



Twitter User Guide

You may know what Twitter is. You may know where to find it (www.twitter.com). By now, you've probably read hundreds of reasons why you should be using it. You might even already have an account. Now what?

Basic Twitter Tools

Here are a few terms / symbols you're likely to encounter when using Twitter:

RT – ReTweet – Use this to give credit when you use someone's tweet in your own. Put "RT" right before the username and original post you are referencing:

Original post from @bianchipr: Check out the latest news from Johnson Controls

<http://www.johnsoncontrols.com>.

RT from @userA: Great article. RT @bianchipr check out the latest news from Johnson Controls

<http://www.johnsoncontrols.com>.

@ – Reply – Use this to respond to someone. It will show up in their @ Replies (or in their feed if they follow you):

Original post from @bianchipr: Can anyone suggest a good site for driving directions?

Reply from @userA: @bianchipr Google Maps is the best.

DM – Direct Message – Use this to send users private messages. Unlike @s and RTs, DMs are not public – only the user you send the message to will see it.

– Hashtags – Use to tag your tweet so that it will appear in searches. Hashtags are generally used in association with an event or trend and can be used as part of the tweet or tagged on at the end:

Examples: WHO raises pandemic level as #swineflu spreads

#iPhone rumored to be working on deal with Verizon

Here in Austin for the South by Southwest festival #sxsw

URL Shortening Services

In order to stay within Twitter's 140-character limit, URL shortening services are becoming a must. Here are a few to check out:

<http://tinyurl.com>

<http://is.gd>

<http://bit.ly>

<http://ow.ly>

These will all shorten your URLs. Some offer tracking services and others allow you to create preview links, but for most users, it is a matter of preference. Some Twitter applications (see below) have URL shorteners built in to their platform.

Twitter Applications

Logging into your account via the web (www.twitter.com) is just one way to use Twitter. You can also update your status via your mobile phone (text message or web-based applications) or from a variety of desktop applications. Here are just a few:

Twirl (www.twirl.org) – Desktop application pops up new tweets as they come in;

TweetDeck (www.tweetdeck.com) – Desktop application allows you to manage multiple social networking accounts at once;

HootSuite (www.hootsuite.com) – Web-based application allows you to manage more than one Twitter account;

Twitpic (<http://twitpic.com>) – Allows you to post photos to the Web via Twitter; and

Ping.fm (<http://ping.fm>) – Web-based application allows you to manage multiple social networking accounts at once; also allows updates from mobile devices.

Etiquette

Twitter is a community. Communities have guidelines and codes of conduct – whether written or not – to make sure the best interests of its members are kept a priority. Here are some “unwritten” best practice tips to keep in mind when using Twitter:

- **Add value** – If your goal is to gain followers, make sure your posts are meaningful and contribute something to the community. Updating your status every five minutes with what you are doing, eating, thinking, etc., might be amusing to your friends but will most likely not position you as a thought leader;
- **Don't be a salesman** – Twitter can be a great marketing tool. However, if you are constantly promoting your self or your company and not offering any value to your followers, you will probably lose them;
- **Use discretion** – You don't have to follow everyone who follows you. Who you follow says just as much about you as who follows you;
- **Give credit** – retweet or @reply when using part of or all of someone else's tweet; and
- **Provide original content** – don't be afraid to post your thoughts about a particular trend or issue, this is how you gain followers.

How to Find People

One of the easiest ways to gain followers is to follow people yourself. You can search for people/companies/news outlets on Twitter (http://twitter.com/invitations/find_on_twitter) by name or username. You can also view who your peers are following and follow any who interest you.

Here are a few of our suggestions to get you started: (type in the username after www.twitter.com to locate:
@bianchipr = <http://www.twitter.com/bianchipr>)

CNN / CNN Breaking News: @cnn / @cnnbrk

The New York Times: @nytimes

The Associated Press: @associatedpress

NPR: @nprnews

CBS News: @cbsnews

The Detroit News / Detroit News Autos Insider:

@detnews / @autosinsider

Detroit Free Press: @freep

PR Week News: @prweekuknews

PR Newswire: @prnewswire

PRSA: @prsa

Peter Shankman, Help a Reporter Out (HARO)

founder: @skydiver

Pete Cashmore, Mashable.com: @mashable

Lee Odden, Top Rank Marketing Blog: @leeodden