

Twitter for Scientists: The Essential Why & How

A resource from the IGI Comms team

Why?

- Multiple studies link Twitter use to **higher citation rates** (here are a few: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)), with indications that it may be [causative](#).
- Social media is a great way to **share your work** with other scientists; learn about **new research** in your field; **network** and find potential new students and collaborators; interact with conference attendees; directly share your expertise with **journalists and policymakers**; get **feedback** from peer experts; share/find **events** and talks; inform and **influence** the public; and show **representation** of different kinds of folks doing science.

What to tweet about

- Share/explain your work
- Summarize thoughts on important new papers or news articles
- Bring up topics for discussion with the scientific community
- Share images of data from new papers... Or lab hijinks
- Be yourself and let your personality shine through. It's a public forum so be courteous, but it's also okay to be fun and informal.

Set up a profile

- Pick a name. Use your real name (@JaneDoe, @JaneDoePhD, @JaneDoeSci) so you're easy to find, or something related to your research area (@DreamingOfDNA, @DNAdame, @DNAForDays, etc.).
- Add a photo or avatar
- Add a short bio: "Researcher @igisci, studying #DNA regulation." Add a personal detail or two if you wish, and include "Views my own," or "Tweets represent my views and do not necessarily represent the views of my employer."
- Add a link to your lab or professional website

Write tweets

- Tweets are short: they can contain up to 280 characters. Be brief, or link a series of tweets together into a "[thread](#)" by replying to your previous tweet and numbering them "1/n," "2/n," etc. Here are a couple examples ([1](#), [2](#)) of great threads from IGI members.
- Using images and videos helps tweets get attention. This could include photos of you, data figures from a presentation or paper, micrographs, or photos of your model organisms. Include [alt-text](#) for images by clicking "Add description" or "+ALT."

Network

- Even if you don't plan on being an active user, it's helpful to have an account so people can tag you by including your handle in tweets and to make it easy to find your website and current affiliation

- Follow departments (e.g. @UCB_Chemistry), people (e.g. @daniamatos), and [topics](#) (e.g. “science news”) that interest you. Following or mentioning accounts will often trigger them to follow you back.
- Posting regularly helps grow your following. Use hashtags so your tweets will show up in search results and Twitter “topics”, e.g. “New #ClimateChange research...”
- Engage with other peoples’ tweets – “like” Tweets you find interesting by hitting the heart, reply by hitting the conversation button, and/or retweet by hitting the square
- Getting retweeted helps you reach a broader audience, so it’s good to mention other people or institutes that are involved in your work. The IGI account (@igisci) regularly retweets members, and we often get retweeted by other UC Berkeley accounts as well. If you really want something retweeted, just ask us!

Stay out of hot water

- Remember that “likes” and who you follow are public
- Be kind and courteous. Use Twitter promote *your* work and share *your* ideas – think twice before using social media to criticize another community member or their work. If you feel absolutely compelled to, sleep on it. If you still feel compelled to, make sure your criticism is considered and specific. Do not get personal.
- Choose your words thoughtfully. You can’t edit Tweets, and social media is forever.
- You can’t edit a Tweet – but you can delete
- Don’t reply to people who respond aggressively or in bad faith (“trolls”). There is no winning these arguments and they are not worth your time.
- You don’t need to reply to people right away. If you’re feeling worked up, take a breather, and decide if it’s worth responding later.
- If you get something wrong, admit it and apologize
- If you tweeted something regrettable or another challenge comes up, consult with IGI Comms for advice on handling it