

Threads in Teams Channels: Best Practices & FAQ

Q: When should I use a threads vs. a post layout channel?

Threads channels are a good choice when...

- You want free-flowing, less structured collaboration and lightweight chat experience, with the durability of channels
- You need to have a chronological conversation where ideas build on each other and there's a sequential flow to a conversation
- You want less clutter in the main conversation, since replies are rolled up and not visible in the main view
- Example: Small collaboration group with a lot of back and forth

Post reply channels work well when...

- You want more structure and rigor for announcements or message boards
- You want more flexible moderation capabilities
- You want to be caught up on details in the replies on every conversation, since conversations are re-ordered based on recency of replies
- Examples: Announcement channel with lengthy posts and one-to-many communication

Ultimately, it's up to you! Try both (it's easy to switch back and forth) and see what works best for your team.

Q: How is a threads layout channel different from a group chat?

Threads channels come with extra benefits like

- **Centralize discussions.** Group chats on related topics can quickly multiply, leading to scattered and hard-to-track conversations. Threads channels keep everything in one place, with organized threads that make it easier to follow, search, and reference discussions.
- **Reduce meeting chat sprawl.** Channel-based meetings store all discussions, notes, and shared content in a single, persistent location—neatly organized into threads—making it easier to revisit past conversations and maintain continuity over time.
- **Simplify onboarding.** When all relevant information lives in one channel, new team members can get up to speed quickly. Instead of managing access to multiple group chats, simply add them to the channel to give them full context and history from day one.

- **Better information longevity.** Since channel content is backed by SharePoint and stored in the cloud, conversations and documents remain accessible, even as team members move on or projects change, ensuring long-term knowledge retention.
- **Support better moderation and structure.** Channels offer more control for durable working groups, with moderation tools that help manage membership, posting permissions, and content flow.
- **Provide flexible notification settings.** Everyone in a channel can choose how much or how little they want to be notified—making it easier to stay informed without getting overwhelmed.

We recommend converting all your long-running project group chats into a threads layout channel!

Q: When should I use reply vs a main channel message in a threads layout channel?

Replying in a thread is especially useful in active busy channels with multiple ongoing conversations, or when a reply will only be relevant to a subset of the channel audience. Threads help maintain the flow of the main conversation by keeping deep dives in the threads and out of view.

When deciding whether to start a thread, consider these factors:

- Are there multiple active discussions happening already? Keep them neatly organized in a thread dedicated to each conversation.
- How many people are in the channel, and is my response relevant to everyone or just a few individuals?

In some cases, a message in the main conversation makes the most sense:

- You might be using the threads channel the same way you would a chat, so your team has decided on a culture of keeping the whole conversation flat
- You might have a new topic unrelated to the existing threads, so you start a new conversation, for instance, posting a question
- You want to highlight a threads reply in the main conversation view, because it's a relevant topic for everyone

Q: What are the most important capabilities of a threads layout channel I should be aware of?

1. Follow a thread you're interested in to get future updates from the conversation

2. Stay up to date with threads from all channels in the Followed threads section
3. Reply in a thread to keep the main conversation organized
4. (Coming soon Share decisions and outcomes from the thread back to the main conversation for visibility
5. Follow all threads through channel notification settings for channels of particular interest

Q: How do I effectively catch up on content in a threads layout channel?

There are a number of flexible ways to catch up effectively based on how you prefer to stay on top of new content in Teams:

- If you want to receive updates when others reply, *Follow* the threads you're interested in.
- If you want to receive update for every thread in a given channel, go to Channel notification settings and select *Follow all threads*.
- If you want to quickly catch up on all followed threads across all your channels, use the *Followed threads* quick view at the top of your chat list.
- If you want notifications for new messages in a threads layout channel in your Activity Feed, update your preferences in Teams settings.

Q: What are some examples of how other teams used threads layout channels successfully?

The system is built to be flexible, and there are many ways threading can work for your team.

- You could choose to mostly use it as a chat-like free-flowing conversation, with the occasional side conversation in a thread. Most messages are in the main canvas, and the conversation flows like a chat, but with the extra added benefit of transparency of the convo for the whole team, and SharePoint storage.
- You could choose a set-up that allows for easy scan-ability. Each message in the main canvas can stay a brief 1-2 lines, and then the details are added as the first reply in a thread below. This allows others to catch up quickly and only jump into conversations that are relevant to them and ask questions, while keeping the main view clutter free and scannable.

We recommend agreeing with your working group on how you plan to use a threads channel so that everyone has same expectations about where to reply.