Best Practices for Live-Tweeting (and other Social Media Engagement) at Academic Conferences

1. Do not tweet while you are on the dais or a part of the group presenting (unless it is part of the presentation and then please make that clear to the audience)
2. Attribution: make sure people know the main speaker or what the tweeting is about. For conferences, you often see the tweet prefaced by the speaker's last name. Use the conference hashtag or include the event's twitter handle so that people know where you are receiving your information. Try to link back to original works of the individual or the associated websites.
3. Be clear in your tweets about who is saying what. If you don't attribute and/or use quotation marks when reporting what has been said, people can (and rightly will) assume it's you saying it. If the speaker is on Twitter, find out what they are called on Twitter in advance, as their 'handle' will often be shorter than their name.
4. If you are quoting directly, use quotation marks. Think direct and indirect reported speech. Never assume anything you read online is from the public domain. Attribute other people's ideas or anything else you quote. It's not just good manners; it's professional ethics.
5. Don't share too much: it's hard to reveal too much in 140 characters, but you still need to be careful. The goal of live-tweeting is to share and engage, not give every single detail. You don't want to jeopardize someone else's research or your own.
6. Be a good colleague: as always, be positive and supportive of your peers. If there is something you want to critique, do it in a constructive not destructive manner. Approach peers in person if you want to have a more extended discussion. Also, respect the wishes of the individual if they ask that you don't share information online.
7. If you are going to take photos, whether you intend to post them online or not, always ask if it's OK first, even if it's impractical to do so. It's better not to take photos of large groups (i.e. the audience) unless you have permission from all of them to do so.
8. If you will be in charge of live-tweeting the whole event or individual sessions, take it seriously. It's a cliché but with great power comes great responsibility.
9. If you are live-tweeting an event, assume that people outside the conference will be interested and/or will read your tweets. This includes people who don't follow you directly. Explain frequently what that obscure hashtag means, so the hashtag achieves the purpose of promoting the event and ideas outside the four walls of the event venue.
10. Link liberally. Search for references as speakers present. Share with your followers the resources the presenters are showing in the room – unless you are not meant to and one should expect speakers and/or organizers to indicate this in advance.
11. Enjoy it. Live-tweeting should be fun, empowering and inspiring. It should create positive opportunities. It's all about engagement, community building and widening participation.