

**SPECIAL FEATURE**

**HASHTAGS**

## A guide to a blissful virtual life

**A** quick glance at my Facebook newsfeed can sometimes turn into a never ending ordeal. First there were those whose lives I wanted to follow so intricately that they decided to check in at the loo. But what led to that – a mind wonders? Behold the glory of the egg and rice that was had for dinner. Not that these people haven't existed for a while, and although my fingers ache to the point of being permanently disfigured by keeping them crossed, hoping beyond hope that the trend passes came the attack of the hashtags. Because what is a picture of a 'dim-poch' if not accompanied by #dim #poch #shokalernasta.

Hashtags evolved out of a necessity in an age of data where everything from your Google search algorithm to the stories that go viral are governed and directed by constant information processing. Use it with care and your next story can be the buzz of social media tonight. Use it wrong and you are probably part of one of the following groups.

**The Hashtag OD**

So you had a nice day out with your family or your significant other. Good for you. You think it would be a nice to cherish this memory forever and want to upload it on Facebook to share the joy with your pals. Sure, why not? But then you decide that the only way all of this has any value whatsoever is to put the caption "#Fun day out with #family/#friends. #precious\_moments #love." Even ignoring the complete uselessness of those tags, why anyone would want



to use four hashtags in one sentence is completely baffling.

**The Ironic Hashtagers**

So you know that hashtags are not meant to be used the way they are by the common Joe. And the funny guy that you are, you think the way to stick it to social norms is to continue the abuse and hold a mirror to the face of the world's stupidity. Very mature – if you are still in school that is. If you are above the age of 14, please just stop. #toocooltohashtag must stop. You are not helping anyone.

**Just BD things**

This category has curiously developed in Bangladesh. Facebook and Twitter conveniently allows one to tag a certain person

by using the @ sign. But recently, especially in pages like DSD, that has been replaced by the hashtag. Why? Who knows?

**The Verbal Hashtager**

This group, too cool to use the actual hash sign, will actually write out things like "Hashtag date with best friend." Fifth grade sarcasm? The # button not working on the keyboard? Because that's the way they roll? Again, who knows?

**The road to hell...**

It all started with noble intentions. Hashtags are amazing and convenient when used right. It developed as a way to categorise information on Twitter. So when the popular #everydaysexism started, women wanting to share their stories had

to simply add that somewhere in their tweet, and voila! It was part of the growing number of similar tweets and women had a collective voice while being scattered throughout the world. A simple search by that keyword would bring up all the messages posted under the tag.

People use hashtags to identify what is happening at a particular event or the developments of a breaking news or emergency. So a simple search by #ARGvsGER during the World Cup would bring up all the live tweets from the arena, news agencies and spectators. On a wider scale, such as on Instagram, keywords like street photography can be used as hashtags to group similar images so that users can find them quickly under one search.

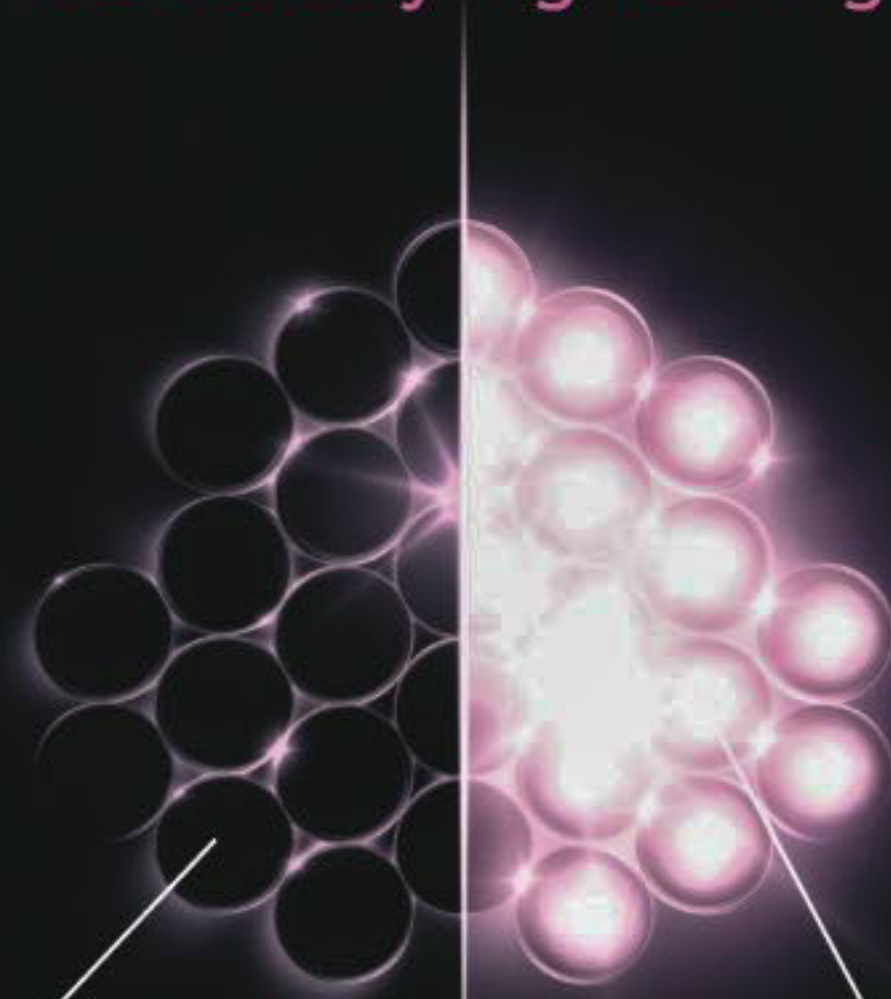
**Is there a hashtag etiquette?**

Yes. To be brief, follow the few simple rules. Don't overdo them. If absolutely necessary, one is good, two, and you are pushing it. Keep it short. #Gaza is fine, while #iamcurrentlyunemployedandthustakingaselfie is not. Search what the hashtag you are about to use has been used for in the past. If your post falls under the same category, use it. And, although Facebook now supports them, it's best to lay off them unless you really know what you are doing. We tend to dilute and reduce great inventions to absurdities. For the sake of tags out there being used for great purposes, know thy hashtags before pressing the CTRL+3.

**By Moyukh Mahtab**

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