

Social Media Basics

Whether you decide to use Twitter or FriendFeed, Facebook or LinkedIn, here is some basic information that could be helpful.

Use your real name when signing up so people who know you will be able to find you and follow you.

Be a responsible, respectful participant. Share accurate, credible information that demonstrates your knowledge, listen, ask questions and respond to others in a polite and constructive manner and thank or “reward” others for good leads and information. One way of rewarding is to champion stakeholders and support their issues. When you write, it is important to establish the right “voice”, one that is direct but genuine.

Mike Spear, Genome Alberta Director of Corporate Communications suggests that to build a good network you should “find someone you respect who’s on Twitter and start by following them. See who they follow. In its most basic form, Twitter is a great tool for getting breaking news in your field, networking with other researchers in your area, and increasing your profile as a researcher.”

Your Twitter page has the number of “followers” you have (the people who are paying attention to your Tweets) and the number of “friends” you have, which is who you have chosen to follow.

For most people, it builds slowly over the first two weeks depending on who responds to your messages and how quickly you respond to them. You can get inundated with messages but you can also cut back the volume by reducing the number of people you follow (you “unfollow” them) and by not allowing everyone who asks to follow you.

To really start using it, hook up your mobile phone to receive messages.