

Being digital

Writing a good tweet

1: Introduction

“We all have 280 characters? Well, as Shakespeare wrote, “Brevity is the soul of wit. The soul of wit is what brevity is. Brevity? Soul of wit? They're the same thing. Like if you had brevity in one hand and the soul of wit in the other, you'd be hard pressed to tell them apart.” (quote from © Stephen Colbert via [Twitter](#))

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

To start with users could only use 140 characters to tweet their message. On 7 November 2017 this was changed to a 280-character limit.

Since 24 May 2016, media such as photos and videos do no longer count against the 280 character limit. In the past a user photo post used to count for about 24 characters. Attachments and links are also no longer part of the character limit.

It is possible to say something meaningful in only 280 characters 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*).

Watch the video on 'How to write a good tweet' ([Howcast \(2009\) How to write a good tweet](#)). Note the key points.

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

Tip: To reach a larger audience consider switching on the accessibility settings. See Rob Long's [tweet](#) about how to do this.

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 280 characters and make it interesting to your followers.

Type your answer into the box then select 'Feedback' to see our suggestion.

Original text

"I have come across some interesting research on the role personality plays in online social networking. According to Readwrite Web, there are three 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 your answer here:

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

4: Summary and next steps

Summary

- Keep it **simple** – shorter tweets tend to generate more engagement.
- **Write a headline** communicating 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.
- Use the **right hashtag #** or identify ones closely related to your target keyword with something like Hashtagagify. Ideally do not use more than two-three hashtags.
- Think about what your **goal** is and about the **timing** of your tweet.
- Make your tweets **relevant** to your key followers - the people you 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. Remember, tweets can be read by anyone. You are in public so only say anything that you will not feel embarrassed about later.
- Allow room for others' **retweets**.
- Ensure your tweets are **readable** and credible by using good grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Where applicable use **different tools** such as Vines, Emoji or Periscope live-streams.
- 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

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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](#).