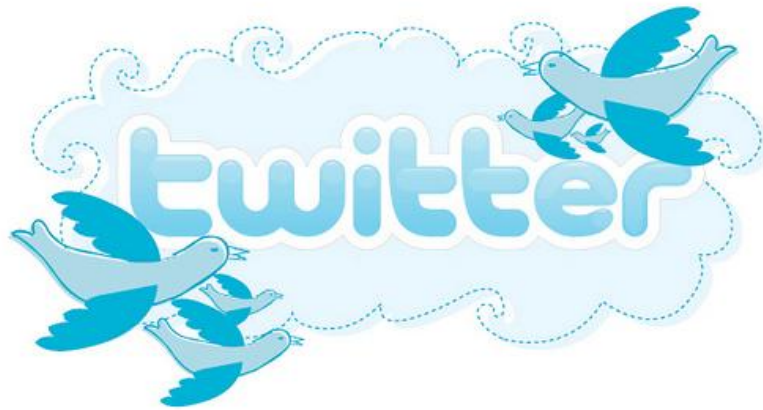


# SOCIAL MEDIA

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## Twitter 101 The Key Terms



ACS ADVERTISING

## TWITTER 101 - The Key Terms

### **Tweet**

Users refer to an individual message as a tweet, as in, “Check out this tweet about our CEO dancing on the sidelines of the Phoenix Suns game.” People sometimes use it as a verb, too, as in, “I tweeted about the stimulus package this morning.” If “tweet” is hard for you to use with a straight face in a business context, try “twittering” as a verb instead. Alternatives include “post,” “message” and “update.”

### **140 Character Limit**

Twitter messages are meant to be short. Most people don’t even go up to the 140 character limit when posting a tweet. (This is the reason for utilities like URL snippers, see at the end of this glossary).

### **Following**

To receive messages on Twitter, you follow other people and companies you’re interested in—which means you get their messages as they post (put another way, their messages show up in your incoming timeline on your Twitter home page). Conversely, people see your messages by following you. People who are following you are called your “Followers.” \*Just because you are “following” someone it does not necessarily mean that they are following you, and vice versa. (As opposed to on Facebook, when you friend request someone you are essentially both “following” each other)

### **Mentions / @replies (Said like “at replies”)**

For companies, one of the most useful things about Twitter is that it lets you exchange public messages with individual users. Simply start a message with @username of the person you want to reach, like this:

“@Ev Glad you liked our vegan cookies. Thanks for twittering about ‘em!”

If Ev is following your account, your message will appear directly on his Twitter home page. (If he’s not following your account, your message will appear in his folder of @username mentions.) People who are following both you and Ev will also see the message on their Twitter home page. Finally, the message will appear in search results, and people who come to your Twitter home page will see it among the messages in your outgoing timeline.

**\*Tip:** On Twitter, @username automatically becomes a link to that person’s account—helping people discover each other on the system. Put another way: when you see an @username, you can always click through to that person’s Twitter page and learn whether you want to follow them.

To find the public messages that are directed to you (i.e., those that start with your @UserName) or that mention you (i.e., those that include your @UserName elsewhere in the tweet), head to your Twitter home page, and then on the right side of the screen, click the tab

labeled your @UserName. For businesses, it's a good idea to keep a close eye on incoming @mentions, because they're often sent by customers or potential customers expecting a reply.

**\*Tip:** To reply easily from the Twitter website, mouse over a message, and then look on the right end for the "Reply arrow". Click the arrow to start a new message addressed to the original user.

### **DM / Direct Message**

Direct messages—or DMs—are Twitter's private messaging channel. These tweets appear on your home page under the Direct Messages tab, and if you've got email notifications turned on, you'll also get an email message when somebody DMs you. DMs don't appear in either person's public timeline or in search results. No one but you can see your DMs.

The one tricky concept with DMs is that you can send them only to people who are following you. Conversely, you can receive them only from people you're following.

You can easily send DMs from the Direct Messages tab by using the pull-down menu to choose a recipient and then typing in your note.

**\*Tip:** To send a DM from your home page, start your message with "d username," like this:  
"d Ev Sorry those cookies gave you food poisoning! Would you prefer a refund or a new batch?"

**\*Tip:** If you're communicating with a customer about something potentially sensitive—including personal information, account numbers, email addresses, phone numbers, street addresses, etc.—be sure to encourage them to DM or email you. As we mentioned earlier, @mentions are public, so anyone can see them.

### **RT / Retweet**

To help share cool ideas via Twitter and to give a shout-out to people you respect, you can repost their messages and give them credit. People call that retweeting (or RT), and it usually looks something like this:

RT @UserName: Twitter is awesome!

Retweeting is common, and it's a form of conversation on Twitter. It's also a powerful way to spread messages and ideas across Twitter quickly. So when you do it, you're engaging in a way people recognize and usually like—making it a good way to connect.

### **Trending Topics**

On the right side of your screen and on the Twitter search page, you'll see ten Trending Topics, which are the most-mentioned terms on Twitter at that moment. The topics update continually, reflecting the real-time nature of Twitter and true shifts in what people are paying attention to. A key feature of Twitter, Trending Topics aggregate many tweets at once and

often break news ahead of the mainstream media. (Note that the trends often include hashtags, described below.)

### **Hashtag (#)**

Twitter messages don't have a field where you can categorize them. So people have created the hashtag—which is just the # symbol followed by a term describing or naming the topic—that you add to a post as a way of saying, “This message is about the same thing as other messages from other people who include the same hashtag.” Then, when somebody searches for that hashtag, they'll get all of the related messages.

For instance, let's say you post the following:

“I voted sixty times in tonight's showdown. #AmericanIdol”

Your message would then be part of Twitter search results for “#AmericanIdol” and if enough people use the same hashtag at once, the term will appear in Twitter's Trending Topics. Companies often use hashtags as part of a product launch (like #FordFiesta), and conferences and events frequently have hashtags associated with them as well.

### **Shortened URLs**

With just 140 characters at your disposal, Twitter doesn't give you much room to include URL links—some of which are longer than 140 characters themselves.

There are also a number of services—URL shorteners—that take regular links and shrink them down to a manageable length for tweets, and some even let you track clicks. Our Social Media Monitoring program does this for us!

### **Block**

The act of blocking a particular user name from following your tweets. You block someone by clicking on their profile and choosing “Block” on the right sidebar.