

Twitter Cheat Sheet

By Jon Reed



Timeline. Once you've joined Twitter, it's time to start 'following' people. Click the **Who To Follow** menu link for some suggestions, or to search for people, and click the **Follow** button by their name. The latest tweets of people you follow show up in the **Timeline** on your Twitter home page.

Biography. Make sure you include a bio on your profile page: click **Settings** on the top-right drop-down menu, then choose the **Profile** tab. Include a description in up to 160 characters. This can include web addresses and Twitter user names, which become clickable links. This is useful if you want to link from a book-based Twitter account to your personal one, or to your publisher.

Website. There is also a field in the **Profile** section to include your Web address. This can be your blog, website or Amazon sales page. Use an Amazon short link for this, such as <http://amzn.to/getuptospeed>. You can generate and customize these using <http://bit.ly>.

What do I tweet? Unlike Facebook, you can set up multiple accounts, and use them as you wish: a personal account, one for your book, business – or even book character. You don't have to share personal information unless you want to. You can focus on sharing tips, links and information, creating a useful news feed in a discrete topic area, sharing news of your book events, tweeting your blog posts or simply sharing short extracts from your book. You can tweet whatever you like, so long as it is no longer than 140 characters. If people like your tweets, they will follow you.

@Mentions. A Twitter username preceded by the @ symbol (e.g. **@jonreed**) becomes a link to that person's Twitter page. When you include someone's Twitter username at the start of a tweet, it is considered a **reply**. You can also reply to people who have sent you @replies by clicking the **Reply** link that appears when you hover your mouse over their tweet. Replies are public, and can be seen in the timeline of anyone who follows both you and the recipient. If you want everyone who follows you to be able to see it, include an extra character such as a period before the username (e.g. **@jonreed.**). Including a username elsewhere in a tweet is called a mention. You can see who has replied to or mentioned you by clicking the **@Mentions** tab on your Twitter page.

Direct Messages. Direct Messages, or DMs, are private messages rather than public mentions. You can only DM someone you follow if they also follow you back. Either click the **Message** button on the Twitter page of the person you want to DM, click **Messages** in the top menu bar, or type the letter d followed by their username at the start of a tweet, e.g. **d @jonreed**.

Favorites. You can save your favorite tweets by clicking the **Favorite** link that appears when you hover over a tweet. Other people can see your favorites, so you could use this to save any nice comments people make about your book on Twitter!

Retweets. There are three ways to retweet – or pass on – someone else's tweet: 1) click the **Retweet** link that appears when you hover over a tweet. The tweet will appear in your timeline as retweeted by you, with the original tweeter's profile image; 2) Type e.g. **RT @publishingtalk:** followed by the text you want to retweet. Add your own comment before or after if you wish, and if space permits; 3) Type the text you want to retweet followed by e.g. **(via @publishingtalk)**

Links. Share links in your tweets to your own blog and to other articles you think your readers will be interested in. Use a URL shortener to make the most of your 140 characters. <http://bit.ly> is great for this, gives you loads of metrics on clickthroughs, and comes with a handy browser toolbar so you can share any webpage via your Twitter account(s) with a couple of clicks.

Searches. Use the search box on your Twitter page to search for keywords in your field, and click the **Who To Follow** menu link to search for people. Use www.tweetdeck.com to set up a real-time keyword search in one of the columns. I use this for the word 'publishing' to find tweets and links that I want to read – and retweet.

Hashtags. Hashtags are simply keywords. Putting the # symbol before them turns them into a link that clicks through to a new timeline of everyone who has included that hashtag in their tweets. Hashtags are often used by people tweeting from conferences, such as #LBF11 for the London Book Fair 2011. People also use #followfriday or #ff on a Friday to recommend people to follow. #writerwednesday is a similar way to recommend authors.

Trending Topics. The most popular keywords or phrases used on Twitter at the present moment are displayed in the right-hand column of your page under **Trends**. These may or may not be hashtags. You can choose whether the trends displayed are worldwide, or for a specific country or city.

Twitter Lists. Add people to a Twitter list to create a discrete timeline of that group's tweets. To add people to a list, click the **Lists** drop-down button under someone's profile on their Twitter page (in between the **Message** button and the cog icon of the tools drop-down menu). Once you've created a list, others can follow it. You can also include your list as a widget on your website, or use it to create an online newspaper made up of articles that people on your list have shared. This is how the **Publishing Talk Daily** is created: the **@publishingtalk/daily** list is turned into an online newspaper using <http://paper.li>. See the latest edition at <http://paper.li/publishingtalk/daily>.

Build your followers. To increase your followers, follow more people – at least half will follow you back. But you don't want just anyone following you: stick to people within your community of interest. Find them by using searches, or directories such as www.wefollow.com - and also use this to find and follow the followers of people tweeting in a similar topic area to you. Anyone can follow 2,000 people; after that you can only follow 10% more people than follow you.

Third party tools. There is a vast amount of third-party Twitter tools out there. One of the most useful is www.twitterfeed.com, to automatically tweet your blog posts to your twitter account(s). Use a social media dashboard to manage multiple Twitter accounts – www.tweetdeck.com and www.hootsuite.com are popular, and also allow you to pre-schedule tweets. Use <http://onekontest.com> to promote your book on Twitter with a giveaway, and use <http://twtvite.com> to organize tweetups – real-life meetups of people on Twitter!