

# Twitter Tips – The ‘Hashtag’



If you are new to Twitter, you may be wondering what all of those blue words are starting with the # sign. Those are called Hashtags and are a powerful little tool on Twitter. Here is what they are generally used for:

**To find things:** The initial use of hashtags, and still the primary purpose, was for creating a ‘tag word’ that people could use in their tweets to find things. You can make up any word you want, as long as it doesn’t have spaces or punctuation in it, and simply put the # at the start of the word. People who click on the hashtag or search for one, can find all of the tweets with that in it. In the example above, the #cdnELT hashtag is used to locate tweets that are around the topic of English language teaching in Canada. If you clicked on or searched for that tag, you would find all of the tweets with that tag in it. Of course you can search for almost anything, but what if what you are searching for makes up a part of another word, such as in the case of ELT (English language teaching)? So many words and names have the combination ‘elt’ in it and have nothing to do with English language teaching. Search for #ELT and you will primarily find tweets about that subject.

**To give context:** Due to the nature of Twitter, you can’t put everything you want into a tweet. Hashtags are a simple way to show the general subject of the link you have posted or the text in the tweet. In the example above, we know the subject of the blogs must be about English language teaching in Canada due to the hashtag. The subject of the text only mentioned educational blogs, but not the subject area. Instead of using the title of the blog post in the tweet along with the text ‘English language teaching in Canada’, Natalia chose to use the short and simple hashtag #cdnELT. Also, sometimes things we mention need context. We can put in a quote and then a hashtag and now the reader has context and subject in a simple form.



## **Language Instruction Support and Training Network**

**Twitter chats:** One of the great things that has come out of Twitter is the Twitter chat. This is usually a set time when people get together online to discuss a topic on Twitter using a single hashtag to keep track of the tweets related to the chat. An example is #LINCchat every second Tuesday evening. People working in LINC in Canada get together for an hour to tweet on a topic using the hashtag #LINCchat in their tweets. People ‘follow’ the hashtag either on the Twitter website or using another website or program such as Tweetdeck so they can follow the online ‘conversation’. It is very simple, but extremely effective in bringing people from all over together to share their questions, problems, solutions, and ideas. You can find out more about #LINCchat here: <http://j.mp/lincchat>

**Humour:** You will often see a tweet that has a really long or strange hashtag in it such as #isitFridayyet. In this case, the tweeter is likely talking about something silly that has happened due to them being tired. These hashtags serve no real purpose other than to add levity to the situation.

**Automation:** Some third-party applications can also connect to your Twitter account and use your hashtags to do things such as send out a message to Facebook. Some people use an online service called IFTTT (If This, Then That) to automate all sorts of things. Using a hashtag as a ‘keyword’ or ‘signal’ to IFTTT makes it simpler to do all sorts of repetitive tasks. These are not meant for the person reading the tweet and can be confusing for some people.