



Twitter: Searching & More

By the end of today's session you should:

- See common uses for Twitter and create an account
- Understand Twitter terminology, such as "follow"
- Develop an understanding of best practices for using Twitter effectively

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a social networking site. All social networking sites allow users to connect online with people they know, as well as meeting people they don't know. Twitter's model makes it very effective for connecting with people you don't know personally, such as industry leaders or celebrities. Twitter can be useful if you want to keep up with what writers, politicians, artists, brands or other semi-public personalities are doing.

Twitter Terminology:

- **Handle:** Your Twitter username. For example, @wellesleylib
- **Followers and Following:** Following someone on Twitter means adding him, her or the organization to the list of items that will appear in your Timeline / Feed. Your followers will see your tweets in their Twitter Feeds.
- **Tweets or Posts:** The space under the "What's Happening" text is for your "post" or "tweet." In this area, you can enter text or links, up to 140 characters (spaces count!).
- **Timeline or Feed:** The list of posts that you will see from others when you login to Twitter.
- **Retweet:** Re-posting someone else's tweets. A great way to spread the words about interesting tidbits you may have found.
- **Hashtag:** Adding a pound symbol (#) before a word is a great way to specify the content of a tweet. You can search for hashtags in the search feature.
- **@Mention:** The @ symbol, or "Mention" deserves its own special definition in Twitter. The @ symbol indicates that you are talking about a specific Twitter account, and provides a link to that account. Using the @ is another great way to get the word out about useful Twitter feeds. Using the @ mention brings your tweet to the attention of others. For example if you were referring to the Wellesley Free Library in a tweet you would include @wellesleylib.
- **Direct Message:** Twitter is not designed to be a private messaging tool, but if you do want to leave a private message, you can use the direct message option.
- **Moments:** Moments are curated stories showcasing the very best of what's happening on Twitter. Our Moments guide is customized to show you current topics that are popular or relevant, so you can discover what is unfolding on Twitter in an instant. (Learn more: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/20174546#>)

What are good uses for Twitter?

- Keeping up with news: Even if you have not built up a “following,” Twitter can connect you to newsmakers, reporters and analysts so you can keep up to speed on a variety of news issues. Example: You might choose to “follow” your favorite news program, and get information quickly and easily.
- Following people of great interest to you: If you are interested in the doings of specific industry leaders, politicians or celebrities, Twitter can help you see what is happening with public figures. Example: political campaigns often use Twitter as a way to communicate with supports, including information on getting out the vote, and other topics of interest.
- Searching for real-time information about the experiences of others: Since you can search Twitter, you can use the service to search for information on any topics. Example: You want to know what people had to say about a movie, a natural disaster, or a conference. You’ll find it on Twitter. Real time tweeting can provide a unique perspective on events.
- Keep in touch with businesses: Many businesses are using Twitter as a way to communicate with clients or patrons. Example: Following a favorite business, company or brand might connect you to sales, discounts or other goodies.
- Microblogging: Twitter began as a tool for posting microblogs, essentially a blog in 140 characters or less. If you have something to tell the world, Twitter can be a great blogging platform with which to share your information. Example: you are starting a home renovation project, and you want to be able to share text, pictures and video of your project. Twitter can help you do that.

Best Practices for Using Twitter

There are a number of ways to use Twitter. It is perfectly acceptable to follow many and not tweet yourself. You might choose to do this if you are using Twitter as a news filtering service for yourself. If you are going to be tweeting, you should think about some best practices.

- Define your purpose for being on Twitter. State in your bio what kind of topics you will be tweeting about, and stick to it.
- Instead of lumping all content together, build lists for groups with similar content.
- Welcome new followers with a mention or a direct message. It’s a great way to start to build community online.
- Use Twitter to start conversations. Asking questions is a great way to use the tool.
- Post only if you have something useful and interesting to say. If your followers aren’t getting anything from the tweets, they will stop following you.
- Include links to articles, videos and other items that your followers might find interesting.
- Retweet items of interest.
- Write well in the space given.

Helpful websites for getting started on Twitter:

- <https://support.twitter.com/>
- <https://media.twitter.com/the-basics>