



Twitter Twaining

Twitter for Academics An Introduction

2nd Edition

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About This Resource

If you are considering using Twitter either for yourself or for your class, this document is intended to provide you with guidance and ideas for getting started.

For step-by-step tutorials on the basic use of Twitter, please see Twitter's help documentation at support.twitter.com.

Twitter will not be appropriate for every academic or every classroom. Hopefully this introduction will inform your decision on whether it is appropriate for you.

Questions and feedback are always welcome.

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This is the 2nd edition of this guide. Two days after the 1st edition was published, Twitter launched a major redesign which changed the layout. Any affected screenshots have been redone in this edition.

List of changes

- Information on bitly expanded to cover statistics
- Instructions for saving a search updated
- Find people to follow instructions updated
- Instructions for reporting spam followers updated



Why Use Twitter as an Academic?

Whereas Facebook is largely organized around people you know, Twitter is organized around subjects you are interested in. It is a great way to absorb and disseminate information.

Create a Global Faculty Lounge Twitter can be used to network with other education professionals and institutions across the world. Ask for advice, benefit from others experience, and keep up with trends in your field.

Publicize Your Work Twitter is a publishing platform useful for promoting your journal articles and other endeavors.

Top Source for Breaking News Citizen journalists consistently break news stories before traditional media particularly in case of disasters.



Anatomy of a Tweet

Twitter has its own lexicon. You can find a glossary of terms here: [support.Twitter.com/articles/166337-the-Twitter-glossary](https://support.twitter.com/articles/166337-the-Twitter-glossary) but let's take a look at some of the most common terms in action by examining an example tweet.

A tweet is simply a message on Twitter. Tweets cannot be longer than 140 characters. This has several important implications for how Twitter is used.

RT or Retweet When you see a tweet you find particularly informative or interesting, you can retweet it which forwards the tweet on to all your followers. Retweeting is essentially a method of repeating content in order to pass it on.

**original creater of the tweet
that is being retweeted**



**RT indicates this
is a retweet**

@Replies and @Mentions To reply to or mention another Twitter user in your tweet, you precede their username with an @ symbol. Replies and mentions work in exactly the same way, but are used for different purposes. Replies are for talking publically to another user, and mentions are used when you are talking

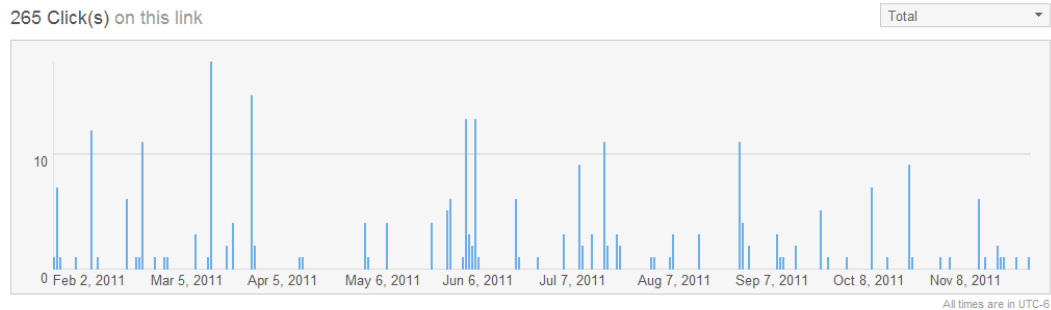


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publically about another user and you want them to easily see what you said about them.

Links Traditional URLs (i.e. web addresses) can be extremely long, so many people on Twitter use a link shortening service in order to share links without wasting all their 140 characters.

bitly.com is one of the most common link shorteners. Simply paste the web address you want to share into bitly and it will spit back a much shorter addresses for that same webpage that you can paste into your tweet. You will also be able to see statistics for the link, like who else tweeted it and how many clicks it is getting.



Conversations



MatthewTrifiro
Email Marketing Benchmarks, by industry <http://t.co/uZYbm8WF>
about 15 hours ago



HelloBenTeoh
@joannatsoukalas Mailchimp has a pretty good for e-newsletter resources - <http://t.co/effxUj3P> #socadl
about 18 hours ago



GuenterLenz
MailChimp scanned 570 million emails and calculated performance benchmarks for various industries. <http://t.co/bCDsLIi3>
about 18 hours ago



MailChimp
PDF, ePub, mobi, and HTML formats are now available for all of the guides in our resources section! <http://t.co/nHWG4dox>
about 22 hours ago

Google also has a link shortening service at goo.gl



Twitter Twaining



**link to an article or webpage
for more information**

Hashtags Any word, phrase or abbreviation preceded by a # is a hashtag. Hashtags are a way of labeling tweets as belonging to a particular subject area or trend.



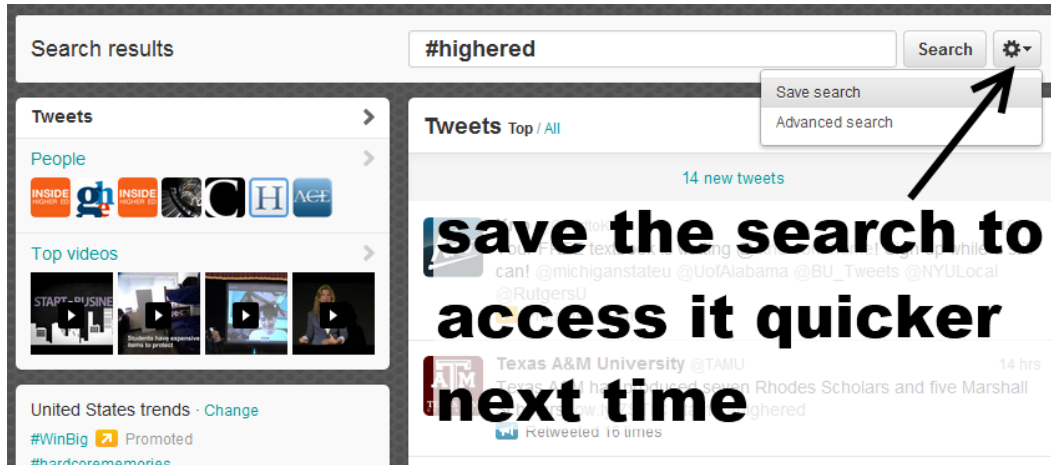
**hashtags indicate
relevant subject area**

If you use Twitter in the classroom, you will want your students to use a particular hashtag on all their class-related tweets so you and your students can easily keep track of the class conversation. There is no special setup required – just invent a hashtag that isn't already in use and start including it when you type out a tweet. For example, NURS-262 might use #uenurs262 as their class hashtag

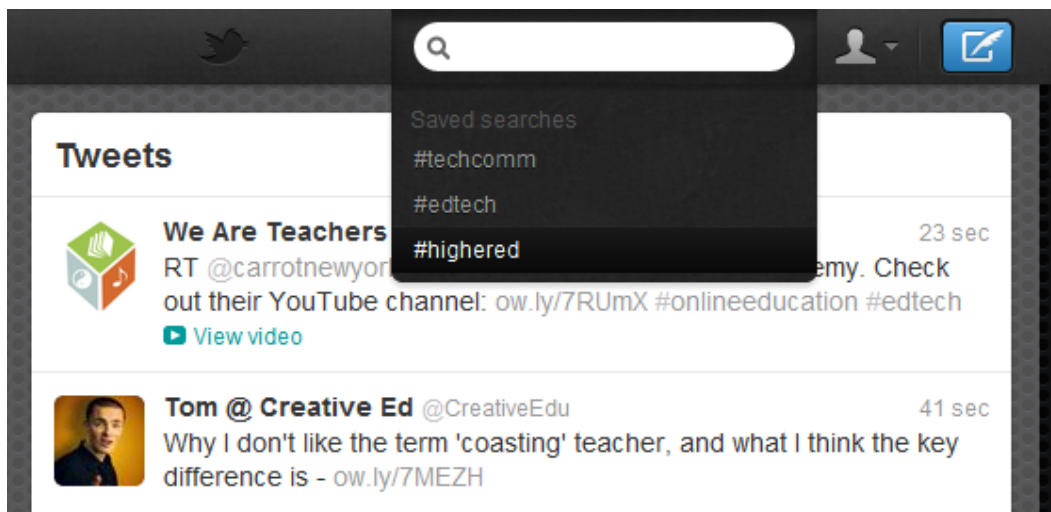


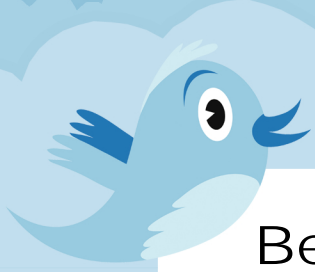
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To see activity for a particular hashtag, either click on it when it appears in your stream or type it into the search box at the top of the screen. You and your students should click the button that looks like a cog and select Save Search so you can easily access the search again in the future.



Once you have saved a search, you can access it again quickly by clicking once in the search box. All your saved searches will appear in a dropdown. Simply click the one you want.





Best Practices for Individuals

Pick the shortest possible version of your name @replies and @mentions (i.e. tweets to or about you) will include your name, and with only 140 characters per tweet a long name will waste space that could be used for informative content.

Spend some time crafting your bio Your bio is limited to 160 characters and will likely play a large part in who finds and decides to follow you. Try to include keywords for your specialty subjects, whilst injecting a little of your personality. Change your bio at [Twitter.com/settings/profile](https://twitter.com/settings/profile)

Upload your picture Increase connection with others by putting a face to your name. For best results, the picture you upload should be square or close to it. If you upload a rectangular image, Twitter will be forced to arbitrarily cut some of it off in order to make it fit.

Do not try to upload a picture straight from your digital camera as it will likely be enormous. Twitter profile pictures should be between 48k and 700k. Opening a photo in an image editing program (Photoshop, [Paint.net](https://www.paint.net/), [Picasa](https://www.picasa.com/), etc.), cropping it square, and resizing it to around 200px by 200px should work well.

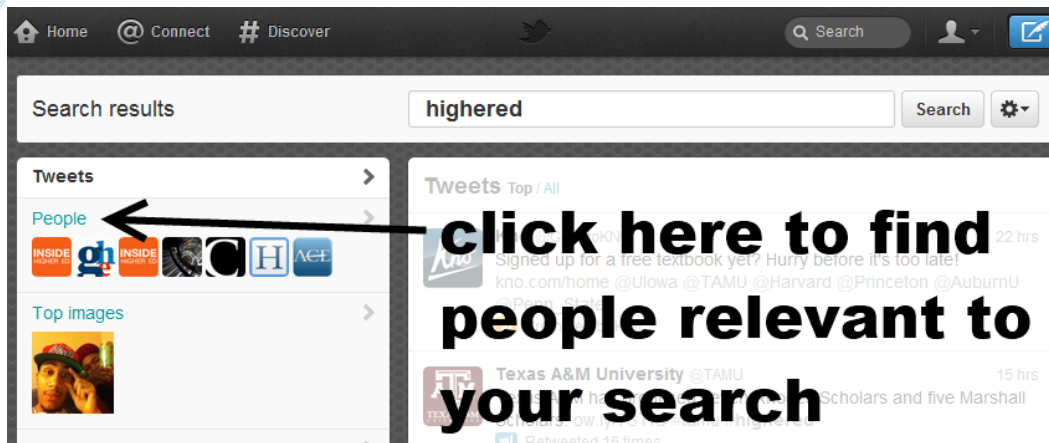
Change your picture at [Twitter.com/settings/profile](https://twitter.com/settings/profile)

Find People to Follow The people you follow do not need to be real world acquaintances, although you can find a list of UE employees on Twitter at [Twitter.com/katlinzy/twueps](https://twitter.com/katlinzy/twueps)

The quickest way to find a pool of potentially interesting people is to type a relevant term in the search box and see who is talking about that subject.



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Be Consistent Many people give up on Twitter in their early days of using it because they do not get into the habit of checking it and so fail to get into the groove of how it works. Check in regularly, and try to distribute your tweets throughout the week.

Be Aware You are Broadcasting Unless you protect your tweets (which negates many of the useful aspects of Twitter), your tweets are public. Your colleagues, employers, and students can see them.

Promote Your Twitter Consider adding a link to your Twitter profile to your email signature, or include it in relevant documentation. The convention for Twitter usernames in print is *@username*

Be Patient if You are Just Starting Out You will not be flooded with followers immediately, but build a body of high quality tweets and they will come. You might feel like you are talking to a brick wall at first, but consider it practice. To get some practical experience contacting specific people directly, choose a UE colleague from the list at [Twitter.com/katlinzy/twueps](https://twitter.com/katlinzy/twueps) or contact me [@katlinzy](https://twitter.com/katlinzy) for a little back and forth test tweeting.



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Some of your followers, particularly early on, are likely to be spam accounts. You can report a spam account by visiting your list of followers, clicking the button with a person's silhouette on it and selecting 'Report *username* for spam'



Use Popular Hashtags A hashtag is any word, condensed phrase, or abbreviation preceded by a # symbol that labels a tweet as belonging to a particular subject area. Keep an eye on the hashtags being widely used in your field.

Be Selective in your Following You do not need to follow someone just because they follow you. A Twitter feed bloated with content you do not care about makes Twitter irritating and hard to use. Do not be afraid to unfollow someone who isn't adding value to you – Twitter does not notify them that you have abandoned ship.

What should I tweet? Unlike a private Facebook profile, you have minimal control of who sees your tweets. Most influential users of Twitters are looking for useful resources – nobody wants to know what you had for breakfast. Staring at a fresh, blank Twitter profile can be intimidating. The following suggestions may get you started:



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- tweet your published articles
- tweet your response to a news story
- retweet something you found insightful, perhaps with your response to it or questions you have



Why use Twitter with a class?

Live Blog Events Easily connect students in a real time discussion while they individually watch an event in different locations. For example, students may be tasked with watching a political debate or movie screening at home. With Twitter, play-by-play discussion is simple and free.

Promote Sense of Community Non-traditional students or distance learners can feel disconnected from their classmates. Having Twitter as an outlet for discussion can build community, and encourages students to seek instant answers from their peers (e.g. “Which chapter were we supposed to read?”) rather than contacting their instructor.

Backchannel Communication If you have ever attended a technology conference, you have likely seen the backchannel in action. Speakers publicize a hashtag for their presentation, and audience members add that hashtag to their tweets as they react to the talk in real-time. By running a search on the hashtag, audiences and presenters can monitor audience reaction as it happens.

While the idea of instant public feedback can be terrifying for the speaker, the backchannel can add a rich layer of discussion to what would have been a one way dissemination of information.

Tweets Function as a Study Guide In class tweeting with hashtags gives students the opportunity to refer back to what was said in class. If class time is short, have students tweet their most relevant points after small group discussion, so they can be referred to by the entire class.

Start Students Building a Professional Network Students can start following and connecting with target companies before graduation and gain real world experience building a personal brand.



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Engage with a Public Figure Try tweeting a public figure or industry expert – you are likely to get a response.

Increase Engagement Although we're blessed with small class sizes at UE, professors at other institutions with hundreds of students have found using Twitter broadens participation in lectures where there is simply not enough time for everyone to speak. Shy students may feel more comfortable tweeting than speaking out in class.

Pre-Class Discussion Prompts If students are required to tweet a question or a comment on assigned reading before class, the Twitter stream for their hashtag can be used to generate discussion in class

Encourage Clarity of Expression Distilling a meaningful response into 140 characters can be challenging. Such a tight character limit can spark creativity.

Historical/Literary Character Impersonation A number of educators have used Twitter to get students into character as famous historical or literary figures by asking them to tweet as that person.

One of the more ambitious project is detailed at twhistory.org ([@TwHistory](https://twitter.com/TwHistory)) where students create scheduled tweets as characters in a historical event, which then function as a kind of historical reenactment.

TwHistory [How to set up your own TwHistory reenactment](http://twhistory.org)
Resources [Sample Classroom TwHistory unit on the Cuban Missile Crisis](#)



Potential Drawbacks to Consider

Student Preference for Facebook Anyone who has walked around campus has seen laptops and smartphones open to Facebook. Twitter adoption among the college student population is considerably lower, so the majority of students are unlikely to have an existing Twitter account and less likely to participate on Twitter unless they are given specific Twitter assignments.

This preference for Facebook, however, may be a positive for Twitter in the classroom; students already on Twitter may be reluctant to comment on class related topics when their friends/family will see it. The effects of this can be negated by encouraging students to set up a separate Twitter account specifically for class use.

Some educators have reported complaints that using Twitter/Facebook for educational purposes can be seen as an unwelcome intrusion into what students consider a purely social space.

Easy Out for Nervous Contributors Although Twitter can increase the participation of students who may be reluctant to speak out in class, the availability of Twitter as a participation method can become a crutch, encouraging students to neglect the opportunity to build public speaking skills.



Add a Twitter feed to Blackboard

You have probably seen Twitter feeds published to major news websites. If you use Blackboard, it is easy to publish your tweets (or the results of a particular Twitter search) to your blackboard course and keep non-tweeting students engaged by bringing Twitter to them.

Visit <https://Twitter.com/about/resources/widgets>

Click My Website on the left side of the screen

Resources > Widgets **click here**

Select Your Widget

Widgets for...

My Website **then click here**

Profile Widget
Display your most recent Twitter updates on any webpage.

Search Widget
Displays search results in real time! Ideal for live events, broadcastings, conferences, TV Shows, or even just keeping up with the news.

Faves Widget
Show off your favorite tweets! Also in real time, this widget will pull in the tweets you've starred as favorites. It's great for moderation.

List Widget
Put your favorite tweeps into a list! Then show 'em off in a widget. Also great for moderation.

HOME WORLD U.S. POLITICS CRIME ENT

What's being said about the White House

XTensiveOps Wal-Mart bullies American small business owners: When Wal-Mart sent a letter to President Obama two weeks ago su...
<http://bit.ly/b23nK>
33 seconds ago

weighlesstoday Obama says without action, health costs will rise: The Associated Press Jon...

To publish your own tweets to Blackboard, select Profile Widget. (The Search Widget is another useful tool to publish to Blackboard, particularly when used in conjunction with hastags – set up is very similar to the profile widget detailed here.)



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Resources › Widgets › Profile widget for My Website

Customize Your Profile Widget

Settings Username

Preferences

Appearance

Dimensions

if you're happy with how this looks click here

Test settings Finish & Grab Code

If you are happy with the way the widget looks right out of the box, click Finish & Grab Code.

To tweak the settings (like number of tweets shown and the colors), use the Preferences, Appearance and Dimension options at the top left.



Resources › Widgets › Profile widget for My Website

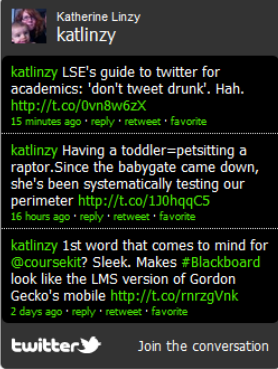
Customize Your Profile Widget

copy the code in this box →

```
<script
src="http://widgets.twimg.com/j/2/wid
get.js"></script>
<script>
new TWTR.Widget({
  version: 2,
  type: 'profile',
  rpp: 4,
  interval: 30000,
  width: 250,
  height: 300,
  theme: {
    shell: {
      background: '#333333',
      color: '#ffffff'
    },
    tweets: {
      background: '#000000',

```

Copy and paste this code into an HTML webpage



Click in the code box to select the code, and copy it by your preferred method (e.g. use the keyboard shortcut CTRL+C on Windows or Command+C on a Mac, or right click and select Copy)

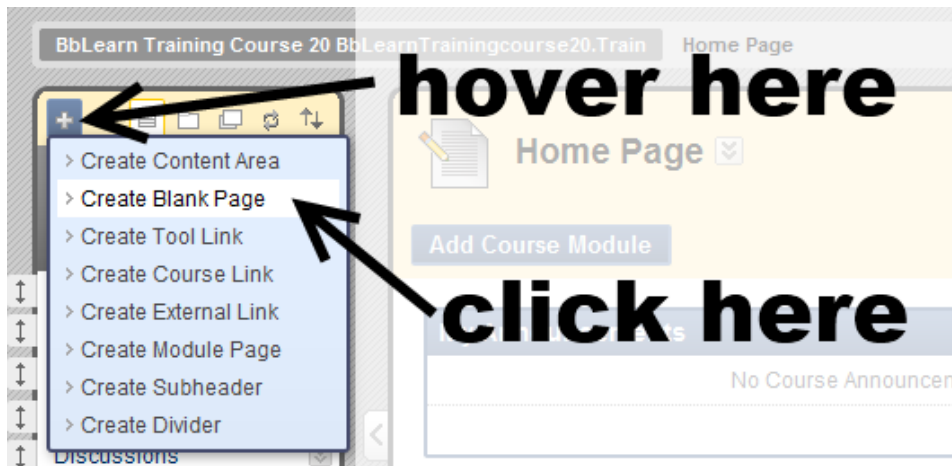
Now head to your Blackboard course. We're going to paste the code into a Blank Page. You have two alternatives for creating a blank page:

Option 1: Create a blank page in the course menu

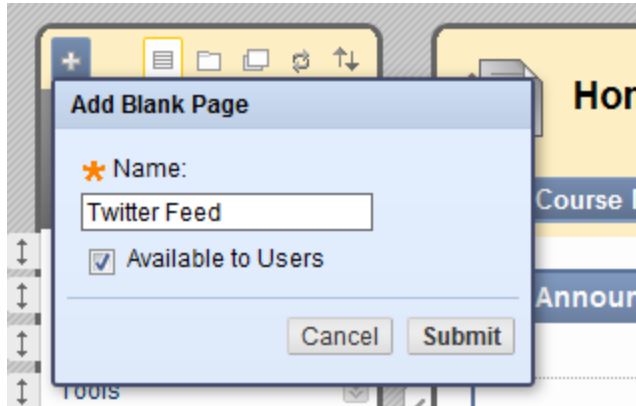
Hover over the + icon at the top left of the course menu and select Create Blank Page.



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Type a suitable name, check the Available to Users box and click Submit.



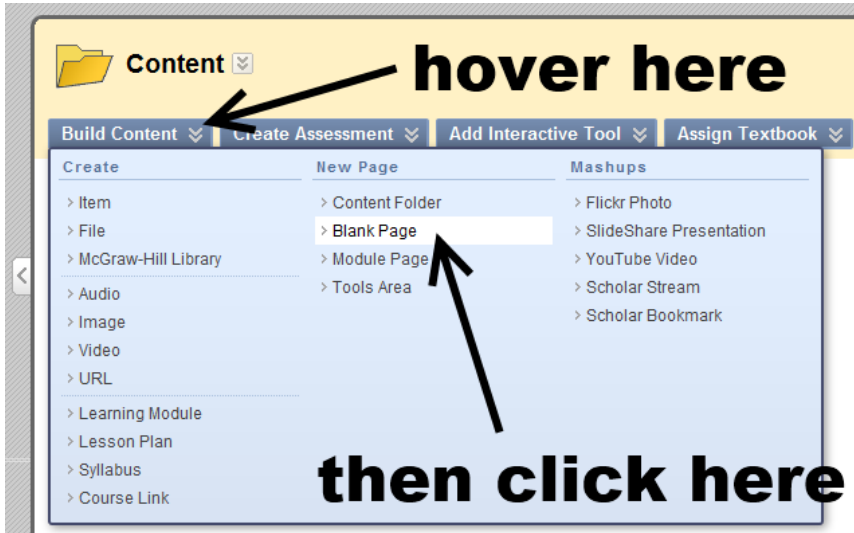
Option 2: Create a blank page within a content area

From the course menu, access the content area where you want your Twitter feed to live.



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Ensure Edit Mode is on. Hover over the Build Content button and select Blank Page from the dropdown.

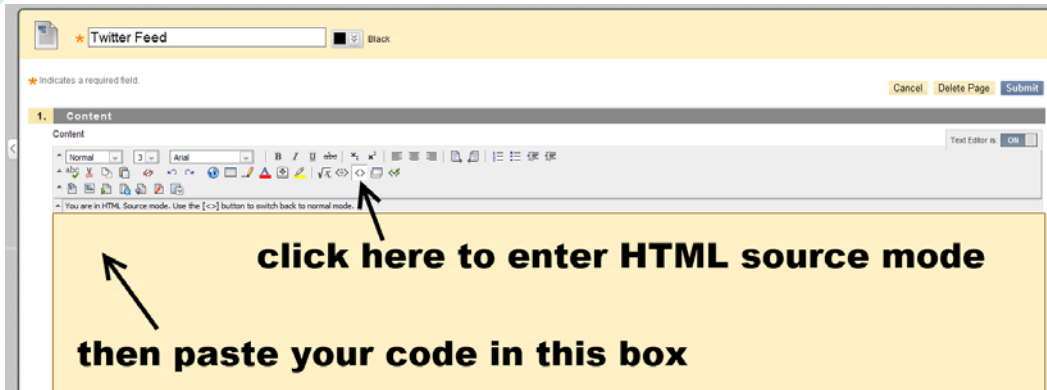


Once you have created your blank page, click the button just above the content box that toggles into HTML Source Mode.

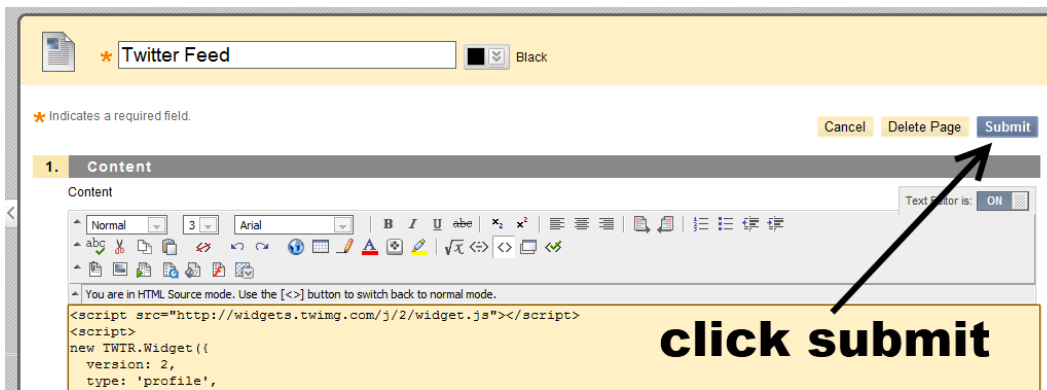




Twitter Twaining



What's going on here?
Blank Pages in Blackboard are essentially just web pages. When you type in the content box, Blackboard formats your text into HTML behind the scenes. If you are comfortable with HTML (or if, like here, you have been given HTML code from a widget), you can change the HTML of a page directly. You will know you are in HTML Source Mode because the background of the content box will be a creamy color. For typing regular text (not code), you should *not* be in HTML Source Mode.



Click Submit to save the page. Switch edit mode off and your Twitter feed appears!



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Success: Twitter Feed edited. If you want to continue

Twitter Feed

Katherine Linzy
katlinzy

katlinzy LSE's guide to twitter for academics: 'don't tweet drunk'. Hah. eprints.lse.ac.uk/38489/1/Using_...
about 1 hour ago · reply · retweet · favorite

katlinzy Having a toddler=petsitting a raptor. Since the babygate came down, she's been systematically testing our perimeter pic.twitter.com/1J0hqqC5
17 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite

katlinzy 1st word that comes to mind for @coursekit? Sleek. Makes #Blackboard look like the LMS version of Gordon Gecko's mobile coursekit.com
2 days ago · reply · retweet · favorite

katlinzy @Blackboard Who must we kill/bribe/elect to get a giant red "CLICK HERE TO MAKE THIS COURSE AVAILABLE" button on the course homepage?
2 days ago · reply · retweet · favorite

twitter Join the conversation

Course Management:

- Control Panel
- Files
- Course Tools
- Evaluation
- Grade Center
- Users and Groups
- Customization
- Packages and Utilities
- Help

Navigation:

- Home Page
- Tools
- Discussions
- Groups
- Help
- My content
- Twitter Feed



Communication Alternatives

If the public nature of Twitter is a deal breaker for your classroom, there are more private or education-centered alternatives.

edmodo.com

edublogs.org

backnoise.com

gosoapbox.com

hootcourse.com

todaysmeet.com

yammer.com

What about Facebook?

If you are interested in Facebook as a classroom communication tool, ensure you understand the difference between profiles, groups and pages.

Profiles are what you are using when you post to Facebook as an individual. If you intend to use Facebook both personally and professionally, consider setting up a separate professional profile or using either groups or pages to connect with your students.

Groups are designed for collaboration between specific members. Groups can be made private, so that only members can see and use the group. Other members of your group do not have access to private information on your profile unless you friend them. In many cases, groups are the best option for classroom use of Facebook.

Pages are public spaces designed for people to interact with organizations. Anyone can like a page and so keep up with updates to it. When a Facebook user likes a page, they do not gain access to the page administrator's personal profile and the page administrator does not gain access to their personal profile.



Suggestions for Further Reading

Educators' Reflections on their Experiences

[Reflections on the Twitter Experiment](#) by Monica Rankin, who received enormous amount of publicity for her use of Twitter in the classroom at UT Dallas after a communications student created a 5 minute video segment and posted it on youtube.

[Reflection on first use of Twitter in the classroom](#) by Gavan P. L. Watson. Article includes link to download PowerPoint used to introduce Twitter to the class.

Howard Rheingold teaches Digital Journalism at Stanford and Virtual Community/Social Media at Berkeley, and has made a variety of useful resources available online

[The Social Media Classroom](#)
[Why Twitter? \(focus on journalism\)](#)
[Twitter Literacy](#)

Twitter Clients

Applications that help you manage your social media profiles, schedule tweets (this is extremely useful), and track your social media success.

[tweetdeck.com](#)
[hootsuite.com](#)
[twhirl.org](#)