

Twitter for Teens: A Primer for Sprigeo



Twitter Basics

From the Start

Twitter was founded way back in 2006 by a couple of guys who wanted people to be able to send short texts, or “Tweets,” to each other with their dumbphones. They had no clue that it would turn into what it is today. Twitter has flocked from the United States to pretty much everywhere over the past nine years: it’s available in 35 languages to 288 million people—77 percent of them living outside of the good ‘ol US-of-A. You don’t need to use Twitter for any one reason. So long as you abide by our Rules and Terms of Service, the sky’s the limit. Nobody’s sure of what’s possible, since some of the cleverest people around are active Twitter users. So follow that celeb, catch up on news, watch bots spew nonsense at each other: Twitter is about connecting you to stuff that interests you. Full stop.

The “At-Sign” (@)

We’re going to let you in on a little secret: nobody really knows how the @ sign came about, but we’re sure glad it did. People first started using it to send email in the 1980s. Yes, there was email in the 1980s, but nowhere near as much there is as today. Now, @ is everywhere. Twitter grabbed a hold of it so that people could send replies to each other in real-time. It kind of works like it did in the emails of yore: you’re in conversation; you’re talking to specific people; and you might even be making 80s references. Especially if you weren’t born then. More recently, people have taken to using @ before names when adding a person to an email thread. If you didn’t sign up in time to get your paws on @jane or @john, folks can still use it to refer to you elsewhere (assuming your name is Jane or John).

Hashtags (#)

Here a hashtag, there a hashtag, everywhere a hashtag. Also the symbol for a number, the hashtag now peppers our cultural landscape. From t-shirts to billboards, art displays to risqué tattoos, it’s become a staple of our time, a way of grouping content together or to drop one of those ironic, self-referential comments kids are using nowadays. #ironiccomment #likethisone #someta. Hashtags as we know them trace all the way back to 2007, when a Twitter user who thought it’d be awfully nice to be able to sort through the raw content streaming across his screen. Thus the hashtag was born, a hallmark of our time that, like baconnaise or smartphones, we’re not sure how we survived without.

Signing Up for a Twitter Account

Here's a laundry list of instructions for how to sign up for Twitter. Yup, it's long, but that's only because there's so many ways to access the platform to send Tweets that we didn't want to leave anyone hanging. If you have any questions, Tweet us at [@support](https://twitter.com/support) or shoot us a message at support.twitter.com/forms.

Web

1. Go to <http://twitter.com> and find the sign up box, or go directly to <https://twitter.com/signup>.
2. Enter your **full name**, **email address**, and a **password**.
3. Click **Sign up for Twitter**.
4. On the next page, you can select a **username** (usernames are unique identifiers on Twitter)—type your own or choose one that's been suggested. The interface will notify you if the username you want is available.
5. **Double-check** your name, email address, password, and username.
6. Click **Create my account**. You may be asked to complete a Captcha to confirm that you're human.
7. Twitter will send a **confirmation email** to the email address you entered. Click the link in that email to confirm your email address and account.

iPhone (Apple iOS)

1. If you haven't already installed the Twitter for iPhone app, go to about.twitter.com/products/iphone and follow the instructions on that page.
2. Once the app is installed on your iPhone, you can log in with an existing account or sign up for a new account directly from the app.
3. Tap the blue **Sign up** button on the welcome screen and fill out the fields asking for your **name**, **phone number or email address**, **desired username**, and **password**.
4. If your desired username is already taken, it will turn red and a message will drop down below the username field telling you to choose a new username.
5. Once you've chosen a username that has not been taken, a blue checkmark will appear next to the username.
6. When you have completed the form, tap **Sign up**.
7. If you provided a phone number while signing up, Twitter will immediately send you an SMS text message with a code to verify your number. Enter the verification code in the box provided.
8. A message will pop up telling you your account has been successfully created.

Android (Google)

1. Open the app and tap the **Sign up** button.
2. On the next page, fill in your **account information** (name, username, email address, and password).

3. After entering your name, you can choose from one of the suggested usernames, or type in an available username of your choosing.

Note: If you provided an email address when signing up, Twitter send you a confirmation email. You must confirm your email address in order for it to be fully associated with your Twitter account so you can receive important notifications regarding your account.

Posting a Tweet

Web

1. **Sign in** to your Twitter account.
2. **Type your Tweet** into the box at the top of your Home timeline, or click the **Tweet** button in the top navigation bar.
3. Make sure your update is **fewer than 140 characters**. We'll count the characters for you! Remaining characters show up as a number below the box.
4. **Tip:** Read about how to include photos in your Tweet [here](#), and how to include a video in your Tweet [here](#).
5. Click the Tweet button to **post the Tweet** to your profile.
6. You will immediately see your Tweet in the timeline on your homepage.

iPhone (Apple iOS)

1. Tap the **compose Tweet icon**  in the top menu on the right.
2. Compose your 140-character message and tap **Tweet**.
3. The Tweet will be successfully posted to your profile.

Pro tip: Have a Tweet in progress you're not ready to post? Tap the **X** in the Tweet composer box and select **Save draft**. Access it (and other drafts) later by tapping the **draft icon**  in the bottom menu of the Tweet composer.

Android (Google)

1. Tap on **What's happening?** from the menu bar at the bottom.
2. Enter your 140-character message.
3. When you're ready to post your message, tap **Tweet**.
4. A notification will appear in the status bar on your device and will go away once the Tweet successfully sends.

Twitter as a Learning Tool

News and Trending Hashtags

Twitter says it connects you to your world. It's not kidding, either: stories break on Twitter before TV crews have a chance to warm up the news van. Desktop computers are, for the most part, relics of a bygone era. Laptop sales have plummeted as iPads, iPhones, iWatches, and iWhateveres have flooded the market. Now, it's all about mobile and wearables; now, anything you can wear or tote in your pocket or strap is where it's at. Hypermobility has remade journalism ten times over. Grainy videos, the sort recorded on a dumbphone from 2005, made citizen journalism a faint possibility. Nowadays, it's a prime source of news footage. People once had to wait for reporters to show up for a story to be told. No longer. Professional reporting still matters in that it serves up deep analysis we could use more of these days. But as for breaking a story, anyone with a smartphone can do that. Sure, this style of news lacks the gravitas of traditional news sources, but it also provides much of the raw footage those sources rely on to craft Pulitzer-worthy stories.

So, where's Twitter in all of this? You might remember the story of pilot miraculously landing a plane in the Hudson River just off the shore of Manhattan. On that brisk morning in early 2009, a guy taking a stroll on shore tweeted about the crash he hopped on a ferry bound to rescue the passengers. This single Tweet put Twitter on the public's radar in the same way that it did for techies at SXSW two years earlier. Journalists and whole publications soon set up accounts, just as TV stations plastered the familiar blue bird on the banners streaming at the bottom of the screen. This happened just in time for the Arab Spring (2010-12), the colossal earthquake and tsunami in Japan (2011), the protests in Ferguson, Missouri (2014), and, most recently, in #JeSuisCharlie after the massacre at the offices of the French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* (2015).

Connecting with Subject Matter Experts

Anyone with an Internet connection can view a user's Tweets. What's cool about such openness is that with the right dose of hashtags and/or @replies, you can learn about anything you want from the people who know most about it. Imagine, for example, that you're going to write a paper about literature in the digital age. Say that the paper will touch on the shift from the page to the screen and how social media has turned genres like poetry or the short story on their head. As part of your research, you might take a gander at one of several hundred "[Twitterature](#)" accounts that tinker with what's possible to say in 140 characters. It turns out that there's been a lot of tinkering: modernized and hilarious renditions of Shakespeare; single-sentence summaries of whole novels; poems chock full of hashtags and @replies; and the revival of genres left for dead like the aphorism or serialized novel. Finding Twitterature takes little more than looking through a hashtag, such as #twitterfiction or #twovel (Twitter novel), wherefrom you can DM and @reply authors and readers to your heart's content. Read. Ask questions. Try your hand (or fingertips?) at a couple of haikus. Like this one: brainiacs are near / only log onto Twitter / they're waiting for you. With enough research, you'll become an expert on Twitterature in no time.

Enough of Twitterature. Do you want to test out an idea that you've been kicking around for a while? Crowdsource it. Using hashtags, find an ongoing conversation closely related to the idea and start talking it up. Ask for direction to relevant hashtags and lists. Ask for constructive feedback. Ask if there are any people whom you should contact for advice. Are you fed up with calling customer support and waiting to

Speak with a real person? With few exceptions (bots, mostly), companies man their official accounts with actual human beings. Usually, they'll answer questions or address your complaints quickly. This is a textbook example of a symbiotic relationship: you get your question answered without having to navigate through a call tree; the company shines by helping you out in public.

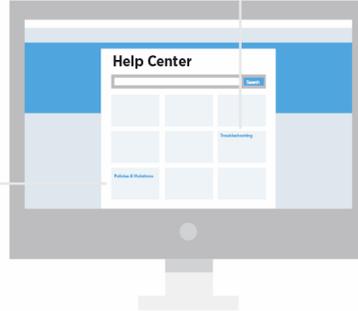
Reporting

When an issue is reported or flagged by a user, it's sent to one of several teams responsible for policy enforcement. These teams review reports for Twitter Rules (<https://twitter.com/rules>) and Terms of Service (<https://twitter.com/tos>) violations and, if applicable, take action on the reported account. In most circumstances, they also follow up with the reporter to inform them of any actions that have been taken. In some cases, such as spam, Twitter uses automated signals to aid in our reviews and removals of accounts.

Twitter Reporting Guide: How to Submit a Report

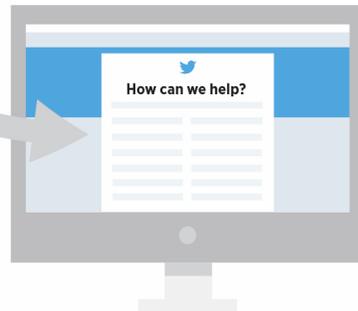
1 Go to <https://support.twitter.com>.

2 For account- and feature-related problems, select **Troubleshooting**. This section offers solutions to common problems about logging in, managing an account, and using other features on Twitter.



3 For information about policy violations, select **Policies & Violations**. This section contains all of Twitter's policies and explains how to report violations.

4 Navigate to the section that best describes the issue you've encountered. Clicking on any section will guide you through a reporting form. To complete the form, provide all necessary information it asks for, such as contact information and a brief description of the issue.



5 Twitter automatically sends you a confirmation email containing a case number to the address provided in the form.



6 A Twitter specialist reviews the issue.

7 Upon reaching a decision or to request more information, Twitter will contact you.

Reporting Abuse: Preliminary Steps

Twitter prohibits targeted harassment and abuse. Engaging in such behavior leads first to warnings then to temporary or permanent account suspension. Twitter also forbids posting specific and direct violent threats on its platform. As with other behavior infractions, we issue warnings that either result in case resolution or account suspension. We also encourage users to report illegal behavior to law enforcement in order that the threat may be evaluated properly and, if applicable, the behavior prosecuted.

Anyone can report abusive behavior directly from a Tweet or profile—even if he or she doesn't have a Twitter account. To ensure that the behavior you've witnessed on Twitter constitutes abuse and to file a report if it does, please take the following steps:

1. Review Twitter's abuse policy: <http://bit.ly/1DinAZf>.
2. If the behavior you've witnessed doesn't appear in the abuse policy, also review our policies concerning media (<http://bit.ly/1zmjxJd>) and posting private information (<http://bit.ly/1zMNF0U>).
3. A complete list of policies is available on our Help Center: <https://support.twitter.com/groups/56-policies-violations>.

Web

To report abusive content to Twitter, navigate to the “Report a Tweet” option found on each Tweet or fill out one of the online forms on the Twitter Help Center (<https://support.twitter.com/forms/abusiveuser>) to message our highly trained safety team. Completing a report requires that you specify the username of the accused, links to Tweets, a thorough description of the problem, your email address, your location (local laws may apply), your Twitter username (optional), and a digital signature.

Mobile

To report an abusive Tweet:

1. Navigate to the Tweet you'd like to report.
2. Click or tap the **More** icon (••• icon on web and iOS;  icon on Android).
3. Select **Report**.
4. Select **It's abusive or harmful**.
5. Next we'll ask you to provide additional information about the issue you're reporting.
6. Once you've submitted your report, we'll provide recommendations for additional actions you can take to improve your Twitter experience.

To report an abusive profile:

1. Go to the user's profile and click the **gear icon** 
2. Select **Report**.

3. Select **They're being abusive or harmful**.
4. Next we'll ask you to provide additional information about the issue you're reporting.
5. Once you've submitted your report, we'll provide recommendations for additional actions you can take to improve your Twitter experience.

Twitter Tools to Control User Experience

Over the course of 48 hours, there are one billion new Tweets. While it's impossible to monitor this much content proactively, our Terms of Service and the Twitter Rules govern how people should behave on our platform. Upon receiving a report of a potential violation of these rules, we use automated and manual tools to communicate with users, conduct an investigation, and take action accordingly. Other than the Twitter Rules, there's a number of Twitter tools—or user controls—to promote safety and educate users about how to control their online experience.

Mute

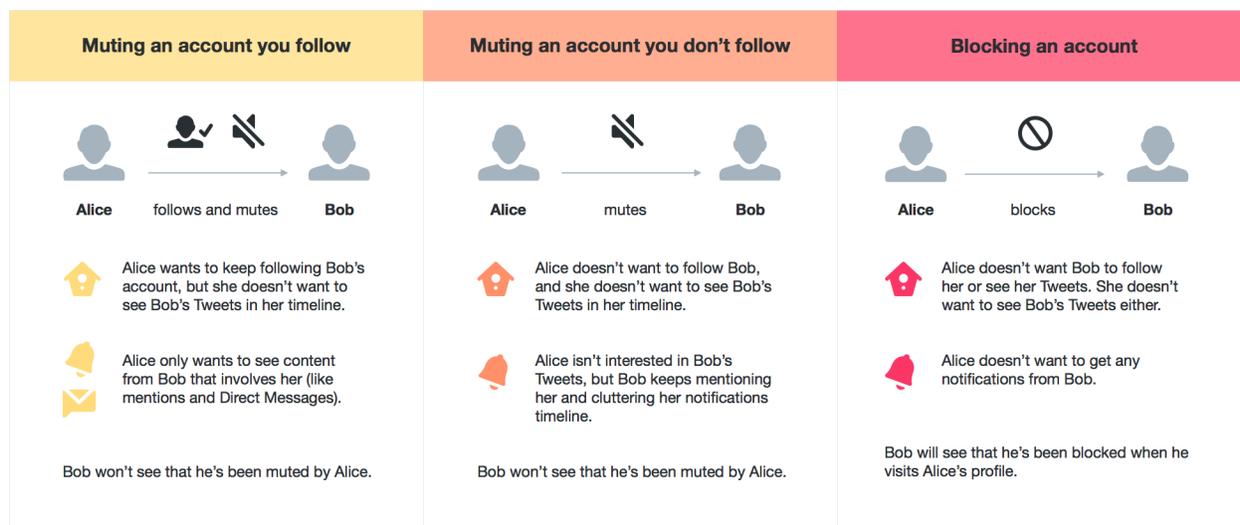
Sometimes, simply ignoring the user can end an altercation. Abusive users often lose interest once they realize that you will not respond. You can hide a user's Tweets from your timeline without blocking them by using the mute function. A red mute icon visible only to you will appear on their profile and remain until you unmute them.

Unfollow

Users can unfollow others if they no longer wish to see that person's Tweets in their home timeline. Unless his or her Tweets are protected, you can still view a user's Tweets by visiting his or her profile. You can unfollow Twitter users from your following list and from a user's profile page or by SMS/text message. Note that anyone who reports another account as spam unfollows it automatically.

Block

Use the block function to stop a user from following you, tagging you in photos, or accessing your Tweets. Any @replies or mentions from a blocked user will not appear in your mentions tab (although these Tweets may still appear in search).



Protect your Tweets

If you want to control who sees your updates, you may choose to protect your Tweets, which will only be visible to followers whom you approve. Similar to other social media sites, users with protected accounts can approve requests from other users to follow their accounts on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, only approved users are able to view or search for Tweets on a protected account. Opting for a protected account prevents unwanted followers from viewing their content.

Flag Media

If you believe that an image or video should be brought to the attention of the Twitter team for review, please report it by clicking on the “••• More” button located beneath the image. You can also label your own media for the appropriate viewers and select whose media appear on your timeline. Twitter asks users to mark their Tweets as “sensitive” if they contain content such as nudity, violence, or medical procedures. The default setting for sensitive media requires Twitter users to click through a warning message before viewing the content. Anyone who would prefer to remove this protective barrier may do so by changing his or her account settings.