

# Academic tweeting: finding the appropriate tweeting style for your project

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Following the launch of the guide on [using Twitter in university research, teaching, and impact activities](#), we look at three different tweeting styles and how you could use each when tweeting about your research project or academic blog.

**Substantive tweets** are written in complete sentences, and are always intelligible on their own. This style can appear formal or corporate so is often used by large organisations or news outlets, such as [@guardiannews](#). Links in the form of shortened URLs to news stories will tend to appear at the end of the tweet.

This style is suitable for teaching-based use and for Twitter accounts linked to blogs, as well as official department accounts. For individual academics this style may seem uptight, but is more suitable for senior academics already known for their research intensive careers.

**The conversational style** is much more fragmented and relaxed, the opposite to the substantive style, with users sharing stories from a variety of sources, engaging in conversation with others, and making more use of abbreviations. The content is eclectic and covers professional and personal interests, so is popular with individual tweeters from all backgrounds.

This style will be a comfortable fit with some academics, and the personalized element can help students to empathize with tutors if used for a teaching-based account. The style can work well for blogs which thrive on comments and interaction, although is problematic for department accounts.

**A middle ground or compromise style** is feasible and is widely used in academia. Many thinktanks, blogs, magazines, and companies also adopt this style of tweeting, as it takes the best of the substantive and conversational styles.

This style conveys personality well without being too informal, and is a good fit for a smaller academic department. However, 'control anxieties' or internal rivalries can complicate its use in large departments, and it is not really suitable for whole-university level.

The table below shows the pros and cons of each tweeting style in more detail.

Style	Features	Pros	Cons
Substantive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tweet is always in full sentences</li> <li>- Few abbreviations are used, except for shortened URLs</li> <li>- Must be independently understandable</li> <li>- Normally each tweet is the headline or 'taster' for a blog post, web article or other longer piece of text</li> <li>- Focus is consistent and solely professional or singletopic</li> <li>- The team producing tweets often remains invisible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Always make sense to all readers</li> <li>- Especially accessible when viewed in a combined stream of many tweets from different authors</li> <li>- Attracts followers with well-defined interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No conversational element, so can appear corporate and impersonal</li> <li>- Hence may turn off some potential followers</li> <li>- Takes a professional skill to always write crisply and substantively</li> </ul>
Conversational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most or many tweets are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conveys personality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some tweets only</li> </ul>

fragments from an ongoing conversation with followers  
- or thoughts from many different aspects of tweeter's experiences  
- Content is eclectic, drawing on professional interests but also on personal life, commenting on current events, etc. and so covers diverse topics  
- Includes author photograph

well for individuals, or organisational culture for collective accounts  
- Attracts people who like this personality or culture (usually like-minded)  
- Good at building 'community' and strengthening followers' identification with site

make sense to those who are involved in their conversation  
- Very hard to follow in a Twitter feed from many different authors  
- With eclectic contents many followers may not value many of the tweets  
- Hence incentives for some folk to unfollow over time

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#### Middle ground

- Most tweets are substantive as above but some are short and conversational  
- Goes beyond a 'corporate' focus without being too eclectic  
- Uses retweets to diversify/ liven up the tweet stream  
- Uses team photos, and the blog site or website identifies team members well

- Injects more personality or organisational culture into a basically professional approach  
- Most tweets are independently understandable

- Some conversational tweets will not make sense when read in combined tweet streams

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**For more tips on academic tweeting, download our short guide to [using Twitter in university research, teaching, and impact activities](#).**

**Also see our [lists of academic tweeters](#).**

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