

# Using #hashtags and @handles

This guide is optimized for your phone—use it on the go!

# Using #hashtags and @handles

Amplify your message by using hashtags and handles the right way. Don't just post your content into the void—make sure you're plugging into the right conversations with the right folks. And always use #OFAAction when talking about your organizing work!

**Haven't signed up for a social media platform yet?**

[Get started on Twitter](#)

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## **What's a hashtag?**

A hashtag is any word or string of characters (not including spaces or special characters) that has a # symbol at the beginning (e.g. #Obamacare, #OFAAction, #RubberStamp, or #ProtectOurCare).

A hashtag basically indexes your tweet or post based on the “keyword” that follows the # symbol. They were designed as a way of organizing tweets



or posts so that you can easily focus-in on a specific topic or conversation

[Read more from the experts at Twitter →](#)

## How am I supposed to use hashtags as an organizer?

Since Twitter recommends that you don't use more than one or two hashtags in a single post, be strategic about which hashtags you're using with your content. And try to work the hashtags into your language organically, if you can.



**Obamacare** ✓  
@Obamacare

Following

17 million fewer insured next year  
32 million fewer insured by 2026  
Premiums doubled by 2026  
This is #NotAHealthCareBill — it's  
#RepealAndRun.

**CBO Cost Estimates** ✓ @USCBOcostest

H.R. 1628, Obamacare Repeal Reconciliation Act of 2017 [cbo.gov/publication/52...](http://cbo.gov/publication/52...)



## Where can I find the right hashtags to use?

Not every word or phrase is meant to be a hashtag. A good place to find the most relevant hashtags to use is to look to trusted organizations (e.g. OFA, ACLU, Planned Parenthood, Sierra Club, etc.) that work on the issues that interest you.

These organizations are typically plugged into the wider conversations going on with their issues, so the hashtags they use can help you identify the right one to use for a particular moment, event, or campaign.



**Our Lives**  
@OurLives

Follow

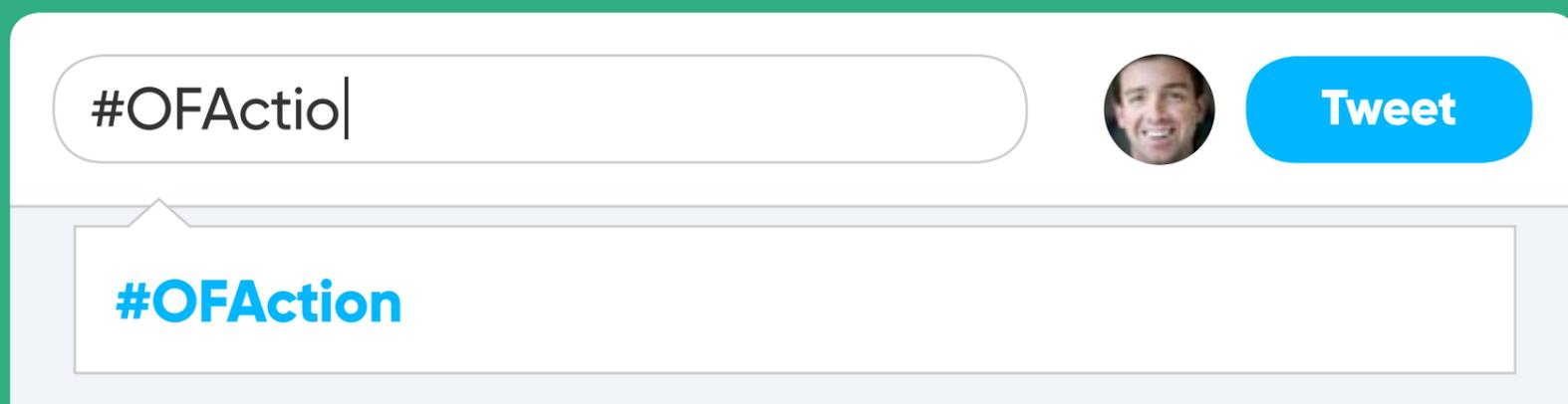
.@lisamurkowski and @SenatorCollins stood against their fellow GOP senators to #ProtectOurCare yesterday. RT to show your thanks.

## How do I use hashtags to find the right conversations?

Just type the hashtag you're interested in (e.g. #Obamacare or #OFAAction) into the platform's



search field to see a filtered list of posts that will now include that specific hashtag.



This is why you should use #OFAction whenever you're posting about organizing—so that OFA volunteers and staff can find your content by searching for that hashtag and then help lift it up with a like, a comment, or a retweet. The more engagement a post has, the more likely other users will be able to see it.

## Will using hashtags help my content go viral?

Including a hashtag in your post could help amplify your message because it plugs your content into an ongoing conversation that other folks are having using that same hashtag, but you shouldn't expect to "go viral."



Your goal should be to share your organizing work and make an impact within your own network of followers.

## What's the deal with "trending" hashtags?

Getting a hashtag to trend is not always the goal, but when it does, millions of more people can see it. So when you see organizations like OFA, Planned Parenthood, or the ACLU using a specific hashtag, it's generally part of a coordinated effort to get more people to see a certain topic or discussion.

If enough people start to use the same hashtag within a certain amount of time, the topic of the hashtag may start to trend, either locally in your hometown (like Chicago below) or even nationally.

The trends list is based on an algorithm designed to help users identify the most breaking-news in certain locations.

[More on trending topics on Twitter →](#)



# What's a @handle and how should I use it?

A “handle” is a username that follows the @ symbol. So, for example, Organizing for Action’s Twitter handle is @OFA. When addressing a particular account (like an elected official, a fellow volunteer, or an organization), make sure to use the “@” symbol followed by the username.

Using handles to direct your content toward specific individuals or groups is also referred to as “tagging.”



Anna

Follow

We will hold @SenToomey accountable!  
#SaveMedicaid #ProtectOurCare #OFAAction



# Why do I need to use a handle and when should I use it?

Use handles when you want the individual or group to be more likely to see your content. Most accounts get notified when someone else mentions their handle in a post.

For example, if you're thanking attendees for coming out to your event, be sure to use their handle within your post.



Paul

Following

Thank you @SenJohnMcCain,  
@SenatorCollins, @LisaMurkowski for saving  
Obamacare! @SenRonJohnson  
#WeDeserveBetter! #OurLives @OFA\_WI  
#OFAAction



Or, if you're trying to hold your elected official accountable, be sure to tag their handle in the post so that whomever is managing their social media manager knows that you're speaking to them.

It's also helpful to use this tactic with other organizations that you may be working with on the ground, like Planned Parenthood or the ACLU. Like OFA, they want to see how folks are taking action on the issues and may be looking for posts to like and share.



**David Miller**  
@davidmill



Thank you [@neeratanden](#) [@CecileRichards](#) [@SecSebelius](#) for working to [#ProtectOurCare!](#) [@OFA](#) community is proud to stand with you. [#OFAction](#)



**Cecile Richards** [@CecileRichards](#)

Still on Capitol Hill, continuing the fight for the millions whose health care is on the line. Watch: [facebook.com/PlannedParenth...](https://facebook.com/PlannedParenth...)

### **Pro-Tip #1:**

Don't forget: We're using social media as an organizing tool to connect with fellow supporters. Don't be shy about asking for someone's handle or



email when you meet them at a progressive event or a community gathering.

### **Pro-Tip #2**

Try not to use more than one or two hashtags. Too many, and your content will be harder to read and folks will tend to ignore your post.

### **Pro-Tip #3**

If you start a tweet with a user's handle (e.g. @OFA), Twitter won't show your content in your followers' timelines (it treats it like a reply). So if you want your followers to see your post, make sure to put a character—like a period—before the @ symbol.



**If you have feedback on this guide or would like to see other topics covered in future toolkits, email us at [organizing@ofa.us](mailto:organizing@ofa.us)**