting the cause.
- There are many other examples of using hashtags for advocacy around the world. For instance, Mexican university students used “#YoSoy132” in the 2012 presidential election, Hong Kong university students rallied around the “#umbrellarevolution” hashtag during the democracy protests of 2014, and Chilean university students used “#MovimientoEstudiantil” to advocate for educational reform.
- When you are advocating for a cause, using hashtags is a great way to reach an audience with your ideas. In the assignment, we will explore the use of hashtags on social media.

Assignment

[Organize participants into pairs.]

SAY:

- In teams of two, find a hashtag that has recently been used to promote a cause.

- Once you find a hashtag, review the conversations taking place around it, and in your team, come up with a short summary of what is being discussed. You will present this summary orally to the rest of the group.
- You will have 15 minutes to find a hashtag and come up with a summary.

[Give participants 15 minutes to work. Once they are finished, allow 15 minutes for each pair to present their summaries to the group.]

ASK:

- What kind of content is being shared using the hashtags?
- Are there similar conversations happening under these different hashtags? Why do you think this is or is not happening?
- Do some hashtags seem to be more effective (e.g., more likely to be reposted) than others? Which ones? Why?

SAY:

- Now, come up with an issue that is important to both of you. In your pairs,
 1. Create a hashtag for it.
 2. Design an image, infographic, meme, chart, or graph to promote your hashtag.
 3. With your partner, discuss various ways that you can spread your hashtag through a network. What are some successful strategies we learned from examining other hashtags?
- You will have 30 minutes to complete this exercise.

[Give participants 30 minutes to engage in this exercise with their partner. Afterwards, allow 20 minutes for pairs to discuss, with the larger group, their hashtag, accompanying visual, and ideas for spreading the hashtag.]