



# A Beginner's Guide to Twitter

Twitter isn't just for celebrity gossip and breaking news headlines. It is a really useful tool for campaigners.

One way of looking at it is as a fast-track way of bringing like-minded people together. It can help us make contacts with others who share our interests - and campaign objectives - be they all around the world or in our own backyard.

It's a great way of discussing events, sharing ideas and making plans. In a way it is similar to a giant online forum that is more public, allowing more people to join in. And because it updates all the time, things can move far more quickly.

## **Wait a minute, start at the beginning. What is Twitter?**

It is a website that allows you to set up your own profile (much like Facebook) with your own user name which you can use to publish short messages (or tweets) - a maximum of 140 characters long. Sometimes it is called microblogging.

Most people who use Twitter do so publicly. That means that everyone can see their tweets, which is what Twitter thrives on - open discussion.

Not that you would listen to everything everyone is saying at once. Instead, there are ways for you cut to the chase and make sure you only see what you want.

## **Follow people**

The main way you can filter what tweets you see is by 'following' specific people, groups or organisations. By following them, these accounts' tweets will show up in your 'timeline', which is usually what displays when you have logged into Twitter.

And of course, people can follow you, too!

But how do you know who to follow? Well... follow other Local Groups and @Livingstreets of course. Also think about local contacts and partners to follow.

Some might be recommended by others you already follow.

One important way is by using Twitter's powerful search function.

## **Searches**

Just as important as the people you follow are the searches you make so you find tweets about things you are interested in.

Most powerful of all, though, are when you search using a 'hashtag'. These are Twitter's equivalent of the Dewey decimal codes on library books, only anyone can create one.

They work best when people use the same ones.

More and more you will see other media - especially television - publishing hashtags in order to encourage people not only to discuss their show or product, but to do it in the same 'place' as it were.

Of course, as with finding new followers by searching for your interests, you will more than likely find new hashtags via your followers.

### **OK, so how should I get started?**

The best way is to set up an account. For this you will need:

A username - If you are representing a Local Group please use LStreets(name of group) as the username i.e @LStreetsCardiff.

A profile picture - If you are representing a Local Group you could use the Living Streets local group logo (ask your Local Engagement Coordinator for this) or a street in your area as your picture.

A short biography - this is so people who find you on Twitter know who you are and what to expect from your tweets. This can be as literal or abstract as you like, but remember that this, as much as the tweets you send, is what will make the first impression on potential new followers. Add a link here to your Living Streets webpage and email address.

### **Start tweeting!**

You can tweet your own messages, either in the 'Compose new tweet' box on the top left of your Twitter page, or via the quill icon in the top-right.

You can also respond to tweets by hovering over them and selecting 'Reply', 'Like' or 'Retweet' if you agree with a comment and wish to share it with your own followers.

### **Tagging and interacting with other users**

On the Interactions tab, you can see who has mentioned, followed or retweeted you recently.

### **Come up against any problems?**

Contact us at [info@livingstreets.org.uk](mailto:info@livingstreets.org.uk) and we'll see what we can do to help.