

# X, formerly Twitter, rolls out US\$1 annual fee for new users in New Zealand and the Philippines

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Author: Josh Taylor

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X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, has begun rolling out a US\$1 annual charge to new users in New Zealand and the Philippines in a move the service owned by Elon Musk says is aimed at combating bots. Fortune first reported the subscription plan, which costs US\$1 a year for access to key functions including tweeting, replying, retweeting and liking. After Fortune's report, X revealed the details. "As of October 17th, 2023 we've started testing 'Not A Bot', a new subscription method for new users in two countries," the company said in a post. "This new test was developed to bolster our already significant efforts to reduce spam, manipulation of our platform and bot activity. "This will evaluate a potentially powerful measure to help us combat bots and spammers on X, while balancing platform accessibility with the small fee amount. Within this test, existing users are not affected." New accounts created in New Zealand and the Philippines will first be required to verify their phone number, and then pay the US\$1 annual fee to be able to post, like, reply, repost, quote posts and bookmark. "New users who opt out of subscribing will only be able to take 'read only' actions, such as: read posts, watch videos, and follow accounts," X said in the post. At the time of reporting X said the price translated to approximately NZ\$1.43 and 42.51 Philippine pesos. "This new program aims to defend against bots and spammers who attempt to manipulate the platform and disrupt the experience of other X users. We look forward to sharing more about the results soon," the post said. The terms and conditions say the new charge is a beta program, and users who sign up must agree to a recurring subscription payment. Musk first flagged the potential to charge all users last month in conversation with Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, but the current plan is restricted to new users. The logic, he said, was that bots cost "a fraction of a penny" to set up, and raising the cost of an account to "a few dollars or something" could put off operators of the software. "Plus, every time a bot creator wanted to make another bot, they would need another new payment method," he said. Since Musk implemented the X premium blue tick product, which costs \$11 a month in the US for iPhones, £11 in the UK and A\$19, the product has not prevented scammers using X premium accounts to target users on the platform. The move to charge new users comes as Musk sees alternative avenues for revenue to advertising, and pushes for X to become an "everything" app – including payment services. Musk has said an advertiser boycott since his takeover and concern about its management of inappropriate or hateful content has caused ad revenue to decline by 60%. • This article was amended on 25 October to make it clear that the conversion rates were what had been given on X.