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[Twitter Tips for College Media Organizations](#)

[Twitter](#) is a great tool for promoting content, engaging readers and building community. But poorly phrased tweets, offensive content or too many automated posts can alienate readers. Here are some pointers for making the most of your news organization's Twitter presence.

1. Set up a profile. Establish a profile that includes your news organization's name, basic information, a web address and an image, probably your logo. Select a user name, probably a variation of your news organization's name or a commonly recognized nickname (such as [IDSnews](#) for the [Indiana Daily Student's](#) news account).

2. Follow, don't just lead. Follow as many people and organizations linked to your school and your town as you can find – school officials, professors, teams, clubs, nearby businesses, alumni, staff and individual students. (To follow a person or organization, simply click a button on their profile that allows you to subscribe to their Twitter feed.) The more people you follow the more you'll know what's going on in your community -- and the better you'll be able to develop an audience. One place to find sources is [CampusTweet](#), a Twitter directory of college students, faculty and alumni organized by school.

3. Make it a conversation. Don't just push out links to your content; ask readers what they think about the new football coach or the controversial cartoon in your paper this week like this tweet from [The Hustler](#) at Vanderbilt University:

First-year students: what did you think of orientation? Reply to @hustlernews and let us know!

4. Proofread your posts. There's no excuse for misspellings and grammatical errors. You've only got 140 characters; make sure each one is correct.

5. Report news as it breaks. Twitter is a powerful vehicle for reporting breaking news. Even if you don't have the complete story you can quickly alert readers to urgent news as it unfolds and then point them to your website for more information like this post from [The Battalion](#) at Texas A&M University:

Tornado warning--tornado activity near College Station moving toward campus. Seek shelter immediately.

6. Shorten your URLs. Every character counts in a Twitter post. Use free Web-based services like [bit.ly](#), [ow.ly](#) or [is.gd](#) to compress Web page addresses.

7. Cover sports live. Use Twitter to post scores and other developments at big games like this tweet from the [Mustang Daily](#) at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo:

Doug Shumway connects with Dominique Johnson on a 25-yard TD pass to put the Mustangs up 35-20.

8. Retweet. Send out interesting comments or news alerts from other news organizations or Twitters that would interest your readers. Simply click on the "retweet" button that shows up when you slide your mouse over the bottom-right corner of each tweet. Here's an example from [The New Hampshire](#) at the University of New Hampshire:

Living off campus this year? This @fostersdailydem article about new ordinance changes in Durham is a must read. <http://bit.ly/bBHJ1b> #UNH

9. Make your tweets useful. Your Twitter feed should be a go-to place not just for news alerts but for resources your readers will be interested in. Is there a new sushi bar in town? Tweet it! Is today the first day to register for fall parking permits? It may not be worth a news story, but it warrants a tweet. [The California Aggie](#) at the University of California, Davis ran this tweet:

The US Bank branch located in the Memorial Union opened for business today.

10. Alert readers to your coverage. If you're sending a reporter to an out-of-state game or planning to liveblog the Board of Regents meeting, let your readers know as [The Daily Orange](#) at Syracuse University did:

Can't catch the game? Read live updates on Twitter RIGHT NOW

11. Ask for news tips. Remind your readers you want to hear from them as *The Tower* at Catholic University of America did with this tweet:
got news for us? email news@cutower.com or tweet us.

12. Promote campus events. Let your readers know what's going on as it happens like this tweet from [The Daily Sundial](#), California State University Northridge:
Temporary tattoos, laser tag, fortune tellers, caricature portraits...it's all going on right now at matador nights!

13. Use hashtags. Set up a hashtag -- a # sign followed by a keyword (“#SFSU” or “#Big10”) for your school and for major stories to make it easy for readers to follow you and the issues you're covering. From [The State Press](#) at Arizona State University:
Tired of expensive textbooks? #ASU launched a book printing service at the #Tempe campus

14. Consider setting up multiple Twitter accounts. You may want to establish separate Twitter feeds for certain sections, such as sports, A&E and news, or for certain people, like the editor-in-chief, a columnist or a beat writer. But don't set up too many; you don't want to fractionalize your audience. If you've got multiple Twitter feeds, you may want to put a Twitter directory on your website to make it easier for readers to find the Twitter account they want.

15. Keep private information private. Your news organization's Twitter feed is not the place to post your reaction to last night's date. If you want to tweet about your personal life, do it on your own Twitter account.

16. Tweet interesting facts. Got a tidbit that's not worth a full story? Report it in a tweet like this one from [The Daily Athenaeum](#) at West Virginia University:
A record crowd of 41,382 people attended tonight's game at Joan C. Edwards Stadium. Stadium capacity is 38,016.

17. Respond to your audience. Let readers know you're listening to them. If readers tweet to your news organization, make sure someone responds. To answer a message, click on the “reply” button that shows up when you move your mouse over the bottom-right corner of each tweet.

18. Recruit. Let your readers know when you're looking for a cartoonist or taking on new writers like this open invitation from [The Breeze](#), at James Madison University:
Breeze open house tonight at 7 p.m. Come learn more info and get involved!

19. Solve mysteries. If people are wondering why there are three police cars outside the Humanities Building or why the cafeteria is closing early tonight, let them know. Here [The Daily Californian](#) at UC Berkeley explains why helicopters were flying over the campus:

Helicopters above campus just now are filming a BBC documentary on earthquake faults, according to campus public affairs

20. Correct errors immediately. If you make a mistake or if something you reported turns out not to be

true, put out the correction on Twitter as soon as you can like this post from [The Famuan](#) at Florida A&M University:

Tear gas, NOT gunshots fired in response to series of fights in front of student services center.

21. Don't punch out all your tweets in one blast. Unless you're covering a breaking story you should tweet throughout the day.

22. Tweet photos. As of this writing, you can't tweet photos directly from Twitter, but you can tweet links to photos on services like [Twitpic](#), [Pikchur](#) and [Plixi](#).

23. Use Twitter judiciously. Don't tweet every story you publish or post every thought that enters your brain. Consider whether your readers would care.

Posted by Rachele Kanigel at [4:53 PM](#)