

Being digital

Writing a good tweet

1: Introduction

"It's amazing how annoying some people can be with only 140 characters on Twitter" (anonymous quote from [`Twitter Quotes and Sayings`](#)).

Twitter is a form of microblogging, where people provide short, frequent updates on what they are doing, thinking, or want to share.

Is it really possible to say anything meaningful in only 140 characters? We believe that it is, if you follow a few simple guidelines. What's more, getting it right can mean you maximise your investment in this form of social networking, and ensure that you enhance rather than detract from your reputation.

Learning outcome

By the end of this activity you will know the essential ingredients of a good tweet.

2: What makes a good tweet?

Good tweets are concise, informative and relevant. They tell you what's important, link to interesting stuff and leave you wanting more. (The sentences you have just read contain 136 characters to demonstrate the typical length of a tweet).

Visit the [Howcast \(2009\) How to write a good tweet](#) website. Either watch the video, or read the transcript towards the bottom of the page, and note down the key points.

If you have time, visit the [LSE \(2011\) Your favourite academic tweeters](#) website. You could try following a few relevant people, thinking about what makes their tweets effective.

3: Putting it into practice

On this page is some information you want to communicate via Twitter. It's a bit wordy, so your task is to summarise it into 140 characters and make it interesting to your followers.

Original text

"I have come across some interesting research on the role personality plays in online social networking. According to Readwrite Web, there are 3 different kinds of people on Twitter: listeners, talkers and 'hubs'. A hub is someone who both follows and tweets in equal amounts. ([5 Ways To Have Fun with Twitter When You're Bored](#))"

Write down how you would write this tweet.

(You will find feedback on this exercise in Appendix 1 on page 4.)

4: Summary and next steps

Summary

- Aim to **write a headline**, which communicates the key information in a succinct and engaging way. There are different kinds of headlines, so it does not have to be the same style every time. The BBC website can give you ideas.
- **Share** interesting information, and **include links** so people can easily click through to find out more. Use a URL shortener such as bitly to ensure you stay within the 140-character limit. If you are tweeting about a conference or event, find out the hashtag # and include it.
- Make your tweets **relevant** to your key followers - the people you'd want to have a conversation with about the topic. You know it has hit the spot when people retweet it.
- **Interact** with others: as well as posting your own information, respond to what others say. A conversation is more interesting than a monologue.
- **Be human.** It's OK to include some information about yourself, but remember you're in public and don't say anything you'll feel embarrassed about later.

- Allow room for others' **retweets**. If you leave about 20 characters someone else can retweet your post without losing any of it.
- Ensure your tweets are **readable** and credible by using good grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Re-read and if necessary **edit** before sending.

Next Steps

Try some of the techniques outlined in this activity and see if they make a difference. For example, do more people retweet your posts? Do you pick up some extra followers as a result?

References

Being digital activity

[Writing a good tweet](#)

Appendix 1: Feedback

Putting it into practice (page 2)

Here is one suggestion, with a shortened URL so people can follow it to read the original article:

“Are you a listener, talker or both? Your Twitter personality revealed: <http://bit.ly/2ctZ984>”

Note that the URL has been shortened to take up less space. Various URL shortening tools are available, such as [bitly](#).