

THE
ULTIMATE GUIDE

TO

TWITTER CHATS



INTRO

Participating in a Twitter chat is a good way to increase the reach and visibility of your brand, and your own personal influence.

It helps you make new connections and increase your authority in your industry, plus it's a great opportunity to share knowledge and build a loyal community.

SEMrush started hosting Twitter chats in October of 2014

Over the last 10 months, hundreds of people have logged on each week to share their knowledge, and nearly a thousand tweets using [#semrushchat](#) have already been posted.

Some of our chats have had a couple hundred tweeters, and have had an estimated reach of more than a million people.

One thing we have learned is that creating and launching a successful Twitter chat takes work.

We want to share with you our experience, and that's why we've created this comprehensive guide illustrating 20 tips to help you succeed with a Twitter chat of your own.

“One thing we have learned is that creating and launching a successful Twitter chat takes work.”

1. Find out how many followers you have

In our experience, it's best to have 5,000 followers or more before you launch a Twitter chat. If you have only a few followers, you may not get the kind of participation that you need.

Unfortunately, not all of your Twitter followers will be available when your chat is live, and not all will be interested in every topic. When we started to run our Twitter chat, we had 7,000 followers, and we already had a lot of industry influencers involved in our community.

2. Find a catchy hashtag

Hashtags help users search and identify content on Twitter, which is a must with the millions of tweets that are posted each week. You have a few options here:



- You can brand your chat using the name of your company and add the word "chat" if you want to take the obvious approach. Examples: #semrushchat, #vcbuzzchat, #sproutchat and #bufferchat.
- You can create your own hashtag using part of your company's name and make it your own, as CoSchedule did with #cochat.
- You can choose a hashtag related to a topic, like Unbounce's #CROchat for conversion optimization.

The best hashtags are short and clear.

Brainstorm a couple of options for your main hashtag and then make sure nobody else is using it by searching on Twitter or on [hashtags.org](https://www.hashtags.org).

Before you make a final decision, assess each tag's potential for bashtagging. If your chosen hashtag can be easily repurposed into something negative then avoid it and think again. Don't forget that you can also add a topic-related hashtag to your tweets when appropriate.

3. Choose a time slot

There are dozens of Twitter chats out there. People in your niche may already be running one. See what's out there (take part in a couple for tips and inspiration) and then decide which slot to host your chat in and what broad theme it should cover.

There's no point in saturating people's Twitter stream with another chat on the same topic. Aim to offer additional value instead. Check the times and dates of the most popular chats so you can identify the best time for yours.

4. Pick topics that will interest your followers

Once you have a niche, you need some specific topics for each chat. Make no mistake; you have to plan your Twitter chats just like you plan other forms of content marketing.

To help you choose, check suitable keywords using SEMrush or your favorite keyword analysis tool. This will tell you what information people are looking for and guide you on how your Twitter chat can add value.

When inviting guest experts, don't just randomly pick a topic from your list of ideas. Look at their area of expertise, discuss with them what they would feel comfortable chatting about, and adjust your topic and questions accordingly.



5. Create your own questions

Once you have identified your broad niche and topics, then it's time to focus on specific questions. Most chats focus on around five questions and may include one related to the brand, as #myblogu's chat does.

At SEMrush, we like to create a wide-ranging list of questions and let guests choose the ones they most want to answer. **Here are some tips on coming up with questions for almost any topic:**

- Ask people to discuss mistakes they have made or seen.
- Ask for recommendations for favorite tools.
- If you have expert guests, ask for pro tips.
- Discuss the anatomy of the topic.
- Check your blog and social media profiles to see what people are discussing.
- Use Google. Type your keyword in and see what the search suggestion box shows.
- Check other people's articles to see what questions they have asked that would also be useful for your chat, but remember to avoid plagiarism when framing your question.

6. Invite guests

You can run your Twitter chat yourself every time, but it's much more interesting for participants if you have a special guest.

If your guest is an expert whom most participants normally wouldn't be able to access, that makes it even more appealing.



When you are right at the beginning of your Twitter chat journey, check out your existing partners to find those who are most loyal to you and your brand.

Don't aim for stars at first. Your brand advocates will be more patient and forgiving of any possible flaws or omissions, which will most likely occur early on.

7. Create promotional materials

For Twitter, you need two kinds of promotional materials for your Twitter chat: tweets (which can also be used as status updates on other social media sites) and visuals (which we'll look at in the next tip).

Your tweets should include:

- A standard chat promo tweet.
- A tweet highlighting your guest.
- A couple of the questions for your guests to answers.

Include the chat hashtag, the topic hashtag (both of these can be small) and the time and date of the chat. **Tweet templates:**

- How do you (topic-related question)? Join our (#hashtag) chat with (@specialguest) to share your tips!
- How to Supercharge (topic-related issue)! Join (#hashtag) chat with (@specialguest) on (date and time) to discover new ideas!
- Join today's (#hashtag discussion)! Topic: _____. Special guest: (@specialguest). We start at (time)!
- Share your best (topic) tips with other experts! Make sure you join our (#hashtag) chat tomorrow at (time+time zone)!
- Twitter chat with (@guest) this week! >>> Topic: _____. Hashtag: (#hashtag)

Once you share these, you will begin to build a buzz around your Twitter chat.

8. Use images

We all know that social media users love images, so it's worth mentioning again that they are a key part of your chat promotion strategy.

Visuals can include:

- A standard chat promo tweet.
- A tweet highlighting your guest.
- A couple of questions your guests will answer.
- A branded general chat graphic.
- A branded graphic with an image of your guest plus the topic.

As with text tweets, your images should include the chat hashtag, the topic hashtag and the time and date of the chat. We like Adobe Creative Cloud for choosing harmonious color schemes and recommend Canva for creating Twitter chat visuals.

When tweeting images, be sure to include a text version with the associated hashtag so people can find your chat easily.

9. Proofread obsessively

It only takes one small mistake to ruin your online reputation.

Before you send any of your tweets or visuals, proofread them carefully to make sure the spelling, grammar and details are correct.

“For best results, create some of the other tweets you'll need ahead of time and proofread those too.”

For best results, create some of the other tweets you'll need ahead of time and proofread those too.

These may include tweets for greeting guests and participants, introducing the chat, and ending the chat. See our list of tweet templates to help you craft your own.

10. Share promotional materials with your guests

If you're featuring guests in your Twitter chat, let them have copies of your visuals and send them tweet templates in case they want to let their own followers know about the chat.

At SEMrush, we never ask guests to do this, but some people offer, and most are happy to do it if you make it easy.

11. Use email marketing

Use other marketing channels to promote your Twitter chat. A key one is your email newsletter. Email remains the most popular marketing channel, so inviting your subscribers to take part in a Twitter chat is a no-brainer. Remember to include a link to one of your promotional tweets and ask for retweets to help spread the word.

12. Invite super influencers

Every brand's got them - super influencers and raving fans who love you. Chances are your audience already follows some of these influencers and trusts what they say, so getting them on your side is a big plus.

Find your super influencers by using tools like Klear and Klout. Then invite a few of them to take part in your chat. Their presence alone will increase your potential audience.

13. Invite your audience

When you have everything you need to make your Twitter chat compelling and successful, it's time to invite your audience. Here are some things to do:

- Email your colleagues, letting them know about the date, time and topic of your chat, the questions to be discussed, and the guest. Some of them may choose to take part in the chat, making it an even better experience for participants.
- Put out a general call to your list of followers sharing some of the visuals and tweets you have already created.
- When your followers favorite or retweet your tweets on any topic, include a mention of the upcoming Twitter chat when you thank them. Hootsuite and other social media dashboard tools are great for keeping on top of this, but you can also just use Twitter itself.
- On the day of the chat, invite people who have recently participated in your previous chats by sending them a reminder that a chat is due to take place.

When we started the SEMrush Twitter chat, we initially publicized it to our Twitter list of blog contributors, but there are other options.

Use tools like [Followerwonk](#) to get a picture of your audience. Followerwonk also allows you to export your list of followers into Excel, sort by time zone and filter by interest.

Unfortunately, you have to do this manually, but if you only invite followers who are interested in the topic of your chat, it's likely to be more successful. For a recent chat on SEO, we filtered by the term "SEO" in an Excel file and invited those who were interested in that topic.

Examples of invitation tweets:

Invitations:

- Please join us (time and date) to share your (topic) tips with other experts via (#hashtag)! :)
- Please join us in ___ mins to share your expert (topic) tips with our audience via (#hashtag) if you have time! :)

When someone RT's your tweet:

- Thanks for sharing! Would you have time to join us (date and time) to discuss the best (topic) strategies via (#hashtag)?
- Thanks for sharing! Please join us (date and time) to discuss the best (topic) tips via (#hashtag)!
- Thanks for sharing! We'd be happy if you joined our (#hashtag) chat on (date and time)! Topic: _____

To someone who recently starting following you:

- Happy to connect! We're super excited to invite you to today's (#hashtag) chat at (time) to discuss the best (topic) tips! :)

14. Take the first few minutes to welcome people

When the date and time arrives, don't just dive into your chat with questions. It can take people a couple of minutes to get there and you wouldn't want them to miss anything. Plus, you want to have their full attention before you start asking questions.

This is a good time to:

- Welcome people.
- Share some general, quick news.
- Have a small talk.
- This should only take a couple of minutes.

Avoid announcing other offers at this time. If people leave to check out your call to action, they may never come back.

15. Ask questions and monitor answers

Once everyone is settled, it's time to ask questions. Make sure you seven questions or less, not more. A list of six questions is ideal.

You can also use images for these, as people will share them; but remember to include text versions of the questions too.

Allow a few minutes for your experts to answer each question and discuss any follow-up issues that may arise before moving to the next one.

Monitor the answers, keeping track of the most popular and compelling ones for your recap (see tip #20). This will help you create a summary that people will share on Twitter, resulting in more engagement with your topic and brand.

If you've run out of questions, arrange a giveaway or a poll. This is an easy way to engage and entertain your audience. Just don't overwhelm them with extra questions on the your chat's topic.

16. Engage

When moderating a chat, let participants know that you value their input. An easy way to do this is to favorite and retweet the best tweets, and of course, respond to them.

17. Thank your participants

At the end of your chat, use your thank you tweet to thank your special guests and participants. Let them know how they can find out more about your guests and how they can engage with you.

This is a great time to share a link to another event or to a recap blog post (see tip #20).

At SEMrush, we love to show the people behind the brand, so we usually post a selfie at the end of our chats. You will know what works for you.

We also post a tweet with statistics from each chat created via [Tweet Binder](#) (see tip #19).

18. Thank your guests

As well as thanking your participants at the end of a chat, it's only polite to thank your guests for their time after the chat by sending an email.

It's a simple relationship-management tip that many people forget. Doing this builds a relationship with your guests, and, you never know, there may be an opportunity for you to work together in the future.

19. Use Tweet Binder

There are many hashtag analysis tools on the market, but the hearts of SEMrush's social media team belong to [Tweet Binder](#). This tool gives great insights into how your chat is working.

With a free account, you can enter a hashtag and check its reach, find out who has engaged with you the most, check their level of influence and location, and much more.

But a paid subscription unlocks even more insights. It also lets you export chat data and get a complete list of participants. This allows you to increase their engagement and invite them to future chats. After all, if they have already participated, they may be your ideal audience.

20. Create a recap post

Twitter chats can be a great marketing tool even after they're over. One of the best ways to get more from your chat is to create a recap post. In the post you can:

- Pick out the best tweets and link them together with your own commentary.
- Create images with the best quotes.
- Embed actual tweets.
- Choose the best 10 to 15 answers for each question and create a graphic with those answers.



Don't forget to mention your special guest and anybody who contributed something that you think is worth sharing.

Let people know via tweet that they were mentioned in the recap and thank them again, or send them a group message, if you don't have time to tweet directly.

As you can see, putting together a successful Twitter chat can be hard work, but it is extremely rewarding in terms of relationship building, as well as audience growth and engagement.

That's why it's such an important part of content strategy.

Moreover, it makes your marketing team cooperate more - your social media team prepares the whole process, PR looks for the special guest, and your content team creates super awesome recap posts.

“Twitter chats can be hard work, but it is extremely rewarding in terms of relationship building, as well as audience growth and engagement.”

Start creating a Twitter chat yourself and make sure to invite the [@semrush](#) team to participate! Also we'd also love to connect with you on social media and get your feedback about this guide. Keep us updated about your Twitter chat achievements!