



A 'how to' guide to Twitter





1. What is Twitter?

Twitter is a website (www.twitter.com) where users send and read short messages called 'tweets'. Tweets are text based and limited to only 140 characters which makes it incredibly quick and easy to use. Tweets are also a great way to share links to your sport or personal websites, blogs, photos, videos etc.

Once you have created a profile for yourself on Twitter, you can follow other people to see their messages, view information and pass it on to others. Twitter provides a **simple** and **fast** way to share your opinions and news with lots of people, and also enables you to find **interesting** and useful **content** from the web.

Twitter has become incredibly popular with sportspeople and teams because it enables individuals to build a relationship with people who they wouldn't usually interact with on a daily basis. Along with sharing information with team mates, friends and family, using Twitter means that fans, sponsors and members of the media can all choose to 'follow you' to receive a regular flow of updates about your activity, along with your thoughts and opinions.

Some leading sportspeople have gathered incredible numbers of 'followers': Lance Armstrong (2.8M) , Shaquille O'Neal (3.8M), Ian Poulter (1.2M), Shaun White (450k), Andrew Flintoff (275k), David Haye (165k), Usain Bolt (100k), Jessica Ennis (55k).

It is estimated that Twitter has over 200 million users worldwide, generating 65 million tweets a day.

A **Glossary** explaining the terms used in Twitter can be found at the end of this guide.

Before starting, you may like to take a look at the following Twitter feeds: [Team_GB](#), [ParalympicsGB](#), [uk_sport](#), [eis2win](#), [London2012](#) and your National Governing Body Twitter feed.

2. Getting Started

Creating an account

- Go to <http://twitter.com>
- Click on Sign up
- You then follow the simple steps to register
- Remember your username / email and password to sign in every time
- Your account is now active

Selecting your username – keep it short

You may find your name has already been taken in which case it's worth taking a moment to decide on an alternative username for Twitter. It's best to keep your username as short as possible and to avoid using underscores.

- Here are some suggestions :
 - Name with your birth year - @tomdaley1994
 - Name with a key position - @gareththomas14
 - Shortened version of your name -@rioferdy5
 - Full name - @ianjamespoulter
 - Initials with your name - @kevinpp24





User verification

You may see sports stars whose names are marked as 'verified' with a blue tick against their name. The blue tick identifies the 'official' Twitter feed of the individual. Twitter no longer offers this service for the public to apply for verification, although this may change again in the future. Twitter does verify some high profile celebrities and politicians and we are speaking to them about introducing this for athletes selected for London 2012.

One of the best ways to reassure your followers that you are authentic is to link to be followed by other influential people on Twitter such as sportspeople, National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and media groups.

You can also help by beginning your Twitter biography with: 'Official Twitter of....'



Lance Armstrong ✓

@lancearmstrong Austin, TX

7-time Tour de France winner, full time cancer fighter -
LIVESTRONG!

<http://www.livestrong.org>

Creating your profile

Choose a strong, tasteful personal photo for your Twitter profile. A sporting image will reinforce your position as a leading athlete – on the podium, in your GB kit, in action. It is good practice not to change your profile photo too often once it's in place. Your followers will become familiar with seeing the image in their 'Twitter stream' and changes can mean you lose followers.

Biography

Create a short, engaging biography about yourself for your profile. People considering following you will review this to decide if you are worth following. It's worth mentioning your sporting honours, Olympic / Paralympic ambitions and some hobbies or general interests. You can also include a link to a relevant personal website here. Remember to state that this is your 'Official' twitter page.



Mo Farah

@Mo_Farah England London

Britain's No:1 distance athlete. Specialise in 5000m and
rank no:1 in the UK for 1500m, 3000m and 10K road

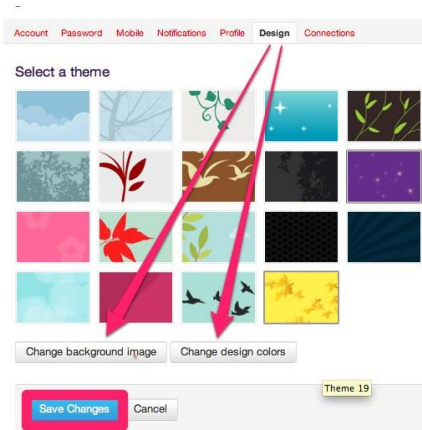
<http://www.mo-farah.com>



Background

Customising the background of your Twitter profile page gives you the chance to personalise your page.

- 1 Go to your profile page, and click on your profile picture on the far right and choose the **Settings** tab from the drop down menu.
- 2 Click on the **Design** tab
- 3 Upload your own background image by clicking “change background image”
- 4 Background images must be in PNG, GIF, or JPG format and smaller than 800k. If your image is too large use an image editing programme to shrink it.
- 5 Save your changes when done
- 6 You can also customise the side bar and font colours on your page by clicking “change design colours”
- 7 Click any of the boxes to change your colours and then click done when you’re finished



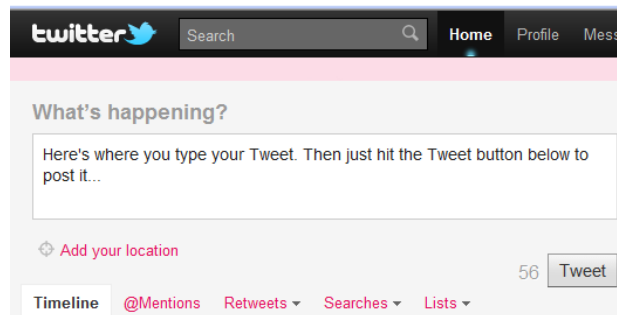


3. Twitter for Beginners

Sending a Tweet

Sending your first Tweet can be a scary thought. What should you say, who is listening, what tone of voice should you use?

Just be yourself and share something that you think might be of interest to people following you. It will take a few Tweets before you find your voice. Think about your followers and try to share messages that are interesting, useful and informative. If you have a sense of humour – use it!

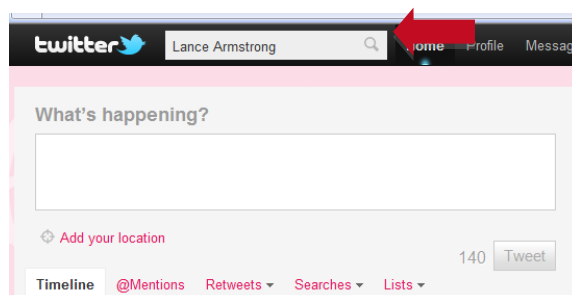


Privacy

Your Tweets are publically visible by default, but you can restrict message delivery to just your followers if you prefer. Just remember that anyone could retweet a message you send them, so treat every Tweet as if it's open to the public and could appear in tomorrow's newspaper. If you use Twitter to gain profile and engage with fans then it is not a good idea to restrict who can read your messages.

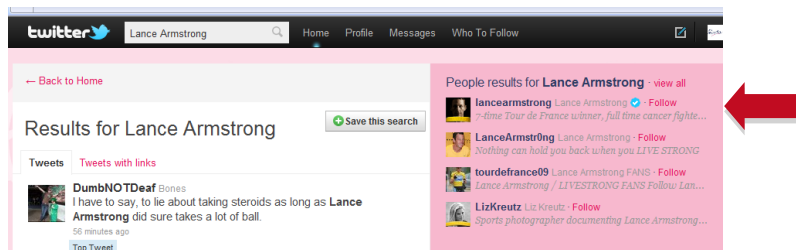
How to find people on Twitter

The best place to start is to find some familiar people who have similar interests and look at who they are following. If you don't already know their Twitter username, type the name of the individual into the search box at the top of the page and then click on the magnifying glass symbol next to it.





A list of all the people with that name will be provided to help you locate the person you are looking for.



Many people create lists of people in groups and you can then follow the group without needing to follow all the individuals.

Good places to start are: high profile current and former sportspeople, NGBs, [Team_GB](#), [ParalympicsGB](#), [uk_sport](#), [eis2win](#), [London2012](#), sports journalists and sponsors.

Click to follow someone and they will be notified that you are following them. Some people will automatically follow you back when you follow them.

Replies '@'

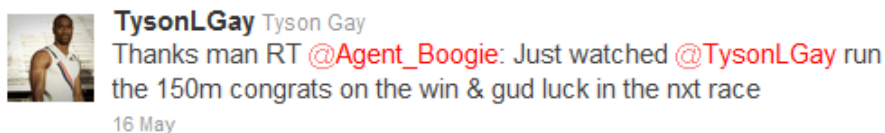
One of the most powerful elements of twitter is that you can engage in conversation with your followers. It's really easy to reply to any tweet you see. If you are using twitter on the main website you would just hover your mouse over the original message and click on the reply icon. You can then type your message into the box that appears and click 'tweet' to send it. Your message appears in your timeline and that of the person you have sent it to.

Many celebrities and sportspeople who have built a really strong following on Twitter have done so by interacting and replying to people that comment on their Twitter feed effectively.



Retweeting

A retweet is when you read someone else's message and then send it on to your followers. To do this you can either just press a retweet button on the Twitter website or the application you are using on your PC or phone, or you can type RT followed by the @ sign and then the original person's twitter address.





Retweeting is a good thing to do and here are a few tips:

- Always acknowledge the place that you found the information. In social media it's generally unacceptable to try to pass off someone else's content as your own without recognising the source.
- If you don't want to RT the whole message, but are quoting part or just sharing a link with your own message then it's best to add the phrase **via @** and then the original source's twitter at the end.
- Whilst it's very quick and easy to just press RT to retweet messages, it's always more powerful if you add your own personal comment first.
- It's good to retweet others information, but don't get carried away and keep a good balance with original messages from you.

Getting retweeted

Getting your own messages retweeted is very powerful. When someone picks up your message and forwards it to their followers, it magnifies your reach and often recruits new followers for you in the process.

It isn't recommended to ask for a retweet (you will sometimes see the phrase 'please RT' at the end of a message), but if the messages you are sharing are topical, interesting, useful and unique, then you are more likely to be retweeted by your followers.

Sharing links

Twitter is a superb place to share links to all kinds of places on the web. You might want to share a great video from YouTube, photos from a Flickr album, an interesting article in an online newspaper or a journalist's blog about something topical for your sport.

With only 140 characters available in each tweet you might think that you won't have the space to include long URL links from websites (and also include a comment and your twitter address). Fortunately there are lots of 'URL shorteners' available which can provide you with a shorter version of any URL you want to share. Use the shorter version in your Tweet, and anyone who clicks on it will be redirected to the longer URL. Two examples of popular link shortening services are:

<http://bit.ly>

<http://tinyurl.com>

If you use an application like Tweetdeck to manage your Twitter account, it does all this for you. Simply paste in a long URL and the system automatically shortens it for you.



Telegraph The Telegraph

London 2012 Olympics torch: Sir Steve Redgrave favourite to light the Olympic flame <http://tgr.ph/kN3ahw>

16 hours ago

Setting up an account on bit.ly will also enable you to track how many people have clicked on a link you have shared, which helps you to get a feel for what interests your followers most.



Hashtags

Once you start using twitter you'll soon come across hashtags in messages, where a topic is identified with a # prefix – hence the term hashtag. A hashtag is a way for people to search tweets that have a common topic. They help spread topics and also help organise them. For example if you search the term #2012, the majority of the tweets you see will relate to London Olympics. What you won't get are tweets that say 'Looking forward to my holiday in 2012', because '2012' isn't preceded by the hashtag.

You can either start your own hashtag for an event or topic and encourage others to use it too, or use hashtags that are already in existence. Some useful sites for finding out more about the hashtags that are most popular are: www.whatthetrend.com; www.twubs.com; www.hashtags.org; www.tagal.us

Direct messages

A message (previously known as a direct message) is a private message sent via Twitter to one of your followers. These messages can only be exchanged by people who are following each other.

From the Twitter home page you can send a message by clicking on the messages button on the top menu bar of the page. You're taken to a page with all your private message history and you can just type a new message and add the user name of the person you are contacting.

In turn, people you follow can send you a private message. You cannot send a direct message to a user who is not following you. Remember to bear in mind that you should treat everything you write as if it could be reproduced and made visible to the public.

4. Advanced tips for Twitter

Tools to help

Twitter can be a bit overwhelming when you get started. Help is at hand though, and there are various tools and applications to help you organise your Twitter messages to get the most from the system. Here are a few examples.

www.tweetdeck.com

Tweetdeck is without doubt one of the most popular programmes for managing Twitter. It has the same functions as the Twitter website, with additional features enabling you to better log, track and respond to your followers with dedicated columns so you don't miss key messages. You can then replicate this set up on your PC, laptop, iPad, phone etc. Other services like this include www.hootsuite.com



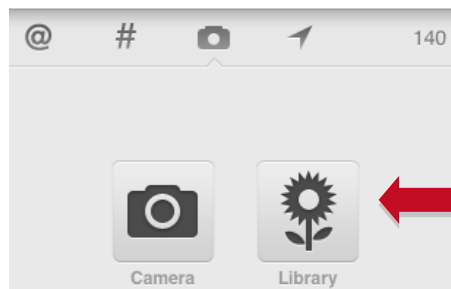
Sharing photos

There are lots of systems available to help you share photos. They include:

www.twitpic.com
www.tweetphoto.com
www.yfrog.com

Download one of these systems to your phone and it's really easy to just take a photo and share it with your followers.

On most systems, once you have written your message, you press one of these symbols and you will have the option to attach a photo from your library or to take a photo with your phone to attach.



Whilst you retain the rights to photos you upload and share on Twitter, recent changes mean that they also have the right to use and sell your images via third parties. If you are uploading images to sites like Twitter, Facebook, Flickr etc the best approach is to always assume that they could be re-used or be printed in tomorrow's newspaper.



Sharing videos

The most effective way to share video is to first load it to YouTube or Facebook and then share a URL to the page.

When sharing photos and videos remember to ensure you have permission to do so from the rights holder of the image or video.



How often should I be Tweeting?

It's difficult to give a precise answer as it will depend on what you are trying to achieve, how much time you have available and how much access you have to your phone or computer.

A general guide would be:

- Successful tweeters generally tweet at least twice a day
- Space your tweets out throughout the day. If you send lots of tweets one after the other you are likely to lose followers
- Reply to others with comments and retweets as well as sharing your own information

Twitter on your phone

You can also use Twitter with your phone through SMS/text messaging or via one of the many apps available.

The free apps like – Twitter for iPhone, Echofon, Twitbird etc - will enable you to use Twitter wherever you are – so you can send tweets, sharing photos and links, following others etc.

Link your phone to your Twitter account (in settings) to post updates to Twitter from your phone and receive messages. In the UK you can also update your Twitter via SMS by linking your phone to your Twitter account and then sending texts to 86444. This 'gateway number' is different if you are in other countries.

5. How to be Successful on Twitter

Increasing your followers

There are a number of things you can do to increase your followers:

1. **Publicise your Twitter address** - Make sure people know where to find you by including your Twitter address in places like your website, email signature, Facebook, LinkedIn, business cards, blogs etc.
2. **Follow other people** - many will automatically follow you back which can increase your followers
3. **Be topical** – search for keywords that relate to your sport and then retweet the interesting messages, comment on them or reply to the individuals. Once these individuals see you are engaging with them they are more likely to follow you.
4. **Share interesting information.** The better the information you are sharing on Twitter the more likely you are to be retweeted and followed by others. Each day as you post messages keep asking yourself if your Twitter feed is entertaining, informing or educating people.
5. **Short messages** – being retweeted is a great way to reach more people, so keep your messages to 120 characters to make retweeting easier
6. **Strong bio** – make sure your bio is complete and update it as necessary
7. **Include a photo** – having a strong photo on your profile will increase the likelihood of your being followed
8. **Get recommended** by other people on Twitter. Getting recommended by someone with a large Twitter following (like an athlete or celebrity friend) or being added to a list can help you to reach new followers.



Glossary of terms

@

The @ sign identifies usernames in Tweets. When a username is preceded by the @ sign, it becomes a link to a Twitter profile. For example, if you put @usainbolt in your message, it will appear in your Twitter stream and also in the 'mentions' Twitter stream of Usain Bolt for his followers to see.

Bio

The short personal description of who you are.

Blocking

To block someone on Twitter means they will be unable to follow you or add you to their lists, and Twitter will not deliver their mentions to your mentions tab.

Direct Message

Also called a DM and most recently called simply a "message," these Tweets are private between only the sender and recipient. Direct messages can only be exchanged by people who are following each other.

Favorite

To favourite a Tweet means you are marking it as one of your favorites by clicking the yellow star next to the message. Other people can see what your favourites are.

FF

#FF stands for "Follow Friday." Twitter users suggest people to follow by tweeting their name with the hashtag #FF on a Friday.

Follow

To follow someone on Twitter means to subscribe to their Tweets.

Follow Count

The numbers shows how many people you follow and how many people follow you.

Follower

Another Twitter user who has followed you and therefore receives your tweets in their twitter stream.

Hashtag

The # symbol marks keywords or topics in a Tweet.

Lists

People create groups of other Twitter users in lists and the list function ties specific individuals into a group on your Twitter account.

Mention

Mentioning another user in your Tweet by including the @ sign followed directly by their username. This will appear in the 'mentions' section on their Twitter page.

Reply

A Tweet posted in reply to another user's message, usually posted by clicking the "reply" button next to their Tweet in your timeline. Always begins with @username. This reply appears in the Twitter page of the person it was sent to. Unlike DMs, replies are public.

**Retweet / RT**

The act of forwarding another user's Tweet to all of your followers. Done by clicking a retweet button next to the Tweet or manually placing RT before the username and the text to be retweeted.

Timeline

This is a list of Tweets in time order that they were sent.

Twitter Stream

Your Twitter Stream is all the Tweets from everyone you are following in the order that they have been received.

Trending Topic

The most popular subjects on Twitter at that moment.

Tweet

A message on Twitter.

Tweetdeck

A free piece of software which enables you to better manage your Twitter stream by creating columns with just the Tweets of certain specified people.

Unfollow

To stop following another Twitter user which means their Tweets will no longer show up in your timeline.

URL

The web address that points to a unique page on the internet.

URL Shortener

Used to turn long URLs into shorter URLs. Shortening services can be found online and include tinyurl.com and bit.ly

Username

Also known as a Twitter handle. Must be unique and contain fewer than 15 characters.

When using this 'How To' Guide for Twitter, remember to refer to the 'Social Media Guidelines' provided by the BOA, BPA, UK Sport and EIS to help you be successful in your social media use.



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