

**twitter**   
**for**  
**Teachers**

**How to Use Twitter to  
Grow Professionally  
and Personally**

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# Twitter for Teachers: How to Use Twitter to Grow Personally and Professionally

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## **Disclaimer**

The instructions and content provided in this manual are based on information that was relevant at the time the guide was written.

Social media services regularly change the format and presentation of their sites. While every effort has been made to provide accurate and up-to-date information, things may look or function a little differently in real life than they appear in this manual.

The author is not employed by Twitter and has no official affiliation or association with Twitter, other than being an avid Twitter user herself.

## Table of Contents

Who is this manual for?	5
Workshop description	5
<i>Participant outcomes</i>	5
<i>Course content</i>	6
<i>Prerequisites</i>	6
Twitter overview	7
<i>What is Twitter?</i>	7
<i>What is a Tweet?</i>	7
<i>If I join Twitter do I have to Tweet?</i>	8
Twitter basics	9
<i>Signing up for an account</i>	9
<i>Start Tweeting</i>	16
<i>Public Tweets</i>	16
<i>Retweeting</i>	17
<i>Following others</i>	18
<i>The # symbol (a.k.a. a “hashtag”)</i>	19
<i>The @ symbol</i>	19
Develop your personal Twitter strategy	20
<i>Following others strategically</i>	20
<i>Using lists to organize the people you follow</i>	20
<i>No obligation: You do not have to follow back</i>	21
<i>Following / Followers Ratio</i>	22
<i>Twitter style types</i>	23
Manage your Twitter time effectively	24
<i>3 things you need to know about managing your time on Twitter</i>	24
<i>Schedule Tweets with 3rd party services</i>	24
Build an engaged following	25
<i>Be consistent</i>	25
<i>Retweet regularly</i>	25
<i>Post original material</i>	25
<i>Acknowledge and appreciate your Tweepers</i>	25

<i>Random acts of kindness</i>	26
Resources	27

## Who is this manual for?

This manual was developed for participants of my professional development workshop or online webinar “Twitter for Teachers”. The intended audience is professional educators who are interested in using Twitter for professional development and personal growth.

Twitter is a hot tech tool for teachers. But how can you, as an educational or training professional, use Twitter in an effective and efficient way that helps you?

## Workshop description

Get tips and advice on how to use Twitter as a powerful social media tool to help you develop personally and professionally.

### Participant outcomes

By the end of this session you will:

1. Understand how to use Twitter for professional purposes in a meaningful and strategic manner.
2. Have ideas on how to develop your own personal and professional approach to using Twitter.
3. Gain insight into how to manage your Twitter time effectively.
4. Understand what it means to have an engaged Twitter following and how to build one.

## Course content

1. **Twitter overview.** We will briefly review what Twitter is and how it is used in business. This course is designed for people who already have had some exposure to Twitter and want to learn how to use Twitter in a meaningful and strategic way. There is no point in having a Twitter account “just because”.
2. **Develop your personal Twitter strategy.** You will learn how to develop your own personal vision about what Twitter means to you and why.
3. **Twitter time management.** You will learn how to manage your time on Twitter effectively. There is no question that social media can be time consuming. In this session, we will talk about ways to minimize the time you spend on Twitter, while still using it to its fullest potential.
4. **Twitter followers.** We will bust the myth that you need more followers. What you really need is more *engaged* followers. You will learn what it means to have an engaged following and how to develop one.

## Prerequisites

You must be comfortable using the Internet. It is expected that participants will already know what Twitter is and may have “dabbled” or already opened an account, but not have used it extensively.

# Twitter overview

## What is Twitter?

Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>) is a real-time, online social media site designed to let users follow others with similar interests. The Twitter website says it best:

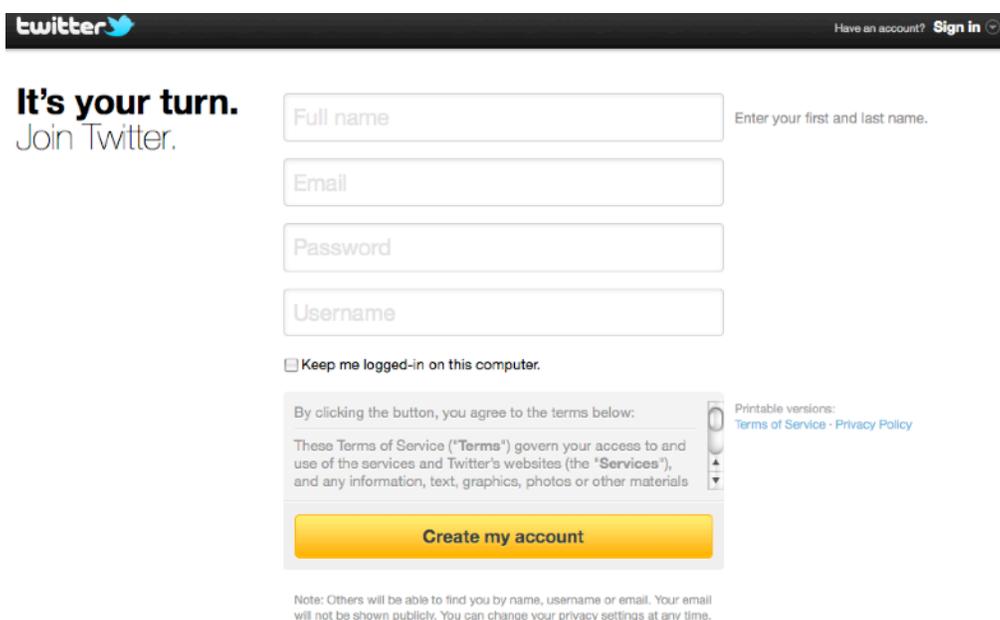
“Twitter is a real-time information network that connects you to the latest information about what you find interesting. Simply find the public streams you find most compelling and follow the conversations.”

## What is a Tweet?

A Tweet is a short message of 140 characters or less. Tweets can be:

- 📍 self-contained messages
- 📍 a headline that includes a short link to a full story, blog post or resource
- 📍 a photo

Even though 140 characters does not seem like much, you can say a lot in a Tweet. Twitter users learn to use concise, brief language and shortened web site addresses in order to share information.



twitter  Have an account? [Sign in](#)

**It's your turn.**  
Join Twitter.

Full name Enter your first and last name.

Email

Password

Username

Keep me logged-in on this computer.

By clicking the button, you agree to the terms below:

These [Terms of Service](#) ("Terms") govern your access to and use of the services and Twitter's websites (the "Services"), and any information, text, graphics, photos or other materials

Printable versions:  
[Terms of Service](#) · [Privacy Policy](#)

**Create my account**

Note: Others will be able to find you by name, username or email. Your email will not be shown publicly. You can change your privacy settings at any time.

**If I join Twitter do I have to Tweet?**

Well, you do not have to, but that is the general idea, yes. If you prefer, you can just follow others' conversations. While some people have Twitter accounts and never Tweet, that is like going to a party or to work, or to any other place where a group of people are talking about topics that interest or inspire them... and being silent.

The more you join in, the more useful you will likely find it. Like other social media, Twitter is more effective if you use the service and interact with others.

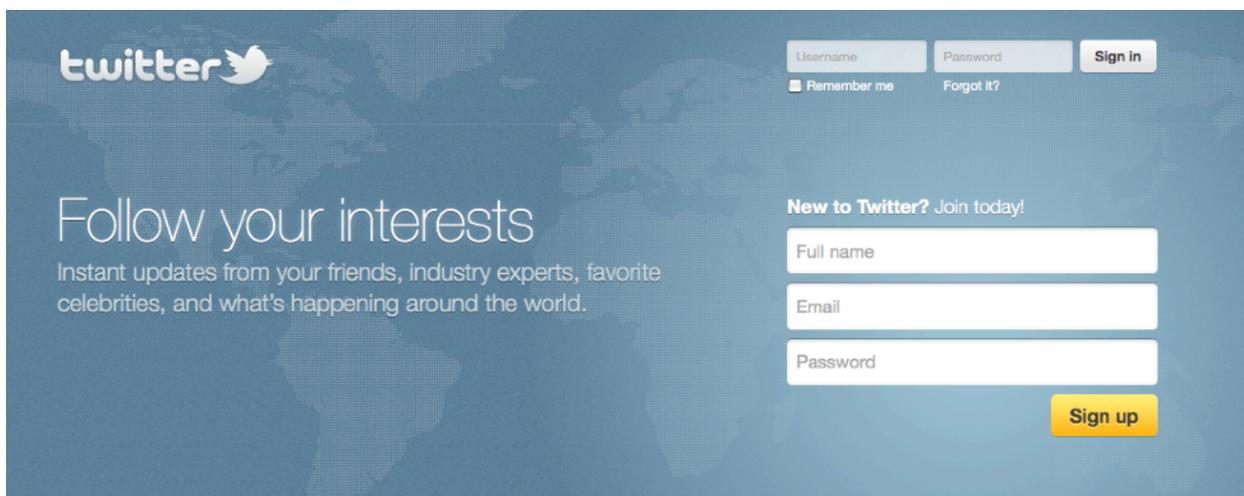
## Twitter basics

This section offers a basic overview of how to sign up for Twitter and use the service.

### Signing up for an account

This is what the Twitter home page looks like:

Click on the yellow box at the bottom that says “Sign up”.

A screenshot of the Twitter sign-up page. The background is a dark blue world map. In the top left is the Twitter logo. In the top right, there are input fields for 'Username' and 'Password', a 'Sign in' button, and a 'Remember me' checkbox. Below the sign-in fields is a link for 'Forgot it?'. In the center-left, the text reads 'Follow your interests' followed by 'Instant updates from your friends, industry experts, favorite celebrities, and what's happening around the world.' On the right side, there is a section titled 'New to Twitter? Join today!' with three input fields for 'Full name', 'Email', and 'Password'. At the bottom right of this section is a yellow 'Sign up' button.

twitter

Username Password Sign in

Remember me Forgot it?

Follow your interests

Instant updates from your friends, industry experts, favorite celebrities, and what's happening around the world.

New to Twitter? Join today!

Full name

Email

Password

Sign up

You will be taken to a new page where you fill out your user information:

Account Password Mobile Notifications **Profile** Design Applications

Picture    
Maximum size of 700k. JPG, GIF, PNG.

Name   
Enter your real name, so people you know can recognize you.

Location   
Where in the world are you?

Web   
Have a homepage or a blog? Put the address here.  
(You can also add [Twitter](#) to your site here)

Bio   
About yourself in fewer than 160 chars.

### Use your real name

On the top line, Twitter asks you for your first and last name. If you are tweeting for professional reasons, it is a good idea to use your real name, as others in your professional network may search for you by name.

### Password

As with any social media, it is a good idea to have a long password that contains numbers, letters and symbols. Use a password that is hard for others to guess. While there are no guarantees that your account will never be hacked, having a complex password reduces the chances of that happening.

**Your user name**

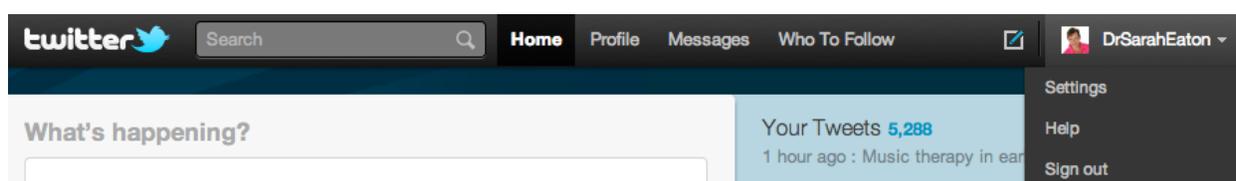
If your real name is available as a user name, go ahead and claim it. If not, you may have to get creative. Choose a name that says something about you and who you are. Avoid “naughty names”, profanity or sexual references if you are Tweeting for professional purposes.

## Adjusting your settings

After you have created your account, you will be guided through a number of steps that familiarize you with Twitter and how it works.

Once you have gone through the basic steps, you will want to check out your settings:

At the top of the page, you will see your user name. To the right of your username there is a little triangle. Click that triangle. You should see a drop down menu. Here is what mine looks like:



Right under your name, you will see the word “Settings”. Click on it.

You will be taken to a new page. You will want to:

- Select your language
- Select the time zone you live in.
- Decide whether you want to add a location to your Tweets
- Decide if you want to protect your Tweets. If you do this, other people will not be able to see your Tweets without your permission.
- Choose whether you want an “HTTPS” secure connection. Checking that box is recommended, as it adds more security to your account.

Now, go back up to the top of that page. You will see your name.

Under that you will see a link to change your profile settings. Click on the link.

## Changing your profile settings

This is where you can add a photo of yourself and a brief description that lets other users know a little about you.

### **Did you know?**

It is considered good “Twitter etiquette” to retweet others.

Some experts say that a ratio of 10 retweets to every one of your own tweets is an excellent way to build good will.

## Add a photo

You can add a photo in .jpg, .gif or .png formats. The maximum size is 700 Kb.

Some people are reluctant to add their photo to social media sites. Adding your picture serves a number of purposes:

The screenshot shows a social media profile editing interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Account, Password, Mobile, Notifications, Profile (selected), Design, and Applications. The main content area is divided into sections:
 

- Picture:** A small square image of a sunset is shown next to a text input field containing "/Library/User Picture:" and a "Browse..." button. Below this, it says "Maximum size of 700k. JPG, GIF, PNG."
- Name:** A text input field contains "Jane Doe". Below it, a note says "Enter your real name, so people you know can recognize you."
- Location:** A text input field contains "Earth". Below it, a note says "Where in the world are you?"
- Web:** An empty text input field. Below it, a note says "Have a homepage or a blog? Put the address here. (You can also add Twitter to your site here)"
- Bio:** A large empty text area. Below it, a note says "About yourself in fewer than 160 chars."

 At the bottom of the form is a blue "Save" button.

- 👤 If there is more than one Twitter user with your name or a name similar to yours, it enables others to find you more easily.
- 👤 It shows users that you are a real person and not a spammer. Spammers are notorious for leaving photos out of their profile.
- 👤 It makes you seem friendly and approachable. The point of social media is to be social and to interact with others. Not posting a photo is like hiding. It sends a message that you are not to be disturbed.

If you are very reluctant to add a photo of yourself, consider adding a photo that does not show your face, but rather some other image that reflects a little about who you are (e.g. a photo of your cat or dog). At least that will let others know that you are a real person and not a spam bot.

## Add your location

This lets other users know where you are from.

**Add a web site**

If you have a web site, add a link to it here.

**Add your bio**

Write a brief bio here -- in 160 characters or less -- that says something about your profession and interests. Others may decide to follow you -- or not follow you -- based on this information. Keep it brief and professional. Avoid profanity.

## Start Tweeting

It is time to send your first Tweet. Click on the Twitter icon at the top of the page. You will see a page that looks like this:

A screenshot of the Twitter 'What's happening?' tweet composition box. The text 'What's happening?' is displayed in a grey font at the top left of a light grey rectangular area. Below this text is a large, empty white rectangular input field with a thin grey border and rounded corners. A small cursor icon is visible at the bottom right corner of the input field.

Write your first Tweet in the white box.

Your first Tweet is unlikely to change the world. Nor is it likely to make you look silly. In fact, it is not uncommon for people's first Tweet to say, "This is my first Tweet" or "Just learning how to Tweet".

While it may not be Shakespeare, it does let others know that you are just learning and that you are a real person. (Again, proving you are not a spam bot is an essential part of the process, believe it or not.)

### **Did you know?**

Twitter users are often referred to as "Tweeters".

## Public Tweets

Most tweets are public and can be seen by others. Use common sense when sending your Tweets. Be respectful and avoid profanity if you are tweeting for professional purposes. Also avoid "trash talking" others.

Even if people are not following you, they may see your Tweets by searching your name. So, it is possible for your employer, your family members and others to see what you are saying on Twitter, even if they are not following you.

## **Retweeting**

As you are developing your own personal Twitter strategy, you may want to retweet what others have said. Sharing excellent resources and insights is an effective way to build good relationships with other Tweeters. If you are not sure what to Tweet about, it is also a good way to share interesting content.

Before you retweet, check out any links that may be included in the original tweet. Links can get cut off and lead no where, making them irrelevant. Also, people who retweet blindly may end up sharing links that go to an “Error, not found” page, or worse, a page that actually has nothing to do with what the original tweet said.

Take the time to check out links and resources before you retweet them.

On Twitter “RT” is short for “retweet”. It is considered good Twitter etiquette to mention the name of the person or people who posted the tweet before you by using “RT @” directly followed by the other user’s name. Do not leave a space between the @ symbol and their name.

### **Example:**

RT @bookpublish101: Social media messages are a direct inquiry. Answer them in a timely fashion. It's like someone walking into your office.

### **Did you know?**

People who are part of your Twitter following are affectionately referred to as “Tweeps”.

This word is a combination of “Twitter” and “peeps”, which is slang for “people.”

## Following others

You can follow a user by clicking “Follow” under that person’s name.

Two easy ways to find people to follow:

- 👤 Use the search box to look for people you know personally.
- 👤 Use the search box to look for people whose work you admire such as authors, leaders in your professional field or just people who inspire you.
- 👤 Use the search box to look for keywords or topics that interest you. If you include the “#” symbol in front of the words, this may yield better results.

Follow at least 25 people. It is fine to follow more, but twenty-five is a good start. That way, you will see tweets from a variety of people and no one person will dominate your Twitter feed.

## **The # symbol (a.k.a. a “hashtag”)**

The # symbol is called a hashtag by Twitter users. It is placed directly before a relevant keyword in order to help Tweeters categorize and highlight topics that are important to them. Tweeters may also use hashtags to search for topics.

### **Example:**

Typing #creativity into the search box at the top of the page will result in all the latest Tweets on the topic of creativity that users have tagged using the same hashtag. Hashtags can be used anywhere in the Tweet.

Sometimes, long topics are shortened into a short hashtag keyword. For example, the National Lacrosse League uses the hashtag #NLL. People who like Lacrosse may find Tweets relating to that topic based on the short hashtag.

The more you use Twitter, the more familiar you will become with hashtags and how to use them.

## **The @ symbol**

By placing the @ symbol directly in front of another person’s username, with no spaces, you are directing a message at that person. This is one way to acknowledge others and engage in conversations.

### **Example:**

@AAzimGarcia Really enjoyed your latest blog post on using all natural cosmetics.

@DrSarahEaton Thanks, glad you enjoyed it!

In the first line, I am writing to user AAzimGarcia. I sent the message from my Twitter account, using the @ symbol directly in front of her name to let her (and others) know that about my comment.

When she replied back to me, she used my user name (also known as a “Twitter handle”) preceded by the @ symbol to acknowledge my message.

## Develop your personal Twitter strategy

### Following others strategically

Choose the people and organizations that you follow strategically. Let your own interests guide you. Look for organizations and individuals whose work impresses and inspires you.

### Using lists to organize the people you follow

Lists allow you to organize the people you follow into groups.

Underneath your name you will see the number of Tweets you have sent, the number of people you are following and the number of people who follow you back.

Click on “Following”. That will take you to a page that shows who is following you. You will see their photo, username and their brief bio.

To the right of that, you will see these two buttons:



Click on the icon that is shadow of the person. It is located next to the green “Following” button.

A drop-down menu will appear. The second option is “Add to list”. Click that option.

A pop-up box will appear with your lists. At the bottom will be an option to “Create a list”. If you do not have any lists, create a new one. It is common for Twitter users to create lists based on topics they are interested in or location. For example, you may want to create a list with the same name as your city and add people who live in the same city as you. Create another list for your state or province and add people and organizations related to your area. You can add people to more than one list.

Twitter also gives you the option of creating a public or private list. If you choose to keep a list private, only you can see who is on it. If your list is public, other Twitter followers can see your list and who you have added to it. Other users can follow your public list, too.

### **No obligation: You do not have to follow back**

Just because someone follows you, it does not mean that you are in any way obliged to follow them back. Of course, if they look like interesting, reasonable people, it shows good will and generosity to reciprocate. Do not feel obliged to follow people back if:

- 🗿 **They have no bio or photo.** Really, all you have then is a user name and who knows who they really are.
- 🗿 **They have no tweets.** If you click on the profile of someone who has followed you and you see from their profile that they have never, ever Tweeted, not even once, this should raise a flag for you with regards to following back. They may be a “silent follower” (also known as a “lurker”), someone who prefers to read others’ Tweets, rather than engage actively in the Twitter conversation. That’s fine, but if they are not going to Tweet, there is no point in following them is there?
- 🗿 **They have no followers.** If a Tweeter follows loads of people and no one follows them back, there is likely a reason for this. You are not obliged to take pity on them and be their first. Chances are high they are a spammer.
- 🗿 **Their photo offends you.** If someone has followed you whose photo shows an image or a political, religious or philosophical symbol that makes your skin crawl, then don’t follow them back. Chances are, their Tweets will annoy or upset you anyway.
- 🗿 **Their bio offends you.** As with the photo, if you find a Tweeter’s bio offensive, do not follow them.

## **Following / Followers Ratio**

There are differing opinions about the idea ratio of people you follow to the number who follow you back. One way to approach it is to keep the numbers about even. The problem is that as you gain more followers, you will also attract more spammers and people who want to bombard you with sales Tweets.

If you keep the number of people you follow to about 80-95% of those who follow you, then you are likely to find a good balance.

### **Did you know?**

There are services that will sell you more Twitter followers. Do not buy into these vanity schemes.

Instead build a following of interested, engaged followers who are sincerely interested in your Tweets.

## Twitter style types

Every Twitter user has their own personal style and identity. Here are some Twitter style types:

Retweeter	This person mostly retweets other people's resources and tweets. They offer very little in the way of original contributions. Can be seen as either highly informed, manic, or both.
Retweet Beggar	This person constantly begs others to retweet their posts by writing "Please RT" at the end of a message. While most of us ask for this favour occasionally, for some Twitter users, it's their most significant characteristic. Often considered desperate or annoying.
Spammer	This person is most likely to be an entrepreneur or work for a non-profit. Their tweets consist of "Please buy my product!" or "Please donate to our worthy cause!" Often considered self-serving and annoying.
Philosopher	Will ask thought-provoking questions, regardless of whether they get any answers. Often considered insightful, lacking in real content, or both.
Conversationalist	Engages with others in short exchanges using the @ to direct their message. Makes a point to thank others for their retweets and mentions. Usually considered to be an engaged and interested Twitter user.
Non-stop Tweeter	This person reports every single thing they do during a day starting with a "Good morning, world!" tweet and ending with "Good night, Tweepers!" Usually considered not to have much of a life.

The reality is that most of us are some combination of these types. What kind of Tweeter do you want to be?

## Manage your Twitter time effectively

There is no doubt about it. Once you start Tweeting, it can become time consuming.

New Tweeters often complain that they simply do not have enough time to Tweet or keep up with tweets.

### 3 things you need to know about managing your time on Twitter

1. **Everyone gets behind with their Tweets sometimes.** Even avid Tweeters get busy, have emergencies or go travelling in a place where Internet services are limited.
2. **No one keeps track.** Do not beat yourself up if you get behind with your Tweets. Although there are services such as Klout that may unofficially keep a “score” on you, really, few humans do. And if they do, they need to get a life.
3. **There are services that can help you.**

### Schedule Tweets with 3rd party services

Tools such as Hootsuite and TweetDeck are designed to help keep you organized and schedule your tweets. There are other services available, too. It is worthwhile to check them out to find one you like.

These services allow you to schedule your Tweets, which means that you can be Tweeting, even when you are sleeping or on holidays. If you schedule your tweets this way, remember to still use the services in real time so you can thank others for their retweets, listen to what some of your favorite Tweepers are saying and engage in conversations.

## Build an engaged following

There is a myth that having a large Twitter following is desirable. You do not need *more* followers. You want more *engaged* followers. The number of followers you have means less than if those followers are real people who interact with you and are interested in you and your work.

You want followers who:

- 👤 read your Tweets
- 👤 retweet and share your Tweets
- 👤 have Twitter conversations with you, making comments and offering responses.
- 👤 suggest you as someone to be followed using the #FollowFriday #FF or #ff hashtags, or just suggest you even if it is not Friday.

### **Be consistent**

It is better to tweet once a day for a month than it is to send out 30 tweets in one day and then send nothing for the next 29 days. Using services such as TweetDeck or Hootsuite can help you ensure that you are Tweeting regularly and consistently.

### **Retweet regularly**

Repost interesting Tweets on a regular basis. Make a point to share resources that you think others will enjoy and find useful.

### **Post original material**

Share your own insights, resources and thoughts. Be careful not to spam. It can't be a constant stream of output. You need to balance your output and asks with responses, acknowledgements and retweets. Don't expect others to share your stuff if you don't share and acknowledge theirs.

### **Acknowledge and appreciate your Tweeps**

They don't have to follow you, retweet your stuff or give you a shoutout. Showing appreciation helps build good digital relationships.

**Random acts of kindness**

Promote a good cause. Mention a friend's business. Give someone you don't know a public compliment or shoutout.

## Resources

There are numerous resources available about Twitter and how to use it effectively. These are a few of my favorites.

Twitter <http://www.twitter.com>

10 Innovative Twitter Tools For The Busy Freelancer - by Mirko

<http://www.designer-daily.com/10-innovative-twitter-tools-for-the-busy-freelancer-18460>

Follow Your Interests. Discover Your World. Twitter.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AN4\\_N5N52U&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AN4_N5N52U&feature=youtu.be)

Twitterspeak: 66 Twitter Terms

<http://mashable.com/2008/11/15/twitterspeak/>

Twitter for Teachers

<http://twitterforteachers.wetpaint.com/>

Twitter Handbook for Teachers

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/14062777/Twitter-Handbook-for-Teachers>

Top 100 Tools for the Twittering Teacher - by Donna Scott

<http://www.bestcollegesonline.com/blog/2009/04/02/top-100-tools-for-the-twittering-teacher/>

An Educator's Guide to Twitter - A LiveBinder by Steven W. Anderson

<http://www.livebinders.com/play/present?id=34291#>

## About the author



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- Educator since 1994 - University of Calgary, Mount Royal University, Idaho State University (ISU - Workforce Training) and Chinook Learning (Calgary Board of Education).
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- Professional Member, Canadian Association of Professional Speakers (Calgary chapter) and the Global Speakers' Federation.
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