

Twitter Tips



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What Is Twitter?

What is Twitter? Heck if I know.



Just kidding . . . Twitter is one of the fastest growing sites on the web today. It has taken the Internet by storm—there are around 10,000 new users signing up to every day to participate in this digital revolution.

Twitter is a micro-blogging platform. You are limited to 140 characters each time you post a message (called a tweet). This may give you fits at first, but as you get used to it, it can be surprising what you say in 140 characters.

Twitter is yet another way to meet new people online, particularly those with similar interests to you. I will show you how to do this as we press on.

How to Set Up a Twitter Account

Opening a Twitter account is easy, but there are a few things you want to get right when setting it up. If you already have an existing account you may still find some good tips you can use.


To get started, go to Twitter's home page at <http://www.twitter.com>. You will be asked to either login or register. If you already have an account you can log in, for everyone else, let's go through the registration process.

Registration

The Twitter screen will ask you for your first name and last name and will then check this is entered correctly. A green tick will appear next to the box.

The next box asks you for a user name. You'll want to give some thought to how you are going to represent yourself on Twitter. You can set up more than one account, but you will need a different email address for each one.

The first account you register should be in your own name if you can get it. Common names like JohnSmith (there are no spaces in usernames) will be taken, but it's possible to get variations on your name such as John_Smith, or John_Smith23 or some variation like that.

Note that you can only use an underscore in a username. Hyphens are not allowed for some reason unbeknownst to everyone but some guy in Australia with a dancing kangaroo, and he's not talking. 

Uh...well anyway, it isn't absolutely critical that you register with your own name, but I would advise you to do so if you can, if only so someone else can't impersonate you on Twitter.

If you wish to register a business name, then you can do that of course, but make sure you use your own name in the sign up process so you are identifiable and connected with the business name you register. We'll discuss the reasons for operating under each type of registration later.

Next you'll be asked for your email address. Email addresses are linked to accounts and you will only be able to use your email address once. For every account you register, you will need a different email address.

The last thing to do is to fill in the Captcha letters and then click on Create My Account.

The next screen will ask if you want to add any of your friends from the popular web based email programs. You can do this now if you have any to add, or later if you wish.

The next screen presents a short list of people who Twitter asks if you would like to follow. Choose some if you like, but I wouldn't bother. I prefer to find my own friends on Twitter.

When you click Finish, you will then be taken to your very own Twitter account. You are logged in and ready to go!

Your Settings

The next thing to do is fill out your settings, and this is very important on Twitter. You will find the access to this at the top right of the screen, fourth link from the left.

On this page you will notice there are some tabs across the top. For the moment we will concentrate on the Account tab.

The information you entered upon joining is already entered here, but now it's time to pad this out so people can find you on Twitter and so you also make yourself an interesting person to be followed.

People will use the information you enter here to make that decision, but much of what is entered is also searchable on Twitter and through various search engines.

One thing to note is that you can change your username at any time on this screen. You just have to enter your password to do so. While it can be done, it can confuse your follower base, so I wouldn't recommend doing it unless you have a real need to.

First of all change your time zone to your own and then move onto the one line bio.

Your Bio

You have 160 characters here to "sell" yourself. Take some time to think it over and do it well. Don't simply enter a bunch of keywords as they will be totally uninteresting to most people, even if they do help you to get found.

Use keywords by all means, but start your Bio with the words "I am" and then describe yourself. So you might put for example:

I am an avid gardener, hiker and bicyclist with a great passion for the outdoors, internet marketing, affiliate marketing, and social media.

That description is only 140 characters, so you could still get some more keywords in the bio. No doubt you can see the ones that are there: gardener, hiker, bicyclist, internet marketing, affiliate marketing and social media.

Using these terms in your bio will help you to be found in search results when people are looking for other like minded individuals to follow. As you can see, it is worth taking some time to get the bio right.

Balance of Screen

Enter your web site name or blog here if you have one. Make sure you include the <http://> prefix to the address or it won't be clickable and won't count as a backlink with the search engines.

Your location is next and is also important if you want people to be able to locate you by geographic area. It is also important if you are chasing rankings on Twitter as users are ranking by their locations.

Protect Updates

This is included if you want to have a private account and you want to manually approve followers. NEVER turn this on if you intend to use Twitter to meet new people and gain followers. Most won't bother to request permission to follow you...they just won't.

You can now save your settings, but note here for future reference that there is also a link to delete your account should you ever wish to do so.

Devices

You can enter your mobile phone number here if you want Twitter updates to your phone. Personally, I can't think of anything worse, particularly if you develop a lot of followers.

Notices

You can have Twitter "nudge" you with a text to your mobile phone if you haven't updated in 24 hours. Again, what a pain!

The Replies function is interesting, It determines what tweets you see that are prefixed with the @ symbol. This is how you direct a tweet to a particular individual. There is a great help screen explanation on this, so go there to make your decision.

The rest of the notices are self explanatory, but it is worth noting that the Direct Messages possibly needs a bit of explanation if you are new to Twitter.

If you are following someone and they are following you, Direct Messages can be sent that won't appear in the Twitter timeline. They are essentially private messages between two people.

If you are an infrequent user of Twitter, it may be worthwhile to switch on receiving notifications by email so you can respond. Otherwise leave it off as it will just fill up your mail box with more clutter.

Likewise, the notifications that you have a new follower just add to your email clutter. I would leave it off unless you like the buzz of being told someone new has started followed you.

Picture Tab

This is really important. When you open this page you will see the small avatar, which is the default one for Twitter. If you want new followers, putting a photo of yourself here is imperative. If you are running the Twitter account for your company or business, then your logo is ideal.

But do put something so you can be identified in the "Tweetstream" by your followers. The graphic is often more important than your name when people are scanning Tweets—you want yours to stand among the crowd.

Design Tab

Here you can change the background of your Twitter page from the default. Twitter provides a number of alternatives that you can select or you can upload your own background. You can also change all the colors if you wish.

Again, I recommend you change it so you are not running the default look like millions of others do. It shows you have taken some time setting up your account and aren't just a "me too" fad follower.

A note here worth mentioning is that with the plethora of Twitter client applications out there many people don't even look at your web page anymore. Still, it is one component of your presence on Twitter and it is important enough to be worth doing well.

Well, that's it for the setup. The last thing to do now is to click on Home at the top of the screen and send your first Tweet. Something like, "Hi, I've just joined Twitter and am looking forward to meeting interesting people" is a good first one to send. Just type it in and click the Update button.

Twitter Client Applications

The biggest problem with the standard Twitter web application is that you have to keep an eagle eye on your replies and Direct Messages as you only see the main Tweetstream on the screen. Another limitation is that they only displays about the last 20 tweets, so if you want to see older ones, you have to keep going back pages. So what to do?

Easy, download Tweetdeck from <http://www.tweetdeck.com> The first thing you will probably notice is that you will need to change the settings as the default is white text on a black screen. That's harder to read than black on white, but each to their own.

Tweetdeck is brilliant in that it displays the Tweetstream, your replies and your direct messages all on the one screen. The message columns allow for 500 tweets as a default, so scrolling down allows you view a lot of tweets.

The screen has a continuous right hand scroll, so you can set up different groups and their tweets will appear in that column. You might have a group called best friends and another for gardeners for example. That way you're less likely to miss tweets from people who are the most important to you.

At the time of writing, Tweetdeck is probably the most widely used and recommended application for Twitter.

Your Tweets

Start getting some tweets into the system right away. On the Twitter home page it asks what you are doing as a way to get things started. Quite frankly, most people don't give a hoot what you're doing until you have built a relationship with them as a result of following.

There are some better ways to get started. Follow some blogs that you are interested in via and post links to interesting posts.

For example: "Interesting post on the Fair Tax. [YourLink](#)".

Make sure you always include **http://** in the link and not just **www** or the link won't be clickable, and if it isn't clickable people will quickly stop following you. If it's a long link, Tweetdeck has a facility to shorten the URL.

Another good way of starting out tweeting is with quotations if you can find some relative to your main Twitter topic. Do a search for some quotes of interest and tweet these.

Whatever you do, never start posting sales tweet after sales tweet trying to drum up business. Your career will be short-lived if you do and people will stop following you very quickly. To the avid users, Twitter is about engagement, value and a social experience.

That doesn't mean you can never post links to your products or sites, but keep them to around 5% of your total tweets or less. To be successful with Twitter you need to give a lot more than you ask to receive.

Another good idea with your tweeting is to keep religion and politics out of them unless that is your purpose for joining Twitter. These subjects will always alienate followers.

Replies

You can reply to someone's Tweet simply by putting the @symbol in front of their name. This makes the tweet stand out to them as it appears in their reply column or page instead of in the general Tweetstream.

This is a very useful way of starting conversations with people in order to build relationships. Simply comment on one of their tweets. People love being paid attention to—show them you are and you'll start building a relationship.

Tweetdeck has a feature when you hover over the user's avatar to put their name and reply symbol straight into the posting area.

Re-tweeting

People appreciate re-tweets. It is a good way to get noticed by others. All you do is put RT in front of the @username. Using Tweetdeck, hover over the user's avatar and it will put the whole thing in the posting area.

Separate their tweet from your comment if you have one. A lot of people insert two pipes. The "pipe" is found on your keyboard above the backslash (\) character. Hold down the Shift key to type a pipe character. This will produce "||" which clearly shows the end of the other person's tweet and the start of your reply or comment.

If other people re-tweet your tweets, make it a habit to thank them. It's common courtesy. Simply tweet @username Thanks for RT :-) and send.

The Big Decision

You'll need to make a big decision that will affect your Twitter experience greatly. That decision relates to quality versus quantity. If you are into marketing, then quantity of followers may be more important to you.

It's like building a list. But if you want to keep things personal, then quality of followers will probably be more important. Either way, the next step will be to find some people to follow.

Gaining Followers

You need to first be aware that rushing out and following a heap of people can make you look like a potential Twitter spammer—and every kind of spammer is hated the world over!

Build your following base slowly, especially at first. As time goes on, if you are chasing quantity, then you will be able to add more at a time, but initially I would suggest you stick to 50 or less for a start.

The reason for this is that when you follow people, many will follow you back. However, some people don't do this automatically, they will actually go look at your Twitter home page to decide if you are worth following to them. This is where your profile and the settings that you took all the trouble to do will stand you in good stead.

Next we'll look at ways to find followers and people to follow.

Twellow

Twellow, at <http://www.twellow.com>, is a great way of finding people to interact with. People here are categorized into all different areas and you can search for those with similar interests to your own.

The main page shows you all the categories and some sub-categories. You just click on a category or sub-category and the list of people in that area are displayed. If you click a main category the sub-categories will be displayed on the right-hand side of the next page. Twitter users in the main category will be displayed on the left-hand side.

You don't have to be registered with Twellow to be displayed, but at the time of writing there were nearly two million people showing on the site, so you will have plenty to choose from. By all means though, register yourself and set up a profile so others can find you.

When you click on a category, Twellow displays a list of people in that category and they are ordered by the number of followers they have. If you are already logged into Twitter via the web (rather than through Tweetdeck), you will be able to follow people directly from the screens where the profiles are displayed.

Mr. Tweet

Mr. Tweet can be found at www.mrtweet.net. It's another way of gaining new followers. All you have to do is follow Mr. Tweet on Twitter and your tweets will be monitored for content and then you will get a Direct Message from "him".

You then go to the site and login and you will get a list of suggested people. You will also get a list of people who are following you that you aren't following so you can then follow them if you choose. It's a really nifty little site and worth registering at.

Grader

Grader is on Twitter as @grader, but also online at <http://twitter.grader.com/> and is a site of some interest. As you get going on Twitter, you can get "ranked" by Grader on a score out of 100. It is based on some secret algorithm apparently so people can't game the system.

Apart from that aspect of Grader you can have a look at who the top Tweeples are in a particular area or even by topic using the search function.

When you use the search function, it will list the Tweeples by their score in descending order. For example, if you search for "gardening" on Grader, you will get a list of all the top 100 people interested in gardening on Twitter. You

can see their “bio” from their Twitter account and if you click on their Grader score, it will take you to their Twitter account from where you can follow them. Naturally, you must be logged in to Twitter to follow anyone.

Advanced Tweeting Tips

Now that you're all set up, let's get into some advanced Tweeting tips and applications that can really power your Twitter usage up.

Twitter Backgrounds

We discussed setting up your Twitter background earlier so it doesn't just look like the default Twitter page. You need to distinguish yourself from the crowd to attract more followers, and distinguishing yourself visually is your first opportunity to do that.

If you're a graphics whiz you can create your own background, full of bells and whistles and upload it to your Twitter profile. But if you're not, or you just want to save time, then there are some sites out there that will do them for you automagically.

To find these sites, simply Google “twitter backgrounds” and you will find quite a few sites offering this service for free.

My personal favorite is Twitbacs at <http://www.twitbacks.com/> where you can get some great backgrounds.

However, that said, if you want to do your own fiddling in Photoshop, you can get some great layouts in PSD format from <http://www.twitterbacks.com/>

SocialToo

SocialToo, found at <http://www.socialtoo.com>, is a useful Twitter tool. One of the handiest features is that you can set SocialToo up to automatically follow everyone who follows you.

This really takes the drudgery out of checking all your new followers and adding them to your own list in order to reciprocate.

You can also set up SocialToo to send an automatic Direct Message to people who follow you. **Don't do it!** Automatic Direct Messages are absolutely hated by the majority of the Twitter community, particularly experienced users because they can pick them a mile off. It's a sterile and rude way of starting out a relationship with new followers.

The backlash against this has largely been caused because many newbies, and even some old hands too, were setting up an auto Direct Message that basically said, "Hello, thanks for following me. Visit my sales page at <http://. . .>". I'm sure you get the picture.

I can't think of any worse way to start a relationship with a new follower on Twitter. In any sort of business, you build relationships before you try and sell someone something and this is even more relevant in the social media space.

SocialToo will also provide you with an email every day of all your new followers, and those that have stopped following you as well.

Another function of SocialToo is that it will automatically stop following anyone who stops following you.

TweetLater

Tweetlater, found at <http://www.tweetlater.com>, is a fantastic tool to use with Twitter. It allows you to schedule tweets for various times of the day.

So how can this be of use to you?

You need to realize that the Twitter audience is constantly changing and the tweetstream occurs quite fast. It's called a tweetstream but it's more like a tweet-flooded-river! The more people someone follows, the greater the number of tweets they'll receive, and I guarantee they won't read them all. It just isn't possible unless all they do is follow Twitter 24 hours a day.

By using Tweetlater, you have a much greater chance of catching people's attention throughout the day and in different time zones.

Let's say you have written a post on your blog and you want to drive some traffic there. Rather than tweeting the link and subject once, you can do it every hour for 24 hours if you like using Tweetlater. I'm sure you can see the power of this in terms of driving traffic or getting noticed.

There is a free and a professional version of Tweetlater. Start out with the free version and then if you need it, upgrade to the professional version when you are ready.

Twitterfeed

Twitterfeed, found at <http://www.twitterfeed.com>, is also a very handy tool. It is far more secure to log into than the other sites I have mentioned as it uses Open ID, which is a bit of a pain. However, you may find it worth the effort in the absence of an alternative tool.

What Twitterfeed does is let you can set up your blog to feed directly via RSS to your Twitter account. So every time you make a blog post, it gets tweeted automatically on your behalf. You can use this in conjunction with Tweetlater with the first post coming through Twitterfeed and then subsequent ones at times you specify via Tweetlater.

SplitTweet

SplitTweet, found at <http://splittweet.com>, is a great tool if you have a number of accounts on Twitter. Rather than switching between them from time to time in order to Tweet, you can set an account up here for free and bring all of your accounts under the one roof.

SplitTweet will display the Twitter feed from all your accounts at once, or you can turn individual accounts off and on. When actually tweeting, you can pick an account to tweet to, or you can do a broadcast message across all your accounts at once.

Twitdom

Twitdom, found at <http://twitdom.com>, may be the greatest site relating to Twitter. It is a repository for all Twitter related applications and it is just a little bit amazing what there is in there.

At the time of writing, Twitdom had nearly 500 Twitter related applications in its database. If you think about it, it's amazing that there have been so many third party applications written for Twitter. It shows you how important the programming community thinks Twitter is.

Friendfeed

Friendfeed, found at <http://www.friendfeed.com>, is an automating tool you can use in conjunction with Twitter. Friendfeed is a bit like a hub where you can set up links to all your other accounts. Friendfeed collects information from those accounts and publishes it in your Friendfeed feed.

Although Friendfeed is a topic almost in itself, I mention it here particularly because of its ability to link your Twitter and Facebook accounts, among others. If you have a Facebook account and you link it and your Twitter accounts in Friendfeed, then what will happen is that all your posts in Twitter will be posted on your wall at Facebook. It means you are running two social media accounts via one, and that saves you time.

Your Twitter Karma

Your Twitter Karma, found at <http://dossy.org/twitter/karma/>, is a really useful site for having a look at your followers and those following you. It's great for managing your account from a followers/following perspective.

Underneath each avatar it tells you if you are following them and if they are following you. You can also sort by people that you are following who aren't following you back so you can decide whether or not to stop following them.

By checking the boxes, you can actually do a bulk “unfollow” as opposed to going to every individual Twitter account and clicking on “unfollow”.

You can also list those that might only be following you and decide if you want to follow them back. Again, this can be done in a bulk manner.

Unfortunately, Your Twitter Karma doesn't seem to be reliable all the time, but when it is working it's great.

Conclusion

I hope the tips and resources in this report will make using Twitter a fantastic experience for you. People seem to love it or think it's stupid. You'll have to make up your own mind on that one. 😁

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Dennis