



STOPPING HATE



HOW TO COUNTER HATE SPEECH
ON TWITTER?

WHY COUNTER SPEECH?

Counter speech is a way of responding to hateful messages.

If left unchallenged, the peddling of myths, lies, and the use of hateful rhetoric and abuse can lead to more harm being done - especially when individuals are targeted without knowing there is support out there and 'haters' gain more confidence about expressing their views both on and off-line.

BEFORE COUNTERING ON TWITTER...



File a report with Twitter that someone is Tweeting abusive messages. Twitter can temporarily lock and permanently suspend accounts that violate the **Twitter rules**: <https://support.twitter.com/forms>

If you are being abused, if needs-be, use Twitter tools to stay safe:

BLOCK AND MUTE:

<https://about.twitter.com/safety/three-tools-to-control-your-twitter-experience>

Find out the law in your country governing abuse and hate on social media. Report hateful Tweets to the police if you think they fall foul of the law.

Find a civil society organisation in your country involved in monitoring or countering hateful speech. Report the hateful Tweet to them.

SAFETY FIRST

Directly countering hateful Tweets can be hazardous. Arguing back may simply provoke hatred in your direction.

If you were the original target of the hate, the sense of violation you feel will be magnified if speaking back provokes a reaction.

Even if you weren't originally the target of the hate, you may become a target if you respond.

At the very least, engaging in counter speech can lead to emotionally bruising encounters. You should ensure that you have access to support from others.



Therefore, don't work alone.

It's always best to engage in counter speech through a community or civil society organisation where you will have the support of others.

They may also help safeguard you by conducting counter speech through an organisation or group account.

Find a campaign against hate speech on social media. Volunteer your services.

DON'T BE ABUSIVE

Make sure your words and any content you share do not spread bigotry, prejudice, or hate, or contain otherwise unlawful content.

DON'T SPREAD THEIR HATE

Giving attention to fringe individuals with few followers and their hatred can be counterproductive. You might give them the attention and publicity that they crave.

RESPOND PROMPTLY

Responding to old Tweets risks reviving a conversation and having the adverse effect of spreading hate speech to others who might not have seen it before. Timing is therefore critical.

THINK ABOUT YOUR OBJECTIVES

Are you seeking to engage with the person expressing hateful speech? What for? Are you seeking to lessen the consequences of a hateful Tweet on the wider audience? Are you seeking to express support for a group or identity under attack? Thinking about your goals will help shape your response and the language you use.

TRY TO ENLIST INFLUENTIAL SUPPORTERS

Add their usernames to Tweets. Celebrities, politicians, civic leaders and subject experts can help bring attention or add weight to your counter-narrative.

JUMP IN ON EXISTING HASHTAGS

This will increase the chances that your message will be seen beyond the Tweeter who you may be replying to. This may help divert the tone of an otherwise negative hashtag discussion. It may also encourage others not to feel silenced and empower them to join in.

INTRODUCE NEW HASHTAGS

...alongside those associated with a hateful message.

This will help divert the tone to a more positive and inclusive direction and provide a space where others might feel comfortable joining in.

BUILD A NARRATIVE

- **Build up a narrative** over time. See counter speech as a long term process.
- **Post consistently over** time to increase your profile and ability to engage more widely.
- **Be prepared** to engage in a back and forth discussion if your objective is to change somebody's views. But don't feed a troll: that's what they crave.
- **Develop a resource bank** of counter-arguments, statistics, information, sources and links to support your counter narrative.
- **Subject knowledge** is important and those engaging in hateful speech may be armed with many misleading sources of information which they will use. Counter them with credible evidence from independent and reputable sources which can't be accused of being partial.

For ideas, go to:

www.h8hurts.eu/social-media

BE VISUAL

Visuals - such as carefully chosen images and videos - help drive interest and engagement with your message.

For ideas, go to:

<http://www.h8hurts.eu/social-media>

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY



Choosing the right words for counter speech in any given circumstance takes skill and experience. Here, though, is some general advice:

DON'T GET PERSONAL

Challenge the message - don't attack the person who sent it. Provoking defensiveness on their part might inflame the situation and you don't want others to leap to their defence.

THINK ABOUT YOUR TONE

- Express support to those who might be under attack.
- Actively reinforce social norms of civility, mutual respect and politeness. (It puts pressure on others to do likewise. And if they don't, their incivility is emphasised).
- Invoke notions of shared ideas and knowledge (either with the hate speech protagonist, or the observer who may be swayed).
- Appeal to common interests, identity and values.
- Express kindness, countering hate with empathy and positivity.
- Use language that will help encourage bystanders to join the debate and express their support for your message.
- Ensure your Tweets are constructive and be prepared to engage with underlying anxieties, misperceptions or fears that may have led someone to express a hateful sentiment or which may lead others to be sympathetic to a hateful message.
- Be careful if using sarcasm, humour, parody and satire, as they run the danger of being antagonistic.

DISENGAGING FROM COUNTER SPEECH

Think about disengagement strategies that won't leave you feeling wounded. If a seemingly extreme hater targets you with a hateful Tweet you might respond with kindness by saying "Sorry you feel the need to express yourself this way. Have a nice day."

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