



# Twitter Style Guide

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go/writingstyle

While there are a number of resources for writing at Twitter, this style guide is meant to be one universal source for all of us across the company: product, marketing, support, comms, and so on.

Questions or comments? Ping [Zoe Finkel](#)

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## VOICE AND TONE CHEAT SHEET

### **Tweet vs tweet**

Tweet and Retweet are capitalized – always. Noun or verb. Even if it looks strange. Tweet is trademarked and Retweet is in the process of being trademarked, so we need to own them.

### **Empathy and tone**

Your copy is meant to help people have a better, more delightful experience. Think about the experience from *their perspective* (and not your own) and write accordingly.

### **Sentence casing vs. Title Casing**

We use *sentence case*, which means headlines (and titles) are capitalized the same way as sentences, with only the first word capped.

## **Write with clarity**

Write clearly and crisply so people can quickly understand what you mean. No need to be fancy. Shorter is usually better, but sometimes adding context is essential, even if it adds length.

## **People vs. accounts**

We generally refer to the people using our product as people not accounts (great people are what differentiates us!) For example, “follow people, favorite people.” In certain, more negative situations, we refer to people as accounts “unfollow accounts, mute accounts.”

## **When to show personality**

There's a time and place to show more personality. Certain situations call for a more serious tone (e.g. safety center), and in others we can be more playful. Messages seen once can have more personality than messages that's going to be seen repeatedly.

## **Timing matters**

As in life, timing matters. Asking for sensitive info from people (like phone or contact upload) gets a better response if we've timed *when* we're asking for it correctly. For example, address upload can't be the first step of the NUX flow. It's too soon in the process and people don't feel comfortable sharing sensitive info.

## **Consider the context**

Final copy has to be considered in relation to the other things on the page. Never write copy in a document and ship it without looking at the copy in the context of the product and making sure it still works.

## **“Users” isn’t consumer-facing**

“Users” is a word we *only* use internally. We don't write “users” in the product, emails or elsewhere.

“Users” should never be the descriptor for the consumers you're trying to reach. We don't refer to “users” in emails to them, or in the produc. If you must describe a group of users for consumer purposes, try words like “people”, “person”, “viewers”, “fans”, “readers”, “visitors” depending on the vertical. If you are reaching advertisers, aim for “audience” or “fans” or “buyers” or “prospects” or similar. Developers may be the one broad category among our clients who need the word “users” for their apps.

## **Be consistent**

When possible, use words and language that are already being used. Consistency of our product story is built on consistency of language, voice and tone.

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## **TONE PRINCIPLES**

- **Conversational.** Twitter is approachable and useful, and our words should reflect that. The Twitter voice should be friendly, relatively informal, and jargon-free. A good test to assess whether your copy has the right tone is to read it aloud: if you find yourself stumbling over phrases, suffering through run-on sentences, or feeling distant from the information, the words need fixing.
    - Generally, when writing for Twitter you should use **second person** (the narrator tells the story directly to you); this is the most conversational option.
    - Avoid overuse of the generic "users" in favor of **descriptors that define interests**, e.g. "TV fans," "readers", "political junkies", "viewers", "shoppers", "footy fans", etc.
  - **Clear.** What's the most helpful way to highlight a message, explain a position or demonstrate something new? When writing for digital media, links can do a lot of heavy lifting for depth, but you can't rely on links to tell the whole story. The gist of your message should also be easy to grasp at a glance — before the click. If you only had a Tweet to inform, what would it say?
  - **Friendly.** Just as using Twitter should be simple, fast, and easy to understand, talk directly to your readers as people. They are not a faceless mass "out there". Use conversational language, including contractions. Don't use big words unnecessarily. Read your work out loud: if it sounds awkward or stuffy – if you feel foolish speaking those words – then change it.
  - **Brief.** There's no better watchword than E.B. White's classic line: "Omit needless words." Any bundle of words can always be trimmed, and probably should be.
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## PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALIZATION

### Capitalization (with regard to product)

#### When should names be capitalized?

We cap products (e.g., Twitter, Vine, Fabric) and trademarked elements (e.g., Tweet, Retweet, live-Tweet, Twitter Mirror) that are unique to the brand, but *not* features (e.g., notifications) or actions (e.g., favorite). We would also prefer to lowercase programs. And on occasion, we may make special exceptions to these rules for design or other reasons (e.g., Direct Messages, Twitter Certified Program, Twitter Alerts).

Our approach to naming them is as follows (with few exceptions):

- **Products:** capped
- **Features:** lowercase
- **Actions:** lowercase
- **Programs:** lowercase

For more, see [Product-naming guidelines](#)

### Ellipses (...)

Reserve ellipses for loading screens and open ended form fields that prompt user action

Ex:

"Loading new content..."

"Add a comment..."

### Exclamation points

Use with caution. If the string is going to appear terse (eg, 'Congrats), then go ahead and use it. But in general, it's better to convey excitement with words, not punctuation.

### M dash vs. n-dash vs. hyphen

An em-dash should be used as a stand-in for a comma or parenthesis to separate phrases or even single words. (We love — and I mean *love* — Twitter).

An en-dash should connect values in a range or that are related (1939–1945; the Warriors beat the Cavs, 102–95).

A hyphen should join together compound words (cage-free; 28-year-old male).

### Sentence casing vs. Title Casing

We use sentence case, which means titles use capitalization the same way sentences do, with only the first word capped.

### The Oxford Comma (word, word, and word)

NEW! While in the past we have not used the Oxford (or serial) comma, we understand that use of it improves user comprehension and readability on-screen. So go forth and use the power of the comma.

### Periods

- Do not end headlines with a period, but do end body copy with a period.

Ex:

*Headline:*

*The #SuperBowl happens here*

*Body:*

*See #SuperBowl pics, videos, and predictions from NFL players, coaches, commentators, and fans.*

- Single space after a sentence. Even you, legal. [Here, read this article.](#) This goes for colons as well.

**quotation marks** — Periods and commas go outside the quotation mark if a word, letter or number that isn't actually a quotation.

*Ex: He used the hashtag "yolo". What do the hashtags "yolo", "FF" and "OH" mean? What is the value of "x"?*

### **Items on a bulleted list:**

- Start with a capital letter
  - End in punctuation only if they are complete sentences
  - Match the other items on the list (in terms of starting with a verb/noun/etc. and being phrases or complete sentences)
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## **FORMAT**

### **Time**

Spell out noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes, but do not use :00 (e.g., 1 p.m. ET, 3:30 a.m. PT). **Not** 1 pm ET or 3:30 am EST, etc. [Our reasoning](#).

### **Date**

### **Numbers**

- Never begin a sentence with a figure, except for sentences that begin with a year (e.g., Two hundred developers attended. Five speakers took the stage. 2006 was an important year.).
  - For ordinal numbers, spell out first through ninth and use figures for 10th and above when describing order in time or location (e.g., second base, 10th in a row). Some ordinal numbers, such as those indicating political or geographic order, should use figures in all cases (e.g., 3rd District Court, 9th ward).
  - When referring to the number of Tweets, Retweets, followers or impressions, spell out million, billion, etc. (e.g., 100,000 Tweets, 1 million Retweets).
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## **QUICK STRATEGY HITS**

(to come)

UMF Best Practices

Error messages Best Practices

Empty State Best Practices

CTA Best Practices

Email Best Practices (note: start with go/email design)

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## **WORD LIST AND VOCAB**

[Go/wordlist](#) gets you the master list. Some tips and tricks are here:

### **On vs. with**

We talk about things happening ON Twitter, but use WITH for features (to indicate their utilitarian nature).

*Example:*

*Find out what's happening now on Twitter  
Discover breaking news with Moments.*

## WRITING RESOURCES

- With few exceptions, we adhere to [AP style](#). When writing for a UK audience, see the [Guardian and Observer style guide](#) or the canonical [Economist Style Guide](#).

## 4 NEW USER ONBOARDING STORYTELLING TIPS

### **Less isn't always more**

Even though we always assume less steps in the flow are better than more, data showed that adding a humanizing step in the flow increased completion for our new flow. Data compared the new flow with the extra humanizing page and without. The flow with it showed an 8% retention increase.

### **Make a good first impression**

Just like in life, the first meeting is where we show who we are and it's an excellent place to be extra warm and friendly. In all the user research to date, "We're glad you're here" has been uniformly well received. It sets a welcoming tone to people curious about the product.

### **Be helpful**

This is a great place to explain a few of the most important ideas about the product or feature you're introducing. Strike a balance between what's essential and too much information. Giving people important info here not only makes us of service but eases tension and anxiety for people new to the product.

### **Payoff our setup**

Whatever expectations we set up in our value or intro statement should be developed over the flow and paid off in the product (first thing). Nothing ruins an experience like disappointment or confusion. Think of the flow as an narrative arc.

## SOURCES CONSULTED/REQUIRED READING

## [go/editorial](#)

- Your one-stop shop for help with all editorial comms (i.e. corporate blogs and accounts). Get in there and dig deep!
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## AP Style (with the Oxford comma exception)

- So you know, the rules suggested here come from somewhere, namely, the AP. Get thee there to confirm other questions you might have. Note, the only place we veer from AP style is with regards to the Oxford/serial comma.

## [Product-naming guidelines](#)

- A great read from our friends at Legal explaining the madness behind the method of how our product names come to be

## [Help Center Writing Guidelines](#)

- A great amount of content lives in our handy help center. To keep these articles aligned and consistent, review this specialized set of guidelines.