Follow Your Senator's Tweets!

If you have a Twitter account, this should be pretty easy. Find your senator and follow them. If you don't have an account, it is slightly more complicated (but still pretty easy). Follow the steps below:

If you go to Twitter's website or download a Twitter app, all you see is an invitation to log in or to sign up for a free account. Without an account, it may appear that you are barred from all of the action going on inside. Yet this is far from the truth. Twitter contains billions of posts that are accessible to anyone online, and you don't need an account to access them.

Getting Access

To get immediate access to Twitter without an account, just go directly to Twitter's search field (twitter.com, upper right hand corner). If you type a name or a word about what you're looking for in the search field, you will begin seeing tweets right away. Another option for getting into Twitter is to go directly to any account profile page. If you know someone's username, such as "@username" as seen on websites and business cards, type "twitter.com" in your Web browser and type the username, replacing the "@" with a slash. For example, type "twitter.com/username" to go straight to that user's profile without being asked to log in.

Using Twitter Search

When you go to Twitter's search page, you can type a name or a few keywords into the search field to see posts and user accounts related to those words. To narrow down the results, click the "Advanced Search" option. This gives you the ability to filter the results with additional words or limit the results to specific Twitter accounts, languages, countries or cities. You can even specify whether you want positive or negative comments, which can be useful if you're looking for reviews of new products or services.

Roaming Around Twitter

At the bottom of the Twitter search page are links to the most popular topics currently being discussed, often with a hashtag symbol in front of them, like "#HotTopic." Clicking one of these displays a list of recent tweets about the topic. Click on any username, preceded by the "@" symbol, to see that person's account page. If you click on a link or a photo, it takes you out of Twitter, but you can use the Back button to go back again. The only posts you can't see without an account are those made by private accounts. For those, you not only need a Twitter account to see them, but permission from the account holder as well.

Reading Twitter with Text Messages

If you have a cellphone, you can subscribe to anyone's public posts using SMS text messaging, even without a Twitter account. All you need is someone's username and the Twitter short code for your country. In the United States, the short code is 40404. If you type "follow username 40404" and send this text, you will get that person's tweets as text messages. Type "GET username 40404" to get only that person's last tweet. If your carrier charges you for text messages, remember to type "STOP 40404" to stop getting messages from Twitter after following someone.