**Twitter for Academics: A Tool for Learning, Disseminating Results, and Networking.**

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**What is Twitter:**

Twitter is a social network that lets you post short messages (tweets) of 140 characters or less. You can include images and videos (gifs), as well as links to other things. These tweets are seen by your followers, or can be found by searching for hashtags (symbolized with the pound sign, followed by text. For example: #RealTimeChem). It can be integrated with a variety of other social media, computer apps, or websites and is widely used by people around the world.

**Why to use Twitter:**

I use twitter to publicize what I am doing (“tweeting”) and to highlight interesting things that others are doing (“retweeting” and/or “favoriting” something posted by someone else). I follow the twitter accounts of other chemists and journals, as well as other things I find interesting (such as the twitter feed on research from the International Space Station and also chemistry and science bloggers). Chemists tweet about their publications, what their students are doing, and the conferences they are attending, among other things. Some chemistry journals tweet out ASAP papers, hot papers, awards, and other useful information. Bloggers will tweet the link to each new post they make on their blog so you can go to it.

I start conversations with other chemists on twitter and also use it to contact chemists while I am at conferences. It is especially useful at conferences to know what presentations various people are at. I used twitter to advertise the symposium that I was chairing at a conference. Conferences will often have their own hashtags you can search (like #ACSDenver). I have even attended a “tweet-up” at an ACS meeting, where chemists who only know each other on twitter meet up at a bar. It was a great way to network.

I also tweet things that students at my own institution would find useful (scholarships, events, etc) because I assume that some of the students follow my twitter feed (and I know for a fact several do). Those tweets are sometimes retweeted by the chemistry, biology, and CSH twitter accounts, so they get out to a wider student audience.

I do not use my twitter feed for personal information, and I try to keep it as professional as possible. *I do not recommend using twitter (or any social media platform) to say things that you wouldn’t want your mother, all of your students, the president of the university, and your children to see… because they can see anything posted if they search for your account.* I also recommend that you keep things positive and constructive as much

**Making an account:**

Making an account is quick and easy. You make a name and a twitter handle that starts with the “at” symbol (@). Mine is @GriceChemistry. I recommend making it clear and something relating to your research. Be sure to put a picture up, otherwise people will think you are not a real account (and there are plenty of fake accounts out there).

**Who to follow:**

Follow your colleagues, journals in your field, funding agencies and other people you are interested in networking with. You can search for people based on keywords (such as “Inorganic Chemistry”). Don’t follow people who post lots of random stuff that you don’t care about because it will jam up your twitter feed. You can always un-follow someone if that is the case (for example, when political posts get out of control and you don’t want to see them). Sometimes I follow a person for their science/scholarship but then they start to constantly post random things non-stop and I have to unfollow them because it’s not useful to me. ***Don’t*** *follow everyone who follows you*. Some companies and people try to follow as many random people as possible just to advertise/get publicity because they hope you will follow back. You will get followed by these people. Just ignore them. You can also mute or block them. There are a variety of levels of privacy you can set up, based on how visible/discoverable you want to be as well.

**Networking/having a conversation on twitter:**

You can tweet about or at a twitter handle and it shows up on their feed. For example, if you tweeted “I saw @GriceChemistry today at a meeting”, it would appear on my feed because it had my handle on it. I could then reply and we could start a conversation. This can be seen by everyone, and is good advertising. You can also directly message someone if you want to communicate privately (people will say “DM me”, which means “direct message me”). I have started several interactions with chemists on twitter I have never met. Some of those led to email conversations and/or videochatting later about research/collaborations.

**Notifications and Hashtags:**

You get a notification every time one of your tweets is favorited, or if someone tweets at your handle or messages you. You can have this synched with your email or phone app so you get notifications if you want. That way you don’t have to check your account all the time to see if people have been favoriting/retweeting things.

Hashtags are search terms or keywords you can associate with a tweet. If I tweet “I just wrote five letters of recommendation! #ProfLife”, the #ProfLife hashtag means that if someone searches for #ProfLife, my post will be included in the search results. Yes, #ProfLife (Professor Life) is a real hashtag. Anyone can come up with a hashtag and run with it. Others start using it and then it becomes a searchable term.

**Links/Resources:**

There are other great resources out there, here are a few relating to academics and twitter:

**“A Gentle Introduction to Twitter for the Apprehensive Academic”**

<http://deevybee.blogspot.com/2011/06/gentle-introduction-to-twitter-for.html>

**“25 Interesting Observations About How Academics Use Twitter”**

<http://blog.getacclaim.com/25-interesting-observations-about-how-academics-use-twitter/>

**“10 Commandments of Twitter for Academics”**

<http://chronicle.com/article/10-Commandments-of-Twitter-for/131813/>

**“The Academic Benefits of Twitter”**

<http://savageminds.org/2013/05/08/the-academic-benefits-of-twitter/>

**“10 Things About Twitter for Academics”**

<http://justpublics365.commons.gc.cuny.edu/2014/06/30/10-things-twitter-academics/>