



A tool kit on how to use Twitter

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Twitter

What is Twitter?

Twitter is an online social networking service and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based posts of up to 140 characters, known as "tweets". It was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey and launched that July. The service rapidly gained worldwide popularity, with over 300 million users as of 2011, generating over 300 million tweets and handling over 1.6 billion search queries per day. It has been described as "the SMS of the Internet.

Source : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>

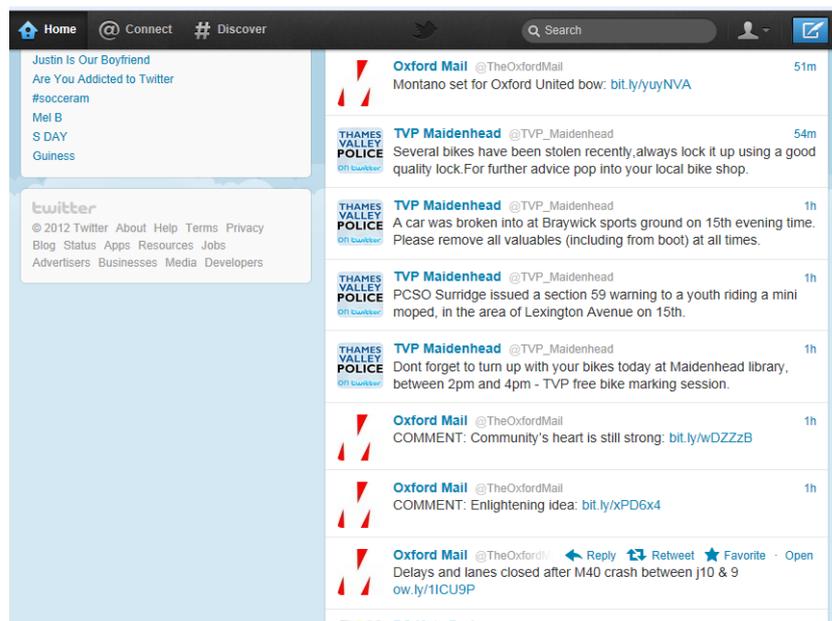
Over 15 million users are signed up in the UK with a significantly high proportion under 25 years old.

How can it support local community engagement?

A local community Twitter page can be used by any community as long as they are willing and receptive to engage with its members in this way. Along with computers, Twitter can be used on smartphones and mobile devices providing a useful platform to engage in a quick, effective way. It is an especially useful tool for getting a brief message out to a wide audience.

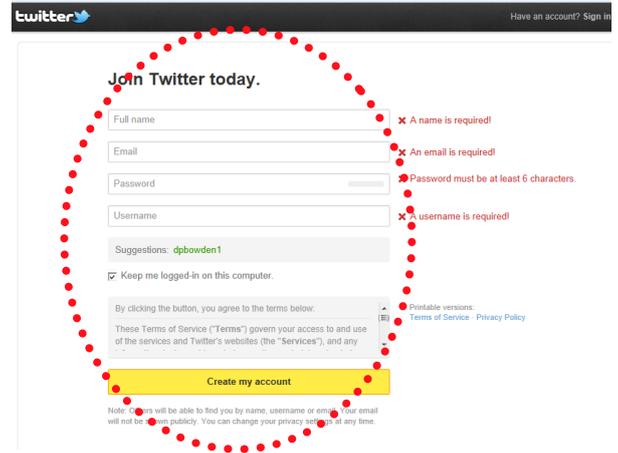
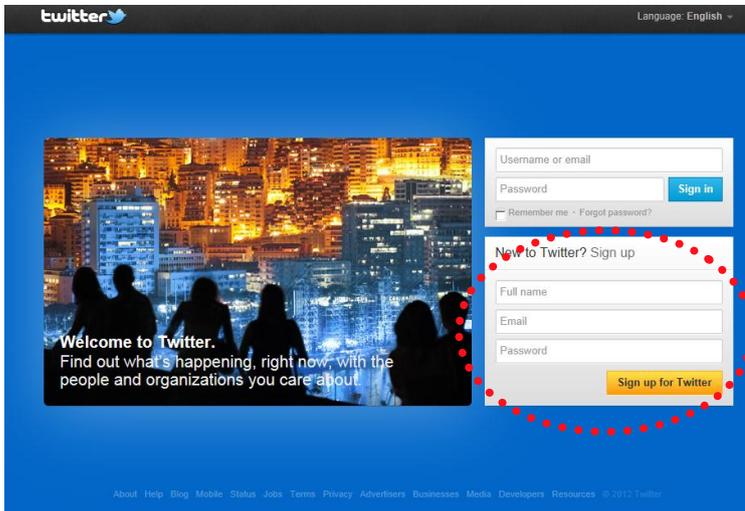
Once the page is set up (a step by step guide on how to go through the process is included in the next section) and residents are signed up, you have a platform to broadcast short messages, share pictures, advertise events and update local information and news.

The screen shot opposite shows a list of tweets on a Twitter account. You can see each tweet is a short message. This could link to other web pages or pictures.



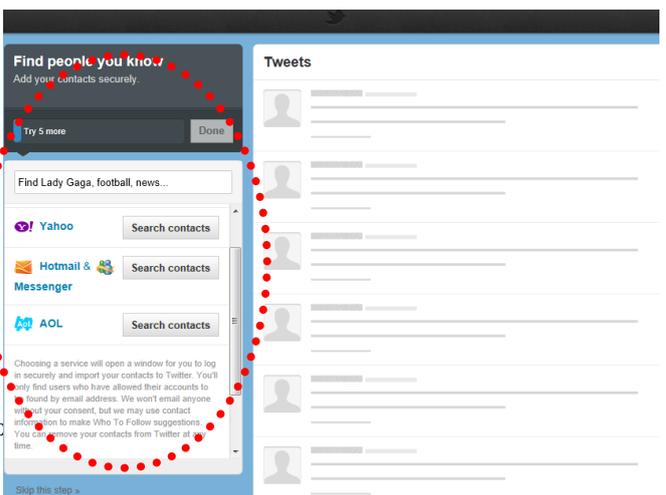
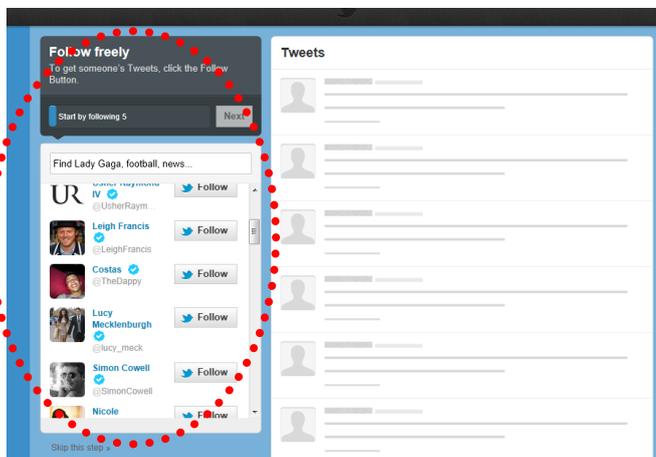
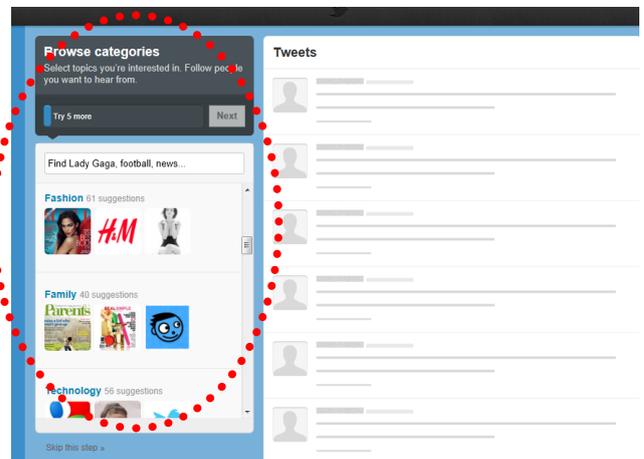
How do you set-up a Twitter page?

Going to www.twitter.com will take you to the sign-up page, enter your name, email and password and this will take you to the Join **Twitter today screen**. Select your user name, it will provide you with a list of available ones; accept the Terms and Conditions and click **Create my account**.



Once logged in, Twitter will take you through a few steps to get you following categories and people from your email contacts (as shown below). 'Following' is how you will receive updates from people as it is essentially the same as subscribing to news updates from someone.

These three screenshots show the various prompts you will be faced with when setting up your Twitter account. Twitter helps you try and find people and categories to follow to start you off. This might be of some use in giving inspiration on whom to follow, although you can easily just skip through each step.



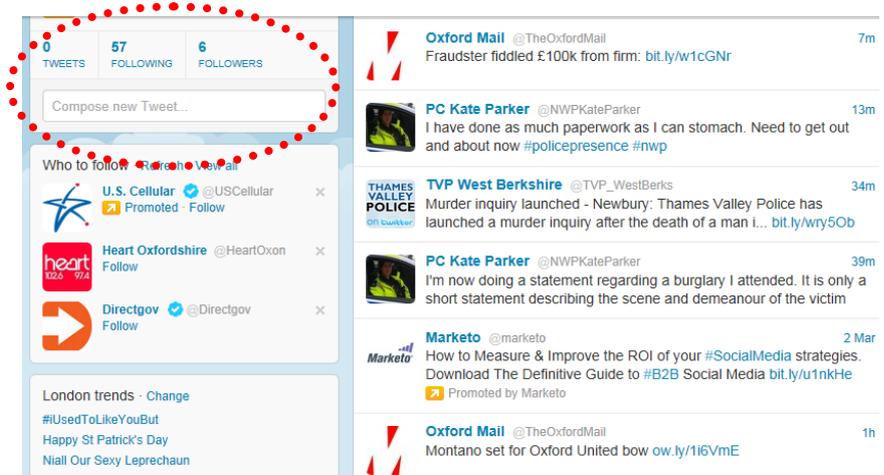
How do you post a tweet?

Posting a tweet is very simple.

Clicking in the **Compose new Tweet** box will open up the box to enable you to type your tweet.

Remember you only have 140 characters to use here so it needs to be short and concise.

Also, here you can see data on the number of tweets you have posted, the number of people following you and the number of followers you have.



Useful Tactics

Re-tweets (RT)

Re-tweeting means a follower of your Twitter feed can re-post your message onto their Twitter feed. It will then be read by this persons followers, therefore reaching a wider audience. You can also re-tweet other people's messages.

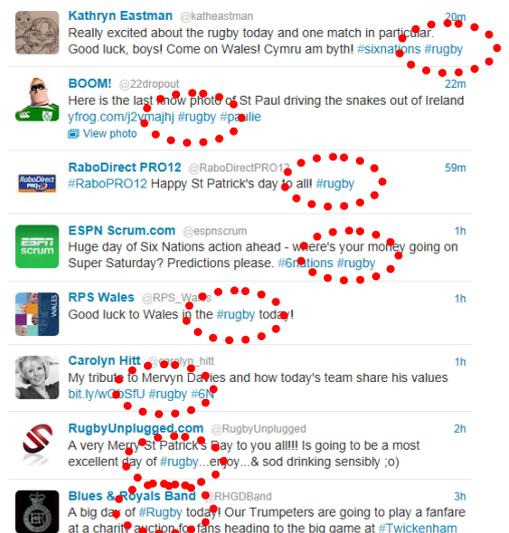
Hovering the mouse or cursor over any tweet will display the options to **Reply** or **Re-tweet**.



#tags

#tags are a very important tool on Twitter, it is a powerful way of getting other people to read your tweet and can dramatically increase visibility and the size of your network. Twitter users often follow #tags that they are interested in, and the # often refers to a subject or something of interest. Eg #londonriots, or #bbc #worldcup. A #tag can be anything; they can be included anywhere in your Tweet and will then be shown to all following the #tag.

For example, searching on #rugby shows all tweets, from everyone on Twitter who has put #rugby in their tweet.



Mentions (@)

A mention is when a Twitter @username is included anywhere within a tweet. It is a way of tagging or highlighting someone in your tweet.

Along with your followers, each user mentioned in the tweet will see it in their Twitter feed and it will also appear in their list of "Tweets mentioning". This is very useful, as it is a direct way of letting someone know you are talking about, or to them, even if they are not following you.

How do you manage the account?

To make the page successful it does need some attention. Interesting tweets need to be uploaded on a relatively frequently basis.

Reviewing your page on a frequent basis and responding to comments is good practice, along with adding new content weekly. If this level of use seems daunting, logging on every couple of days would be adequate. This doesn't need to take a long time; quite often this can be done in a few minutes.

How do you increase followers?

1. Tell people that you are on Twitter, add your Twitter name to contact details / email signatures etc.
2. Use the search option to find and follow people - Identify relevant people, groups, organisations in your area or business area and follow them, such as:
 1. Councils / Councillors / MPs / Police
 2. Church and religious leaders
 3. Schools
 4. Local businesses / cafes / restaurants / pubs
 5. Charities
 6. Youth Council members
 7. Sports clubs
 8. Local residents / hyper-local groups
3. #tags dramatically increase visibility and the size of your network.
4. Using @ in front of another users name will mean that they will be made aware that you are talking to or about them. E.g. @ddppbb1234 thanks for this document!
5. RT or Re-Tweet means that you can easily pass on other peoples Tweets to your followers.
6. Use Twitter to have a dialogue, not just to tell people about what is happening, but to respond to specific questions aimed at your organisation.

7. Make all Tweets interesting and relevant.
8. Make the experience interactive for your followers by including links to pictures, videos and interesting stories. You can use URL (web address) shorten sites so you do not use up all of your characters. www.bitly.com or www.tinyurl.com are free sites that allow you to enter a URL and they will convert it to a shorter version for you to post in your Twitter update.
9. Use slightly more informal language.
10. Tweet regularly, but not too often.

There is also a wealth of information on the internet about how to boost Twitter followers, such as the link below:

<http://wordpress-websitebuilder.com/4-tips-to-quickly-increase-twitter-followers/>

Security

The key thing to remember with Twitter security is that it is an open site. Anyone could choose to follow you and see all of your Tweets, so whatever you Tweet, make sure that you are happy for this to be in the public domain. Always make sure you use a strong password to avoid anyone trying to hack your account.

Glossary

All of the key information you need to know has been included in this document, however the link below is for the Twitter glossary which outlines each word or phrase and may be useful.

<https://support.twitter.com/articles/166337-the-twitter-glossary>