

# News: Official tweeters' guidance



## Introduction

BBC News correspondents and reporters are encouraged to use Twitter for newsgathering, building their profile and engaging with the audience. There are two routes that can be followed in setting up a Twitter account – a personal account or an official (BBC News-specific) one. What's the difference between the two?

**Personal accounts** don't need to be complied by anyone – you alone are responsible for them. You should bear in mind the [BBC social media guidelines covering personal accounts](#) – which boil down to 'be sensible' and don't bring the BBC into disrepute as anyone could potentially see what you're posting. Your 'handle' (the account name) shouldn't refer to the BBC, and in the bio you should make clear any opinions are your own and not the BBC's.

**Official accounts** mean tweeting within the context of your role as a BBC correspondent/reporter. We approve a limited number, aiming for a coherent stable of different and distinctive BBC News voices.

Official accounts need to be complied by a senior editor/producer in your department. At the moment this means they will be alerted to every tweet you send out and can ask for tweets to be corrected/deleted if there are any editorial issues surrounding them. The advantage of having an official Twitter account is that it can be trailed on output and the content of tweets can also be automatically published on the BBC News website and other BBC digital platforms.

Below are the best practice points that should be followed by any BBC News correspondent/reporter wanting or already with an official BBC Twitter account:

1. Before you set up a BBC account, first speak to your department head/ editor and establish who will comply your account. You then need to send an email to the Social Media Editor for News and the Assistant Editor, UGC and Social Media hub. They will then go through the setting-up process with you. They will also need to keep a central log of your account username, password and name of the editor/producer complying your account (if you have an account already setup and you haven't sent them these details, please do).

2. Remember that **your BBC Twitter account is official BBC News output** and so all tweets need to be consistent with this. You should **only tweet in your role as a BBC correspondent and focus on areas relevant to your specialism**, avoiding personal interests or issues that do not relate to your work role.
3. This doesn't stop you **using an informal tone** and **engaging with your audience**. A useful guide on how informal you can be is by asking yourself the question: "Would I be comfortable saying this on Radio 5 live?" (copyright: Rory Cellan Jones). There have been examples where tweets have become too jokey/personal/off-topic and the impact of these instances will in the future be magnified as they may automatically appear on the BBC News website – and possibly other BBC News output - in addition to your followers on Twitter. Crucially, don't be tempted to mistake an informal tone as something that reduces the need for impartiality – normal BBC editorial standards apply.
4. The **core content that you should aim to provide is news, updates and analysis on stories and developments on your patch**. In addition, you could point out interesting articles/links related to your field; offer behind-the-scenes insights into how you do your job or what you will be working on; trail ahead to any appearances you will have on BBC News output; 'crowd-source' questions or issues to your followers to find more information or case studies.
5. **Don't feel you have to reply/respond to messages from followers** – though feel free to do so. It's the key way of engaging with people, and a useful way to monitor feedback and potential leads/follow-up on stories you are covering.
6. **Be cautious about re-tweeting other people**, as it can give the appearance that you are endorsing their tweets. This may not be a problem, but it's worth checking their account bio before re-tweeting if you are unsure who they are.

### **Correspondent Pages/use of tweets on BBC output**

As part of the move to correspondent page blogs, tweets from official BBC Twitter accounts can be programmed to automatically appear on relevant correspondent pages as a real-time feed.

This can provide new opportunities for promotion – on TV and radio output, across the BBC News website on related stories or Live Event Pages, and via other official BBC Twitter accounts. This will mean that anything you tweet could be automatically pulled in as content onto another BBC News digital platform, out of context of your Twitter account (hence the importance of

ensuring tweets meet the BBC's editorial standards and are relevant to your role).

**So please be mindful of this when considering what to tweet and how to phrase it.**

The Breaking News unit within BBC Newswire also monitors tweets from all official BBC News related accounts and will re-tweet or publish lines that are relevant via the main BBC News accounts on Twitter ([@BBCBreaking](#), [@BBCNews](#), [@BBCWorld](#)). They do this by following all official tweeters via a [Twitter list](#) authored by the [@BBCNews](#) account (which you can also follow if you wish).

There is now also a web page with a list of all the official social media accounts in BBC News:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/help-12438390>