

Twitter for Business: Everything You Need to Know

If you've got a business, it's likely you've got a Twitter account, too. If not, you're missing out on an opportunity to market to more than 284 million active users around the world — for free. That's the power of social media.

Twitter may seem like a breeze, but if you really want to take your social marketing to the next level, you need to know the ins and outs of every network you're on. And using Twitter requires a lot more effort than just sharing a link and throwing in a hashtag or two.

Want to be a tactful tweeter? Here's everything you need to know about the social networking platform.

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a social networking platform through which users can share short messages (under 140 characters each) also known as “tweets” with the rest of the Internet. The platform, which was created and launched in 2006 by founders Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass, is Web-based and has a mobile app in addition to its own native platform, Tweetdeck, which is available on the Web and on mobile devices as well.

Twitter now has over 500 million users worldwide, and over 284 million monthly active users as of September 2014, according to the company's third-quarter financial report. Twitter is one of the top 10 websites in the United States and is currently ranked no. 8 globally, according to Internet analytics company Alexa.

How does it work?

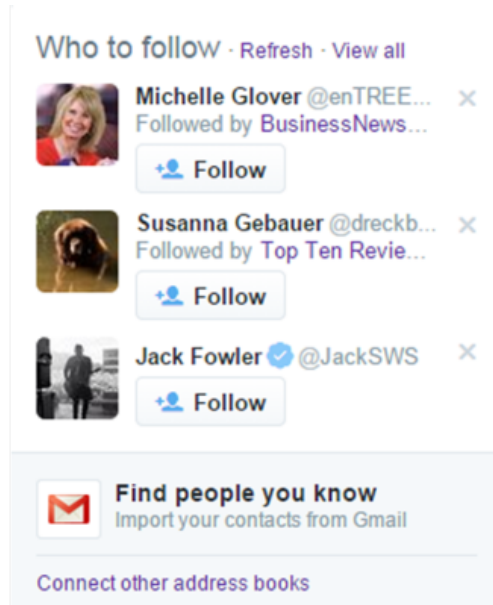
To use Twitter, first you have to sign up for a profile. While unregistered users can visit your profile (so long as it's public), only registered users can share tweets and interact with other users. To sign up, you need to fill in your name and email address, create a password, and choose a username. Usernames, or @handles, are alphanumeric (meaning they can include letters and numbers) and case sensitive. They can also include underscores. You can change your username

at any time.

When you sign in to your Twitter account, you're taken to your home page. Twitter uses a dashboard-type interface, like Facebook and Tumblr. Across the top of the page is your navigation bar, where you can access your home page, notifications and messages, and browse the Discover tab. On the right-hand side is a search bar, along with your user icon (clicking this will take you to your account and profile settings) and a Compose Tweet button.

Under the navigation bar, on the left-hand side, is a box that displays your profile's cover photo, your user icon, name and @handle, along with the number of tweets you've shared, the number of users you follow and the number of followers you have. Below that is the trends box, which shows you the top 10 trending topics and hashtags on Twitter at that moment.

On the right-hand side, there is another box entitled Who to Follow that displays suggested Twitter users and gives you the option to import your contacts from Gmail or connect to other address books. (Alternately, depending on the size of your screen and your screen resolution, this box could be on the left-hand side below the trending topics box.)



At the center of the dashboard is your Twitter feed. At the top of the feed is a box in which you can compose a tweet. The rest of your Twitter feed contains tweets from users you follow along with the occasional ad. The feed features infinite scrolling and is updated in real time as users share posts. From there, you can retweet, favorite and reply to others' tweets.

Customizing your Twitter profile

Once you've signed up for Twitter, you'll need to set up and customize your profile. Twitter doesn't give users a lot of customization options like its fellow social media platform Tumblr, but it does allow for a little bit of personalization.

First, you need to upload a user icon. Whether this is a personal photo or a logo is up to you, but the one thing you don't want to do is leave it blank. The default Twitter user icon is an egg on a single-color background. Leaving it as such not only shows that you don't know how to use the platform, it also makes you look lazy and careless.



If you already have a Twitter account and the egg is still your profile picture, it's

time to hatch and upgrade to a high-quality image (ideally one that is 400 pixels by 400 pixels and 2MB maximum) that represents who you and your business really are.

You can also add a header photo, not unlike cover photos on Facebook. This can be anything you feel properly represents you or your brand, but it should, like your user icon, be a high quality image. This is a great place to put a custom banner for your business. Twitter header photos should be 1500 pixels wide by 500 pixels high, and a maximum of 5MB.

Your Twitter page's layout can't be changed, but for a little added visual customization, you can choose a theme color. The theme color you select will appear as an accent color on your profile, mostly visible in links and when you hover over the navigation bar. You'll also be able to see this theme color from your home page, and not just on your profile.

And when it comes to your profile information, you can share a little blurb about yourself or your business. But since this is Twitter, you're forced to keep things short and sweet. You do get a little more leeway, though — your bio is limited to 160 characters, 20 characters more than the tweet limit. You can also list the city you're located in and include a link to your website.

Verified accounts on Twitter

Have you ever seen an account with a little blue and white checkmark next to the name? That badge shows that the account is verified by Twitter. This means that the social network considers the user to be a key brand or individual. In the case of celebrities like Taylor Swift, verification is a way to differentiate between fake accounts impersonating the user and the authentic account actually run by that user (and/or their social media team).



"Twitter verifies accounts on an ongoing basis to make it easier for users to find who they're looking for. We concentrate on highly sought users in music, acting, fashion, government, politics, religion, journalism, media, sports, business and other key interest areas," the company wrote on its website.

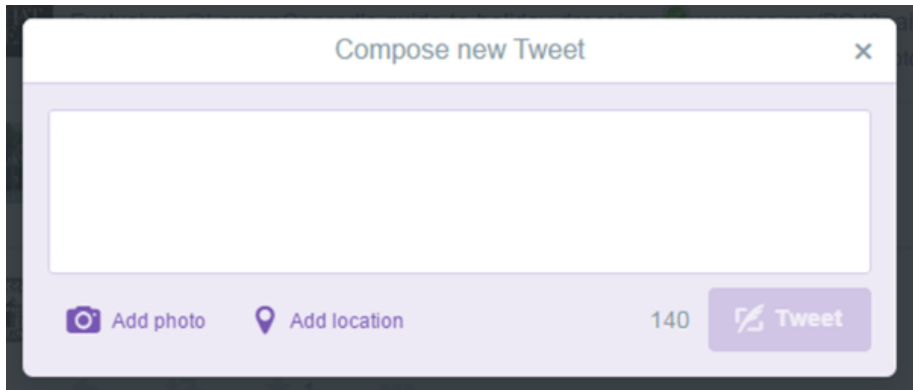
According to Twitter, the requirements for verification are constantly being updated, but the website doesn't take things like follower count or tweet count into consideration. However, it sounds easier than it really is, and you can't request to be verified — if Twitter thinks you meet the requirements, they'll find you and verify you eventually.

Verified accounts have access to special features, like filters in their notifications page, access to account analytics that include data about their followers and engagement with their tweets, and more.

It's also important to note that verified Twitter users can lose their verified status if they change their @handle or protect their tweets. In these instances, Twitter will automatically review the user's account again to make sure it's still eligible for verification. Verified users can also lose their status if they violate the Twitter rules or terms of service.

The anatomy of a tweet

Posting on Twitter is fairly straightforward. It's mostly text-based, but you have a strict 140-character limit, so your messages have to be short and to the point. But what can a tweet contain other than text?



- **Links:** Sharing links to your content or content from other websites that is relevant to your professional or personal brand is a great way to make your Twitter feed more engaging. To save more room for text, you can use a link-shortening service like Bit.ly when adding links to your tweets.
- **Images:** Twitter also allows you to share images in your tweets. Simply upload the photo or image you want to share in the Compose Tweet box. As with adding links, adding photos will take away from your available character count, so plan accordingly when you share images. Now, you can also upload multiple images to share photo sets, as opposed to sharing one photo at a time.
- **GIFs:** Not familiar with GIFs? GIF stands for “graphic interchange format” and is a type of image file-format that compresses digital video images, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. Essentially, GIFs are moving images taken from videos, and they’re all over the Internet. Recently, Twitter was updated to allow users to upload GIFs in their tweets, and it’s a great way to incorporate meme marketing in your Twitter strategy.

- **Videos:** You can also share Vine videos and YouTube videos to Twitter, simply by sharing links. As with adding links or photos (or GIFs) to your tweets, adding a video takes up some of the character count available to you.

With such a range of multimedia options available to Twitter users, the 140 character limit isn't so limiting at all.

Interacting with others on Twitter

There are several ways to interact with other Twitter users, both publically and privately.

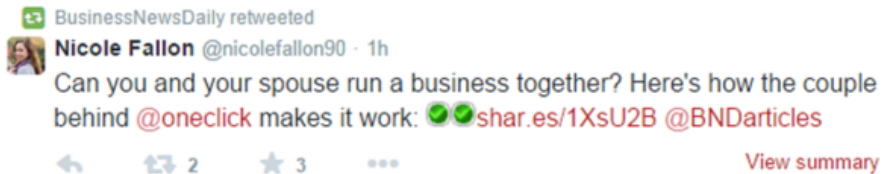
- **@mentions:** The easiest way to reach out to a fellow Twitter user is by tagging that user's @handle in your tweet. This will notify the other person, while other users who see the tweet can click on the @handle to see the person you're talking about.



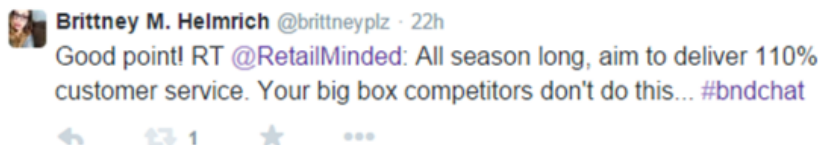
Note: If you want to start your tweet with the other user's @handle, you need to place a period before the @ symbol if you want it to show up on your feed. But if you don't care if other users see it, this is not necessary.

- **Favorites:** If you like a particular tweet but don't want or need to respond to it, you can favorite it by clicking the star button under the tweet. Your favorites are stored in a list on your Twitter page that is visible to you and anyone who visits your profile.
- **Retweets:** Retweeting allows you to share what other Twitter users post so that your followers can see those posts as well. There are two methods of

retweeting: You can click the retweet button under the original tweet, which will share the tweet in its original form on your feed, or you can quote the original tweet (also known as a manual retweet). When you retweet, it'll show up on your feed with the other user's profile picture and @handle. Above that, visitors to your page will see a note that says "[Name] retweeted".



To quote a tweet or manually retweet, simply highlight, copy and paste the tweet into the compose tweet box, and write "RT" and the user's @handle before the tweet. You can also put quotes around the tweet, though some users do not. Quoting a tweet instead of directly retweeting it allows users to add their own thoughts to it or share it with other users by tagging their @handle in it.



- **Direct messages:** To privately interact with other Twitter users, the social network allows you to direct-message people (usually referred to as DM on Twitter). Direct messaging is a little trickier; in most cases, the two users need to be following one another in order for one to direct message the other.

The exception to this rule is when a user is verified. Verified users can choose to let any of their followers send them DMs, whether or not the verified user follows the individual back. This is especially useful for brands, as it gives Twitter users another way to contact businesses if they have customer service issues or want to provide other feedback.

Twitter hashtags



You've likely heard a lot about hashtags by now, but just in case you're wondering what a hashtag is, the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as "a word or phrase preceded by the symbol # that classifies or categorizes the accompanying text (such as a tweet)," and its first known use was in 2008.

Hashtags are searchable on Twitter and therefore are a great way to make the content you share on the platform visible to users beyond your own followers. There are many highly popular hashtags that generally all active Twitter users are familiar with, like #FollowFriday or #FF, which encourages your followers to reach out to other users you admire or work with, and #ThrowbackThursday or #TBT, with which many users post vintage or childhood photos and memories. You can also create your own hashtags to draw attention to your brand or to events you may be throwing.

Many Twitter users add their hashtags at the ends of their tweets, but you can add hashtags anywhere you want in the text. Just make sure the hashtags you use are relevant — for example, if you were tweeting about starting a business and it happened to be a Friday, you might use the hashtag #entrepreneurship, but using the #FF hashtag would be inappropriate.



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oak.ctx.ly/r/22dco



  1  2 

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When you're using hashtags on Twitter, however, it can be tempting to add as many as possible to increase your reach. This doesn't work — in fact, the more hashtags you use, the less likely people are to interact with your content because they'll find your posts annoying. Twitter suggests limiting your hashtag use to two or fewer per tweet.

Trending topics on Twitter

Trending topics are any topics that Twitter users are talking about at a very high rate. Often, these trending topics are hashtags, but they can also be words or phrases related to the subject. As previously mentioned, you can see the current trending topics on your Twitter home page in the trends box on the left-hand side.

United States Trends · [Change](#)

#FloBron

 Promoted by Progressive

#MTVStars

#Gruber

#PowerTripToLA

#RejectedSNLCharacters

Charles Manson

#WGRZsnow

NFLPA

Adrian Peterson

Starter Pack

Twitter users can customize the trends box to show trending topics in different locations. For example, if you were in New York, you could set it to only show you what's trending in New York. You could also set it to show you trending topics in the United States overall, or around the world.

Topics become trending for a few reasons. Most commonly, trending topics result from breaking news or commonly talked about topics in the media. For example, if the results of presidential election were announced, you might see the candidates' names as trending topics. These topics can also come about when large groups of Twitter users work together to get a certain hashtag or phrase trending. This is usually the work of celebrity-obsessed fans, so it's not uncommon to see things about One Direction, Taylor Swift or Lady Gaga in the trending section.

When you click on a trending topic, it'll take you to a search page where you can view what people are saying about the topic, along with photos and related users. At the top of the page, you can select to view all of the tweets being shared, or just the top tweets — the ones getting the most interactions.

For brands, latching on to trending topics is a good way to get noticed — just

make sure you do it the right way. Only use trending topics in your tweets if those topics are relevant to your brand, and make sure you use them appropriately. If you're not sure why a certain topic is trending, do some research to ensure that you don't do something to offend your audience, like making light of a serious situation or saying something politically incorrect.

Twitter lists

Twitter offers its users the ability to make lists of other users they find interesting. This gives users another way of tracking what people post, except with lists, you don't have to be following the users you include to see their posts regularly.

Lists are handy if you want to better organize your following list. For example, you might make a list of celebrities and other users that you admire and label it "Influential People," or if you had an interest in something like photography or writing and want to track users in your area who tweet about those things, you could make lists of "NYC Writers" or "NYC Photographers" to do so.

Creating lists is simple. Just click your user icon in the top navigation bar so that the drop down menu appears and click Lists. From there, you can see two tabs: lists you're a member of (i.e., lists you've been added to) and lists you're subscribed to (the lists you've created). You'll see a Create List button below the Subscribed To and Member Of links.

TWEETS 4,911 FOLLOWING 342 FOLLOWERS 516 FAVORITES 3,329 LISTS 1

Subscribed to Member of

Top Writers by Ankit Thakor

World's Top Content Writers & Marketing Expert

65 Members



Foodiechats NYC by #Foodiechats

108 Members



Leaders to Follow by Michael Sim

2198 Members



When you create a list, just type in the name you want to give the list and a short description, and then choose whether you want the list to be publicly visible or private (visible only to you). If you make your lists public, the users you add to it will be notified. Once you're done, simply click Save List. After the list has been created, you can add users to it by clicking the gear button next to the follow button on their page, selecting "Add or remove from list" and then selecting the list you'd like to add them to.

Live tweeting

Live tweeting is another way to get topics trending on Twitter. Essentially, live tweeting is when a user tweets his or her reactions to a live event as it is happening. When brands throw events and want their attendees to live tweet while they're there, the brand will often create its own individual hashtag to use and share with the invite list so that others can follow around.

Live tweeting most commonly occurs with TV shows and televised events, however. If you've ever been watching a TV show and seen a hashtagged phrase overlaid on the bottom of the screen, it's because the network is encouraging its

viewers to tweet about the show as they watch. The same goes for major televised events like the Academy Awards. It's not uncommon during events such as these to see the trends box filled with related topics — for example, in the case of the Oscars, it wouldn't be surprising to see the official awards show hashtag along with the names of celebrities and films that win major awards.

Twitter chats

Another way to engage followers or get a topic trending is by hosting a Twitter chat. Twitter chats are fairly straightforward, but they do require a decent and active follower base to be successful.

So what is a Twitter chat? It's when several Twitter users get together (online, of course) to discuss a specific topic. To do so, they create a hashtag — for example, Business News Daily hosts a monthly Twitter chat with the hashtag #BNDchat — which participants incorporate into each of their related tweets.

Usually, one Twitter user will host a Twitter chat at a specific time and prepare specific questions and discussion points. The host will tweet out the questions, often with "Q1" or "Q2" (numbers vary depending on how many questions you're asking) preceding the questions, and other participants will respond with "A1" or "A2" and their thoughts.

Twitter chats usually last about an hour. They are a great way to show how active you are on social media and to get your followers (and their followers) engaged and asking questions or sharing their advice.

Advertising on Twitter

Using Twitter is free, but if you'd like to pay to promote your account on the platform, there are plenty of advertising options at your disposal.

- **Promoted Tweets:** These ads are just like regular tweets, and they appear in a user's Twitter feed along with posts from people the user follows. Promoted Tweets are a way for advertisers to increase engagement and expand their reach to a wider group of users beyond their follower base. These tweets are labeled "promoted" across the bottom of the ad, above the reply, retweet and favorite buttons.



Domino's Pizza @dominos · Nov 10

\$5.99 for one pizza, \$5.99 for the other. We're not playing favorites, but you can.



Order Domino's Online!

order.dominos.com

Shop now

Promoted by Domino's Pizza



32



53



Expand

Brands or their partners can also choose to pin promoted tweets to their profiles' timelines; the pinned tweet shows up at the top of the brand's feed when others visit the page. Additionally, Promoted Tweets are visible in search results, on official desktop and mobile Twitter clients, and through some third-party clients.

You can read more details about Promoted Tweets on Twitter.

- **Promoted Accounts:** Promoted Accounts are exactly what they sound like — they're designed to help brands become more discoverable and grow their follower counts. These ads are displayed in multiple locations on Twitter, including the Who to Follow box on the home page, your home page's Twitter feed and search results.

Promoted Accounts ads are designed to target Twitter users who have interests relevant to the advertiser's brand, so that brands can gain followers who are more likely to interact with their content. All of the ads are labeled as "Promoted" just like Promoted Tweets are, so users can distinguish them from other content on their feeds.

To learn more about Promoted Accounts, go [here](#).

- **Promoted Trends:** Promoted Trends appear at the top of the trending topics list in the trends box on Twitter and, like other Twitter ads, are clearly labeled as “Promoted.” These ads look exactly like other trending topics, and users can interact with them in the same ways.

While Promoted Tweets and Promoted Accounts target specific users, Promoted Trends are visible to all users when the trends are being promoted. They’re also visible on Twitter’s mobile apps and on Tweetdeck. If you’re looking to get people talking about your business using a specific hashtag, Promoted Trends are a good way to do so.

For more-detailed information on Promoted Trends, head to Twitter.

TweetDeck vs. Hootsuite

With Twitter, you’re not limited to using the Web platform or the mobile app on your devices. There are also a number of third-party clients and desktop apps that you can use to manage your tweets. The most popular ones are TweetDeck, Twitter’s own native client, and Hootsuite, a separate third-party client. So what are the differences between the two?

- **TweetDeck:** TweetDeck is completely free to use and has a sleek user interface with customizable columns that you can organize to show you things like your lists, notifications and your own feed. You can also track hashtags in their own separate columns, schedule tweets in advance (something you can’t do on the Twitter website or mobile apps) and add multiple Twitter accounts to manage several users at once. TweetDeck is browser-based (as in, you access it via the Web), but it also has a downloadable version for both PC and Mac computers.
- **Hootsuite:** Hootsuite operates pretty similarly to TweetDeck and has a similar interface. However, it is arguably not as sleek or simple as TweetDeck’s layout, as Hootsuite uses tabs for each social media profile you connect to it, while Tweetdeck displays everything all in one scrolling window. Hootsuite offers a free version, as well as a pro version for \$9.99 per month (with a free, 30-day trial). Hootsuite also allows users to schedule tweets in a similar manner to Tweetdeck; however, this client can connect to

other social networks, like Facebook and LinkedIn, while TweetDeck is solely for Twitter. Like TweetDeck, Hootsuite is browser-based, but it does not currently have a desktop version available for PCs or Macs.

Both of these clients have mobile apps for use on your smartphone or tablet, and allow you to add multiple user accounts at once.

Given the similarities, choosing between Hootsuite and TweetDeck is really a matter of personal preference, but you can go to their websites to compare their features more in depth.

Twitter tips and tricks

- **Don't buy followers!** There are services that allow you to purchase followers to beef up your follower count. While it may seem tempting to make it look like you have more followers than you really do, it's not worth it. The followers you get won't be real, and they likely won't interact with your brand. And when you have 10,000 followers, but only 2 people like your tweets, it's obvious to everyone where you really got your followers.
- **Go mobile.** The Twitter mobile apps are incredibly well-integrated with the Web platform, so the transition from tweeting on your computer to tweeting from your smartphone or tablet is almost seamless. And if you don't have a smartphone, don't worry — you can also tweet via SMS text messaging. The process is simple, and you can find step-by-step instructions [here](#).
- **Add a Twitter widget to your website.** Show everyone who visits your website that you're active on social media by creating and embedding a Twitter widget on your page. To create a Twitter widget, simply go to <https://twitter.com/settings/widgets> and click Create New. This will take you to a page where you can customize what kinds of things you want visible in your widget. You can make a widget out of your own timeline of tweets, the tweets you favorite or lists you've created. You can even do a search for a specific hashtag. You can then adjust the size, link color and theme of your widget. Once you're happy with your new Twitter widget, simply click the Create Widget button and you'll be redirected to a new page that contains the HTML code necessary for embedding the widget on your website. Make sure you place it somewhere everyone can see it!

- **Embed tweets on your blog.** Widgets aren't the only things you can embed on your website — you can embed specific tweets, too. If your brand's website has an active blog, it could be fun to showcase any fun tweets you shared or tweets from your loyal followers. This is a great way to incorporate your social media accounts on your website to make them better integrated. And if your Twitter account or your interactions with your followers are particularly fun, embedding tweets can show off your brand's personality online.



To embed a tweet, go to the tweet you want to share and click the ellipse button under the text. A drop-down menu will appear; choose the option Embed Tweet, and it will take you to a new page with the appropriate HTML code. From there, just copy and paste the code where you want it to appear.

- **Mute users who annoy you.** Follow any users who tweet constantly? It can get annoying after a while, but if you don't want to or can't unfollow that user for any particular reason, just go to any of the user's tweets, click the ellipse button and select the Mute option. That user's tweets will no longer

show up in your feed, but the user will stay on your following list, and more importantly, won't have any idea. Of course, if there are users who are sharing spam or harassing you, that's a different matter entirely. Under the Mute option is a Block or Report link that you can use to notify Twitter when anyone is breaking the Twitter terms of service.
