



Twitter for Authors: How to Setup and Use Twitter

By Carolyn Burns Bass

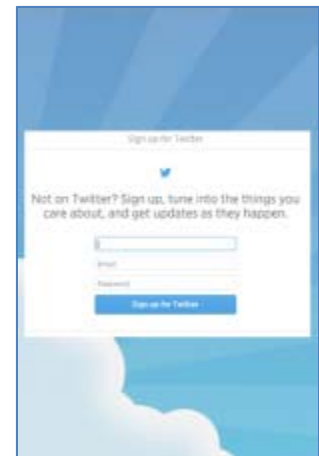
There's no denying how social media, Twitter particularly, has changed how authors promote themselves in the media. It's made promotion easier with its instantaneous activity, while at the same time has cluttered the author's already packed triptik with even more promotional avenues to pursue.

Twitter, however, is a quick and easy way for authors to connect with readers. In as little as five minutes, an author can review a Twitter feed, respond to followers, curate content on his/her page, and send information to followers. Of course, that five minutes depends on how much of the above mentioned activity a person includes in his/her Twitter session. You may find you enjoy reading posts and responding to followers, and from there you'll need to establish how Twitter fits into your schedule so that it doesn't suck time away from other pursuits, such as writing books.

The following provides authors with a basic how-to for setting up and getting started with Twitter.

Create Twitter User Account

Go to www.twitter.com and create a user account. Click the SIGN-UP FOR TWITTER button on the Twitter home page. You'll need to provide your full name and email address, then assign a password and a username. The best practice for authors and Twitter is to use your writing name, or a variation of it, when creating a Twitter account.



What's in a Name?

Not only is it wise branding of your best asset (your name) but using your writing name—rather than your book's title or a fun/cutesy name) also protects you from squatters who may want to pose as you. (It has happened. Someone posed as Oprah for a long time and fooled many people.)

Unless you expect to publish only one book in your lifetime, creating an account in the name of your book is only as good as that one book. You can change usernames later, but it might prove confusing to your followers.

If your name is not available, search for something as close to your name as possible so that when people google your name, the variation of your Twitter name will appear in the results.

Create Your Profile

We've found that people don't enjoy interacting with the generic Twitter icon that appears when people don't upload a photo. You were promoted to upload a photo, header and bio when you setup your account. In case you skipped these steps, here is how to complete your profile.

Look for the profile icon at the right in the top menu and click it. A dropdown menu will appear. From this dropdown menu, select VIEW PROFILE.



Once your profile page loads, look below the page banner (Twitter calls this the header) for the button that says, EDIT PROFILE.



The page will gray-out and you'll see text appear over the header area and the avatar area, along with some other profile information boxes on the left.

To change or add a profile photo, click the small box at left and navigate to where the photo exists on your computer, then follow the directions to upload it.

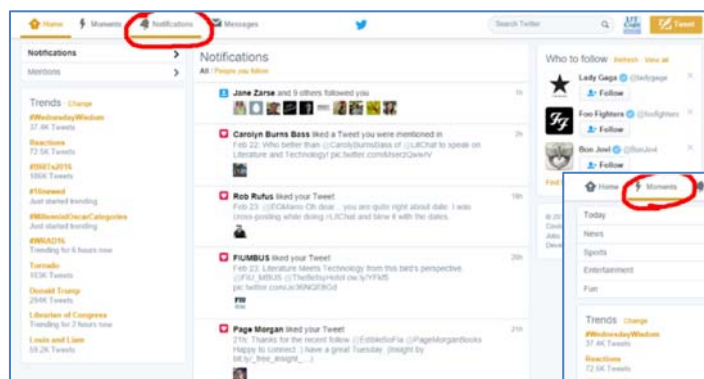
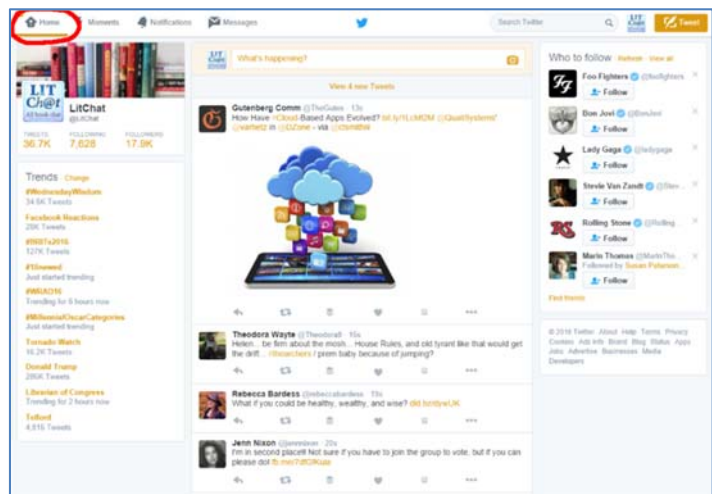
Twitter profiles also have an option to show an additional photo in a narrow, landscape format at the top of your profile. This is called the HEADER. Click in the window that says CHANGE YOUR HEADER PHOTO and then navigate to a photo that would look good in a narrow, landscape format.

Take another look at your bio. Does it contain the name of your book? Does it feature all of the relevant or witty information you want your readers/followers to see?

Be sure to click the blue SAVE CHANGES button before leaving the EDIT PROFILE page.

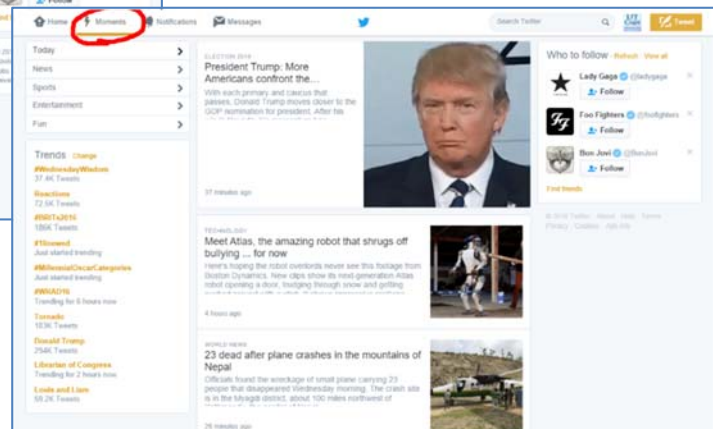
Navigating Around Twitter

Once your profile is set-up, look at the top left menu and select HOME. This is referred to as your Twitter Feed. Here is where you'll see the tweets from people whom you follow. Twitter may have given you suggestions of people which you followed when setting up the account, so you may see some tweets here. (Of course, if you're not yet following anyone, the feed will be empty.) Just remember, the only tweets you see in your HOME feed are from those you follow.



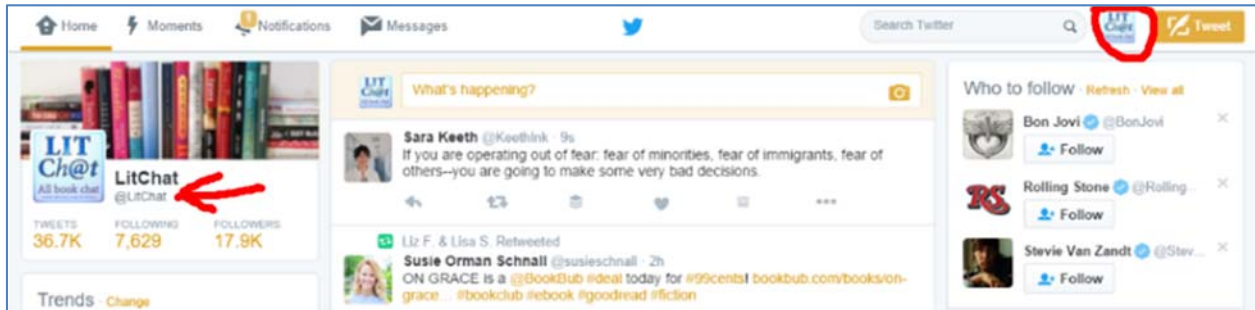
If someone directs a tweet specifically to you with your @twittername, it will appear in your HOME feed. (It will also appear in

your NOTIFICATIONS at top right of menu bar). NOTIFICATIONS will also show other items such as when people follow you or respond to any of your tweets.



The MOMENTS page is curated by Twitter based on your tweets and followers. It will post news stories from around the world that it thinks you might be interested in.

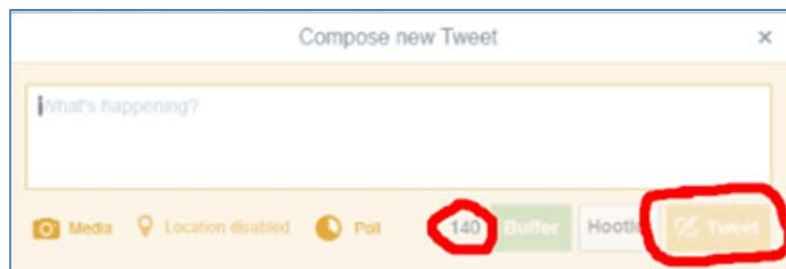
Your PROFILE page is where you'll see all of the tweets that you send or retweet to your followers. No one sees these tweets unless they are following you, or if they are RT (re-tweeted). To get to your PROFILE page, click the link underneath your profile photo or click the VIEW PROFILE button at the top right of the menu bar.



You can SEARCH for people, news content, hashtag topics or other information in the SEARCH window at the top right side of the menu bar.

Sending Your First Tweet

Click on the yellow TWEET button at the far right of the menu bar and a window will pop open. Type your comments into this window, remembering that you're allowed only 140 characters—including spaces, punctuation and special characters like hashtags. The character count number below the white box starts at 140 and descends as you type, allowing you to gauge your characters.



Go ahead and send a welcome tweet to the world.

Build Your Following

Begin building your following by following interesting people. To find people of similar interests, go to the SEARCH window at top right of screen and type in words of things that you are interested in. When I started LitChat, I searched for terms such as BOOKS, AUTHORS, LIBRARIANS, PUBLISHING, READING, etc. Follow the people who seem interesting to you. Look for thought leaders within your field

of expertise. Once you've followed several people of interest, go back to your HOME Twitter feed and you'll see the tweets from those people. Twitter is only as interesting as the people you follow.

Engage Your Followers

Some authors are gregarious tweeters, posting many times a day. Others don't tweet much at all. It's up to you to fit Twitter into your day, but my recommendation is at least one tweet a day. Interesting things to tweet are book signing dates, book review URLs, books you are reading, progress on WIP, lessons from the writing life. However, try to avoid the "all about me" syndrome many authors and celebrities fall into. For every "me" centered tweet you produce, post something "other"-centered, such as a quote from another author, or responses to your followers. Twitter is a great tool for engaging people in conversation, rather than just a blow horn.

If you see an interesting a post from someone, reply back to them. Your readers enjoy hearing from you and will become allies in recommending your books to others.

Join a #Chat Session

#LitChat is just one of many interesting, educational, entertaining or just plain fun chats that happen through Twitter every hour of the day. Moderated #LitChat sessions run each Monday, from 4-5 p.m. E.T. You can login to our dedicated chat channel at www.nurph.com/litchat to participate. To find a Twitter chat that appeals to you, [go here](#) for a comprehensive list of chats.

Using Twitter shouldn't be a burden or another odious chore in the list of things you need to do for promotion. If you find it doesn't work for your lifestyle, don't use it. Twitter is here today, but in the rapidly changing digital world, it may not be around tomorrow.

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