TWITTER

*Overview*

Twitter is a platform where users can share thoughts, news, information, and links in messages of 140 characters or less — known as “tweets.” Users “follow” each other in order to stay apprised of other users’ updates and to converse with specific people.

**Profile**

Your profile includes your username (called your “handle”), a profile icon, a larger background photo, a brief bio, and the tweets that you create. Anyone can see your tweets, unless you elect to make them private.

**Follows**

Unlike Facebook, following affords interaction and conversation between two users who are not necessarily friends. Twitter users can follow friends, celebrities, news outlets, government officials, brands, and more. Once you follow someone, their tweets appear in your feed.

**Retweets**

Share someone else’s tweet and credit them by clicking the “retweet” option beneath their post. Their tweet will then appear in your Twitter posts along with the signifier “RT”

**Replies**

Respond to a tweet or start a conversation with another twitter user by clicking the “reply” option beneath their tweet. Other users will be able to see your reply in your list of tweets.

**Mentions**

Use the @ sign to “mention” a user, referencing them in your Tweet (e.g. I love @umichLSA!). Mentioning is a way to have discussions with other users in a public realm.

**#Hashtags**

Join larger conversations about a specific topic by using “hashtags”(#). Hashtags denote a topic of conversation (e.g. #AmericanIdol, #liberalarts), allowing other users to discover your tweets, based on the topic. You can also click on a hashtag to see all the tweets that mention it in real time — even from people you don’t follow.

**Direct Messages**
Questions or personal messages that other users cannot view can be sent to other users with “Direct Message” option, found in the dropdown menu near the top of a Twitter profile. You can only DM a Twitter user who follows you.

**Protected Profiles**
Profiles with a lock appearing next to the name are privacy protected so you are unable to see their tweets. Only request permission to view tweets of protected user accounts to which you are personally connected. Retweets of protected accounts can only be seen by Twitter users who are approved by the protected user.

**How Brands Use Twitter**
Consumers can tweet about their experience with a particular brand. By monitoring keywords related to its business, a brand can use Twitter to join these conversations when opportunities arise. In this way, brands can develop relationships with consumers by responding personally to their tweets, offering deals and incentives, product support, customer service, and more.

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**-Getting Started-**

**Naming Guidelines**
Departmental Twitter handles should also follow the LSA format: umich + “Department Name,” abbreviated to reduce the number of characters. For Econ, this will be @umichECON.

Your url will be www.twitter.com/“yourTwitterhandle.” For Econ, this will be http://www.twitter.com/umichECON

In choosing your name, we encourage units to keep consistency with LSA’s model: U-M + “Department Name.” For Econ, this will be: U-M Economics.

Your account description should also include a link to your department website. We also encourage your account description, which is limited to 140 characters, to reference the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. For example, your account description might read something like this: “The Economics Department in the College of LSA at the University of Michigan.”

**Visual Guidelines**
LSA Marketing & Communications will supply you with a Twitter profile icon.

Larger photos for your Twitter profile page should be a generic U-M image. This image should be as plain as possible. This will ensure that your profile description, which appears over top of it, is readable. We suggest not putting
people in this photo, as photos like this are often too busy and hard to negotiate around the profile icon and the text below. Michigan Photography has a large selection of campus photos, should you need a good image.

Contact LSA CMS Web Services at lsa.web.support@umich.edu if you are interested in placing social media account icons on your department’s website.

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**Email Notifications**

Familiarize yourself with the notification options available in your settings and choose how you want to be updated when users interact with you on Twitter.

**Management Tools**

Websites and applications such as Tweetdeck and Hootsuite allow you to schedule Twitter and Facebook posts up to a 30 days ahead of time, view lists you create to organize your followers, shorten links, and track hashtags.

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**Engagement**

**Be consistent.** Stick to a schedule of posting daily. And as with Facebook, the voice and tone of your account should always be consistent based on your strategy and objectives, once established.

**Think in 140 Characters.** Twitter is focused on short bursts of information that often lead back to your ultimate gatekeeper of online information: your website. If you need to go beyond the character limitations, link followers over to your website using a shortened, customized URL shortener, like bit.ly.

**Speak as a team.** Again, be sure to say “we” rather than “I” or “me.”

**Know your subject matter.** Some topics to consider for your Twitters posts include:

- Links to departmental stories posted on your website
- Retweets and links to media hits or stories that reference your department, both from other campus entities and from the news media
- Links to stories from your departmental newsletter
- Retweets or links to faculty news/research developments/awards
- Photos of department events
- Event info about guest speakers or lectures
- Important dates/deadlines within your department
- Links to breaking news and timely events

**Maintain a Consistent Schedule.** As with Facebook, a consistent schedule of tweets will help grow your Twitter following. Begin by posting several times a day, including the weekends, to encourage community members to visit your site. Generally, Twitter updates are expected to be more frequent than Facebook updates.

**Understand your post options.** Remember that your posts must be less than 140 characters, including spaces. You have the option to make a text-only post, include links to external sites, embed a photo in your tweet, and tag your location.

- Take advantage of the opportunity to link. 140 characters isn’t generally enough space to tell a story, or explain in detail. Link to pages you are looking to promote and sites with more information.
- Use a mix of retweets and tweets written by you. Retweets save time and can add credibility and diversity of information to your account, but be sure you are offering unique information to your followers by creating your own, unique posts.
- Use a link shortener, like bit.ly.
- Include photos in your post when you can. Use a smart phone or digital camera to take photos from department events to include in timely tweets, or upload graphics of event posters or other print materials to promote department events.
- Use hashtags to reach more people. Consider hashtags relevant to your post and your departmental expertise, such as #economics, #finance, or #markets. Also consider hashtags that draw attention from the campus community, like #umich and #goblue. Remember to only use hashtags that are relevant to the information in your post.

**Include Twitter updates on your editorial calendar.** Plan ahead for strategic posts about important events and department news, but also remember that Twitter is a great place to address breaking news as it develops.

**Take advantage of link tracking.** Many link shorteners like bit.ly include data on how many clicks your link has received, showing what links were the most and least popular. This information can be used to measure the success of your messaging and help you determine what posts do best with your followers.

**Build a following.** Consider proactively following:
- Other Twitter accounts from Michigan entities
- Twitter accounts with similar interests at other colleges/universities
- Experts, companies, or organizations related to your page

**Follow back.** Following users who follow you can establish you as a trusted source. Before following back, check to see if new followers:
- Seem real. View the “about section” at the top to see if it is populated with believable information
- Tweet information that U-M should be associated with. For example, if the user’s tweets are full of profanity, do not follow back.
- Have an appropriate avatar. If it is inappropriate, do not follow back.
- Tweets frequently
- Has an average follower/following ratio. If someone has 40 followers but is following 3,000 accounts, they may be a spammer.

**Keep a balanced ratio of followers.** A good rule of thumb is to follow fewer accounts than you have followers to ensure credibility.

**Use lists** to keep track of your followers and the people you follow. Lists allow you to group users on Twitter. Add a user to one of your lists by clicking on the dropdown menu near the top of their Twitter profile. Examples of lists you might create to find information on Twitter more easily are:
- Faculty in your department
- Students in your department
- U-M Twitter accounts
- News organizations related to your field of study

**Mention other Twitter accounts as applicable.** Use the @sign with a user’s Twitter handle to mention them. Mentioning can be a way to credit other Twitter users for information and also a way to ensure they see a tweet you compose that is relevant to their interests.

**Respond and engage.** Find other users whose interests mirror yours and start a dialogue. Be sure to respond to any questions asked of you via Twitter in a timely and polite manner. If someone mentions your field of expertise in a tweet, don’t let the opportunity pass. Jump in and interact by tweeting them back, mentioning them, or retweeting their tweet. Favorite posts that laud your department or that are particularly helpful, entertaining, or relevant. Politely correct posts that include misinformation.

**Reply to direct messages privately,** particularly if the message involves a personal question. You can only DM accounts that follow you. So if an account that you are following sends you a DM, you may need to ask them to follow you back so that you can reply privately. Tweet the following messaging at
the user: “Hi @username. Thanks for the DM. Can you please follow us so that we can DM you back?”

**Block when needed.** Sometimes, you will receive tweets containing spam or inappropriate or harassing comments. When an account is becoming bothersome or sending inappropriate content to you, you have the ability to block and report them to Twitter. In the dropdown menu near the top of their profile choose “Block” or “Report for spam.”

Contact LSA-DMC at lsa-marketing@umich.edu if you have questions about how to respond to a post or need support.

*Parts of the above guidelines have been adapted from the DePaul Social Media Guidebook: http://brandresources.depaul.edu/vendor_guidelines/EMM_Social_Media_Guidebook_Final%2010_10.pdf*