The Twitter Rules (20110412*)

Our goal is to provide a service that allows you to discover and receive content from sources that interest you as well as to share your content with others. We respect the ownership of the content that users share and each user is responsible for the content he or she provides. Because of these principles, we do not actively monitor user's content and will not censor user content, except in limited circumstances described below.

Content Boundaries and Use of Twitter

In order to provide the Twitter service and the ability to communicate and stay connected with others, there are some limitations on the type of content that can be published with Twitter. These limitations comply with legal requirements and make Twitter a better experience for all. We may need to change these rules from time to time and reserve the right to do so. Please check back here to see the latest.

- **Impersonation:** You may not impersonate others through the Twitter service in a manner that does or is intended to mislead, confuse, or deceive others
- **Trademark:** We reserve the right to reclaim user names on behalf of businesses or individuals that hold legal claim or trademark on those user names. Accounts using business names and/or logos to mislead others will be permanently suspended.
- **Privacy**: You may not publish or post other people's private and confidential information, such as credit card numbers, street address or Social Security/National Identity numbers, without their express authorization and permission.
- **Violence and Threats**: You may not publish or post direct, specific threats of violence against others.
- **Copyright:** We will respond to clear and complete notices of alleged copyright infringement. Our copyright procedures are set forth in the Terms of Service.
- **Unlawful Use**: You may not use our service for any unlawful purposes or for promotion of illegal activities. International users agree to comply with all local laws regarding online conduct and acceptable content.
- **Misuse of Twitter Badges**: You may not use a Verified Account badge or Promoted Products badge unless it is provided by Twitter. Accounts using these badges as part of profile pictures, background images, or in a way that falsely implies affiliation with Twitter will be suspended.

Spam and Abuse

Twitter strives to protect its users from spam and abuse. Technical abuse and user abuse is not tolerated on Twitter.com, and will result in permanent suspension. Any accounts engaging in the activities specified below are subject to permanent suspension.

- **Serial Accounts:** You may not create serial accounts for disruptive or abusive purposes, or with overlapping use cases. Mass account creation may result in suspension of all related accounts. Please note that any violation of the Twitter Rules is cause for permanent suspension of all accounts.
- **Username Squatting**: You may not engage in username squatting. Accounts that are inactive for more than 6 months may also be removed without further notice. Some of the factors that we take into account when determining what conduct is considered to be username squatting are:
    - the number of accounts created
    - creating accounts for the purpose of preventing others from using those account names
    - creating accounts for the purpose of selling those accounts
    - using feeds of third-party content to update and maintain accounts under the names of those third parties
- **Invitation spam:** You may not use Twitter.com's address book contact import to send repeat, mass invitations.
- **Selling user names:** Unless you have been specifically permitted to do so in a separate agreement with Twitter, you agree that you will not reproduce, duplicate, copy, sell, trade or resell the Services for any purpose, where "Services" is defined as follows: Your use of Twitter's products, services and web sites (referred to collectively as the "Services" in this document and excluding any services provided to you by Twitter under a separate written agreement) is subject to the terms of a legal agreement between you and Twitter.
- **Malware/Phishing**: You may not publish or link to malicious content intended to damage or disrupt another user's browser or computer or to compromise a user's privacy.

- **Spam:** You may not use the Twitter service for the purpose of spamming anyone. What constitutes "spamming" will evolve as we respond to new tricks and tactics by spammers. Some of the factors that we take into account when determining what conduct is considered to be spamming are:
  - If you have followed a large amount of users in a short amount of time;
  - If you have followed and unfollowed people in a short time period, particularly by automated means (aggressive follower churn);
  - If you repeatedly follow and unfollow people, whether to build followers or to garner more attention for your profile;
  - If you have a small number of followers compared to the amount of people you are following;
  - If your updates consist mainly of links, and not personal updates;
  - If you post misleading links;
  - If a large number of people are blocking you;
  - The number of spam complaints that have been filed against you;
  - If you post duplicate content over multiple accounts or multiple duplicate updates on one account;
  - If you post multiple unrelated updates to a topic using #;
  - If you post multiple unrelated updates to a trending or popular topic;
  - If you send large numbers of duplicate @replies or mentions;
  - If you send large numbers of unsolicited @replies or mentions in an attempt to spam a service or link;
  - If you add a large number of unrelated users to lists in an attempt to spam a service or link;
  - If you repeatedly post other users' Tweets as your own;
  - If you have attempted to "sell" followers, particularly through tactics considered aggressive following or follower churn;
  - Creating or purchasing accounts in order to gain followers;
  - Using or promoting third-party sites that claim to get you more followers (such as follower trains, sites promising "more followers fast," or any other site that offers to automatically add followers to your account);
  - If you create false or misleading Points of Interest;
  - If you create Points of Interest to namesquat or spam.
- **Pornography:** You may not use obscene or pornographic images in either your profile picture or user background

Your account may be suspended for Terms of Service violations if any of the above is true. Please see our help pages on Following Best Practices and Automation Rules and Best Practices for a more detailed discussion of how the Rules apply to those particular account behaviors. Accounts created to replace suspended accounts will be permanently suspended.

Accounts engaging in any of these behaviors may be investigated for abuse. Accounts under investigation may be removed from Search for quality. Twitter reserves the right to immediately terminate your account without further notice in the event that, in its judgment, you violate these Rules or the Terms of Service.

Following Rules and Best Practices (20110412*)

Following is a way to receive information, in the form of tweets, from a person, company, or organization. If an account seems interesting, you can follow that account and see their updates in your timeline. This page discusses some of the limits and best practices regarding following on Twitter.

What are the limits?

We don't limit the number of followers you can have. However, we do monitor how aggressively users follow other users. We try to make sure that none of our limits restrain reasonable usage, and will not affect most Twitter users.

We monitor all accounts for aggressive following and follow churn (repeatedly following and un-following large numbers of other users). You can read more about these below, but if you don't follow or un-follow hundreds of users in a single day, and you aren't using automated methods of following users, you should be fine. Please note that the only automated following behavior that Twitter allows is auto-follow-back (following a user after they have followed you). Automated un-following is also not permitted. Please review our Automation Rules and Best Practices for more information on automating your account.

What is aggressive following?

Following users is a way to see their updates in your timeline. If an account seems interesting, feel free to follow it! Many Twitter users receive email notifications when someone follows their account or check out the profiles of new followers to see if they share common interests. If some accounts are aggressively or indiscriminately following hundreds of accounts just to garner attention, it makes Twitter a less-nice place to hang out.

What is aggressive follow churn?

If you decide to follow someone and then change your mind later, that's fine! You can just visit the person's profile page and then un-follow them. Aggressive follow churn is when an account repeatedly follows and un-follows large numbers of users. This may be done to get lots of people to notice them, to circumvent a Twitter limit, or to change their follower-to-following ratio.

These behaviors negatively impact the Twitter experience for other users, are common spam tactics, and may lead to account suspension.

Additional limits if you are following 2000 or more people:
The rules about aggressive following and follow churn still apply. In addition, every user can follow 2000 people total. Once you've followed 2000 users, there are limits to the number of additional users you can follow: this limit is different for every user and is based on your ratio of followers to following. When you hit this limit, we'll tell you by showing an error message in your browser. You'll need to wait until you have more followers in order to follow more users—basically, you can't follow 10,000 people if only 100 people follow you. When you reach a daily or total limit and we show you an error message, you've hit a technical limit imposed to limit egregious behavior by spam accounts and to prevent strain on the site. These are just the technical limits for your account; in addition, you are prohibited from aggressive following behaviors. These behaviors may result in account suspension, regardless of your account's technical ratio.

Limits improve site performance by ensuring that when we send a person's message to all of their followers, the sending of that message is meaningful. Follow limits cannot be lifted by Twitter, and everyone is subject to them, including verified and developer accounts. Based on current behavior in the Twitter community, we've concluded that this is both fair and reasonable.

Why does Twitter monitor following behavior at all? Isn't this a social network?

Twitter facilitates social networking, but it's not a social networking website. In fact, Twitter works quite differently from social networks: when you accept friend requests on social networks, it usually means you appear in that person's network and they appear in yours. Following on Twitter is different, because instead of indicating a mutual relationship, following is a one-way action that means you want to receive information, in the form of tweets, from someone. Twitter allows people to opt-in to (or opt-out of) receiving a person's updates without requiring mutual following.

If you follow too many people, there's no way you can keep up with everyone's updates in your timeline. If you need to communicate with someone but don't need to see their updates everyday, you don't have to follow them. Send them an @reply when you need to; it doesn't require following and your update will appear in the person's replies tab, so they can reply back.

In addition, limits on Twitter alleviate some of the strain on the invisible part of Twitter, which prevents error pages and downtime on the visible part. For the sake of reliability, we've placed limits on actions like following, API requests per hour, and number of updates per day (see this page for more information on updating and API limits).

Finally, follower violations are one tactic that spammers often use to abuse Twitter, so monitoring for abuse is one way to reduce spam on Twitter.

Using Third Party Applications to "Get More Followers Fast!"

You may encounter websites or applications claiming they can help you get lots of followers quickly. These programs may ask for payment for followers, or ask you to follow a list of other users in order to participate. The Twitter Rules addresses the use of these programs by disallowing:

- Using or promoting third-party sites that claim to get you more followers (such as follower trains, sites promising 'more followers fast,' or any other site that offers to automatically add followers to your account).

When you give out your username and password to another site or application, you are giving control of your account to someone else. They may then post duplicated, spam, or malicious updates and links, send unwanted direct messages, aggressively follow, or violate other Twitter rules with your account. When these applications do add followers to your account, they are often abandoned or bot accounts that are not reading your updates. If a third-party application causes your account to violate the Twitter Rules, your account may be suspended.

Some third-party applications have been implicated in spam behavior, fraud, the selling of usernames and passwords, and phishing. Please do not give your username and password out to any third-party application that you have not thoroughly researched.

Revoke access for any third-party application that you don't recognize by visiting the Connections tab in Account Settings.

Following limits? But I'm whitelisted!

Some API administrators have whitelist status so their applications can function without hitting certain system limits. Whitelisting means that an application can have more API requests per hour; it does not increase the follow limits. All whitelisted accounts are still subject to follow limits.

So how am I supposed to get followers?

Remember, Twitter isn't a race to get the most followers. If you follow users that you're interested in, it's more likely that legitimate users will find you and read your updates. People follow other users on Twitter to read updates that are interesting to them. Aggressively following and un-following accounts is frustrating to other Twitter users, and degrades the Twitter experience for everyone.

[Automation Rules & Best Practices](#) (2010/01)

Submitted Nov 08, 2009 by **ginger**

We're constantly amazed by the applications and services that grow up around the Twitter platform. External developers have created tools and applications enabling an incredible array of uses; we've seen Twitter accounts that help people stay updated on their city's emergency services, connect to national health alerts, and catch up on the happenings of their local bridge.

Most users will not need to review this document; however, some people are keen on automation. Unfortunately, spammers have also taken advantage of automation, to the frustration of genuine users. This page has information on what account automations are allowed and which ones could get your account filtered from search or even suspended or terminated.

How Automation Works

In order for an outside party to post to your account or perform other account actions (like following), you have to grant them access by either establishing a Twitter Connection or by giving them your username and password. Please see our help page on Connecting to Third-Party Applications for information on the difference, and how to revoke access for each method.

Ultimately, you are responsible for the updates to your timeline and the actions of your account, which means you shouldn't give control of your account to a third-party unless you've thoroughly investigated the application. If you decide to automate any account actions, you will need to manage your automations carefully to avoid violating the Twitter Rules. Violating these rules may result in account suspension or termination, or your account being filtered from search, regardless of whether you performed the violation manually, or allowed an automation to do so!

Automating your Tweets

Automating Your Tweets Based on an Action You've Completed:

Maybe you want to post to your Twitter timeline whenever you upload a video to YouTube, create a new photo album, or beat a high score in your favorite game? Sounds great! It's generally fine to update your Twitter account

when you complete a particular action. Just be careful—if you post similar updates too frequently, your followers might get a little bored!

Automating Your Tweets by Streaming External Information:

If you want to automate your account with a feed from your personal blog or updates from your RSS feed, please consider the following:

- **Feeds of your own blog:** It's generally fine to automate your account with updates of your own content; just be sure to review the Twitter Rules before setting up your automation.
- **Feeds that go through redirects or ad pages:** If you're posting automated links that redirect through landing or ad pages before the final content, your account may be suspended for posting misleading links, a violation of the Twitter Rules.
- **Feeds for community benefit:** We welcome feeds that are used for community benefit or provide non-commercial information to a niche group of users, such as local weather feeds or transit information.

Automatically Tweeting to Trending Topics:

Trending topics are the most tweeted-about topics on Twitter. Posting to current trending topics in an automated fashion can degrade the experience for other users, and may result in your account being automatically filtered from search. If this happens, your followers will still see your tweets but you won't show in search results. Automating your tweets to include references to **unrelated** trending topics will result in account suspension.

Mass-creating Automated Accounts:

There are legitimate reasons why users may have multiple accounts. Serial account creation without prior approval, however, is not allowed. Please file a support ticket if you would like permission for creating a series of accounts. Include the list of accounts and your planned use of each account; accounts with overlapping use cases and names are generally not approved.

We have allowed multiple, automated accounts for community benefit. For example, Twitter users can now find out when the Hubble passes overhead, whether they're in San Francisco or Hong Kong. If the content is available elsewhere on Twitter, however, and does not clearly benefit a community or provide unique information to a niche group of users, these accounts may not be allowed.

Automated Advertising Updates:

We are continuing to consider the issue of advertising on the Twitter platform. We're committed to encouraging and supporting individuals and businesses who want to discuss and promote the products they care about. At the same time, we've also seen an increase in the number of fully-automated, spam accounts promoting affiliate offers. These accounts use automated following, automated @replying, and serial account creation to spam other users with mass-created advertising. These behaviors are all prohibited by the Twitter Rules.

The guidelines in this section are meant to both reduce automated spam on Twitter, and provide guidance for users interested in including advertising for others in their timeline.

Automated or mass-created affiliate advertising is not permitted on Twitter. Updates that are posted automatically to your account through a tool or third-party application, for which you are compensated (whether on a "per-click," "per-sale," "per-tweet," or other basis), are prohibited.

We're still thinking about the full spectrum of advertising on Twitter; in the meantime, other forms of advertising and promotion are allowed, but subject to the rules in this document. The following forms of advertising are not prohibited:

- Promoting your own business or website.
- Tweeting unpaid consumer recommendations.
- Tweeting sponsored or compensated links and updates that you have manually posted or approved.

Your tweets may be sponsored by a third-party if you manually post or approve each sponsored tweet before it is posted. These updates may not be automated or scheduled in advance. The following rules also apply:

1. All sponsored or paid updates must be manually approved. You should either manually post these to your account, or individually approve the tweets to be posted to your account.
2. You shouldn't repeatedly post the same ad updates.
3. If you're using a third-party tool or application to approve and post your tweets, it must be an application **with Twitter OAuth approval**. Please see the FAQ below for more information.
4. You should disclose when you post a compensated or sponsored update.

Users combining advertising with other automations should be particularly careful to review the Twitter Rules and Follow Rules and Best Practices. Account suspensions may be appealed by filing a support ticket. Finally, please do not attempt to circumvent our guidelines on automated advertising by creating lots of bot accounts that promote similar or duplicate websites (or websites with scraped content); these accounts may be permanently suspended or terminated.

Automating other Account Actions

When you're automating account behaviors like @replies, DMs, and retweets, we recommend you follow a general guideline: be nice to other Twitter users. In general, we take a skeptical view of disingenuous social action. If your actions are annoying a bunch of Twitter users, you probably will want to rethink or adjust your automation. Here are some more specific guidelines:

Automated @Replies:

The @reply function is intended to make communication between users easier, and automating this process to put unsolicited messages into lots of users' reply tabs is considered an abuse of feature. If you are automatically sending @reply messages to a bunch of users, the recipients must request or approve this action in advance. For example, sending automated @replies based on keyword searches is not permitted.

Users should also have an easy way to opt-out of your service (in addition to the requirement that all users must opt-in before receiving the messages). We review blocks and reports of spam, so you'll need to provide a clear way for users to stop your messages.

Automated Retweeting of Other Users:

Retweeting someone means you think your followers should see their tweet. When you're retweeting in an automated fashion, and especially based on an automated search or keyword, this becomes less true.

We discourage the automatic retweeting of other users based on a particular keyword and may suspend or terminate accounts that engage in this behavior, particularly if they are being frequently blocked and reported as spam by the users they are retweeting. If you are rewteeting users just so they will see your update in their replies folder and look at your account, this is akin to @reply spam and your account may be suspended or terminated.

Automated Following and Un-Following:

Twitter users often review the profiles and recent tweets of their new followers. Being followed in a bulk, automated fashion can make this process bothersome and makes Twitter a less fun place to hang out.

The only auto-following behavior Twitter allows is auto-follow-back (following a user after they have followed you). Automated un-following is also not permitted. If you find yourself frequently needing to un-follow large numbers of users, you might consider reviewing your criteria for following them. Please review our Follow Rules and Best Practices for a detailed discussion of following recommendations.

Also note that in the general Twitter Rules that "get followers fast" applications and services are not allowed. Do not surrender your username and password to them.

Automating Your DMs (Direct Messages):

Including an automated "thanks for following" message to your new followers might be annoying to some users. We do not recommend, but generally do not regulate, this behavior; if you receive a DM you don't like, you can un-follow that user and they will no longer be able to send you messages.

Automation that Causes Your Account to Violate the Twitter Rules:

If your account automation is causing your account to violate the Twitter Rules (by retweeting spam updates, repeatedly posting duplicate links, etc.), your account may be suspended or terminated. You are responsible for the updates on your account, so please do not add automations unless you are confident you will be able to manage your account within the rules.

Other Questions (FAQ)

What is an application with Twitter OAuth approval?

As discussed above, you may post manually-approved, compensated tweets through a third-party application with Twitter OAuth approval. If an application has OAuth approval, the following will be true

1. You allow the application access by approving their connection, not by giving out your username and password.
2. Once approved, you'll be able to see and revoke the connection from your connections tab.

When tweets come from a third-party application, the name of the source is included to the right of the time-stamp, like this: