How to Get Started with Twitter

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1. **Create an account –** Go to twitter.com and click on Sign up. You will need to make a username for yourself, which is what will show up on Twitter. Give some thought to this choice. It is part of your digital profile, and you may likely wish to keep this account going as your professional career continues. Once you have an account, it is a good idea to fill out your profile at least to some extent, by clicking Settings. Having a good, descriptive profile including a picture that is at least fairly recognisable as you will encourage people to follow you.

2. **Start following people –** Type a name into the search box (Figure 2: Search). If the person is already on Twitter, his/her name should come up. You may need to click onto the listing and look at their profile to make sure it is definitely the person you have in mind. Then click the Follow button (Figure 1: Follow Button).

Figure 2: Search

Figure 1: Follow Button

Follow people who have interests similar to your own. Tip: when you find someone whose interests match yours, have a look at the people **they** are following; you may wish to follow these people as well.

For example, you might wish to follow me (even though I am not the most exciting person). To give you some information to help you decide, I am a learning technologist at University of Leicester and my name is Terese Bird. My Twitter username is tbirdcymru.

When you follow people, they may follow you back. You may wish to follow those who follow you. Be aware: you will notice followers who are salespeople or who may be encouraging you to visit dodgy sites. They follow you in the hopes that you will be interested in what they sell. If you are not interested, it is best to either ignore (simply do not follow them) or even perhaps block such followers.

It is good to get good people to follow you back. By good people, I refer to those who will be tweeting about things you are interested in. Those who choose to follow you will see your tweets in their twitter stream (although others may see your tweets by other methods such as searching for terms – Twitter is very public). Generally, the best way to build up followers is to keep tweeting interesting things, and to follow those who share your interests.

3. **Now you can start tweeting** Remember, a tweet can be no longer than 140 characters. Here are some suggestions of what to tweet about:

a. **Comment on something** in the news that is of interest to you.

b. **Call others' attention** to a website discussing something of interest to you. Include a link to the site where it is discussed.

c. You may like to **say what you are doing**. For example, you might tweet about your lecture or whatever you are working on now. This is the best way to show who you are and build your Twitter around your interests.

d. **Ask a question** about something you are interested in. This can best illustrate the power of Twitter. Your question may get answered by a true expert in the field. Or, you may get no response at all. Don't be discouraged if this happens. Just keep trying and tweeting. Sooner or later those who share your interests will respond. Twitter friends can be very loyal and eager to help.

e. **Reply** to someone else's tweet. This is an excellent way to make friends and build followers. If you hover your mouse in the lower right of the box of their tweet you will see an arrow and the word Reply; click on it, and it begins a new tweet for you beginning with @ and the tweeter's nickname.

Whatever you now tweet, that tweeter will see it as a personal response to their tweet (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

This gets the attention of the original tweeter. If your interests match theirs and they do not

Figure 3: Reply to a Tweet

currently follow you, there is a good chance they will decide to follow you. This is a

nice way to discuss things with individuals. It is not private. Everyone can read it. Perhaps others will jump into the conversation.

How to know when someone tweets to you? At the upper left, click on Notifications. On a mobile device, it may be the '@ connect' symbol (Figure 4: Notification Buttons).
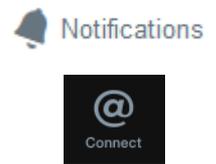

Figure 4: Notification Buttons

All tweets which include @ just before your username will be showing here. So these are people replying to you or sending you a tweet with your name in it to get your attention. This is Twitter conversation! Check this every time you log into Twitter; people might be directly speaking to you using that technique. You can also Direct Message people who follow you; Direct Messages are private; only seen by the sender and the recipient. Check your own Direct Messages by clicking in the upper right hand corner, on your Home page (Figure 5: Direct Message Button).

Figure 5: Direct Message Button

Retweet someone else's tweets. This is also an excellent way to build followers. Re-tweeting means that you repeat the tweet so that all of your followers can read it. To retweet, hover your mouse in the lower right of the original tweet, and click Retweet (Figure 6: Retweet Button). On mobile devices, click the Retweet symbol I retweeted the following from the Guardian Education (Figure 7: Example of retweeting a tweet):

Figure 6: Retweet Button

Retweeted by Terese Bird .
GuardianEducation @GuardianEdu · 6m
How widespread is racism at university? gu.com/p/3ndtp/tw #students
pic.twitter.com/cm5HAg2Hgv

Figure 7: Example of retweeting a tweet

You might also want to **retweet and add a commen**t of your own. In that case, you need to "retweet by hand". Just copy the original tweet, click into the box where you enter your own tweet, begin by typing RT @ with the Twitter name after the @, and then paste everything directly after that. Finally add your comment at the beginning or end, it will have to be fairly short! Your retweet will look something like this – I added a comment at the beginning (Figure 8: How to retweet and add a comment):
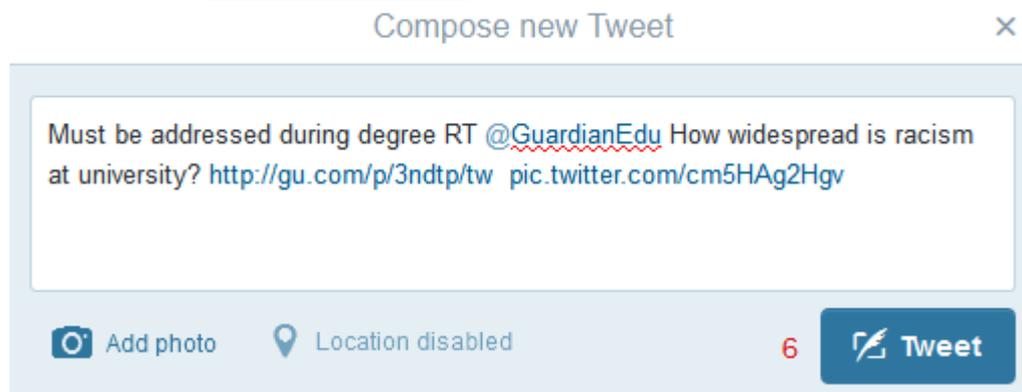
Figure 8: How to retweet and add a comment

Note that if you are using a mobile device, you can click the retweet symbol (Figure 6: Retweet Button) and then select 'Quote Retweet', to achieve this.

4. **Include links** if you wish to draw people's attention to something on the web. If you are tweeting and commenting about a news item, link to the website where you read it. This goes for anything – blog posts (even your own blog post), YouTube videos, a project website if you are tweeting about a project. Just copy and paste the URL into the Twitter window, and Twitter will automatically cut down the URL to a much smaller size for you.