Tweeting guidelines

Compiled by students in Comm 3020/STS 3021, “Science Writing for Media,” Cornell University, Fall 2012

As of 24 October 2012

• Keep it short
• Summary statements (8 words or less)
• Lots of humor
• Lots of rhetorical questions
• Casual language
  o Talk directly to audience: “Listen up....” “we...” “our....”
• Starting with action verbs draws in readers
• Tie science and popular culture together
• Use common phrase in unexpected way
• Don’t use story headline or lede as the tweet
  o Doesn’t explain story
  o Doesn’t grab reader
  o Not diverse idea – nothing new when you click on it
    (have to read same material twice)
• Think about audience
  o Different styles (e.g, Miss Science has more snark than NASA)
• For celebrity or semi-celebrity, tell people what YOU’RE up to (personal pictures, activities)
• Difference between people and organizations
  o Organizations tended to just promote their own work
  o People engaged in conversations
• Using links, clickable content
  o Too many links, references, @xxx, etc., makes it hard to read
  o Links in middle of tweet harder to read – put at ends
  o Be sure to distinguish between @xxx and URL or other link
• Use hashtag wisely, for best results when searching to get to tweet
• Do use @xxx to refer to source of information
• Technical issue:
  o If clickable link that expands on Twitter, more accessible than having to go to another site
• Your own page looks better if it isn’t dominated by RT
  o Quoting, “via xxx” more effective than RT