

Making the most of Twitter

1. Introduction

Twitter is a social networking tool. Use it to post short messages or 'Tweets'. Opinions about Twitter can be quite divided. This activity focuses on its benefits and explores some of the ways it can help you in your studies or work.

Learning outcome

This activity will help you to decide if you would like to make use of Twitter.

2. What is in it for me?

Look at the statements below and select any that appear relevant to you.

I would like to know when new information is released

The Nursing and Midwifery Council, the International Society of Typographic Designers, The Chartered Institute of Horticulture, and the British Cartographic Society are just a few of the organisations who use Twitter to promote their work and research. Follow a selection of accounts to keep up with new information and ideas in your profession.

I would like to keep up with current events

From angry exchanges during Prime Minister's Questions to fund raising events, to announcements by the Bank of England, news stories can often appear on Twitter before they are reported through other media channels.

I would like to know what people are saying about topical issues

Many public figures use Twitter. If you are looking for a quotation to illustrate an idea or point of view, Twitter is a ready source of opinion and social commentary.

I would like to share information with others

If you would like to promote a campaign, research project, pursuit, or pastime Twitter can help you to find, or follow, a community of like-minded people.

I would like to keep up with developments in my subject

Academic authors as well as journals and publishers use Twitter to promote their work. Use the platform to follow specialists, debate and news in a variety of disciplines.

3. Who uses Twitter?

From posting pictures of pets, to following the Cloud Appreciation Society, to campaigning and petitioning politicians, people use Twitter for many reasons.

An article published by *ReadWrite* in 2008, identified three types of Twitter users: 'Listeners', 'Talkers' and 'Hubs'.

While reality might not be quite as neat and tidy as that, the following section outlines each type of user.

4. Which Twitter personality are you?

Here's how some people like to use Twitter:

Listeners

Characterised more as consumers than communicators, 'Listeners' use Twitter as a source of information, gathering news, announcements, comment and updates from a network of carefully selected accounts.

Talkers

'Talkers' use Twitter as a platform to promote a particular interest, topic, issue or activity. As well as being active communicators, 'Talkers' can be very creative, devising compelling content for a network of followers.

Hubs

'Hubs' use Twitter to share and create content. Like a news service, 'Hubs' follow a network of sources to find ideas and themes to inform and inspire output to their own followers.

5. Getting started

If you're new to Twitter and would like some guidance, follow the link to 'Getting started with Twitter'.

Once you have set up a profile find some interesting people to follow. Follow a hashtag (a # symbol) to find tweets that share the same topic.

If you would like to explore Twitter, follow the links to watch 'Twitter for research' by Andy Priestner, or a 2008 video by Martin Weller called 'Twitter love song'.

[Getting started with Twitter](#)

[Twitter for research](#)

[Twitter love song](#)

6. Summary

Be selective. You do not need to devote lots and lots of time to Twitter to get something from it. Decide when you're going to use it and make it work for you.

Be focused. It is easy to be distracted by noise and chatter. Choose the topics that interest you the most.

You can learn a lot just by being a 'Listener' and following a selection of accounts. You do not need to contribute content of your own to get something from Twitter.

Next steps

- Think about how Twitter might work best for you.
- What do you need to do to make it happen? For example, find out who is an authority in your field of interest and follow their Twitter account.

Reference

Iskold, A. (2008) '5 things to do with Twitter when you're bored', *ReadWrite*, March. Available at: https://readwrite.com/2008/03/18/5_ways_to_have_fun_with_twitter/ (Accessed: 26 August 2020).

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