

Social Media Marketing for Authors

An overview of effective
literary marketing techniques
for Facebook and Twitter

Andrew Hutchinson

Introduction

Social media has become a key element in the modern interactive process. Every day, some 3 billion people log onto social platforms around the world in order to stay up to date with the latest news and events, and keep in touch with family and friends. Australia is no exception, with around 18 million Australians - or 79% of the adult population - now active on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others.

Given the role that these platforms now play in connecting people to information, it can also be a powerful tool for promotion and outreach - but it can also be a source of frustration in this respect. Tweet an image of a kitten and you might get a heap of re-tweets, yet share an update about your latest book, and you could see little traction. It's one thing to know that millions of people *can* be reached through social media apps, but it's often another thing altogether to build an audience that's receptive to your messaging.

So how do you do it? What are the key tricks and tips to maximizing social media for book promotion?

The truth is, you need to go in with a plan, and build over time. This guide provides an overview of some of the most effective promotional techniques across two of the largest social media platforms.

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Facebook

The Social Network has more than [15 million active users](#) in the Australian market, and remains the largest social media platform in the world, making it a key option for authors looking to maximize their social media presence.

Facebook Basics

1. Create a Facebook business profile

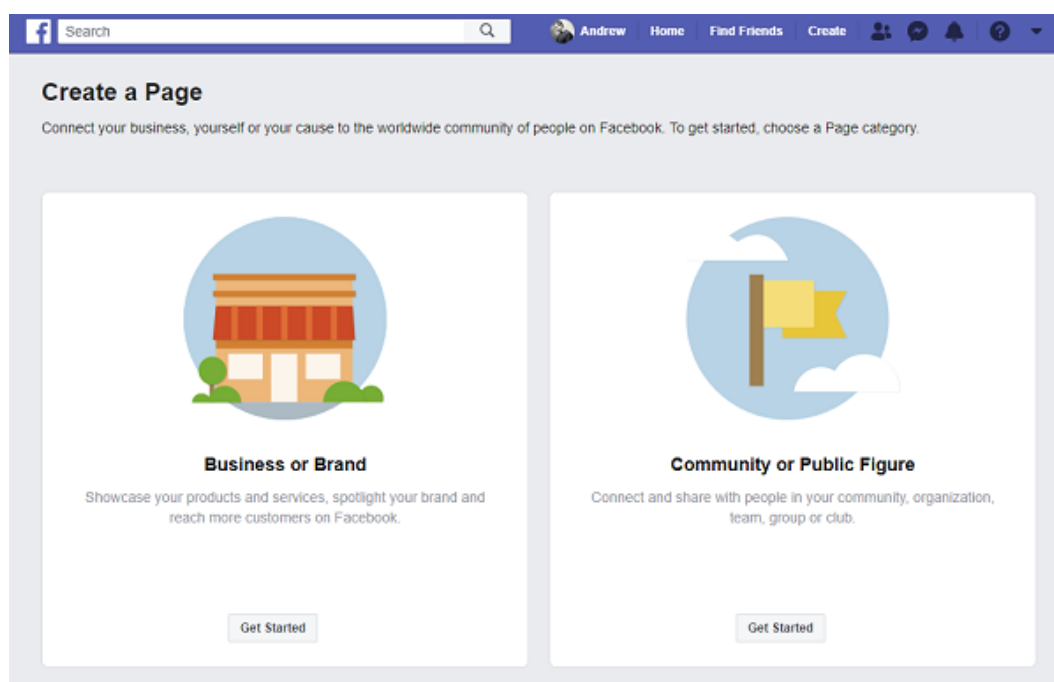
First off, you shouldn't be using your personal Facebook profile for your book promotion activity.

Your personal profile is where you share updates with your family and friends, where your personal connections can link up with you. You don't want to mix up your book fans and personal connections.

You also need a business profile to run Facebook ads, which, as we'll cover, you'll probably want to do at some stage.

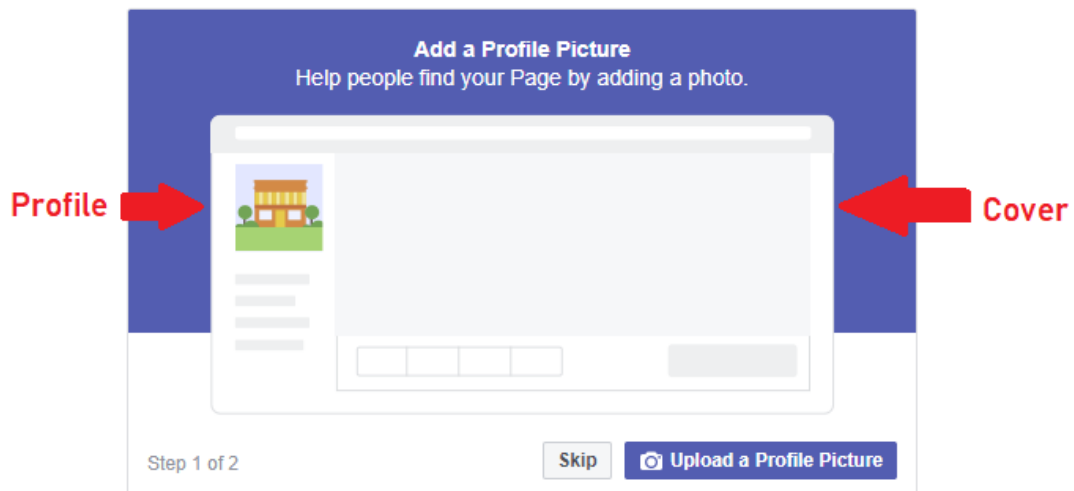
Facebook business profiles are where you can showcase yourself as a writer, and if you're seriously looking to promote your work on the platform, you need one, bottom line.

You can set up a [set up a Facebook business Page](#) by heading to [this link](#):



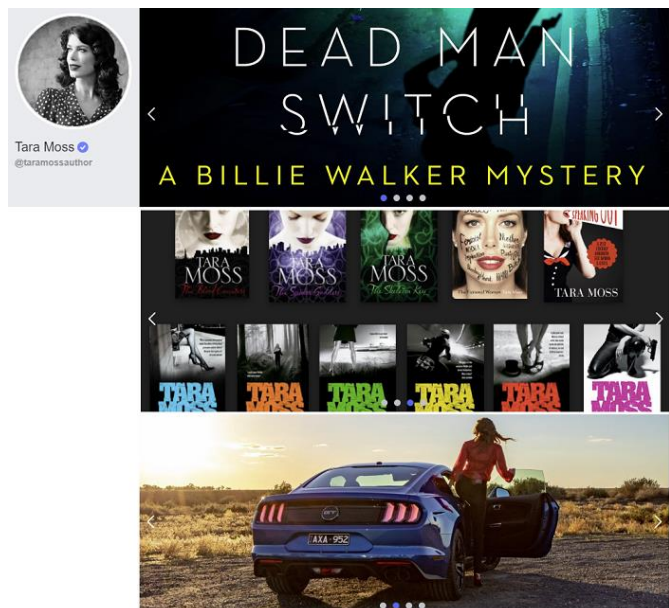
Select 'Community or Public Figure', then enter your name and your category ('Author') and Facebook will then guide you through the basics of setting up a business Page.

Your next step will be to upload a profile and cover image.



Your profile image should be a picture of yourself, while the cover is the largest image section on your Page. This is a great opportunity to showcase your work and you can add video, slideshow or static images in the banner.

For example, as you can see here, [Tara Moss](#) uses her cover slideshow to showcase her latest book, her past publications and images related to her work.



There's a heap of ways you can use this, and it's a key branding opportunity that should not be overlooked.

One key note here is to ensure that you use the right image sizes.

Facebook [advises](#) that:

- Your Page profile picture will display at 170x170 pixels on your Page on computers, 128x128 pixels on smartphones and 36x36 pixels on most feature phones.
- Your Page cover photo will display at 820 pixels wide by 312 pixels tall on your Page on computers and 640 pixels wide by 360 pixels tall on smartphones.
- For profile pictures and cover photos with your logo or text, you're likely to get a better result by using a PNG file.

As you upload your images, it's worth having a phone handy to check out what it looks like mobile, and editing to fit accordingly.

Once you've added in your basic details and images, you now have a Facebook author Page.

You now need to add in all the relevant Page details to ensure people can find you.

Complete your About section so people can find your Page more easily.

GENERAL

Description

Add short description

A brief summary of your Page. The limit is 255 characters. You can write a short summary about this Page, or tell people about your products and service, which can help your business be discovered more often on Facebook.

Save Changes Cancel

Categories

Author X

CONTACT

Phone Number

+1 Enter phone number

Extension (optional)

☐ My Page doesn't have a phone number

Adding a phone number makes it easier for potential customers to contact you.

Save Changes Cancel

Website

Enter website

☐ My Page doesn't have a website

Make it easy for potential customers to learn more about your business.

Save Changes Cancel

Email

Email

☐ My Page doesn't have an email

Adding an email makes it easier for potential customers to contact you. We will send an email to this address to confirm that it's valid.

As you can see here, Facebook offers some basic guidance on why you want to fill out each section, including improved page discovery, ease of contact, providing more context. As an author, you likely don't want people calling you out of the blue, so the importance of these notes is relative, but there are benefits to completing the sections that fit.

Basically, you can choose to enter and leave whatever sections you wish, but including relevant detail will make it easier for people to find your Page when they go searching on Facebook.

You should also look to add a custom Facebook Page URL name at some stage (i.e. <https://www.facebook.com/andrewhutchinsonauthor/>), or Facebook will just give you a generic one. This is not a huge deal, but it can make your Page easier to find – and it looks better.

You can [edit your Page name](#) in the 'About' section at the left of your Page screen – your 'Username' is what will appear after 'www.facebook.com/' in your Page URL.

This also serves as your Messenger handle, if you were looking to get people to send you messages. If they look up @andrewhutchinsonauthor on Messenger, they'd be able to send me a direct message.

Once you've gone through all the steps, and filled in all the elements, you have an effective Facebook author Page. Now you need to give people a reason to connect, and follow you - and ideally, eventually, buy your books.

About

GENERAL

Category	Author	Edit
Name	Andrew Hutchinson	Edit
Username	@andrewhutchinsonauthor	Edit

PAGE INFO

Facebook Strategy

1. Share updates that relate to your books and writing experiences

The key to maximizing Facebook as an author is building your brand, thereby establishing an audience of people who are most likely to be interested in what you write.

In order to do this, it's important to stay on topic, and focus on what matters to the people you really need to reach – people who buy your books. That means you need to separate your Facebook author Page approach to your personal profile – this is not the place to share your cute cat or post your latest holiday snaps. Unless they do, in fact relate to your work.

By staying on topic, you work towards building a community of people who are engaged in what you do as a writer, which is ultimately what you'll be writing about. That means that this audience will be increasingly receptive to your book announcements – which means that they'll not only buy your books themselves, but they'll also like and share relevant news and updates with friends.

That's why you need to keep your author Page updates confined to your book-related news, and create specific posts for your author profile. Don't cross-post. Each platform is very different. Create unique updates, related to writing, specifically for your Facebook Page.

[Tim Winton](#) is a good example of this.

Tim shares content related to his work, articles he's written, publishing news – basically, nothing's off-topic, and again that's important, because it will ensure that those who do follow your writing page get updates about your writing, which is what you want them following you for.

Before you start promoting your Facebook Page – i.e. telling people to come follow you – it's worth posting a few updates so that there's something there for people who do visit to check out.



Other posting notes

- Visuals are important. Still image posts perform better than basic text updates on Facebook, while videos can generate a heap of engagement. As such, a video preview of some kind could be worth the investment, while Facebook Live Q and A sessions are another thing to consider
- Quizzes and polls also generate engagement and can be tied into the key themes of your book

2. Creating Content

This is where you need content – you need things to post, and while that’s relatively easy around book launches and the like, it gets harder to maintain posting consistency in the periods in between.

For this reason, many authors start a blog, in order to keep producing content to share, and maintain that connection with their readers. It’s not essential, but starting a blog will give you things to post to your Facebook Page about, regularly, which is important, as you want to use your Facebook Page to maintain awareness with your audience.

Posting consistently will help you keep your name front of mind, while also helping to build your audience around the themes that interest you, writing insights, etc.

The other advantage of maintaining a steady flow of content is that you can use that in a newsletter, another way to maintain connection with fans. Again, this is not 100% necessary, but one key advantage of a newsletter is that you can ask your fans to sign-up with their email address. And if you can build an email list of dedicated fans, you can then use then for promotion though paid ads on Facebook, which we’ll look at in another section.

3. Don’t overpost

One of the key rules to stick to on Facebook is ‘don’t overpost’.

Your fans are following your Page to keep in touch with your latest news - but they don’t need ten updates a day cluttering their feeds.

These days, people generally use Facebook to stay in touch with friends and family, along with some brands and celebrities in between. If you go overboard, and post too much, you run the risk of them unfollowing. But aside from this, authors don’t really don’t need to post too much to maintain connection with readers.

Definitely, maintaining a level of activity is important, again ensuring that you stay front of mind with potential readers. But realistically, you’re not releasing a new book every other day - there’s no urgent need to keep your fans informed of every single thing in order to guide them towards the local book store.

Consider Facebook as a means of maintaining connection with your readers, as opposed to hard selling. Keep them updated with a consistent stream of news, but don’t overdo it.

[Matthew Reilly](#) is a good example of this.

Reilly has over 61k Facebook followers, and he regularly sees high engagement on his posts. Matt's approach to Facebook is consistent, measured and about right for maintaining connection with his fans.



Matt posts to his Facebook Page once per week, in general, ramping that up around book launch dates/events. That's a pretty solid guideline to follow – and that'll still give you plenty of time to, you know, write stuff, as opposed to spending your days maintaining your social streams.

So, at least one post per week, on theme, with more around release dates.

4. Facebook's Algorithm

Another thing you need to try and get your head around is Facebook's mysterious News Feed algorithm, which gets blamed for everything from stopping your posts from being seen to limiting your reach to only a few people.

As a basic overview, when Facebook first launched, everyone who followed your Page would see your posts, making it easy to build an audience and maintain connection with them on the platform. But then Facebook got really big – the platform is now used by [2.5 billion people](#), and with that, more people ended up following more Pages, more people, and the feed of posts that you could see became overwhelming. According to Facebook, the average user could see up to 1,500 posts per day, based on the average following rates, which is far too much for anyone to take in.

Now, Facebook could have left their system as it was, and whatever you saw is what you got, but Facebook benefits from keeping people on-platform for as long as possible. In order to do that, and maintain a better user experience, Facebook introduced an algorithm which doesn't simply show you everything, but instead, it shows you the things that you're most likely to be interested in, ranked in order, based on new posts.

So, if you regularly Like and/or comment on posts from Nike, which you follow, but you never comment on posts from Adidas, which you also follow, Facebook's algorithm infers that you like Nike, so you're more likely to see Nike's posts above those from Adidas.

Extrapolate that over the many Pages you follow, and combine that with all the people you're connected with, and you can see why you only end up seeing some of the posts from Pages you may have liked in the past.

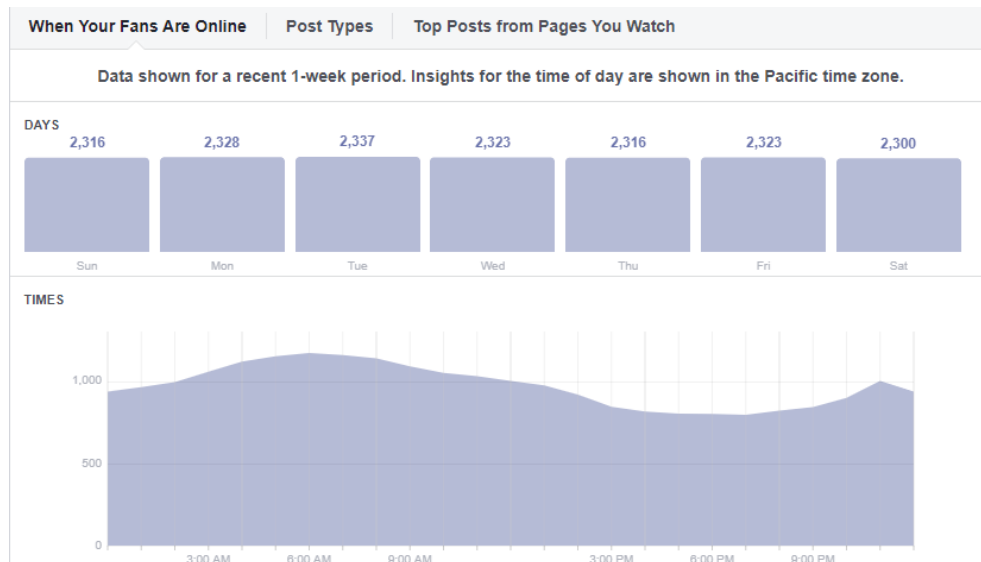
That, inevitably, means that not all of your Facebook Page followers are going to see your posts, which is annoying, but that's how it is.

Some people will try and come up with algorithm 'hacks' and the like to outsmart the system, and get more people to see their posts, but most are not feasible, logical or effective.

Here are some pointers to help you avoid the common 'tricks':

- As noted in the previous point, while you shouldn't overpost to your Facebook Page, not every one of your followers is going to see every one of your posts anyway. Facebook's algorithm will show your posts to a selection of people who follow your Page, and then, if they engage with it, it'll show more, and if they like and share it, it'll show more, and so on. The system is built to maximize engagement, so if your posts are generating likes and comments, more people will see them. This means that sparking engagement with your updates is important, but it isn't more important than maintaining connection to your author brand (i.e. posting relevant stuff) and building an audience based on your writing, as opposed to fishing for engagement.
- This also means that, theoretically, you can post more often, as it's not likely that your audience will be flooded with your updates. I would advise against this, but you could post several times a day and it wouldn't necessarily be a major problem – though it probably won't help a significant amount either.
- The performance of your past posts informs the reach of your future updates, so if you have a post that goes viral, your next post after that will subsequently also see a reach boost. Some people try to utilise this by posting trending memes and inspirational quotes that'll generate likes and comments, even if they aren't related to their broader branding goals. Facebook knows that people do this, and its system will correct for it if detected. It also clutters up your Page, turns off real fans, and even if it does expand your reach, it likely won't help you connect with people who will actually purchase your books. So, you could try this, but a longer-term, consistent approach will, eventually, lead to better results.
- There's a rumour that Facebook's algorithm gives a reach boost to posts which include words like 'engagement', 'married', 'new job', 'big news', 'baby' and various others. This is – or at least was – [true](#), but it's also not likely to be a major help (Facebook reportedly implemented this after CEO Mark Zuckerberg [complained](#) that he missed a post from a friend who'd had a baby). But it may possibly be worth adding 'big news' or 'announcement' to your major news posts.
- Hashtags don't really work on Facebook, which is another reason why you shouldn't cross-post from other platforms. Sometimes you see hashtag-filled text, which is hard to read – it's just not worth it on Facebook.

- Timeliness is an algorithm consideration, so it's worth keeping an eye on your analytics and checking when your audience is active. Post when more people are online, and theoretically, more of them will see it – but it is also worth noting that many brands have also seen good results when they post in quieter times, as there are fewer updates in the stream vying for attention.



Basically, Facebook wants to keep people on its platform for as long as possible, and it works towards this by showing people more of the content that they're interested in.

Post what people want to see, and you'll be on the right track – but even more than that, post what people who buy your books want to see and you'll work towards establishing a stronger platform for promotion.

5. Audience Insights

Not everybody knows about [Facebook's Audience Insights](#), which is a shame, because Facebook can connect you with so much helpful info, if you know where to look.

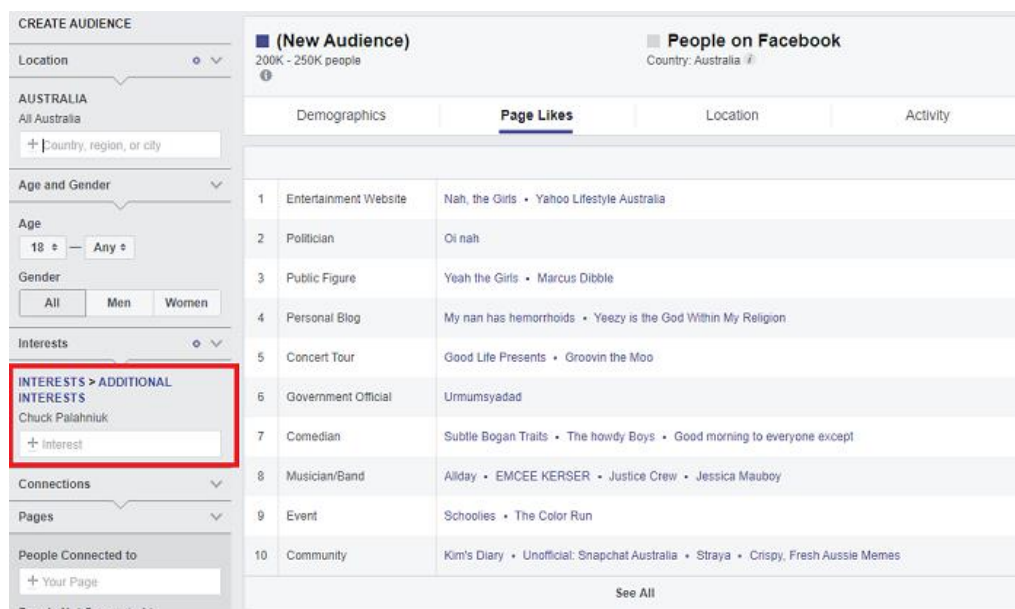
If you have a Facebook Page, and you go to [this link](#), you'll be able to access Audience Insights, which will show you who the fans of your Page are – where they live, how old they are, and other demographic insights.

That's helpful, but if you're just starting out, you're likely looking at an audience of your friends and family, not necessarily your target, book-buying audience.

But this is where it gets interesting – along with your own Facebook Page, you can also look up other interests on Facebook, including other authors, and along with demographic insights, it'll also show you what other things their fans are interested in.



So if I look up an author that I like, whose readers I think might also like my stuff, I can check out what interests them, giving me a better profile of my target book market.



As you can see here, I've created a new audience of fans of American author Chuck Palahniuk, limited to those within Australia (top left panel). Now I can see what other things Palahniuk fans like. Based on this, if I wanted to better connect with the same audience, I could look to partner with these Pages for promotion, like a giveaway tied into my latest book launch.

I could also look to align with these interests in my own posts, while still staying in my brand theme, or I could check out these Pages and see what they do that maximizes appeal to their audiences and learn from that.

In addition, I can also use these interests in my ad targeting approach - which, given Facebook's advanced targeting options, I'm probably going to look to use around launch time.

5. Facebook ads

I know. I know you don't want to spend a heap.

I get it – we're authors, and the majority of us are not raking in the cash from out fat royalty checks and movie deals.

I know you don't have a heap to spend on promotion, but given the advanced audience targeting options available on Facebook, and unmatched potential reach, Facebook ads can be a great option.

As noted in the previous point, you can target your ads to fans of authors whose work is similar to yours, or around common interests that you find among their fans.

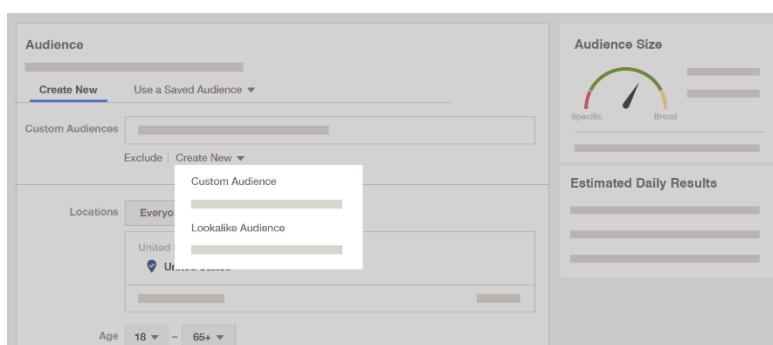
The screenshot displays the Facebook 'Promote Your Page' interface. On the left, the 'AUDIENCE' section is expanded, showing three options: 'People you choose through targeting', 'People in your local area', and 'Your Custom Audiences'. The 'ONE' option is selected and highlighted with a red box. Below this, the targeting criteria are listed: 'Location - Living in Australia', 'Age 23 - 55', 'Exclude Interests: Romance novels, Historical fiction or Spy fiction', and 'People Who Match Interests: Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, Lost (TV series) or Memento (film)'. The 'DURATION AND BUDGET' section is also visible, with options for 'Run this ad continuously' and 'Choose when this ad will end'. On the right, a 'Preview' section shows a desktop news feed view of the ad. The ad features a profile picture of Andrew Hutchinson, a sponsored post, and a book cover for 'ONE' by Andrew Hutchinson. The ad text includes: 'I'm the author of the novels One, Rohypnol, and various other works of fiction.' and several quotes: 'A stunning book.', 'Unravels like a film', 'A riveting, pulsating read', 'One of the most interesting voices in Australian literature', 'Impossible to put down', and 'Nothing quite like it'. The ad also shows a star rating and a 'Like Page' button.

As you can see in this example, for this (mock) campaign, I'm targeting an audience of people who are interested in movies and TV shows which I think are kind of similar to the themes of my novel ONE. You'll also note that I've also excluded people who are interested in book genres that are not related to what I write.

This is also where your fan email list will come in handy – using Facebook’s [Custom Audiences feature](#), you can upload a collection of email addresses and Facebook will be able to match them to their Facebook presence, so you can target them with your ads.

But given many of them are probably already fans of your author Page, that may not be the best use of this info. What else you can do with this is you can create what Facebook calls a [‘Lookalike Audience’](#).

Using the people in your Custom Audience upload, Facebook is able to analyse their user Facebook profiles, and identify common qualities of the people within it. Facebook can then create a new, lookalike audience of people who share the same traits, providing you with reach to a whole new, but similarly interested, group of people.



This can be a very effective way to expand your audience, connecting with likeminded folk and getting your name in front of more people who have a higher likelihood of also becoming fans.

When selecting your ad placements, Facebook will include Instagram and Messenger placements by default, which, depending on your ad presentation, is not always ideal, so ensure you review where your ads will appear on Facebook’s properties and how your ad will look. You can remove any placements you don’t like with the check boxes available.

Facebook advertising is not an exact science, and it may be worth running a couple of ad variations to see what works best. You can then stop the ones that don’t produce (after, say, a week) and re-allocate your budget to those that are gaining traction, in order to maximize your ad spend.

In terms of where you want to advertise, specifically, you can include a link to a page on your website, or your publishers’ – but most of the time, you’re looking to drive awareness, as opposed to getting clicks. This can make it more difficult to accurately measure your ad results, as you won’t know whether seeing your ad resulted in a subsequent book store visit. But with fewer bookshops, and fewer festivals and media opportunities, awareness is key.

And Facebook ads can be great for raising awareness.

6. Getting Page Fans

So how do you build your audience in order to maximize engagement?

Getting more people to Like your Page takes work, but here are a couple of options you could consider, depending on how hard you want to push your promotions.

- First, you're going to get your family and friends to Like your Page, which will give you a starting point. This is not always ideal, because your family and friends are likely not your ideal target, book-buying audience (which can skew your Page data), but you can prompt them to share with friends, which will give you a base to work from. And either way, they're going to Like your Page anyway. Best to try and use it to advantage
- If you have an email list, send out a link to your Facebook Page, or if you're in any writers' groups, clubs, organizations and they have an email newsletter, maybe query them to see if they might be able to include a link
- Share the link to your Facebook Page on your other social media profiles if you have them
- Make a list of Facebook book groups that might be interested in your book, then contact the admins offering to do a Q and A or similar event. You won't hear back from all of them, but it may be another avenue to boost promotion, particularly around launch date (note that around half of all Facebook users are active in at least one Facebook group)
- You could consider running a giveaway to help promote your book. There are [specific rules around Facebook giveaways](#), but you are allowed to ask people to Like your Page to enter a competition, which could be another way to boost your following.
- Blogging and guest-blogging are additional ways in which you can help get the word out, and make more people aware of your broader online presence.
- It's worth leaning on writer friends to ask them to Like or share your Facebook Page, particularly if they're established, as that will help get your name in front of more readers.
- Add social media buttons to your website, so people can easily find your related profiles.
- If you post a picture from an event, make sure you tag the host and any other authors in the image, which can lead to re-shares and more exposure.

That's the basics of an effective author presence on Facebook. There are, of course, other elements you could consider – like Facebook Stories – but as a jumping-off point, this outline should position you to help build an engaging, effective presence to help you maintain connection with more readers.

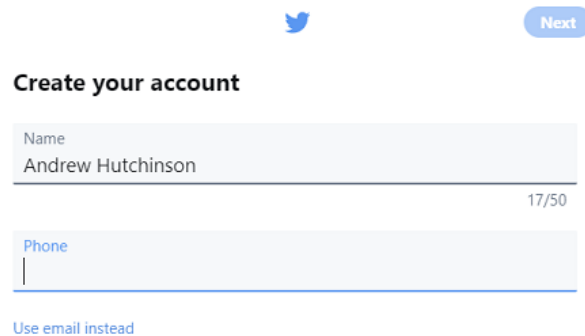
Twitter

Twitter is built for simplicity, with limited space in each message (280 characters) enabling rapid-fire, simple updates. But that also makes it a key platform for sharing the latest news and information, and for keeping up with the same.

Twitter Basics

Setting up a Twitter account is simple – there are no dedicated business accounts on Twitter, all regular users and major brands use the same process.

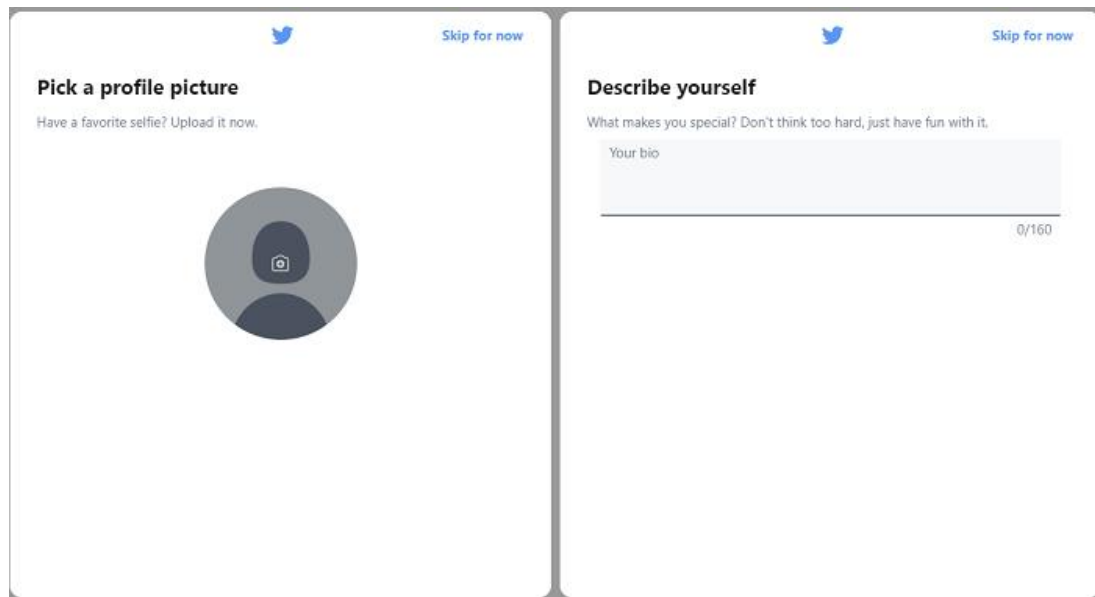
If you head to Twitter.com and tap on the 'Sign up' option, you'll first be asked to enter your name and phone number, which is used for verification purposes.



The screenshot shows the 'Create your account' form on Twitter. At the top, there is a Twitter bird icon on the left and a 'Next' button on the right. The form has two main input fields: 'Name' and 'Phone'. The 'Name' field contains the text 'Andrew Hutchinson' and has a character count of '17/50'. The 'Phone' field is empty. Below the 'Phone' field, there is a link that says 'Use email instead'.

You'll then get a confirmation message from Twitter, and your account will then be active.

Twitter will take you through the account set-up process step-by-step, where you can add a profile picture and a bio.



The screenshot shows two side-by-side panels of the Twitter account setup process. The left panel is titled 'Pick a profile picture' and has a subtext 'Have a favorite selfie? Upload it now.' It features a large circular placeholder for a profile picture with a camera icon in the center. The right panel is titled 'Describe yourself' and has a subtext 'What makes you special? Don't think too hard, just have fun with it.' It features a text input field for a bio, with the placeholder text 'Your bio' and a character count of '0/160'. Both panels have a 'Skip for now' link in the top right corner.

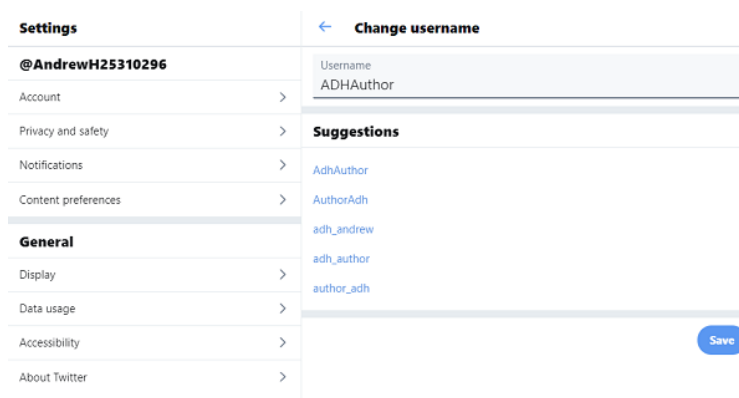
Worth noting that both hashtags and URLs that you enter in your Twitter bio will be active (i.e. clickable), though you do also have a dedicated space to enter in a website which also appears in the same bio section.

You can see here, in my bio, there's another Twitter handle in the description, along with my author website, then below that, there's another website link.



Once you've gone through the basic set-up process, you'll have an active Twitter profile, but you'll then need to refine it a little further to ensure it best represents you and your work.

First, you're going to want to change your Twitter @handle. Twitter will start you off with a generic one, but if you go to 'Settings' in the left hand menu, then select 'Account', you'll be able to update your username.



Most of the common names you might want are likely taken, but Twitter will give you suggestions based on what you enter in, helping you get to one you like.

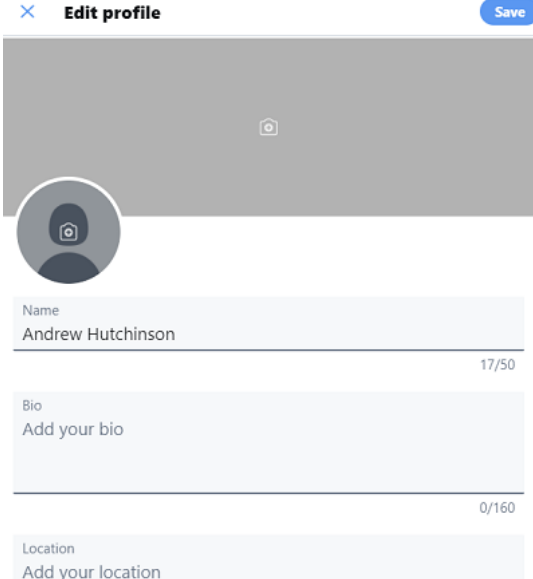
Your @handle is important, as it's what people will use to tag you in their tweets. And some people won't look you up – many times, I'll see tweets to @AndrewHutchinson which are intended for me, but that account is not active (username is too long), so they go nowhere.

The more memorable, and/or simple, you can make your @handle, the better.

From there, you'll need to add in a banner image and fill out the remaining details.

As you can see in my example on the previous page, I've used my banner to promote my latest book, which many authors do. This is prime real estate for promotion, so it makes sense to use it as best you can – just ensure that any image you add looks good on both desktop PCs and mobile devices (keep your phone handy as you update) and use PNG files, as they don't lose as much quality due to Twitter's image compression.

Fill in the details, add in some good visuals, and there you have it – your own Twitter author presence.



The screenshot shows the 'Edit profile' interface on Twitter. At the top, there is a blue 'Save' button and a close icon. Below this is a large grey banner area with a camera icon in the center. To the left of the banner is a circular profile picture placeholder with a camera icon. Below the banner and profile picture are three text input fields: 'Name' (containing 'Andrew Hutchinson' with a character count of 17/50), 'Bio' (containing 'Add your bio' with a character count of 0/160), and 'Location' (containing 'Add your location').

Next, you need to get involved, and build your tweet community.

Twitter Strategy

The first thing you need to understand about using Twitter for promotion is that it takes time, and dedicated effort.

Many authors bristle at this, because they'd rather be spending time and effort on their actual writing projects, but the truth is that if you don't focus on the right things, and maximize your potential for getting your message in front of the right people on Twitter, you won't see any real results.

I mean, you might get a couple of re-tweets from your friends and people you've connected with, but to generate any significant traction via tweet, you need to link into relevant communities, and build your own platform within them.

Essentially, you need to earn the right to pitch your latest work to a receptive Twitter audience.

Here's an overview of a few ways in which you can do this.

1. Build a Platform Around an Issue

Now, to clarify, building a 'platform' in this context relates to establishing a following of people who are interested in what you do – and ideally, what you write about. If you can establish yourself as an authority or leading voice within a certain niche, then people will seek more information on that topic from you, and in that way, you can utilize Twitter as a promotional tool because your audience is interested in the topic and what you have to say about it.

To do this, you need to get involved in the conversation. Let's say you write about climate change in your work – you would start by following the relevant leaders in that field and engaging with them, and within the replies on their tweets, wherever was relevant. That, over time, will get your name in front of other people who are interested in the same – so you're gaining exposure to a group of Twitter users who are interested in that topic.

The more you can get involved and build your profile – through tweet engagement, sharing your own posts, sharing others' relevant content, etc. – the more you'll become known in that niche, so when you do publish your book, which relates to climate change, the audience that you've established will now be more likely to engage with it.

Author [Clementine Ford](#) is a good example of this – Clementine writes about gender equality and feminism, and sees a lot of engagement on her tweets as a result, including her book announcements.

Clementine has built a Twitter audience of more than 132k followers, and while not every single one of her tweets is about her focus subjects, more than 90% of them are, and combined with her newspaper articles and media appearances discussing the same, Clementine has built an audience which knows what they'll get, and will therefore be a likely market for her books.



But this approach does get a little murky for fiction authors, whose body of work is likely not dedicated to a few key subject areas.

As an example, author [Alice Bishop](#) released a collection of short stories last year which examine the impacts of the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria. Bishop lived in one of the bushfire hit regions, so has first-hand insight on the destruction.



Alice hadn't established herself as an authority on bushfires beforehand (which, as a fiction author, wasn't her aim), but over time, she has been able to build more of an audience on Twitter based on bushfire coverage – sharing articles about the most recent fires, engaging with people from impacted communities via tweet, gaining a following as a someone who writes about fires and their aftermath.

Focusing on a subject has arguably helped Alice build a more engaged audience on Twitter, but that same audience likely won't be as beneficial if Alice's next book isn't related to the same topic.

In this sense, topicality can help in your promotion efforts, but it's also likely too confining for fiction authors, who switch topics significantly from one publication to the next. If you dedicate yourself to one key area, it will definitely bring promotional value on Twitter over time, through establishing yourself as an expert in that arena. But this may not be an effective approach for novelists.

Consequently, this is also a problem I see with modern publishing approach to the same, where they seek a topical angle on your work, as opposed to focusing on the story and writing itself. For one, it feels like, over time, literature is merging too much into activism, which can alienate a large audience subset (people are already inundated with politics in their social media feeds every day – the last thing they want is to be preached to in their recreational reading habits). For another, and as noted, it pigeonholes writers into certain topic streams.

But then again, in order to get press coverage, and maximize promotional value, a topical angle is often needed to pique the interest of relevant editors.

Regardless, if your writing regularly covers a specific focus area like this, this is one way in which you can use Twitter to establish yourself. And once you've built an audience of people engaged in the subject, they'll also likely be interested in your books.

2. Build a Platform within the Writing Community

But what if you don't write about a specific topic? Another approach you could take is to build a platform within the Twitter writing community, which can connect you to other people who are interested in writing – and by extension, readers who are interested in their work.

To clarify, this doesn't mean that you should connect to every writer you can and blindly re-tweet each others' latest book news. Doing this will likely see you end up talking amongst yourselves, and promoting your latest books to no one other than other writers, who are not your target audience. It can be great, and beneficial, to connect with other writers on Twitter for advice, support, etc. But in a promotional sense, it likely won't help you a lot.

This is where you need to differentiate your purpose for Twitter use, and consider the audience that you ultimately need to reach. In this context, building a platform within the writing community *for promotion* more relates to connecting with other authors, with a broader view to utilizing those connections in order to reach more potential readers – i.e. their audience of readers who are already following them.

But this takes a lot of time and effort – [Angela Meyer](#) is a good example of this.

Angela has spent literally decades building her profile within the literary sector, first starting as a book blogger, then as a publisher, before finally becoming an author herself. Through all of this, Angela has established connection with a heap of authors and publishing types, who themselves have their own followings of interested readers. When Angela does tweet about a book launch, many of the people who re-tweet it are established authors and publishing folk.

That gives Angela not only reach to writers, but importantly, reach to more readers – but again, Angela has built that platform through years of work, establishing a network on Twitter of people who are now willing to advocate on her behalf.

Angela does also share content around gender identification, which is an element explored in her work, so she also uses topicality to broaden her platform. But by establishing stronger ties within the literary community, Angela now stands a better chance of utilizing Twitter for promotion.



See also book podcasters like [Kate Mildenhall](#) and [Katherine Collette](#), who both see higher engagement on their tweets as a result of their established identities within the writing community, and subsequent connection to high profile authors who will be more likely to help them with re-shares and distribution on their announcements.

‘But isn’t that just authors sharing with each other, which you just said isn’t effective?’

Kind of, but in this way, you’re utilizing bigger name authors, those who already have established followings of willing readers.

Now, you’re not only getting exposure to other authors, but importantly, the book-buying public.

It’s also worth noting here that with Twitter working to show more users tweets that they may be interested in, even Likes can have the same effect as re-tweets. Twitter’s algorithm will display a selection of tweets liked by people you follow in you in your feed – so even if you can get a prominent person in your field to simply like one of your tweets, there’s a greater chance of gaining exposure to a reading audience.

3. Build a Platform Within Your Niche

Focusing on a single topic area can be restrictive, and building momentum for a podcast or similar in order to establish a place within the mainstream lit community takes time.

So what are your other options?

Establishing an audience within a specific niche, related to your work, is another way to maximize Twitter for promotion – though again, it doesn't come easy.

In this way, you could tweet about things that interest you in, say, the horror genre, in order to establish connection with like-minded users. You could share Hollywood news, posts about the horror writing process, engage with the community around the latest books and TV shows - and through this, ideally, you can build a profile among people who will eventually also be interested in your stuff.



Author [Maria Lewis](#) is a good example of this.

Through her tweets, Lewis shares her interests in film, literature and the arts more broadly, which largely relate to the themes of her own books. Really, Lewis uses a combination of all three of these Twitter approaches – her books touch on topical issues, she hosts a [podcast](#) (and has previously been a host on SBS TV), and she shares a consistent tweet stream of the things that she's interested in, further connecting her with like-minded Twitter users.

But again, this didn't happen overnight. Lewis has also worked for years to establish herself as a commentator, through her work as a journalist and presenter, and she's now earned an audience of like-minded fans who engage with her tweets.

But it is another approach to consider. If you write in a specific genre, you can use your tweets to connect with readers who are interested in the same.

And the more you can build your brand, tweet-by-tweet, the more you'll be able to connect with an audience who will be increasingly receptive of your own work.

4. Just Don't Worry About it

So, all of these approaches take a lot of work – but it is also worth noting that you don't *have* to use Twitter as a promotional vehicle.

Many successful authors don't even have a Twitter presence – or some, like American author [Jesse Ball](#), just share random images or cryptic messages for fans.



Many authors also just share what they like, regardless of themes or ideas, and they still do fine. While you can use Twitter as a means to promote your work, it's not essential. But if you're getting frustrated with the lack of traction for your book tweets, it's worth considering how those who do see significant engagement on their book-related updates have worked to establish their presence, as opposed to just tweeting randomly, then sharing a book announcement and hoping it takes off at viral pace.

In terms of other pointers, I would add these tips, based on examples I've seen:

- **Don't just re-tweet – ever** – Well, maybe not ever, but if you're looking to establish yourself in a specific area, you need to be including your opinion when you share things. Basic re-tweets likely won't help improve your tweet engagement (as your followers will be getting these in their feeds with no context) and won't further establish you as a person of interest in that field. It's better to share or [quote tweet](#) with your own thoughts included. A notable exception to this is if the tweet is about you or your work – if a high profile person says your book is great, then you re-tweet that for sure, as that does work to further underline your brand through external endorsement.
- **Follow-for-follow is outdated** – Yes, you want to have lots of followers, but followers who are just doing so in order to boost their own audience counts won't engage with your tweets – and they won't buy your books either. Many people built huge Twitter followings in the early days by just mass following as many people as possible, waiting to see who followed them back, then unfollowing whoever was left and repeating the same process again. You can still do this, but it's not a highly effective practice. An account with 50k followers, which is also following 45k users, doesn't look overly impressive.
- **Don't verge into unrelated trends** – Sure, tweeting a cute cat picture or an inspirational quote might inflate your tweet metrics, but will it help to connect you with the people who are actually going to buy your books? Posting a funny video clip might get more engagement – but if it's not actively working towards building your presence in your key area of interest, and linking you through to your target audience, it's probably not really helping. Sharing insights into your personal life is fine, but keep in mind your broader strategic focus – if indeed you are aiming to use Twitter for max promotional value.
- **Use hashtags** – But don't overdo it. One or two hashtags per tweet is fine, and will help you generate more reach, without looking messy and over the top. Hashtags will connect you to relevant audiences - but you need to use the tags that are relevant to your target readers. For this, look at other authors in your niche and see which tags they're using, check out tweets from writers' centres and libraries and see how they connect, or use a tool like [Hashtagify](#) to find other hashtags which are commonly used in relation to specific keywords or the tags that you know of. Random hashtags do nothing, but the right ones can help you get into relevant streams, and put your name in front of interested users. You can also look to start your own tag for your book title (for example, I might use #onenovel for my book 'One'), in order to help users connect around it and boost awareness through expanded discussion. But you can't make hashtags happen – if you're going this path, commit to adding your custom tag to every tweet you share related to the book. Hopefully, some others will use the same, and it'll catch on – but there's not really any way to make it so.

- **It's not the algorithm** – Some have suggested that it may be worth sharing some high-engagement memes and the like within your tweets, even if they are totally off-topic, in order to ingratiate yourself with Twitter's algorithm. That way, so the theory goes, when you share your subsequent promotional tweets, you'll get more reach, because Twitter's system will determine that your past tweets were popular. That's not really a relevant consideration on Twitter – on Facebook it is, to a degree, but Twitter's algorithm is more specifically aligned to each individual tweet, and any reach boost you might achieve is likely not worth the effort (worth noting, too, that Twitter is working to better align itself around topics, which will likely further lessen any such impact).

The bottom line is that there are ways to utilize Twitter to promote your work, but the pathway to true success is generally not easy, nor immediate.

If you're looking for a quick fix, a quick-hitting way to get the message out about your latest work, Twitter probably isn't the best option. Twitter is a brand-building platform, and as such, you need to take the time to build the right audience of those who will eventually be receptive to your promotional messaging.

