

Twitter... Your First Flight!



by
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What Is Twitter?

What is Twitter? Well, where have you been... LOL? Twitter would have to be the fastest growing site on the web today. It is taking the Internet by storm and there are around 10,000 new users per day signing up to participate in this Internet revolution.

Twitter is best described as a micro blogging platform. You are limited to 140 characters each time you do an update, which initially, may seem a small amount. However, as you become more experienced, it's just amazing what you can fit into 140 characters.

That said, Twitter is much, much more than that. It is like one huge global chat room, but then again, it doesn't have to be. It all depends on how many people you follow on Twitter. If it's in the thousands, then your "Tweetstream" will be running fast and furious with everything that's coming in. If you are only following a few hundred, or even less, then things are much easier to keep up with.

Twitter is also a great way to meet new people online, particularly those with similar interests to you. I will show you how to do this more as we progress through this report.

How To Set Up Twitter

Setting up on Twitter to have your own account is easy, but there are a few things that you should be aware of when organizing your account. This can apply even if you already have an existing account too, so consider these tips and it can improve your entire Twitter experience.

The first thing to do if you don't have an account is go to <http://www.twitter.com> which is the home page of Twitter. You will be asked to either login or register. If you don't have an account, then of course you will need to register. So let's go through the registration process and explain it all here.

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 and this is where you need to give some thought to how you are going to represent yourself on Twitter. You should remember that you can set up more than one account on Twitter, but you will need a different email address for each one.

Now this is where the thinking bit comes in. The first account you register should always be in your own name if you can get it. Naturally, common names like JohnSmith (there are no spaces in usernames) will already be taken. However it is possible to get variations on your own name such as John_Smith, or John_Smith23 or some variation like that. You can only use an underscore in a username. Hyphens are not permitted in the field.

It isn't absolutely critical that you register your own name, but I would advise you do if you can, particularly if your name is an unusual one. I'm sure the last thing you want is someone else impersonating you on Twitter, or anywhere else for that matter.

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

You are now 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 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

Next thing we are going to do is fill out our 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 on joining is already entered here, but now it's time to pad this out so people can find you on Twitter and 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 third party applications.

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. Although it can be done, it can confuse your follower base, so I wouldn't recommend doing it on a weekly basis. 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 over it and do it well. Don't simply enter a bunch of keywords as they appear totally uninteresting to people, although they may get you 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 a keen gardener and hiker who also has a passion for the outdoors, internet marketing and affiliate marketing who also loves social media

.

Now that description is only 143 characters, so you could still get some more keywords in the bio. No doubt you can see the ones that are there which are gardener, hiker, internet marketing, affiliate marketing and social media. Using these terms in your bio will have you coming up 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.

Your location is next and is also important so people can search and find others in their same area. It will also be important to you 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 have to approve followers. NEVER turn this on if you intend to use Twitter to meet new people. They just couldn't be bothered requesting permission to follow you unless they know you personally.

You can now save your settings, but note here 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 have a couple of thousand followers.

Notices

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

The Replies function is an interesting one and will determine 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. It is worth noting that the Direct Messages possibly needs a bit of explanation though as to what they are 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 adds to your email and I would leave it off unless you like the buzz of being told someone new has followed you.

Picture Tab

This is really important. When you open this page you will see the small avatar on the screen which is the default 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 just 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 and you will stand out for yours.

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, whatever you do, just change it so you are not running the default. It shows you have taken some time setting up your account.

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 is worth doing well. Later on I will show you places where you can get a more professional background than those offered here.

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. It is also limited in that it 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. Makes it hard to read I've found, 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 to go back a fair way or search for tweets you may want to refer back to.

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 instance. That way you don't miss important tweets from people who are more important to you than others. At the time of writing, Tweetdeck is probably the most widely used application for Twitter and I would highly recommend it to you.

Your Tweets

Start getting some tweets into the system now. On the Twitter home page, it asks What You Are Doing. Quite frankly many people don't care until you have built a relationship with them as a result of following. But there are some good ways to get started. Follow some blogs that you are interested in via an RSS feed to a feed reader such as Google. (Search these on Google if you are not familiar with the terms.

There is heaps of information on there and could occupy an ebook of its own.) Start by posting links to interesting posts on Twitter about them with a link to the blog post. For example: "Interesting post on pest control in tomatos. Link". Make sure you always include http:// in the link and not just www so the link is clickable in the Tweetstream. If it's a long link, Tweetdeck has a facility to shorten it to a small url.

Another good way of starting out tweeting is with quotes. Do a search for some quotes of interest and tweet these. Personal development ones are great and also quotes by famous people. Here's one I just found in the Tweetstream as an example: "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." — Aristotle. There are thousands of these all over the internet that you can use.

Whatever you do, at no stage of your Twitter career start posting sales tweet after sales tweet. Your career will be shortlived if you do and people will unfollow you very quickly. Twitter is about engagement, value and a social experience. A constant flow of sales links is just not on. By all means post links to your products or sites, but keep them to around 5% of your total tweets at the most.

Another good idea with your tweeting is to keep religion and politics out of them. These subjects can only alienate followers and you can lose them.

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. It is a very useful way of starting conversations with people in order to build relationships. Simply comment on one of their tweets.

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

Retweeting

People appreciate retweets and 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. I usually put two pipes, which is holding down the Shift key on the \ character. This will produce “||” which clearly shows the end of the other person's tweet and your reply or comment.

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

The Big Decision

It is probably time now to make a big decision as it will affect the way in which you use Twitter considerably. That decision relates to quality versus quantity. If you are into marketing, then quantity of followers will be important to you. It's like building a list. But if you want to keep things personal, then quality of followers will be what you need. 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. Build your following base slowly. 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 for a start. The reason for this is that when you follow people, they will most likely follow you back. Many people don't do this automatically, although some do, particularly in the internet marketing space. Some people will actually go and look at your Twitter home page to decide if you are worth following or not in their eyes.

This is where your profile and the settings that you took all the trouble to do will stand you in good stead.

Some Good People To Start With

Here are just a few people that you can start following straight away. They are included because they are great exponents of Twitter and you will learn a lot simply by watching their tweets. You will see their style of using Twitter and can emulate the good points and leave out what you don't like in developing your own style. They will all follow you back too usually, so you will build your own follower base. All these people have large follower bases which they have built by being active, engaging and providing value to others on Twitter.

Ange Recchia aka @angesbiz

Ange Recchia here better known as @angesbiz on Twitter and many other Social Networks. I'm a Social Media and SEO Consultant/Coach for WebVision2020 Pty Ltd and write about Twitter at <http://socialnetworkingnewsdaily.com/> I also love to write about Personal Development at <http://angesbiz.com> You should follow me because I am on the most incredible journey of my life at the moment, I love to meet new tweeps and share interesting links while engaging in conversation. In other words, I like to be **Social!**

Follow Ange at <http://twitter.com/angesbiz>

Ric Raftis aka @RicRaftis

I am a Business Coach, Internet & Affiliate Marketer and Web Designer who loves Twitter & Joomla. I am also a Cagora Community Partner in 5 Worlds. I am also a Geek! Follow me and I will follow back. Engage me and I will answer. I love to meet new people and make new friends and Twitter is a great way to do it. I also run the Help Via Twitter site at <http://www.helpviatwitter.com> where you can get answers to all sorts of questions on the Forum where you aren't restricted to questions of 140 characters.

Follow Ric at <http://twitter.com/ricraftis>

Mike Wesely aka @Mike_Wesely

Hello, I sure hope ur having a "Twonderful Day". Mostly Smart People Follow Me!!! If You're Not, You probably Wouldn't Like Me Anyway. Also, if your Smart, you should go to and watch <http://TwitTalk.tv>, were we teach people how to use twitter more effectively. Check Out the Achieved shows at bottom. If for some reason You get bored there, Liven up your day by going to <http://VideOptin.com>. Oh but most importantly, say hello to me using the @Mike_Wesely at the beginning of your post. I always try to respond. That is the Respectful way :-)

Follow Mike at http://twitter.com/Mike_Wesely

Michele Price aka @ProsperityGal

Twuccess twith <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/TwitterToday>, you learn twit tip and we showcase Tweepers every week, who you are and what you do so you can build a strong networking well. I am a heartfelt business woman who shows you easy ways to connect and succeed, oh I cook a mean pot roast too, giggle. p.s. love to tweet inspirational quotes to get you to thinking in a focus that takes you where you want to BE.

Follow Michele at <http://twitter.com/prosperitygal>

Wayne Mansfield aka @WayneMansfield

After many years as a Internet Marketer I have come late to Twitter. My business is the staging of seminars in Australia, NZ, India and the Middle East on business and personal education. Twitter is someting else... there is a level of engagement on Twitter that allows the meeting new people. To get the best from Twitter, I always follow you back and try yo respond to your messages. Fun is Twitter and you will see the banter between myself and quite a few people. Real friendship are built on Twitter. Retweeting is the ultimate compliment to the posts of others - when you RT RT you are sharing inspiring words - great quotes are vitamins for the brain....I retweet good tweets all the time and enjoy a good quote or two. Make sure you say hello so we can get to know each other.

Follow Wayne at <http://www.twitter.com/waynemansfield>

Ivy Clark aka @IvyClark

I'm a freelance web generalist (web designer/developer/information architect) passionate about usable web design and I guess I'm geeky as I love new toys. My hobbies are varied depending on my mood - gardening, nature walks, jewellery making, scrapbooking, surfing the web, reading or just basking in the sun . I'm still relatively new to Perth, having moved here from Singapore just 6 months ago, so I'm really enjoying the newness and excitement that everything brings . I love making contact with like-minded folk and love how we can share ideas, knowledge and learn from everyone we connect with in Twitter.

Follow Ivy at <http://twitter.com/ivyclark>

Well, that should get you going with a few people and there is a good cross section there of people and styles.

Twellow

Twellow, at <http://www.twellow.com> is another 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, which then have sub categories as well. You just click on a category and the list of people in that area are displayed. 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, (not Tweetdeck), you will be able to follow people directly from the screens where the profiles are displayed.

Mr Tweet

Mr Tweet at www.mrtweet.net is 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 already be logged in to Twitter yourself 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 earlier about setting up your Twitter background so that it didn't just look like the default Twitter page. Leaving it like that shows a lack of care on your part. You need to distinguish yourself from the crowd and that attracts more followers, or at the very least impresses people with your professionalism.

Now if you're a bit of a Photoshop whiz, then you can do your own background, full of bells and whistles and load it up 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, the best thing to do is to 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 at <http://www.socialtoo.com> is a useful automated tool for Twitter. At Social Too, you can set your account up to do some autopilot things for you. First of all, you can set SocialToo up to automatically follow everyone who follows you. This can take the drudgery out of checking all your new followers and then going 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 most 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 some old hands too, were setting up an auto Direct Message that basically said, "Hello, thanks for following me. Now go and 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 unfollowed you as well. Another function of SocialToo is that it will automatically unfollow anyone who unfollows you. Personally I don't think this is a bad thing. If people aren't interested in you any longer, then are you really interested in them? If you really want to keep the updates from someone, just go and follow them back when you see their name on your unfollows email each day.

TweetLater

Tweetlater 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? Well you need to remember that the Twitter audience is constantly changing and the tweetstream occurs quite fast. The more people someone follows, the greater the number of tweets appearing and they won't read them all, I promise you. It just isn't possible. 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 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, it is worth persisting with in the absence of an alternative tool. What Twitterfeed does is that 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 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 her 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 at <http://twitdom.com> would have to be the greatest site relating to Twitter. It is a repository for all Twitter related applications and it is just absolutely amazing what there is in there. At the time of writing, Twitdom had nearly 500 Twitter related applications in its database. Quite amazing when you think about it that there has been so many third party applications written and is a pretty powerful indication as to the value of Twitter.

It also indicates the confidence of the market has that Twitter will become a part of the mainstream very soon.

Friendfeed

Friendfeed at <http://www.friendfeed.com> is an automating tool you can use in conjunction with Twitter. Friendfeed is a bit of a hub if you like 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 saves you time.

Your Twitter Karma

Your Twitter Karma at <http://dossy.org/twitter/karma/> is a really useful site for having a look at your followers and who you are following. It's great for managing your account from a followers/following perspective. Unfortunately it doesn't seem to load very quickly and can be unreliable, but when it is working it's great. It shows you all you all the people you are following and all those that are following you. 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. This is great for management as you can decide whether or not to unfollow them.

By checking the boxes, you can actually do a bulk unfollow of a heap of people at once 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.

Conclusion

Twitter is absolutely fantastic application whether you use it for business or pleasure.

I hope these tips and resources that you received in this report will make it a fantastic experience for you.

Now go out there and start flying on Twitter!

Dennis Lively