Introduction to Twitter

Objectives

After completing this class, you will be able to:

- Identify what Twitter is
- Create a Twitter Account
- Customize your Twitter profile and settings
- Follow other users on Twitter
- Create tweets using hashtags and the 280 character limit

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a social networking site aimed at sharing short updates online. Each update or post is called a **tweet** and is limited to only 280 characters (previously it was 140 characters). Twitter has gained a following as a way to quickly share what’s happening in your world and to follow individuals and topics of interest. Twitter can be used from a desktop computer or from a smartphone or tablet. For this class we will focus on how to sign up for an account and post tweets on a desktop computer. The process of posting from a mobile device follows the same principles.

Twitter Terminology

Before we go further, there are some terms that you should know.

**Twitter Handle**- The Twitter Handle is the same thing as a username.

**Hashtag**- Hashtags are a way of categorizing your post on Twitter. Clicking on a hashtag in a Twitter post will show you other posts that have been marked with the same hashtag. Essentially, it will show you what else has been categorized with that hashtag. A hashtag contains no spaces. For example, if you wanted to create a hashtag for the phrase “I love libraries” you would use #ilovelibraries.
Creating a Twitter Account

Before you can post to Twitter, you’ll need an account. To create an account, go to www.twitter.com and click on the Sign-Up button. You will be asked to enter your Name, Phone Number or Email address, and Date of Birth. Your Twitter Handle/Username will be customized later. If you’re using an email address, Twitter will send you a verification email that you must open and click on before proceeding further. After confirming your email, you will be asked to choose a password.

Customizing your account

Before you can get to Tweeting, Twitter will ask for a bit more information. First, it will ask if you want to upload a profile picture. To do this, click on the circular profile icon and choose an image from your computer. This will be viewable on your profile.

Next, Twitter will ask you to enter a short bio. Keep it short and succinct.

When you first view your Twitter page it will be very simple, but we can change that! There are a few options you can customize to personalize your account.
Twitter will automatically generate a temporary Twitter Handle/Username for your account. To customize it Click on More then go to Settings and Privacy.

Click on Account, then Username. Enter your chosen name or pick one of Twitter’s suggestions and click on Save.

Other parts of your profile can also be customized. Click on More and then Profile. Click on the Edit Profile button.
From this window you can change your **Name**, **Profile photo**, **Background Photo**, **Bio**, **location**, and **website**.

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**Tweeting**

At this point, you know how to create an account and set up your profile on Twitter. Before you start tweeting, let’s review some basics on creating Twitter messages or **Tweets**.
• **Character Limit:** Each tweet is limited to 280 characters.
• **Hash tags:** Remember that a hashtag is a way of categorizing your post so that similar posts can be found.
• **URL shorteners:** Sharing links to sites or articles is a popular use for Twitter, but you a link can eat away at the 280 character limit. To work around this, try using a site like bit.ly or TinyURL to shorten your URL.

To create a tweet, you can start from the box on your homepage or click on the **Tweet** button in the menu on the left side of the page.

As you type in the box, the character counter will keep track of how many characters have been entered. You can also use the buttons at the bottom to add a photo, a poll, or a GIF animation. When you are ready to post, click the Tweet button and the post will appear in your timeline and be visible to the public.

Can you identify the hashtag in the tweet above?

**Interacting with Tweets**

While browsing tweets on from other Twitter users, you can interact with them. First, you can **Like** a post by clicking on the heart button 💖 beneath the tweet.

You can also **comment** on a tweet by clicking on the comment bubble, 🗣️

You can also share tweets from other users on your Twitter feed. This is called **retweeting**. This will share the post with all of your Twitter followers. To retweet a post from another user, click the retweet button under their post. You have the option of just retweeting the post as it is or adding a comment.
Starting a Public Conversation on Twitter

You can start a conversation or tweet at someone by mentioning them in a tweet. To do this, click the Tweet button to open a new composition window. Start your message with the Twitter Handle of the person you want to tweet at. After entering their Twitter Handle, type your message.

When someone tweets at you, you will receive a notification of the message. You can respond to the Tweet if desired by clicking on the Reply button. When you click Reply, it will automatically enter the other user’s Twitter Handle in the message field for you. Type your message and
Private Messaging

There may be occasions where you want to start a conversation with another Twitter user, but also keep it private. This is what private messaging allows you to do. Private messages can only be sent to users who follow you. To send a message, click the Messages icon in the toolbar at the top of the page. Choose who to contact, type your message and click send.
Following

Once your account is set up, you can start connecting with other users on Twitter by following them. You can follow your friends, celebrities, sports teams, companies, and more. Who you follow depends on your interests. When you start to follow other users, their tweets will appear in the Twitter stream on your Twitter homepage.

When you first join Twitter, a box like the one shown may appear on your profile page with suggestions of who to follow. If any look interesting, simply click the Follow button and they will be added to the list of users you are following.

You can also search Twitter for users matching your interests. Once you are on their profile page, click the Follow button on the right side of the page to follow them.

Privacy Settings

Everything you share on Twitter is public, by default. Even if someone doesn’t follow you on Twitter, they can still see your profile and tweets. However, this setting can be changed. Click on More button and click on Settings and Privacy. Click Privacy and Safety from the sidebar menu and then check the box next to Protect my Tweets. With this setting on, your tweets are only visible to users that you approve.
Analytics

Twitter also has an Analytics feature where you can find stats for your account. To access Analytics, click on More then Analytics. This will open the Analytics dashboard where you can view a summary of your account’s statistics.

Twitter Analytics uses some specific terms for when talking about numbers and your tweets. First, Impressions count the number of times that a tweet was seen. Twitter will also count the number of Engagements for each tweet. An Engagement is when another user actually interacts with a tweet. This includes all clicks anywhere on the tweet (including hashtags, links, avatar, username, and Tweet expansion), retweets, replies, follows, and likes.

You can view bar graphs of your Tweet activity over time and switch between viewing stats for Impressions and Engagements.
Additional Resources

GFC Global Twitter Tutorial: https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/twitter/

Twitter Help Center: https://help.twitter.com/en