What is Twitter?
Twitter is a minimal social networking site that allows users to send updates to friends or people called “followers” who choose to read your posts by answering the question, “What are you doing?” in no more than 140 characters. Posts can be made via the Twitter website, by text message, by email or even through an Instant Messaging service/application. Despite its incredible brevity, people have found many uses for Twitter:

- As a “status” updater, users post comments like “working on writing a paper right now” to let others know where they are or what they’re doing
- As a “mini-blog”, users post short, frequent updates with their thoughts and current concerns
- As a quick way of sending out announcements
- To keep track of several individuals (perhaps their location, current activities, or general thoughts) without directly interacting with them

Getting started
Twitter is a free service and only requires creation of a login account. Users can then post and read updates via their Twitter homepage or they can add cell phone numbers, IM accounts and email accounts for receiving and sending Twitter updates. More information on how to add devices and use Twitter can be found on the Twitter help pages [http://help.twitter.com/portal](http://help.twitter.com/portal).

Tweeting and Following
Once you have a Twitter account, you can immediately start posting ‘tweets’. However, you won’t really tap into the full potential of Twitter until you start ‘following’ others, and they start following you - meaning that you’ll be able to see other people’s updates, and they can choose to see yours. You can click the ‘Find People’ link to search for others. For more on this and other Twitter basics, see: [http://help.twitter.com/portal](http://help.twitter.com/portal)

Anatomy of a Twitter page

1- Your Twitter page features a profile picture and your Twitter username.
2- Your most recent ‘tweet’ (post) is displayed first with your past tweets following in reverse chronological order. Notice the abbreviated URL in my tweet.
3- Select ‘Home’ to see your Twitterstream - which will display your tweets along with the tweets of those you follow.
4- Shows your most recent stats. When this screenshot was taken, I was following 113 people, and 95 people were following me. That means every time I post, 95 people see what I post. I also see 113 other people’s posts. I’ve tweeted over 1200 times.
Twitter options/features

| **@replies** | Want to add a comment or response to someone’s tweet? Use an @reply. Just add ‘@’ to their Twitter name and the type your comment (ex: @dukeCIT). The original poster will see your comment, as will everyone else. |
| **Direct Messages** | Don’t want everyone else to see a reply or post? Twitter allows you to post a direct message by adding a ‘d’ before someone’s username. (ex: d dukeCIT) |
| **Favorites** | Want to save a useful or interesting tweet? Click the star next to the tweet, and it’ll be saved as a ‘favorite’. Favorites are a good way to collect tweets to revisit later. |
| **Hashtags** | You might come across tweets that include this symbol: #. These are called hashtags. Hashtagging has become the standard way to follow a discussion about a trend or event. For example, if you want to tweet about how confusing the TV Show Lost was, you might post a tweet and add ‘#Lost’ to it. This will allow anyone else that searches http://search.twitter.com for Lost to see your comment. Hashtags are even more useful if you’re at a conference or event. For example, the hashtag for our showcase this year was #cit09 |
| **RT** | This stands for ‘re-tweet’. Since everyone on Twitter has a different network of followers, it can be useful to repost someone build connections with others. |
| **TwitPic** | Tweets often include pictures. The most popular way to share photos on Twitter is with http://twitpic.com/. This is a website that allows you to upload a picture and post a tweet directly to Twitter with your message. |
| **URL shortening** | What if you want to post a really long URL to Twitter? It’s become standard practice to use a URL shortener, such as tinyurl.com, http://is.gd/, or http://bit.ly/. Just visit any of these sites, copy/paste in your ridiculously long URL, and get back a nice, abbreviated version suitable to post on Twitter. |

For much more, see the Ultimate Guide for Everything Twitter.

View a collection of other useful links at: http://delicious.com/shawnj/CITtwitter

Duke Twitters Too! (here’s a sample of a few)
Duke CIT (that’s us!): http://twitter.com/dukecit
Duke Ford Library: http://twitter.com/fordlibraryweb
Duke News and Communications http://twitter.com/dukenews

Advanced Twitter
Once you’ve gotten comfortable using Twitter, you might want to try using a Twitter app instead of the Twitter website (we recommend Twirl or Tweetdeck) These tools allow you to post and reply to Twitter without visiting the website.