



Introduction

twitter



Please don't be confused - this is definitely not a guide to making bird noises, in fact it's not anything bird-related at all.

Twitter is the web's fastest growing, hottest social media property right now, and you need to know about it because it has the potential to be as big as/bigger than Facebook and MySpace and even takes on Yahoo and Google for news.

Chances are, you've already heard of Twitter but you may not be completely sure about what it is... You probably have friends who are tweeting right now, in the comfort of their homes or out and about in the big wide world, and you don't even know it.

Twitter seems to be everywhere at the moment - Barack Obama famously used it to great effect, and luminaries and celebrities like Stephen Fry, Bill Gates, Shaquille O'Neal, Britney Spears, Chris Moyles and many more can be found 'tweeting' away to their enormous bands of followers. Companies are flocking to Twitter, coming up with innovative ways to better serve their customers and market their products.

News stories often break, and unfold, via Tweets, and Twitter is even considered to be faster than Yahoo or Google for breaking news, as it can come from journalists and independent Twitterers at the scene.

Are you using it yet?

You can Join Twitter and follow me at <http://www.Twitter.com/robbell>

Your new friend,



Rob Bell, The Marketing Boffin

<http://www.Rob-Bell.com>

<http://www.UltimateGuidesTo.com>

Join my gang - submit your details in the little box on Rob-Bell.com

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What is Twitter?



In layman's terms, Twitter can be thought of as being very much like text messaging, but over the Internet - you compose messages of 140 characters or less as updates. The biggest difference is that Twitter lets you text everyone on Twitter, all at once, rather than texting to an individual!

The official description of Twitter is as follows:

Twitter is a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. People write short updates, often called "tweets" of 140 characters or fewer. These messages are posted to your profile or your blog, sent to your followers, and are searchable on Twitter search.

Although you can only post text on Twitter, lots of services are available to let you tweet links to other content - [photos](#), [music](#), [video](#) etc...

Twitter and sites like it are known as 'micro-blogs' - similar to blogs, except your character limit is rather limited, hence the micro- prefix. Micro-blogs tend to have character limits of around 140, although this differs between different services. [This article](#) provides a little help to maximise your use of the 140 characters.

By default, Twitter shows you the updates for your friends only, but you can view all tweets via the [public timeline](#). Twitter is **not** the place to be sharing secrets, as everyone can see everything you tweet, unless you send a direct message. Everyone can see your @replies - don't make the mistake of thinking these are private too!

Twitter does not cost any money to use – now that's value for money!

Some analysts find Twitter's apparent lack of a revenue-model difficult to understand, but others do not see this as a problem. Last Friday, Feb 13th, investors showed Twitter some early Valentine's Day Love by [investing a further \\$35m of venture capital](#) (plus another undisclosed sum from existing investors) in the service. Lots of people have ideas how Twitter can start to make money, but I doubt anyone can tell you for sure how they are going to when they do.

How can I access Twitter?

1. Over the Internet at <http://www.Twitter.com>
2. Via your [mobile phone](#) - you can text in updates, or access the mobile website at m.twitter.com
3. Via a Third-Party Client - Many [applications](#) have been developed that integrate with Twitter - I use [Twhirl](#) to access Twitter, but I'll talk more about clients and applications later in this guide.

How Do I Get Started on Twitter?

1. [Create an Account](#)
2. Go to the Settings, write a short bio, and upload a picture - people don't like to follow people who don't have one
3. Go to 'Find People' and find friends who are already on Twitter via one of the provided tools:
Invite friends who aren't already on - automatically using the email tool if you have Yahoo, GMail, Hotmail, AOL or MSN
4. Follow the users you're interested in on the 'Suggested Users' tab
5. Write and post your first Tweet

That's it - you're now a Twitterer, welcome to the Twitterverse! It's sometimes peculiar, oft more exciting than you'd expect, and always interesting - you'll like it here!

How Do I Get Followers on Twitter?

There are schools of thought that say the more followers you have, the more popular that makes you and the greater coverage you have - so get as many as you can as quick as you can. I'm not going to cover that strategy in any details, because I don't believe that to be the best long-term approach to life in the Twitterverse. You could use the recently controversial [Twittergetter](#) from Gary McCaffrey or Tim Linden's [Twitter Me Fun](#) (excellent targeted source of Traffic Exchange users on Twitter) to get your Follower list started.

My belief is that people will follow you on Twitter if you are interesting and offer worthwhile tweets. Many people will follow you back when you follow them (especially if they use an auto-follower!) If you contribute to the community rather than taking from it, you'll build followers who like and trust your posts, and see you as a great source of information.

Be creative, be unique, be an expert on your chosen topic, just don't be a spammer - nobody likes a spammer.

[Mr Tweet](#) may help you find relevant users and followers

The Language of Twitter - Tweet me This!



Twitter has given rise to a number of terms previously unknown. You'll come across these when you enter the Twitterverse! Here's an explanation of a few of them you may need for the rest of this guide! It should be noted that Twitter users like to 'twitterise' real words to make them into 'twitterisms' e.g. twitterrific, tweekend, politweets (political tweets). This appears to be done, for the most part, by substituting 'tw' for the initial letters of the word...

This makes Twitter a little bit like Yorkshire people - we use 't' instead of 'the' e.g. t'weekend, t'internet t'weather etc... Twittering in Yorkshire could be confusing!

Frequently Used Twitterisms

The **Twitterverse**, or the **Twitosphere** - the community of Twitter users

Tweeter, or **Twitterer** - a Twitter user

Tweeple - Twitter Users

Tweet - a post on Twitter. **Tweets** - the updates you, and everyone else, post

Followers - people who have chosen to receive updates for a particular Twitterer

Twitterati - the members of the Twitter A-list that everyone wants to follow.

Twitterstream - the public, or friend, timeline - the posts on Twitter are chronologically listed

Mistweet - an accidentally posted tweet - may have errors or be incomplete ie a mistake

Retweet - the action of reposting another user's post, crediting them for it

Retweeter, or **Retweetist** - someone who retweets

Twisticuffs - the posts when 2 or more twitterers have a disagreement

Twetiquette (or **Twitetiquette**) - the right way to behave on Twitter

You can find more comprehensive lists of definitions at [Twictionary](#), [Twittonary](#), and [Twitter Fan Wiki](#)

Twitter Shorthand

Because each post can only contain 140 characters, shorthand is used lots when tweeting:

RT = Retweet, followed by @ then the person you're retweeting's username e.g. RT@robbell indicates you are retweeting one of my posts

OH - Overheard

DM - Direct Message

@ - Send/Reply to e.g. @robbell - sends a message to me on the public timeline

BTW - By The Way

JV - Joint Venture

IRL - In Real Life

LOL - Laugh out Loud, or Lots of Laughter depending on who you ask!

FTF - Face to Face

IMHO - In My Honest Opinion

b/c - because

abt - about

Find more Twitter shorthand (Tworthand!?) [here](#)

TheNextWeb produce a tool, called [Twitterkeys](#), that allows you to insert graphics like ♥ and ➔ into your tweets easily, so you can be a ★ and use them instead of words or phrases that use more characters.

ReTweeting

ReTweeting is the act of posting another person's tweet, but still giving the original poster credit. This is popular because twitterers don't all have the same followers so, by retweeting a post, your followers can see a tweet they otherwise might not have.

Retweets may include useful links, notable information, or things you think are funny e.g. pure_ROKER **RT** @guykawasaki: @robbell There's only one problem. Rich Dad, Poor Dad is Robert Kiyosaki. I'm Guy Kawasaki. (LMAO) - I have a feeling it may be some days before I live *that* little error down - sometimes you just want a Retweet to lay down and die!

Read a [Beginner's Guide to Retweeting](#) at Retweetist

What the Devil is a Hashtag?!?!?

Hashtags, where a '#' precedes a keyword or phrase, e.g. *#valentines-day*, *#JV*, *#marketing*, help to organise content on Twitter into groups that share the same tag.

Services like [hashtags](#) can bring together all the posts with the same tag allowing you to read tweets related to the keyword that share the same hashtag.

e.g. FollowFriday is a weekly 'twevent'(think about it!) each Friday where people recommend their favourite Twitter follows to other Tweeples – each post for FollowFriday contains the hashtag *#followfriday* and can be tracked using a feed reader like [Tweetfeed](#).

Have a look at this example - <http://tweetfeed.com/robbell/follow-friday>

Find out more about Hashtags [here](#)

The Top 10 Twitterers by Number of Followers

For the majority of people, 100 might be a lot of followers, but to others 100,000 is a milestone they've already long passed.

Top 10, according to [stats at Twitterholic](#) on Feb 16th 2009



1. [Barack Obama](#) - 278,444 followers
2. [CNN Breaking News](#) - 195,320 followers
3. [Stephen Fry](#) - 193,117 followers
4. [Twitter](#) - 139,466 followers
5. [Kevin Rose](#) (founder of Digg)- 134,382 followers
6. [Britney Spears](#) - 118,368 followers
7. [The New York Times](#) - 113,658 followers
8. [Lance Armstrong](#) - 105,274 followers
9. [Evan Williams](#) (founder of Twitter, invented 'Blogger')- 104,810 followers
10. [Al Gore](#) - 101,641 followers

See the rest of the [top 1000 Twitter Users at Twitterholic](#)

BEWARE - there are lots of fake profiles set up by people pretending to be a celebrity or person. I suppose the name for it is probably **Twijacking!** [AFP famously announced the arrival of the Dalai Lama on Twitter](#), only to retract it later when the fake was exposed.

What is Twitter Used For?

There are a myriad of people using Twitter for any number of reasons. Here are just 25:

1. Sharing links to sites of interest to your followers
2. Fun - to stay in touch with friends and make new ones
3. Group communications - the public nature of updates means you can update whole groups with one message
4. Networking to get new contacts
5. Communicating with your network
6. Promoting your products/services/content
7. Crowdsourcing - getting answers to your questions, about anything
8. Influencing your network
9. Customer Service - communicating with customers and sending service updates e.g. we have x back in stock, your vehicle is ready for collection.
10. Sending updates from your websites/blogs/social networks
11. Newsgathering and reporting - the [BBC](#) came under criticism recently for using unverified Tweets as sources for reports during the Mumbai terrorist attacks in India. News often breaks on Twitter due to its' real-time nature. Twitterers and Journalists on the scene often provide near real-time news.
12. Redistributing existing content
13. Project collaboration
14. Try out new ideas, and get near-instant feedback
15. Live updates from events and conferences
16. Seeking new staff - Businesses may tweet their latest vacancies
17. Looking for a job - jobs are often advertised by companies and recruiters
18. Political Dissent - the [US Army recently identified Twitter](#) as a potential terrorist tool
19. Replacement for Facebook status updates
20. Flight information and updates e.g. for delays
21. Complaining - people like to complain, and Twitter gives them a platform for this (aka Twhiners!)
22. Discussing (Arguing about) Sports
23. Charm (or repel!) people with your online personality
24. Distribute a book, 140 characters at a time
25. Learn another language - by following foreign language speakers, or [via a language micro-provider](#)

[This page](#) features a list of the ten most creative uses for Twitter - 'to water the plants' is number one!!!

Use Twitter creatively - enhance your communications, broaden your interests and join discussions. Add value to your existing activities and bring joy to people.

Are there any Limits on my Twittering?

Twitter do impose some basic limits, and say they may introduce others in time. Here's their [official statement](#) on limits:

Twitter currently applies limits to any person who reaches:

- *1,000 total updates per day, on any and all devices (web, mobile web, phone, API, etc)*
- *1,000 total direct messages per day, on any and all devices*
- *100 API requests per hour*

We've also placed limits on the number of people you can follow. The number is different for everyone, and is based on a ratio that changes as the account changes. If you hit a follow limit, you must balance your follower/following ratio in order to follow more people- basically, you can't follow 50,000 people if only 23 people follow you. Based on current behavior in the Twitter community, we've concluded that this is both fair and reasonable.

Fairly self-explanatory I think.

Twitter Applications and Resources

The Twitter community has taken advantage of Twitter's open API to come up with an ever-increasing selection of tools, clients and sites that use Twitter data to do something interesting, useful, ground-breaking, or just plain odd! None of the applications below actually belong to Twitter - they're all developed by third parties.

My Favourite 5 Twitter Apps

(as at today Feb 17 - I reserve the right to change my mind at any point in the near future!)

1. [Twhirl](#) - the client I mostly access Twitter through. It makes Twitter more like an IM client, and changed my use of the service completely - I feel much more a part of the Twitterverse because of it.
2. [Twitterhawk](#) - monitors the Twitterverse for terms you provide then can add people who use them and/or send them a message from a selection of 5 you pre-write. The business possibilities for this application are immense - it's highly targeted messaging. I use it to follow people who talk about certain terms.
3. [Is.gd](#) - URL shortening service. Pronounced "ees goood", like Manuel from Fawly Towers! Reduces urls to a reasonable number of characters.
4. [Twitter Grader](#) - grades your twitter account giving you a % score. More usefully, suggests good follows for you and lets you find the 'Twitter Elite' in your area (I'm in the top 3 for West Yorkshire, exciting...)
5. [Twitscoop](#) - find out what's hot on Twitter right now, track conversations, topics or conferences using the search function.

Special Award for being Mightily Useful, but potentially dangerous

[Tweetlater](#) provides a number of tools - track keywords, schedule tweets, automatically follow people who follow you and send them an automated thank you note, even publish your own personal 'tweetstream'.

Unfortunately some people's thank you notes can be a bit spammy - which never goes down well, and can even lose you followers. Some also think it's good to publish a list of their latest followers via an automated message, I find this particularly impersonal - I'm an individual to communicate with, not just part of a list!

Use this application with care, and it will enhance your Twitter experience. Misuse it at your own peril.

Twitter Clients



Clients provide you with an interface through which to use Twitter - the basic Twitter web page feels somewhat limited, mainly because it doesn't refresh automatically - you have to do it manually to refresh your timelines and get the latest tweets.

According to [Twitstat \(via Mashable\)](#), after Twitter's built-in web posting tool, the five most popular Twitter clients are:

1. [Tweetdeck](#)
2. [Twitterfeed](#)
3. [Twirl](#)
4. [Twiterrific](#)
5. [Tweetie](#)

Updates from text messages are the next most popular way to send tweets.

I use [Twirl](#), mainly because I like the way it displays tweets in an opaque sidebar - it's relatively unobtrusive, and means I don't need a separate browser tab always open for Twitter, that I have to manually refresh to see the latest Tweets. It also has built-in url shorteners, and notifies me with a sound on arrival of DMs and @s. I don't have an opinion on the other clients because I haven't tried any of them for very long. Mashable has a [great article on Twirl vs Tweetdeck](#) you may like to read.

I also have [TwitterBerry](#) installed on my Blackberry, but I am rarely mobile for long in the cold months, so haven't used it much.

Short URL Services

The 140 character limit makes urls that link to pages other than a site's homepage undesirable because they can easily eat up a quarter or more of your character limit. Short url services allow you to use a far shorter url to save you precious characters.

e.g. the very character-rich link <http://www.rob主blog.com/personal/theres-snow-way-of-stopping-a-committed-entrepreneur-even-an-idiot-like-rob-bell> shortens to the much-briefer <http://is.gd/jLA3> allowing me to include the link in a relevant tweet without wasting all my characters.

[Is.gd](#)

[TinyURL](#)

[Bit.ly](#)

[Snurl](#) / [Sn.im](#)

[Twurl/Tweetburner](#)

Search Apps

These applications wade through Twitter data to find you information on the people, topics, discussions and subjects you want to know about. There are those that state that Twitter has the edge over Google when it comes to real-time searching, and the real value of Twitter might even lie in its' search results. Twitter themselves acquired Summize, a Twitter search engine, last year. You can use their search engine [here](#)

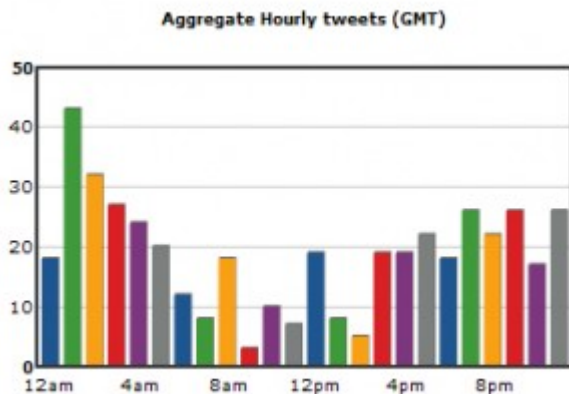
[Twellow](#) - Twellow analyses all posts on the public timeline to categorise Twitter users into a number of categories. This makes it easier for you to find people talking about the subjects that interest you.

[TwitterSearch](#) - simple interface for searching keywords in Tweets

[TwitStat](#) - real-time Twitter analytics

[TwitterTroll](#) - real time search, shows most popular search terms

Measure Your Influence on Twitter



There are a number of apps that analyse Twitter data, your tweets, and your followers and followees, to provide you with information about your coverage, influence and performance on Twitter.

[Twitter Grader](#) - Provides you with a % grade of your reach and authority ([my grade](#))

[Twinfluence](#) - Measure your influence on Twitter ([my influence](#))

[Mr Tweet](#) - follow Mr Tweet and he'll suggest relevant people and provide several usage stats via DM when he updates your data

[Tweet Stats](#) - Graphs and Charts from your Twitter usage stats ([my graphs and charts](#))

Great Twitter Resources

I couldn't hope to provide a comprehensive list of all the Twitter resources and applications available - the number of apps grows at a fair pace, and others have the ability to devote more time and resources to tracking new Twitter apps - they are listed below, along with some other notable applications.

I've started bookmarking all the Twitter apps I come across, and like, [here](#) (this site is still in private beta, so a bit of a secret, except to you - it's my favourite social bookmarking site by far!)

[Magpie - 'convert your Tweets to bling-bling'](#) - Magpie is an advertising provider offering to pay you to allow promotional tweets on occasion with your other tweets. If you [visit their site](#), they provide you with an estimated monthly income to give you an indication of what you might earn from the service. The feature that convinced me to use this was the one that lets you select how often Magpie Tweets are sent e.g. once every 5, 10 or 20 tweets. You control the frequency - nice option.

[The official Twitter applications page](#)

[Mashable](#) has to be my favourite spot for [all things Twitter](#)

[Twittervision](#) - shows Tweets on a world map, indicating a specified location or where their Twitterer is located

[Twitter Applications Database](#) (Twitdom) is an ever-growing list of Twitapps (is that a new tword?!?)

[Twitter Apps](#)

[Twitter Fan Wiki](#) - Extensive list of apps for Windows, Mac, Linux and Multi-platforms

[31 Power Tools](#) for Twitter Lovers - from [SmashingApps](#)

[140+ More Twitter Tools](#) - more from Mashable

[101 Twitter Resources](#) - Traffikd.com

[60+ Useful Twitter Resources](#) - Webgeek

[Twitter Resources](#) - Wiredpen

[Tools, Apps and Bots to Improve your Twitter Experience](#) - MakeUseOf.com

About this Guide

This is v1.0 of my Ultimate Guide to Twitter, which will doubtlessly grow and grow and grow some more over the coming weeks and months. Suggestions, criticisms, contributions and comments are always welcomed. My email address is **rob@ultimateguidesto.com**.

All images used are either my own, or believed to be in the public domain as they were sourced there. Please contact me in the unlikely event you find an image of yours which is not meant to be so readily available!

You can receive my newsletter at Rob-Bell.com – submit your details in the 'Join my Gang' section! You'll be the first to know about one of my many upcoming guides.

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p.s. If you've enjoyed this guide, please tweet this message (select the message, copy it, then paste it into Twitter and submit - you have 55 chars left in the message for your own comments):

I just read @robbell's free Ultimate Guide to Twitter from <http://www.Rob-Bell.com> – u need this!

Thank you so much for reading my Ultimate Guide to Twitter



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