



**The British  
Psychological Society**  
Promoting excellence in psychology

## Twitter Guidelines

Twitter is a great way of communicating psychology and the activities of the Society and its member networks to a wider audience.

These guidelines were produced by the Society's Communications Team.

Below we offer 10 tips for using Twitter effectively drawn from our own experience. There is also guidance on Twitter etiquette, tweeting as a psychologist and tweeting on behalf of a member network.

Finally we offer guidance on live tweeting a member network event.

If you have technical queries about Twitter, have a look at Mashable's excellent guide:

<http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter>.

### **Tweeting for a member network**

The Society Communications Team keep log in details of all the Society's social media accounts. Accounts should have [presscentre@bps.org.uk](mailto:presscentre@bps.org.uk) as their email address, this way account access is not lost when committee membership changes. Any password change requests will come through the Communications Team and will be passed to the relevant committee member. It is important that you keep us up to date with who is tweeting on the network account.

Libel laws apply to social media too - the BBC website

(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/0/22718822>) has some useful basic information on them.

This account represents part of the BPS, and you will probably use slightly more formal language than you would do on a personal account. It helps to think about the voice that you are tweeting in.

## **Tweeting as a psychologist**

Please remember that the usual rules for professionals about confidentiality and treating people with respect apply on Twitter as much as anywhere else. The Society's Ethics Committee have produced a 'Supplementary guidance on the use of social media' ([http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/images/2012\\_ethics\\_committee\\_social\\_media.pdf](http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/images/2012_ethics_committee_social_media.pdf)) which you may find helpful.

You should remember that anything you say on Twitter can be read by your employers, your clients and the media.

## **Etiquette**

Please remember that when tweeting on behalf of a member network you are acting as a representative of the Society. Humorous tweets and criticisms of the Society, if you choose to send them, should be kept to your personal Twitter account and should not be sent from one bearing the Society logo or the logo of one of its member networks.

Remember too that meaning is often harder to communicate in text than face to face – the 140-character limit adds more challenges. Try to assume good faith if someone is coming across in a way you find disagreeable – they are probably not being deliberately rude. Invite them to email the member network or direct message you if there is a problem. Don't escalate a dispute into a heated public row on Twitter, as it could reflect badly on your member network and the Society.

Be polite – remember behind every Twitter account is a person, so even if you disagree with someone, speak to them as you would expect to be spoken to.

Don't spam – If you use Twitter to promote yourself, get the right balance between advertising yourself and socialising.

Don't just promote yourself! If you write articles Twitter is a great way to find an audience for them, but spread other people's ideas too.

## **Ten Tips for Using Twitter**

### **1. The purpose of using Twitter is to increase your influence**

Though using Twitter can rapidly become a fascinating activity in its own right, remember that the purpose of using it is to inform the world about your BPS network's activities and to increase its reach and influence.

## **2. Tweet your news**

Whenever you do anything – hold a meeting, publish a newsletter, add something to your website – use Twitter to tell the world about it.

## **3. Tweet every day (or at least a couple of times each week)**

If you want to gain followers on Twitter it is a good idea to get into the habit of tweeting regularly. If you do not have anything new to say you can repeat an old tweet of yours or retweet something interesting from someone else.

## **4. Follow interesting people**

Find people with interesting or useful things to say about psychology (and other relevant fields like the governments and national assemblies, charities and health journalists) and follow them. The Mashable guide mentioned above will help you to find them and the BPS press centre can also make suggestions.

If you do this, not only will you receive a lot of information about psychology, you will also have a stream of interesting things to retweet to your own followers. Twitter is about networking and if you follow relevant people they may well follow you in return.

## **5. Retweet interesting things from other people**

You want to provide a stream of interesting tweets to keep your followers engaged and to attract new ones. Even if you have a lot to say about your activities, it is a good idea to leaven it with interesting tweets by other people.

## **6. Engage with other tweeters**

It is a good idea to engage with other users: if someone sends you a message, reply to it. If you find something someone else has tweeted fascinating, tell them. Not only is this polite, but being generous will get you more followers and encourage people to interact with you.

## **7. Tweet from your events**

A good use of Twitter is to tell people about your conferences and other events while they are going on. You can tweet from the academic sessions and also send housekeeping announcements about the event. It is a good idea to establish a hashtag (see the Mashable guide) for the event and to encourage anyone else tweeting from there to use it too.

The section below will give you more guidance on this.

## **8. Tell people you are on Twitter**

When you sign up to Twitter you should make sure that people know you can be found there. So make sure you give the link on your account in your newsletter, on your website and in your email signature.

## **9. Fill out your profile**

It is worth taking the time to complete your profile page to make it clear who you are. If you provide a link to your website, people will be able to find out more about you and be more likely to follow you.

This is also a chance to make it clear whether the tweets are from a particular individual or from the Branch as a whole. Be clear that retweets and likes are not necessarily endorsements.

## **10. Do not follow too many people at first**

While it is good to follow other people for the reasons explained above, it is not a good idea to follow hundreds of people from the start. It is better to build up the list of people you are following gradually. A good rule when you are starting out on Twitter is to always follow a few more people than are following you.

If you are running a particular campaign then you may want to follow people relevant to it and then unfollow when it is over.

## **Live tweeting events**

Live tweeting an event is a good way of publicising the work of a member network, encouraging people to attend your events and attracting new followers. Here are some suggestions to help you do it effectively.

If there is a hashtag for the event then use it in all your tweets.

Announce in advance that you will be live tweeting the event. This will enable people to follow it in real time (or tune out if they are not interested).

You can save a bit of work on the day by creating some generic tweets beforehand (“People are arriving for...”) and scheduling for the appropriate time.

Retweet other people who are using the hashtag for the event. This saves you work and means you may get new followers.

If the speakers you are tweeting about or their organisations have twitter handles then include them in your tweets.

Use rich media where possible – audio snippets, photos, video – as tweets with this content are more likely to be retweeted. If you can't include such content yourself, make sure you retweet anyone who does.

Respond to others who are tweeting. If you are short of time then a simple like is fine.

Don't feel you have to tweet everything that is said at an event. Pick the most illuminating statements and the most interesting questions.

Remember that twitter etiquette applies to live tweeting.

Be selective. Over tweeting could put off some of your followers, so think about the key messages you want to give.

Continue to monitor the hashtag after the event and respond if it is appropriate.

### **Helpful contacts**

BPS communications team: [presscentre@bps.org.uk](mailto:presscentre@bps.org.uk) or telephone 0116 252 9500 (office hours).

Follow these BPS corporate accounts on Twitter [@BPSOfficial](https://twitter.com/BPSOfficial), [@PsychMag](https://twitter.com/PsychMag) and [@ResearchDigest](https://twitter.com/ResearchDigest)

On Facebook, like [OfficialBPS](https://www.facebook.com/OfficialBPS).