

7. JOINING ONLINE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE



What is it?

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people with shared interests who develop collaboratively by interacting with each other. In the past, this meant joining teacher associations in your town or district and attending meetings. Nowadays, online CoPs have become very popular with teachers.

Why join an online community of practice?

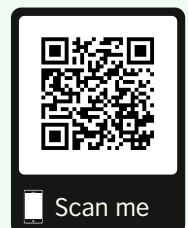
An online community of practice allows you to connect with teachers from around the world and gives you access to experts in your field. What's more, it doesn't take up much time and is convenient for busy teachers. All this and more at no cost!

There are many online platforms, but Facebook and Twitter are the most popular and you can easily find many that interest you.

Facebook



Communities of practice are organised as groups and pages on Facebook. Look through the suggestions on the next page. After you join a few, Facebook will suggest other groups you can join or pages you can follow.

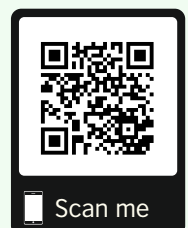


Scan this QR code to go to the TeachEnglish in India Facebook page.

Twitter



You can also follow communities of practice on Twitter. While there might not be as much interaction as Facebook, a lot of links and resources are shared on Twitter. By following accounts that interest you, you will get bite-sized relevant learning delivered to your Twitter feed.



Scan this QR code to go to the Teach English in India Twitter feed.



This guide uses Quick Response (QR) codes. To scan these codes, look for the app in Google Play or App Store and download it for free. To access resources, open the app and hold it above a QR code.

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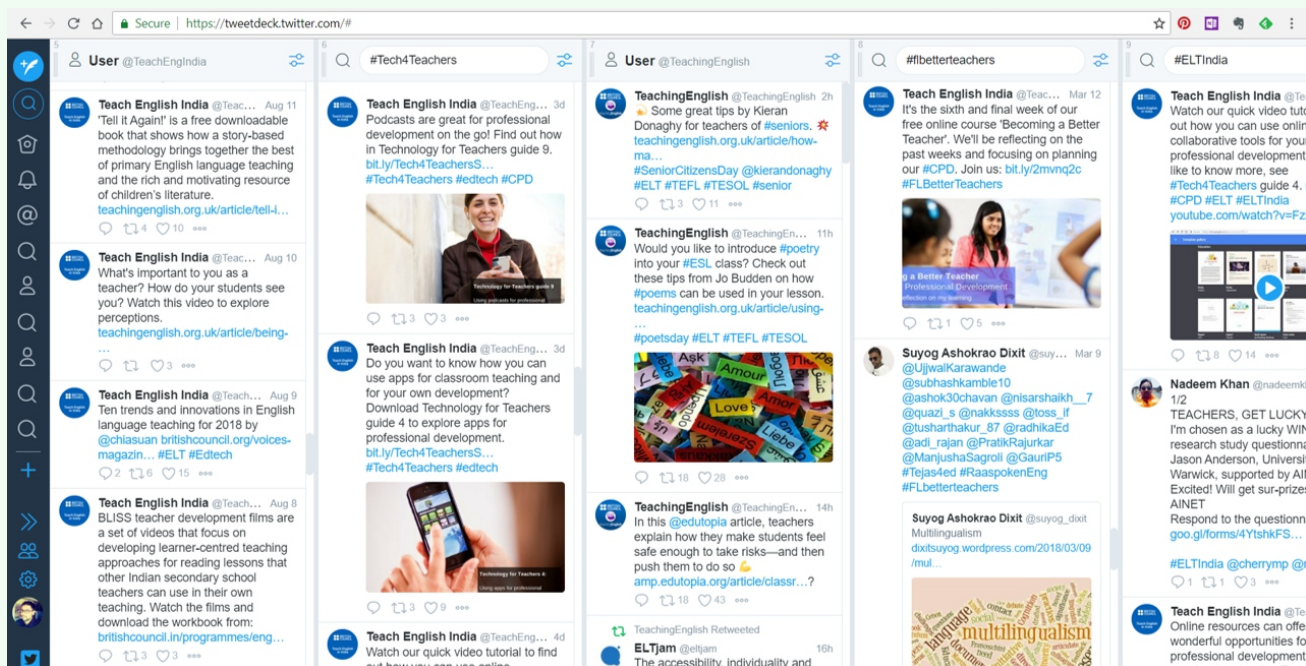
Using hashtags to discover communities of practice



Although hashtags are used on both Facebook and Twitter, they are particularly useful for finding interesting accounts or handles on Twitter. Get started with general hashtags like **#education**, **#teaching** and **#classroom** before exploring technology related hashtags such as **#edtech** and subject specific ones like **#ELT**. Don't forget to follow new handles you discover. If you're an advanced user, explore **Tweetdeck** for tracking interesting hashtags.

After you join these groups, don't feel pressured to contribute immediately. It's a good idea to observe how people interact and what they share before you start participating more actively. You can start slowly by liking posts on Facebook and retweeting on Twitter.

(For more information on using Twitter, take a look at the guide: **Participating in and hosting Twitter chats**)



This guide is linked to the British Council CPD Framework for Teachers.

It develops the professional practice:

Integrating ICT: Promoting collaborative and participatory learning by exploiting online communities, tools and platforms.

Stage: Awareness