What is twitter? Twitter allows you to send, receive and share microblogging messages of up to 140 characters each. (For those of us who know instantly what FF-1 is, the 140 limit is due to the initial limitations of Short Message Service (SMS) at 160 characters. Initial developers limited the tweet to 140 to allow for the addition of a username and colon in front of the text.)

Twitter is considered both a way to share among people and also of business value in reaching customers. Businesses find value is analyzing twitter streams. If you travel a lot, many times you can reach help faster by utilizing twitter especially to @HiltonHotels and @Marriott.

Below is a short, easy course on how to use twitter. Note that @ refers to people and # refers to topics. For example, I am @CleaCoulter and I usually post about #cloud and #IrishMusic.

**Start small.** We are all busy and you don't want to take an entire Sunday on this activity. First - go to www.twitter.com and create an account & handle. Remember, people at work will be seeing this. I do not use my IBM email. I have a personal email set up, cleacoulter@yahoo.com as I feel it is more secure. Use a password that is different than your work password.

**Stage One:**

**Task One:** Find some people and follow them. For an easy way of finding people, type their handle into the search bar, then click on their handle, then click on “Follow.” Here’s my husband’s twitter profile as a sample. Note that the “Follow” box does not say “Following”. Also note that you do not want an “egg” as your picture!

Here’s an example of the box.

Some people to follow:

Me at @CleaCoulter and @ibmperformance (she has a great blog too)!

**Task Two:** Find some IBM sites or your companies and follow them:
Task Three: Find something about your hobbies and follow them (like for classical music or pictures of cute puppies):

Some examples of my classical music hobby are @wconcerthall and @OnlyClassical.

Try installing twitter on your mobile device and look at it while you are in line at the grocery store or waiting for a plane. Experiment with searching for hobbies or charities in the search bar by using the hashtag. Have fun! Try #applepie or #dogs!
Stage Two:

**Task One:** Think about your online “brand.” I am branded the same across linkedin, bluepages, and twitter via my picture, title, and location. Remember to follow your companies social computing guidelines.

Update your picture in twitter. Go to “me” then “edit.” I use my married name socially. I don’t know whether that was a good idea or not, but with a unique first name I’m not going to stress about it.

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**Task Two:** Send me a tweet! I’ll then answer any questions you have!

There is a brief introduction to twitter! Hope you have fun and find some interesting people to tweet to!