



Twitter is quickly becoming one of the most powerful platforms in education today. This short guide will help you get set up on Twitter, so that you can start tweeting in Austin at Gifted 3.0! The Texas Association for the Gifted & Talented (TAGT) and Ingeniosus hope you will take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with Twitter. The potential for collaboration and real-time learning will ultimately benefit you and gifted learners throughout Texas.

Twitter can appear daunting at first, but its potential is compelling. By allowing individuals to communicate in real-time about subjects, like gifted education, Twitter makes 140 characters go a long way.

If you have never tweeted before, this document will guide you through the basics. You will also learn how to follow what's happening at this conference by searching for #TAGT2011, the official hashtag of this conference (more on hashtags in a bit). Finally, you will learn how to participate in #gtchat, a weekly chat on Twitter specifically devoted to gifted education issues. As a Texan, you can take particular pride in knowing that the Texas Association for the Gifted & Talented recently became the Lead Global #gtchat Sponsor for 2011-2012. TAGT helps make #gtchat possible! Are you ready to learn? Let's get started.

Setting Up Your Twitter Account

Go to www.twitter.com and create your account. Twitter will ask you for your name, an email, a password, and a name you would like to use as your Twitter username. My Twitter username is @DeborahMersino. You can use your name, company name, and/or something different. My suggestion is to keep your username somewhat short and easy to spell. Once you have done this, you will be taken to a Welcome page, where The Twitter Teacher will let you know you can get started in 60 seconds or less.

Twitter has quickly changed the face of gifted advocacy worldwide. Real-time resource sharing among vast numbers of tweeps, who share dialogue and kinship, continues to propel collaboration and fresh thinking on this growing global platform."

– Deborah Mersino



Follow Freely

You will then see a page where you will have the opportunity to choose people you might want to follow. I recommend starting off with @TXGifted, the official account for TAGT, and @ByrdseedGifted, the account for Gifted Educator Ian Byrd. I also suggest following @PrufrockPress, the official Prufrock Press account, and @atxteacher, which is the account for Lynette Breedlove, the President-Elect of TAGT. Also feel free to follow me at @DeborahMersino.

Down the line, you may want to follow scores of other individuals interested in gifted issues and/or other areas of interest to you. Just know that when you follow someone, you will begin to see their tweets (what they post on Twitter) in your live Twitter stream. *Important Note: Others won't see what you see (the tweets of the people you follow), unless they follow those individuals too. They will simply see your individual tweets if they choose to follow you. This differs from Facebook.*

Add Your Favorites

You will then see a page inviting you to follow your favorite brands. You can tool around in here or simply skip this step.

Find People You Know

When you get to this page, you will be asked if you want Twitter to search through your contacts. This isn't necessary. Click on the live "Skip this Step" link.

What's Happening?

When you arrive at the page with a "What's Happening" box at the top, you're actually ready to tweet *{insert applause for getting this far!}*. On the right, you will find three more steps, including how to post an update. You have 140 characters for each tweet; Twitter will let you know if you go over.

Setting Up Your Profile

In this section, you will have the opportunity to upload a picture (*highly recommended*), and add your location and any Web sites and/or blogs you have. Then, you'll see a box for a short bio. It's important to include something here! You can put, "Interested in gifted education issues" or "Texas educator who revels in 21st Century Learning" or "Gifted education advocate." It's up to you, but it will alert others to the fact you are interested in these issues. You also will have the option to post your tweets to Facebook. It's a personal decision; I keep the two separate. You will likely notice the other tabs in the Profile section, which you may want to explore later.

Important Note: There is an option in "Account" that allows you to make your tweets "private." Do NOT click this box; otherwise your tweets will not show up in the public stream.

If you have questions about using Twitter at #TAGT2011, feel free to send me an email me at deborah@ingeniosus.net or visit www.ingeniosus.net. Happy Tweeting!

What Do All the Symbols Mean?

When you first look at the Twitter stream on your Home Page, you may find some of the symbols confusing. Fear not! Here is a quick guide, which will tell you all you need to know:

@username – When you want to direct a tweet to someone in particular, you simply start off your tweet with the person's @username. For instance, if I wanted to send Lynette Breedlove a tweet, I would simply write, "@atxteacher – The conference is going swimmingly! Congratulations." It will be a public tweet, but if Lynette searches for her @username, she will see it.

#TAGT2011 – What's the pound sign doing on Twitter? Actually, on Twitter, this symbol (#) is called a "hashtag" and it serves as a subject sorter. It allows individuals interested in the same issues, topics, and/or events to follow all the tweets associated with a particular hashtag. At this conference, people are using #TAGT2011 in their tweets, which will allow people from all over the world to see what is happening in Austin! They will simply search for #TAGT2011 in the Search Box at the top of their Twitter page. You will want to do this as well to follow the learning taking place.

RT – What's an RT? This stands for "Retweet" and is used when someone likes what another person has tweeted. Let's say someone shares a quote from a particular presentation here at Gifted 3.0. If I'm following that person and like their tweet, I can click on the Retweet button right beneath their tweet. Then, all of my followers will also see that tweet.

More on Hashtags - #TAGT2011

If you decide to tweet while at Gifted 3.0, feel free to add the #TAGT2011 hashtag at the end of your tweets. This way, others who follow you will be able to learn from you. As mentioned, you can also search for "#TAGT2011" in the Search Box and see what others are saying.

What is #gtchat?

This one-hour Twitter chat takes place on Fridays at noon (EST) and 7pm (EST) and generates more than 1,500 tweets weekly from around the world on timely topics pertinent to gifted learners.

This Friday, TAGT will host #gtchat LIVE from 10:40 a.m. until noon (CST) in the Social Connections area of Exhibit Hall #4 (middle area). Come check it out. To participate, you'll need to have a Twitter account.

Once you have your own Twitter account, I suggest going to www.tweetchat.com, Allow TweetChat to connect to your Twitter account. Then, put "#gtchat" in the Search Box at the top. You'll soon see a stream of tweets related to #gtchat. The beauty of TweetChat is that you don't have to add "#gtchat" to each of your tweets; it does it automatically for you. You can choose to jump in and tweet and/or simply watch. You will get the hang of it before you know it!

