Twitter Guide

[Twitter](#) is a social media micro-blogging platform where users generate 140 character messages (called tweets) and share them with their followers. Your tweets will show up in the timelines of the people who follow your account (followers) or have you on a list. Likewise, people who you follow or lists to which you are subscribed will show up in your timeline. The Twitter platform is a great way to connect with others around ideas, hold chats, have spontaneous conversations, and gain access to a wealth of resources shared by others. This brief guide will walk you through the basics of setting up and using Twitter.

If you want to review more before we get started, this [video](#) provides a brief overview of Twitter, and there is also a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page [here](#) that may help explain more. Also, [here](#) is a blog post that describes the different conceptual functions of Twitter.

Setting up an account

If you do not already have a Twitter account, please go to https://twitter.com/ and sign up for an account. There is a guide for signing up [here](#). You will need to enter a name, a valid email address, a password, and create a username/handle. When creating a username, try to keep it short (remember you only have 140 characters!), make it easy to remember, and pick something recognizable. Others will see it and use it to follow you. Usernames on Twitter start with the @ symbol and are followed by your name. My Twitter handle is @fredwbaker.

Twitter will prompt you to follow a few people to start your account. If you don't know who to follow you can skip this step to give you some time to search up some interesting people. You can usually just go to Google or another search engine and type in a person's name and the word "twitter" to find their username. Who you follow will have a BIG impact on how you use Twitter and how much you will get out of it. I usually try to follow people who I think are smart or interesting because they will usually tweet interesting or controversial things that inspire me or make me think. I am also interested in open education and instructional design so I tend to follow people in that crowd.

This is also a great time to customize your background, upload a photo, link to your blog or website, etc. Here is a video that shows how to do that.

Hashtags

If you are interested in a topic (like educational technology, for example) then you can search for hashtags related to the topic. A hashtag is a way for Twitter users who do not know or follow each other to easily gather around a topic and discuss it. A hashtag uses the hashmark (#, pound sign) before a word (#example) as a way to make the tweet findable to others who are searching the topic. Sometimes they are spontaneous, and sometimes they are planned or commonly used. A hashtag for educational technology is #edtech. People tweeting about educational technology often add this hashtag to their tweets, and others interested in connecting around educational technology often search for the #edtech hashtag (and others) using the search features in Twitter. Here and here are some guides that explain hashtags a bit more.

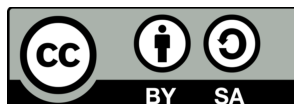Some mobile phone apps allow you to set tabs with search terms so that you can follow hashtags without always having to use the search feature. I recommend using Hootesuite on mobile or Tweetdeck on a computer (If you use Hootesuite, you may want to use a computer to set your tabs once you get them where you want them, otherwise whenever the phone app logs you out you could have to reset all of your tabs!). Also, some groups meet at certain times using hashtags to hold tweetchats (or tweetups, chats), where a group of users follow a hashtag and tweet using that hashtag during a prescribed time in order to discuss a topic. One great chat is #edchat, where people get together to discuss education. You can learn more about that chat at http://edchat.pbworks.com/w/page/219908/FrontPage.

Supplements

- Twitter has some confusing language. Here and here are some language guides that may help you understand some of the nuances.

- You cannot send messages to people who aren't following you, so be sure you are following anyone you try to send a message to!

- Sometimes people abuse the Twitter platform by launching spambots and sending links to other users. Be leery of following links from people you don't know, and be leery of following links that are inboxed to you, especially with no other text. Here and here are guides to help you identify fake followers, here is a guide to help you avoid phishing attempts, and here is what to do if you find that your account has been compromised.

- [Here](#) is a collection of hashtags related to education, and [here](#) is a quick start guide for participating in a chat from the same site.

- Much of this guide was created based on the #etmooc guide [here](#). There is more information there on Twitter and a host of other social media platforms and education technology related content.

I look forward to seeing you on Twitter! If you have any questions, please feel free to tweet me (@fredwbaker)!