

# Twitter

VOCABULARY  
& USAGE  
GUIDE



## BEFORE YOU START TWITTERING, TAKE A MOMENT AND LEARN THE VOCAB!

Thanks to a bunch of mainstream media coverage, a lot of folks around me are becoming more interested in participating in the Twitterverse. "All right, all right," they say. "You've convinced me. But how do I get *started*?" It's almost like walking into a giant party for the first time: You're not sure where your friends are, the bar is on the other side of the

room, and the bathrooms are anyone's guess. Allow me to be your party guide.

Sure, sure, you could also just Google "beginner's guide to Twitter" and read a any number of other guides that have been written. Problem is, I feel like most of them focus on two niches: how to be a fanatical Twitterer,

and/or how to be a really obnoxiously popular Twitterer. What I'm aiming for here is more for people who want to experiment a little and connect with other folks on a pretty direct level. We'll talk later about different ways you can participate, but for now, let's just get the basics down.

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<http://www.deannazandt.com/2009/02/26/a-non-fanatical-beginners-guide-to-twitter/>

## Glossary:

Here are some common Twitter terms you might need to know!

### 1. Following

These are the people whose tweets you've selected to read; their tweets appear in your "feed" or "stream."

### 2. Follower

Someone who is reading your tweets.

### 3. The @ Symbol

Put this before any other Twitterer's username to refer to them. Why? It creates a link to their profile automatically, which is handy for your followers to track conversations or look at people you're referring to

### 4. Rt, RT, or rtw

These stand for "retweet." If you read someone else's tweet that you think people following you should also read, put this before copying and pasting the whole thing, including the original tweeter's username. For example "RT @alpirc Parents day tomorrow, don't forget!"

### 5. The # Symbol

Words that follow # in Twitter are called "hash tags." It's a way of assigning a keyword to a tweet so that so that others can follow the topic.

## Direct Messaging

This is a way of sending a message to someone so only they can see it—like sending a txt message. The person has to be following you in order to receive messages from you, though! (No DMing [Jane Fonda](#) or [Henry Rollins](#) unless they're following you, ya hear?) To do this, you can go to the person's twitter page (aka, their profile page), and click on the "message" link in the left sidebar.



## Finding Your People!

"But how will others know if I'm on Twitter?" Well, you might want to start by telling them. You could go old school and send an email to people you think might be interested, though not that many people do it. I added my Twitter page to my email signature as a subtle way of "announcing" it. Note that the people you choose to follow likely have their profiles set to get an email or other alert every time someone new follows them, so you don't have to tell them. You can also post a note to your Facebook profile, if you have one, telling folks that you're Twittering.

It's a good idea to use your real, full name in [your profile](#) so that if people are searching for you, or if you come up in their list of contacts when they do the email address thingie, they'll see you. (*Thanks, Cos!*)

Another good idea is to [change your icon](#) right away, so that you get rid of the ugly brown default Twitter one. One, it'll help differentiate your tweets in your followers' feeds, and two, it'll help people recognize you when they're looking for you. Many people advocate for using a real picture of yourself, but I say as long as it's something interesting and unique, go for it.

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## Setting Your Settings: Web, Email, Phone, IM, Oh My!

One of the best things about using Twitter is that it's available from any number of devices. You can read and post on the Twitter website, sure, but you can also set up your cellphone to be able to send and receive messages — go to [Settings](#) → [Devices](#) to see how to do that. I don't get every tweet sent to my phone, because it'd just be too much. I have my phone set to receive direct messages only, so it's an additional way to get txt messages from my friends.

You can also keep your Twittering private. In the [Settings](#) page, at the bottom, there's a checkbox that reads "Protect my updates." Select this if you only want people you approve to read your updates.

Another thing to consider is that you can have your tweets also update your Facebook status. Most folks are split on whether this is a good idea or not; I'm a more the merrier kinda grrl, so mine are hooked up. You can do this by adding the [Twitter app](#) to your profile and adjusting your settings there. Or check out the extremely awesome [Ping.fm](#) service. This bad boy updates all of your social networks at once, using whatever type of communication you're most comfortable with.