

# Communicating your Research Online: Twitter in Research

By Anuja Cabraal

The world is constantly changing. As I write this, we are in the middle of a pandemic. Social media has been an extremely useful way to stay connected to the outside, and even to access academic events, seminars and webinars. Global ones. There have been reports of lots of sessions having record numbers which would not have happened if they were not online. There are many questions about what this means for the future of academia, and what it will look like.

This post is really for research students and academics that are thinking about using Twitter, starting a blog, people who are using one or both, or for those that have a Twitter account or a blog, but are still relatively new to the platforms. My aim here is to provide information on the practicalities of using Twitter, some ways to build your Twitter community and things to consider in order to keep safe. I also offer my thoughts on blogging such as what is a blog, why would you might consider starting a blog, and getting started.

There are good and bad I personally have found that using Twitter has had its good and bad sides. I will write about both here, and link to other sites and resources that point to both. I think it is important from the outset to be aware of the good and bad social media use, so read both before you get started.

There has been so much written about academia and use of social media that as I embark on writing this, I wonder what new things I can add to the conversation. What I aim to do is provide a space where a lot of those resources come together, as well as share some of my own personal experiences. The aim of this piece is to provide you with a guide on how to start out using Twitter and blogging. In terms of other resources, one seminal piece is a book titled [Social Media for Academics by Mark Carrigan](#) (2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2019. London: SAGE). If you haven't had a look at it, I suggest you take a look. The other resource I suggest you look at is [this](#). It is a module that has been put together for those in academia currently using or wanting to get onto social media by Tseen Khoo, (who co-runs the [Twitter account](#) and blog [Research Whisperer](#)). It gets you to think about the way that you use it, plan on using it, and thinking about your online profile, which is essential.

## Why join Twitter?

There are [many benefits](#) to having a Twitter account if you are starting on a research career, in an academic post or doing a postgraduate degree. These range from building your networks, connecting with other academics, connecting with others who share similar interests and [to build a name](#) for yourself in your research area. Another benefit is to have a wider [reach, impact and audience](#) for your research. I think it is a good idea to talk to people you know who use Twitter and get their ideas and suggestions on how and why they use it.

## Networking and connecting with others

Networking is essential when it comes to operating in the academic world. Especially in the current climate. Twitter can have a big impact on this once you learn to use it correctly.

It is an excellent way to connect and build your research networks around the world. It also helps you get noticed, not only by other academics, but anyone you want to engage with be they industry people, creatives, or academics. You get rapid access to the current research that is published, calls for papers, conferences, seminars and webinars. While you will likely hear about these through your in-person networks, you get notified of these things almost immediately as they come out. There are also new and upcoming conferences and journals, and you do get to hear about these that you may not be aware of through newsletters and in-person networks. It also gives you an opportunity to bring something to the table with more senior academics. You get to see what is current and what people are talking about.

For example, I am interested in qualitative research. I have found a community of researchers who are experts in this area and share qualitative research content. We often share each other's tweets to our followers. We have also connected via Zoom and taught each other different qualitative research software. I have written about my connections on Twitter, and the benefits I have found [here](#). As a direct result of Twitter, I have been asked to collaborate on journal papers, and even co-author books. I have been invited to work on research projects and engaged in discussions with some of my academic heroes who live on the other side of the world.

I must admit, there is a sort of a thrill the first time an academic you have respected for a long-time shares, retweets or comments on your blog post or tweet.

## Research impact

Twitter is also a way for you to disseminate and share your ideas beyond the more traditional academic modes such as peer-review published journal articles, books and conference paper. Many may have a limited readership and academic conferences can be expensive to attend.

It allows you to promote your work and give it a much wider readership. [This post](#) talks about how using Twitter can help promote and increase readership of your research outputs. I know the author of that paper tweets frequently and often and promote their work. They search the # on the topic, and share their paper whenever the topic is mentioned. Twitter, and I assume other social media platforms, give you an opportunity to reach a broader audience in terms of your research area, interests and academic profile. For a long time now, there has been some debate over whether social media use should be included in research output measures.

There is a growing perception that you need [more than just publications](#) to get the impact that you want from your research. Social media like Twitter allow you better outreach of your research. In different ways, other social media reach elsewhere: for example, Google Scholar, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

## Opportunities

A plethora of opportunities are announced on Twitter. You will see job opportunities, funding opportunities, be informed on upcoming conferences and call for papers. You will see open access free webinars that take place around the world. I have seen a lot more free webinars since the pandemic, and I suspect that some of these formats will stick around. There are also online conferences. Being on social media like Twitter allows you to see and engage in all these activities.

This [blog post](#) discusses some ways that other academics have used Twitter, including the way one uses it for teaching in her courses. It talks about the reasons why some US academics have chosen to use Twitter, and their experience with tweets that have gone “viral”, as well as some downsides of the medium. If you do read that blog post, or if you are thinking of using Twitter to teach and make it part of assessment, I think it is important to think about a duty of care. There can be bullying, trolling or worse that takes place on social media. If you are going to mandate that your students be on the platform, then you also hold a duty of care. My suggestion would be to make it optional.

## Getting started

Think about **how** you want to use Twitter, **why** you are using Twitter and also the **way** you are thinking about using it. You might not know the answers to all these questions yet. I had a play around for two to three months before I really knew what I wanted to do with it. I thought about what was working, what wasn't and what I really wanted to communicate through Twitter. Also remember, that it is possible to change up what you would like to do and how you use it.

The first step when you start using Twitter (or any social media), is to **think about your online profile**. Some questions to consider would be: what sort of things would you like to share? What are you not willing to share? You may want to only share tweets and resources that pertain to your area of research. You may want to share other types of information such as articles you've read on the higher education sector, or research that isn't in your field that you find interesting. There is no right answer on this, it largely depends on you, your personality and even your networks. I have even seen something written [here](#) about using Twitter to recruit research participants. Have a think about the things you not willing to tweet, for example are you willing to share your political views? What about personal content such as family and home life or your hobbies? I have found that having some firm boundaries and clear thinking about what I am *not* going to tweet has really helped me when engaging in conversations on Twitter. It can be easy to overshare, but if

you have clear boundaries then this is less likely to happen, and it gives you a framework within which to work.

There is a real trend at the moment to be “your authentic self” and to show vulnerability in public domains. Being imperfect and sharing your troubles and challenges will get you “likes” and may even get you more followers. Anecdotally I have noticed that a lot of the negative tweets and the platitudes get many more likes and retweets than other ones. Do be aware that negativity will also attract negativity.

Some people will say that they only tweet professionally, and while this is okay, I do think people like to see a personal side. Here are examples of the types of things that I share:

- Information about qualitative research such as useful links, blogs, articles, or books I have discovered in the area.
- Thoughts and ideas about qualitative research, sharing tweets and resources from others.
- I participate in discussions on Twitter and reply to tweets that talk about an interesting topic or a topic relevant to qualitative research.
- I will share and promote things for friends and colleagues as long as the topic isn't too far afield.
- I engage in chat and banter with colleagues on Twitter that I know in person, though I am careful about sharing details about places and times we meet. I always take that part of the conversation offline.
- I do tweet about some non-academic related things. I will post tweets about my running as a way of sharing something personal about myself, I share the odd video or photo of wombats, or a meme I have liked and also nature pics I might have come across. This last part allows me share something about myself, without having to delve too much into my life.

I also am strict about what I DON'T share. In my opinion, **it is good to have a clear idea about what you are NOT going to tweet.** I do not share anything about my family life/status or situation. I also choose not to share anything political. Apart from that, I pick and choose. I also try to post positive tweets and do my best not to whinge or complain on Twitter. This is because I try and tweet things that I would like to see in my feed. There can be a fair amount of negativity on the platform and I find this tiresome.

When thinking about Twitter and my purpose of using it, I like to (mostly) treat it like an online CV. I think about this, if a potential employer were to look at my Twitter feed, what would I want them to see? I see my blogging in the same way (but more of that later). I know that people who attend my workshops and book me for consultations and hire me as a thesis coach will likely see my tweets. Therefore, I tend to keep this in mind when I engage on social media. I also use it as a way to build and engage with a community that is interested in similar research areas to me.

I would like to add a caution here, and that is to remember that everyone can see what you tweet. It may seem at times that you are having a conversation with friends or colleagues but do remember that everyone can see your tweets. This is a [particularly useful post](#) on what to think about when tweeting.

## Using Twitter

### Bios

Twitter can be a great place for community building and networking. When you first start using it, you will be asked to put up a bio of yourself. You will be restricted by the number of characters you have available. Some things to think about: People often look at your bio to decide if they want to follow you. Therefore, when writing your bio, have a think about the types of things you will likely be tweeting. This will generally be your research area, and if there are any personal interests you have, or links to any of your other social accounts like a blog or website. I've even seen people linking to their LinkedIn profile. Take a look at what other people have in their bio to help you get an idea of what to put in your own. You can change it at any time, so don't feel like you need to be locked in.

My profile has changed a number of times over the years. I first listed the research areas I was interested in. I then moved into actually stating in my bio what I tweet about. I found the latter worked better for me because it allowed me to focus and concentrate on the reason I was using Twitter in the first place. It meant that followers knew what content they would see in their feed if they followed me. I also have a link to my secondary Twitter account which I co-run with Pat Thompson called [@virtualnotviral](#). This was set up to support PhD students during the pandemic. Basically, you want to use your profile to point people to the things you want them to know about you.

These days, you can also "pin" a tweet to the top of your Twitter feed. Some people do this as a way to add to their bio, and other people use this as a way to share a piece of research. On the top of mine, I currently have a more detailed bio of my research interests and what I like to tweet about. However, I do change this from time to time.

### A word on profile pictures

On LinkedIn, you will only see headshots of people, Twitter is a little different. You will notice that there are lots of different types of profile pictures. Choose what you are comfortable with, but DO have a photo. Often accounts without photos are deemed to be accounts not worth following because they are seen as new, trolling accounts (those accounts that are set up to attack people online), or bots (computer generated).

One thing to note about your Twitter profile photo is that people start to recognise you by the avatar that you choose, rather than the name. Once you have decided on a photo to use, my recommendation is to keep it. With Twitter, it is best not to change your Twitter photo too often (if at all). In the 9 years that I have had

a Twitter account, I have changed my profile photo once. I know people who have not changed their photo for over 10 years.

### Who to follow?

Start by following some of your colleagues as well as some other academics you know about. I also recommend some academic Twitter accounts that share useful information on Twitter for all researchers such as @researchwhisper. In my experience, I tend to avoid Twitter accounts that are anonymous, as well as the ones that promise to tweet and retweet people's tweets. I find that many of them tend to clutter what I see in my feed, some tweet over 100 times a day, and often the tweets are not curated, so I end up with all sorts of things in my feed! In my opinion, it is much better to build your profile and engage within a community of researchers in a particular area. I would also caution against following an account just because it has a large following. A lot of universities and university departments have Twitter accounts, so you may want to follow them, as well journals, academic book publishers and conferences.

I do have some recommended accounts to follow here:

@WriteThatPhD	@researchwhisper	@VivaSurvivors	@virtualnotviral
@JoVanEvery	@GradWriteSlack	@researchinsider	@DrPetra
@LeanneCPowner	@thesiswhisperer	@ThomsonPat	@raulpacheco
@DrHelenKara	@raewynconnell		

It is okay to just follow a few people to start. If there are any academics whose work you really like, you may want to start by following them. Before you follow someone, it is worth looking at their bio, and also going through some of their recent tweets to get an idea of what sort of things they share. One thing I have recently started doing is clicking on the little "bell" when there is an account I am particularly interested in, or one that I have recently followed. This will give me a notification whenever they tweet so I can see the content they have shared. I find that particularly useful given I live in Australia, most of the tweets happen in a different time-zone. It means I don't miss anything.

You may also like to follow some academic journals and conferences. Many are on Twitter, and tweet when they have a new publication with the titles of the articles, even call for papers. The same goes for academic book publishers. You get a feel for the resources that are out there in your field. You will see who else is interested in these resources by looking to see who has "liked" or "retweeted" that tweet.

### Twitter etiquette

You do not have to follow someone just because they followed you and you always have the option to "unfollow" someone.

It is important to know that people who have retweeted a tweet can see when you have liked it, and when you retweet it based on seeing it from their account. If you do see a good tweet, it is good to share that tweet and try to make sure you attribute or give a shout out to the account where you first saw that tweet. For example, I sometimes “retweet with comment” and say via or HT (meaning hat tip) @... and list the account through which I became aware of that tweet. It is a way of attributing that tweet, and also a way of community building on Twitter. It means that that account knows about you, and you are attributing the resource from where you originally saw it.

### A word about the numbers

Not everyone on Twitter is there to build a large following, and my suggestion is not to be focussed on the numbers. Instead, focus on the type of community you want to build and see in your network. Especially initially. I’ve seen some accounts that have a lot of followers, that don’t offer much to quality discussion or discourse. I have also seen some very prominent academics with less than 1000 followers. If you can, try to avoid chasing followers’ likes and retweets. Instead, think about your purpose for being on Twitter, and try to build the relevant type of community. I have a colleague who is on Twitter, has no followers, does not tweet anything, and uses it as a way to keep engaged with what is going on. Even as a close friend and colleague, I do not know the name of her account.

### Community challenges

From time to time, you will see “Community Challenges”. A community challenge on Twitter is where people are invited to tweet regularly for a month (or any given amount of time, usually it is around one month). There is a # to use and you will be given a topic every day to prompt you on what to tweet. Two challenges I know of are #FebFlourish and #TheLeveragedPHD. If you search for those # on Twitter, you will be able to see what the challenge was like. They can be a great way to get to know other Twitter users who share similar interests. It is also a way to get into habit of regularly tweeting and deciding what you want to share. [This post](#) details the experience of a regular Twitter user, 10 days into #TheleveragedPhD Twitter challenge. It was written by Tseen Khoo, who is a very active social media user and runs workshops on this. She is also one half of @researchwhisper, and account that shares useful resources on research as well as academic life. They also publish a popular blog on a wide range of academic related matters.

These community challenges are a way to ‘meet’ other people on Twitter and get a feel for their interests. They are also a way for people to get to know you and give you an idea of how you might like to frame your online identity, and what you might be willing to share.

### Tweet chats

You will likely see events called “tweet chats” on Twitter. These are a specified topic of conversation that run at a given time and date, and normally go for about one hour each. Think of them as an open conference that

runs for one hour. Anyone can join or follow the conversation using or following the chosen #. Anyone can run a tweet chat. A [few posts](#) out there talk about how to run a tweet chat, and they can be fun to participate in. [This post](#) talks about how to successfully host a Twitter chat and ways that you can save the tweet chat and share the conversation later.

I co-host a tweet chat with Pat Thomson on our account to support PhD students: the account is called @VirtualNotViral and we use the #virtualnotviral for the chat. At the time of writing this, we have run a weekly tweet chat on topics to support PhD students during the pandemic for ten consecutive weeks. We call in a guest to help us with the chat who is a specialist in the area. The # people need to follow is #virtualnotviral and we have set time and day every week for this.

Generally, with tweet chats, participants are invited to following along to introduce themselves. Then a series of questions are asked, and those following can reply or ask their own questions on the topic using the hash tag. Within about a day of the tweet chat, the host of the chat will usually publish all the tweets from the chat in one form or another. Pat Thomson and I collate all the tweets and put them in a Twitter “moment” which is a way to group tweets together, and then share this on our Twitter account and website for those that want to follow up or look at our past chats. You can view them all [here](#).

### Live tweeting

If someone says that they are “live-tweeting”, it means that they are attending an event, and will be tweeting from that event, be it a seminar, workshop or a conference. The most common context I have seen live-tweeting is for seminars and conferences where audience members will tweet and share content of the lectures ON Twitter, generally using the # designated for the conference. It is a way to connect with others in a conference, and those who couldn’t attend or to share information about the presentations. I generally like to check that it is okay to live-tweet beforehand. [Here](#) is some more information on why you might want to consider live-tweeting.

### A word on hashtags

Hashtags are useful because they allow your tweets to be seen by a wider audience, and they help identify what other people are saying.

Some common hashtags in the academic Twitter community are:

#academicTwitter – A good general hashtag

#scicomm – Science communication

#AnthroTwitter – Anthropology

#ScoTwitter – Sociology



#EconTwitter - economics

#phdchat / phdlife – anything related to phd life

#ecrchat – anything related to life as a early career researcher.

#profchat – anything to do with senior academics

#qualitativeresearch – qualitative research

#researchmethods – research methods

There are just a small number of hashtags, and you may like to come up with your own. Do explore and use hashtags. It allows people to see your interests. People also search using these hashtags, so your tweet will be seen by the people interested in that field. It is another way to build and find your community, and also indicates the topic of your tweet.

### **Cautions when it comes to Social Media use**

There is a need to be mindful and conscious of how you use social media and think about the amount of time you spend dedicated to it, how to engage on social media, and knowing how to stay safe online.

### **Mindful use of your time**

Social media platforms are designed to be addictive. The likes, retweets new followers are said to give people a hit of dopamine. Twitter also has a feature now where you have to keep refreshing to keep the feed going. Some have likened it to the pulling of the slot machine handle, designed to keep you there, and refreshing. Dr Inger Mewburn (also known as the Thesiswhisperer) wrote [this post](#) almost a decade ago indicating the addictive nature of Twitter and the impact that can have your day to day life. I also think it is useful to set allocated times that you will look at your social media such as Twitter, and I have found this personally useful. It is easy to get sucked in and spend a lot of time on there. I have heard some people use Twitter during their daily commute and at no other times. Keep in mind, it can take time to articulate tweets and find content you want to share. If you are time poor like many researchers, [It is important to keep the ultimate purpose of your social media](#) use in mind.. Mark Carrigan, well known for his research work on social media, quit Twitter and details why [in his post here](#). It is worth taking a look and taking some tips from him. It can sometimes feel compelling to respond to a reply to a tweet, or to check Twitter for FOMO, but people can wait, and you do not have to reply to anything, let alone reply to it immediately. You get to choose the terms on how you engage. Most regular or long-term users of Twitter understand this, and in my experience, it is fine to reply after a day or even longer.

People also take Twitter breaks, which means that they don't engage on the platform at all for a period of time. I have seen this happens particularly on weekends, after hours or during holidays. Sometimes people announce that they are taking a break and other times they do not. There are also times Twitter breaks are

taken for mental well-being, and this is also widely acceptable. If you are finding it is getting to you, or that you are having a bad day or week, it is completely acceptable to step away for some time. You may be concerned that you may lose followers for taking a break or for not tweeting for a while, but this has not been my experience, and I have not observed this in other cases.

### **Accounts to be wary of**

Not all accounts are what they seem. Through my time and experience on Twitter, I tend to be wary of accounts that are anonymous. Do look at more than just the bios, follower numbers and people you know who are following that account. What are they actually tweeting? I say this because particularly with Twitter, where there can be so much negativity, it is important to look after your mental well-being, and carefully choose what you look at. This brings me to my next point:

### **Controlling your Twitter Feed**

Twitter has an algorithm that works in the background. If you click on something, Twitter will register it and start showing you more tweets of that nature, and even from that account. If you see something you don't like, you can click on the icon towards the top right of the tweet and select an option to say "not interested in this" or even to mute, or block. Use these regularly and freely to make Twitter work for you.

What is the difference between unfollowing, muting and blocking? Unfollowing an account means that they will no longer show up in your Twitter feed, and they will not be able to send you private messages on Twitter. Muting an account means that their tweets will no longer show up in your feed, but you will still follow them. They will still be able to send you direct messages. Muting is useful when you feel you must follow someone (like a friend or colleague) but you don't want their tweets showing up in your feed. It means that they can still send you direct (private) messages.

Blocking an account means that they can no longer see your tweets, they cannot reply to you and they cannot send you private messages. The Twitter account will not be notified that you have blocked them. They won't know unless they go to look at your profile page, where it will show that they have been blocked.

There may be times you are being trolled or attacked on Twitter, and you can make all your tweets private. This means that only those who are following you can see your tweets. They will not be able to retweet your tweets. Some people keep their tweets on private all the time.

### **Trolling and bullying**

When it comes to social media like Twitter, you need to be aware of the risks of bullying, trolling and unpleasant interactions. Not everyone experiences these, but it is good to be prepared for the worst. It is well known that women, as well as marginalised groups experience more of this than others.

Here are some things you might expect:

People may use your tweets to say unpleasant things, your words may be taken out of context, and people may say negative or derogatory things about you. Though I have been lucky enough to avoid this to a large degree, if you are on social media, you need to be aware that this can happen.

How do you deal with this? I don't have all the answers. One thing that people often say, and I tend to agree, is to try to ignore the trolls. If you can't, and they persist, report them, block them or mute them depending on what the situation calls for. [This post](#) is useful for providing some suggestions on how to deal with trolls. This [post](#) gives details on people who have been trolled using particular Twitter features, and how they dealt with those experiences.

Remember that you can also mute accounts, and you can even mute particular words or phrases from showing up in your Twitter feed. Be active and pro-active about protecting your mental health. Twitter is notorious for negativity. Be active and proactive about muting, unfollowing and blocking.

One other thing I would like to point out. Not everyone out there is well-intentioned. Exercise caution and care when engaging in Direct Messages (DM's) or sharing too much about yourself online. At least be considered in this. Like any other online interaction, be cautious about handing over personal information unless you know people, your mental health and safety come first.

### **Other resources**

I really liked [this post](#) on how to use Twitter. Especially useful was the section on "what to avoid". I highly recommend reading it. Here are some other blog posts I found that you might find useful:

[Get Savvy about Online Impact](#)

[99 Serious Twitter Tips for Academics \(Updated\)](#)

[A Nifty Guide for Academics on Using Twitter](#)

[The Research Whisperer – Tag: social media](#)

[Social Media and Your PhD](#)

### **Blogging**

When I was asked to write about my social media use, I thought that the only social media I had was Twitter and a LinkedIn profile. I didn't think of blogging as part of social media. As academics, we write papers that are essentially available for the academic audience (and sometimes, the general public) to read. Blogs are

much more public, and immediate and the writing is different from academic writing. A blog is more like a thought piece than an academic publication.

### What is a blog?

I think of a blog as a place where you can regularly share and post your ideas in a particular area at a particular point in time. A blog is different from a website in that a website is often static and doesn't need to be regularly updated. A website is more "formal". A blog is more a thought piece on ideas and topics, some even use it to write book reviews. It generally needs to be regularly updated and is really a way to engage in discussion and conversation. It is about the presentation of an idea more than anything else. Blog posts are generally short, no more than 1000 words, and I have seen some posts as small as four lines. They are relatively immediate, in that once you publish it, the world can see and access it (if they know to look). They also have the potential to have a very wide outreach if you know how to attract the audience.

A good book if you are thinking about starting blogging is by Mollett et. al. *Communicating Your Research With Social Media* (2017 London: SAGE). The authors write that some of the benefits of blogs are that they can inspire others, can highlight your research, and can even influence the media and public policy. There has also been [some research done on why academics blog](#) by Dr Inger Mewburn and Professor Pat Thomson.

Blogs are an immediate way to share what you are thinking. They are generally [short and focused](#). You don't have to link them to a lot of other ideas or references, though it can be useful to link them to other blog posts on a topic. I use mine kind like an online record of what I am thinking about, currently working on, and sharing some of my knowledge. Blogs also allow us to address issues that are current. It can sometimes take years to get a journal article published, whereas with a blog, once you have written it, other people can see it (and reference it).

Blogging is different from academic writing and serves a different purpose. [This article](#) provides some tips on how to structure a blog. I think the most useful advice from this article is that the piece needs to be punchy, relatively short (ideally no longer than 1000 words. A catchy title also helps to bring readers to the post.

I haven't found as much to write about in terms of blogging and why you should do it. I suspect that this is because less people blog compared to having a Twitter account (or even Instagram and Facebook, and Tick Tok is up and coming). I suspect this is because it takes more time investment, and the process of sharing your ideas and thoughts publicly can be daunting. Here is a link to the work by Dr Inger Mewburn (also known as the Thesiswhisper). She has been blogging for well over a decade, and wrote about here experience here.

## Why would you start a blog?

This is a difficult question for me to answer. I think the main reasons to start a blog are help you get clarity around your ideas, help with your writing, and also to share your ideas, knowledge and thoughts to a broader audience, and also to make them more accessible.

I first started blogging back in 2012, encouraged by the Research Whisperers who had recently started their blog, and by the Thesis Whisperer who had been writing for some time. What I do remember from that time is that people saw I had a strength in conveying ideas and concepts related to qualitative research and using qualitative research software in an applied way, and I thought it would be a good way to share what I knew, get feedback on my ideas and start discussion on certain topics. These colleagues offered to shepherd me during this time when I first started blogging. And this gave me confidence to continue. I received comments on my posts which showed me that people were engaging with what I was writing. I even wrote a few guest posts for the research whisperer site, and found this very rewarding.

[Here](#), Pat Thompson talks about some of the reasons academics should blog. Reasons include that it can help make you a better writer, give you more confidence as a writer (something I have found true for me), it helps you consolidate and articulate your ideas and it also allows to you experiment with your writing.

## Getting started

This [post](#) is really useful in thinking about the basics before you start blogging. The author suggests that you should think carefully about why you want to start a blog, and also about the topic you want to write about.

Before you start blogging, you will need to choose a site to host your blog. Three main ones I am aware of are WordPress (which is where I host mine), Blogger and also Medium, or course there are others. I chose mine because that I what was recommended to me by colleagues and at the time I started my blog, the main ones were Blogger and WordPress. I do like the look of Medium, as it is very streamlined. Have a look at a few different blog hosting sites and see what they offer.

Once you have chosen a hosting site, you will need to think about a name for your blog, and the topics you would likely blog about. You will also need to spend some time setting up the blog, general look and layout. This can take time, but you can tweak it and work on it as you go. It doesn't need to be perfect from the start.

## Once your blog is ready to go

It is time to start writing! Once you have a post ready to go, or a few, have a think about how you might share that you have this posted. This is where it can be useful to share or "announce" the post through other social media accounts you might have such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. I know that WordPress allows you to do this within WordPress itself if you give it access to the accounts.

Consider how frequently you would like to post. Most places I have read, and people I have spoken to who blog, say that you should blog on a regular basis, be it weekly, fortnightly, I even know some who do it monthly. Share the blog on the same day of the month or week every time, so that you can build a steady readership, and people know to expect a post from you on any given day. I must admit that I don't currently do this but am working my way to making this happen.

One piece of advice I was given was to write for yourself, and not worry too much about the audience. I have found this helps and holds true. There have been times when I have written something, thought it wasn't going to be of any use, but often, they have been the most popular blog posts. Time and again I am told and reminded that sometimes we just don't know what the audience will like, so focus on what you want to say. I suggest using your own judgement when it comes to judging impact. I have had people who write regularly for blog sites with a large readership tell me that they are often surprised by which posts seem to resonate with the audience, often it is ones they thought were not very useful! The only caution here is to be mindful of your tone. Sarcasm and humour can be difficult to convey in writing, and if you are writing about sensitive topics, or ideas that may be controversial, do proceed with caution or be willing to accept that there may be people who publicly disagree with your ideas.

The main downside to blogging is the time and commitment. *Communicating your research with Social Media* is a useful book that discusses the unseen labour that goes into online writing such as blogging. Be aware that blogging takes time. As you start to get more familiar and confident with the process, it will become easier and faster, but initially it can be very time consuming.

In the early days, it takes time to write the blog posts. It is normal to feel nervous sharing your first few posts, knowing that they are open to the public. One suggestion I have is for you to ask some friends or colleagues to read over your posts first. If you know people who blog, even better, as they understand the type of writing that you needed to engage in that domain.

[This post](#) links to some useful academic blogs to follow. Having a look at other academic blogs will give you an idea of the different styles of blogging, and may help you think about the type of blog you might like to create (and if you would like to create one at all).

**Some blogs you might like to follow or take a look at:**

[LSE Impact Blog](#)

[The Research Whisperer](#)

[HelenKara](#)

[Patter](#)

[Understanding and solving intractable resource governance problems](#)

[Research Degrees Insiders](#)

[Social Theory, Digital Platforms, Educational Futures](#)

Some more resources on blogging:

[Patter – tag: blogging](#)

[Things it has taken me 8 years to learn](#)

[How to run a blog for 8 years and not go insane](#)

[Five years of blogging: Help me celebrate!](#)

## Conclusion

I hope you can see from this that there are some benefits and pitfalls to using social media in academia. The main takeaways are to be clear about the purpose for which you want to use it, and to be aware of the pitfalls and some of the challenges before jumping in.

## About the author

Dr Anuja Cabraal (PhD) is an experienced qualitative researcher and a global trainer of NVivo and has started training in other qualitative software. She has over 15 years of research experience. She enjoys working with researchers and helping them through the research process and has a passion for all things qualitative. She loves writing and blogs about qualitative research methods and researcher life.

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