

7 Ways to use social media for education

1. Use a Facebook Page to broadcast updates and alerts.

Facebook can be the perfect social media platform to incorporate into the classroom. Instead of putting instructors and students alike through a new learning curve when dealing with a traditional online classroom dashboard, stick to something everyone already knows.

Have students follow the class's Facebook page and the instructor can use it to post class updates, share homework assignments and encourage discussion.

Even if a student isn't active on Facebook, these Pages are still accessible when signed out. However, keep in mind Facebook Page are public and anyone with a Facebook account can comment on the posts.

2. Use a Facebook Group to stream live lectures and host discussions.

Instructors can also create Facebook groups for each of their classes—both public or private—and stream Facebook Live lectures, post discussion questions, assign homework and make class announcements. Keep students engaged during school breaks or snow days by posting reminders and assignment to avoid having to review once class resumes from the break.

When using social media for education, it's important to ensure a professional boundary, so when setting up a Facebook Group, teachers do not need to send friend requests. Email both parents and students a direct link to the Facebook Group for access.

Groups are the perfect "home base," especially for an online course and can make it easy to connect with student.

3. Use Twitter as a class message board.

Twitter can be great as a discussion board or message board for a class. Teachers can create a single Twitter handle per class and reuse it every year, or they can create a new handle each school year. The 280-character limit makes students think critically on communicating concisely and effectively, a beneficial skill to develop.

Teacher can use Twitter to post reminders for assignment due dates or share inspirational quotes and helpful links to practice quizzes or resources.

Teacher can also create discussions and Twitter chats surrounding a specific hashtag that they create.

4. Use Instagram for photo essays.

In a visual heavy class, students can use Instagram to present a series of photos or graphics in a visually appealing manner. Instagram allows students to practice digital storytelling in ways that other social media platforms may fall short.

Students can create class-specific Instagram accounts and may delete them after the course is over if they so choose.

5. Create a class blog for discussions.

Writing blog posts gives students another outlet for digital content that they can then easily link back to class social channels. There are many different platforms available, such as WordPress, Squarespace, Wix, Blogger, Tumblr or Medium, where teachers can create a class blog. Students can create their own user accounts to make discussion posts or add comments on class prompts.

The course syllabus and any assignments, updates and resources can be shared on a blog as a central location as well.

6. Assign blog posts as essays.

Having students create in their own blog for essays or short-form writing is another strategy for combining social media and learning. Blogs as a semester- or year-long assignment can improve students' short-form writing and critical thinking. Have students respond to weekly prompts, making it as informal and loosely structured as possible. Don't feel limited to just an English or writing class; this use of social media in education can be transferred across all subjects.

7. Create a class-specific Pinterest board.

Instructors can create Pinterest boards for each of their classes and save pins that are relevant to lessons.

Pinterest is a great social media platform for teachers to use to prepare and organize resources, lesson plans and worksheets for their classes in one place. Create boards according to class or subject and create sub-topic boards for weekly units or all worksheets.

Pinterest can also be useful for students to curate a digital bibliography for research projects, papers, or group assignments. Students can pin websites, books, or videos to a board on a single topic and refer to it when it's time to write.