

Using twitter for Neighbourhood Watch

Getting Started on twitter

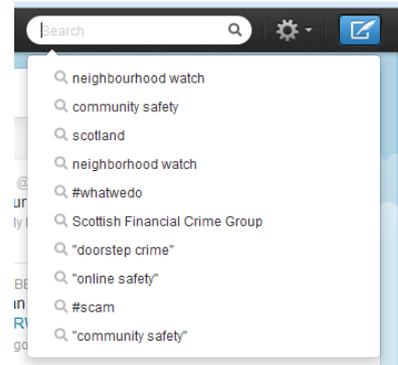
- Try to choose a username (your @name) which is easy to relate to your group, but won't take up too many characters when people are replying to you!
- Make your profile picture one that relates to your group. A logo or a picture of the local area would be best. Leaving your picture as the twitter egg is very impersonal and can make people wary of engaging with you.
- Use your bio well. You have 160 characters so make sure you get in the relevant information so people know what your group is and what you do.

Finding your way around

It's tempting to dive straight in and start tweeting, but sometimes it's a good idea to have a look around first and see how others behave; observe the twitter etiquette! This also gives you a chance to see where you can pick up useful information from on your local area or about safety issues.

Use the twitter search facility to see what's being said about subjects that are of interest to you. You could search for:

- Your local area (e.g. Linlithgow)
- The name of your group (e.g. Neighbourhood Watch Scotland)
- An event that's taking place (e.g. Aberdeen Bogus Crime Seminar)
- A subject (e.g. internet safety)



Whenever you find a search that returns results that interest you, you can click the 'Save Search' button so that, in future, it will appear in a drop down whenever you go to search for something. Once you've found your way around, you can move onto more advanced searches!

Set up lists

At Neighbourhood Watch Scotland, we find lists an invaluable way to keep up with what's going on. From your profile page, choose 'Lists' and click on 'Create List'.



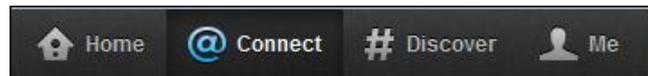
We have lists set up for police, fire and local authorities all over Scotland, but you may wish to set up lists for your local area, or on a particular subject.

Create useful and interesting tweets

Remember, people have chosen to follow you out of the millions of twitter users, so make sure you keep them interested.

- If your twitter account is solely for your neighbourhood watch, keep your tweets *relevant* to this subject.
- Nobody likes dull, boring tweets, so try to keep your tone light and conversational. Again, observing how other people tweet can help with this.
- Add hashtags to your tweets. For example, if your tweet is about safety, consider using #safety somewhere in the tweet. (A hashtag is something that people can click on to view other tweets mentioning the same word.) You can come up with your very own hashtag for your neighbourhood Watch group so that people can follow your conversations. (e.g. #stirlingnw)
- Try to tweet frequently. Someone looking at your profile is unlikely to follow an account that hasn't tweeted in weeks. Aim for a few tweets a week at the very least.
- Try to find a balance between original tweets and retweeting information from other relevant sources. Followers can be put off by an account that is solely retweets from other people.
- Adding pictures to tweets can help to illustrate your point. E.g. if you've just bought some nice new Neighbourhood Watch signs and had them put up, take a picture of them for your followers!
- Some people use various social networks and post exactly the same things to each – think very carefully before you, for example, link your twitter account to your Facebook. Twitter users generally do not want to have to click on a Facebook link to be able to read an update.

Followers

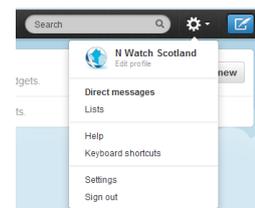


- Communicate with your followers. Twitter is not a one way street; if people tweet at you, they generally expect a reply.
- Use your 'Connect' button to see who's following you and who's mentioning you.
- It's tempting to follow everyone and everything, but try to limit the number of people you follow as it becomes difficult to keep up with your newsfeed.

Publicity



- Mention your Twitter page as many places as you can, e.g. newsletters, web-pages, e-mail footers, posters etc
- Make a button for use in your e-mails (twitter.com/about/resources/buttons)
- If you have a website, create a twitter widget to display your recent tweets on one of the pages by visiting your settings



Learn the language

@ — The @ symbol allows you to reply to another user, or identify yourself. Your twitter name begins with an @ (e.g. @nwatchscotland). If you're replying to another user, you use their @name at the beginning of the tweet. By putting someone's @name in your tweet, it will ensure it shows up in their mentions, and hopefully they will get back to you! Be aware of who will see things that you tweet.

Examples

I think @nwatchscotland a great resource! - All of your followers will see this.

@nwatchscotland I find your tweets very informative - Only people following both you and the person you are replying to will see this.

.@nwatchscotland is a great resource. - If you want to tweet about a person or organisation and the tweet starts with their @name, but is not a reply, put a full-stop in front of it to ensure that all of your followers see it.

— The hashtag (or # symbol) is another useful component, both when browsing twitter and when tweeting. Added to the beginning of a word or phrase, it becomes a 'clickable' topic. Clicking on a hashtag lets you see what other people are saying about it.

Examples

We're having a #neighbourhoodwatch meeting in Peebles Community Centre tonight at 7pm. Everyone is welcome. – This means that anyone who is looking at the #neighbourhoodwatch hashtag will see your tweet, as well as your own followers.

Always use symbols, numbers and capital letters to make your passwords strong. #internetsafety #identitytheft – These two hashtags added at the end will make sure your tweet is included in general conversations about the topics at hand. You may get new followers or retweets out of it!

RT — Retweet. This is when you choose to broadcast someone else's tweet to your followers. It will show up with their avatar and it will be clear that the tweet does not come from you.

DM — This abbreviation refers to a direct message. This is the only private way for two twitter users who are following each other to communicate. If you communicate by Direct Message, you should keep the contents of the correspondence confidential.

