

The Ultimate
Social Media
Guide to Twitter





Twitter is one of the greatest social networking platforms that can help you spread awareness about your practice and drive more traffic to your website. In fact, statistics indicate that 33% of Twitter followers share information about the companies they follow! Twitter is one of the easiest social networking platforms to manage, requiring very little of your precious time to successfully connect with patients online.

If you're seeking a way to implement a new marketing strategy that is efficient and effective, Twitter may be just the thing you're looking for.

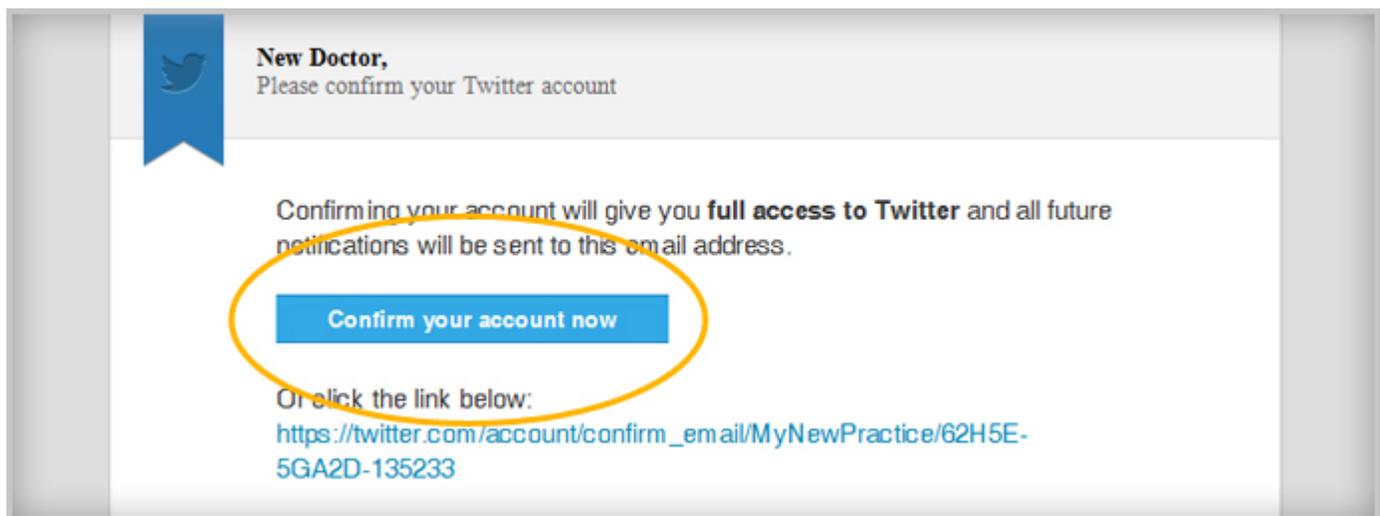
Getting Started

Setting up your new Twitter account is incredibly simple:

- Start by heading to <http://www.twitter.com>.
- On the screen you will see a "New to Twitter? Sign Up" box.
- Input your name, email address, and password.
- You will then be prompted to select a username*. Your username will be the method in which other users identify; you might consider either your practice name, or your own name followed by your doctoral/professional designation (e.g. veterinarian John Doe, owner of John Doe Veterinary Center could use JohnDoeDVM or JohnDoeVetCntr for his username). Twitter usernames may only be up to 15 characters.

* Note: Your username will also become your Twitter URL. (e.g. A doctor who creates their username as "Pet_Doctor" will have the coordinating Twitter URL of "www.twitter.com/pet_doctor", so be sure to choose a username you want affiliated with your practice.

Within a few minutes, you will receive a verification email from Twitter. Click the link within the email to complete the set-up process.

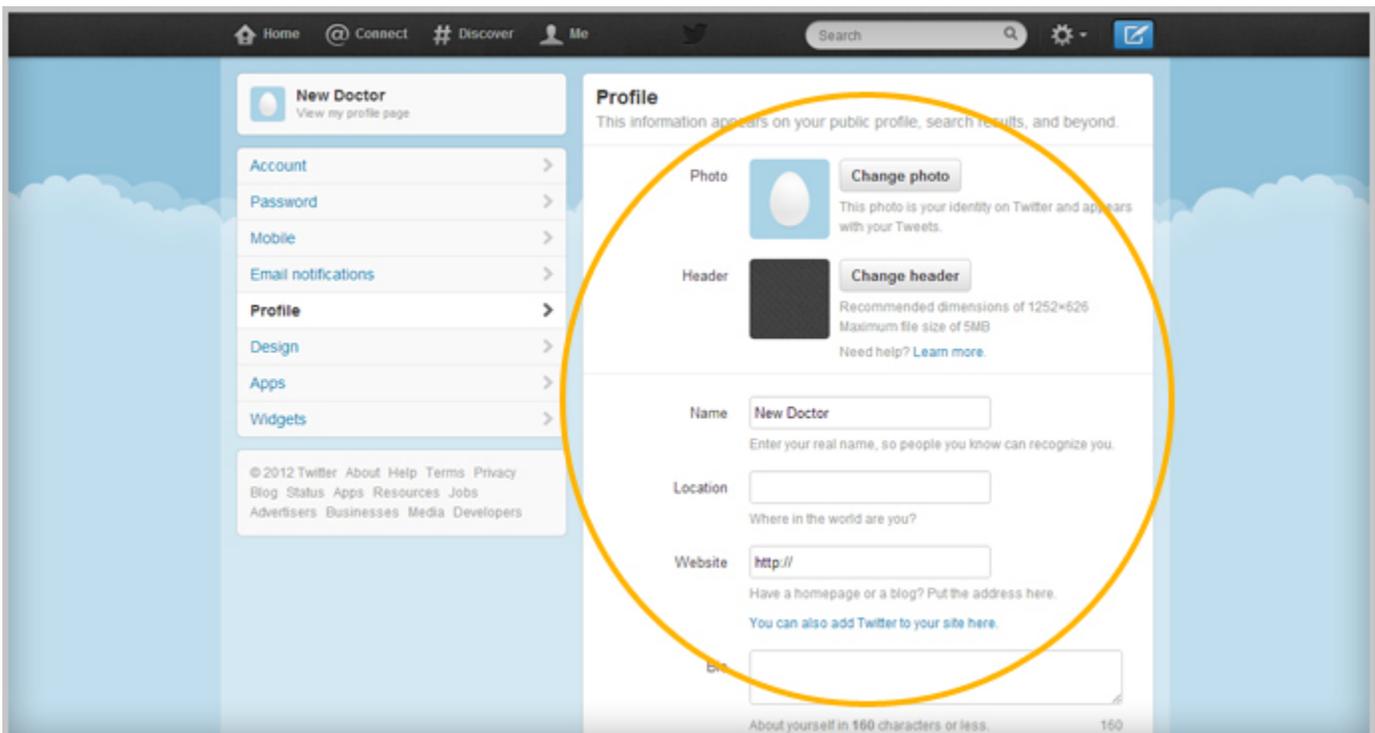




After verifying your new account, you'll want to personalize it with information that online users will find valuable. Here are a few extra steps that will help your Twitter account gain credibility and interest. Start by clicking on the "gear" shaped button within the top navigation.



Within the drop down menu, click "Edit My Profile" to further optimize your Twitter account.





When completing your profile, it's important to highlight **where** you offer your services, to help local prospects easily find you. To best optimize your profile:

- **Upload a Picture with Personality** – While many Twitter business accounts have a profile image of their office or a product, we recommend being more personable and displaying a picture that showcases you.
- **Set Your Location** – Help your followers easily see where your office is located, and input your office's city and state into the "Location" section.
- **Include a Link to Your Website** – Social media provides a great opportunity to increase your exposure among prospective patients. Adding a link to your website via the "Website" section can help drive more traffic to your site and enables users to easily find more information about your practice.
- **Put Some "Auto-" into that Biography** – You only get 160 characters to describe yourself, so why be mundane? Add some personality and let prospective patients see your true colors! We recommend stating your location again within the "Bio" section. (e.g. "My love for kids and teeth inspired me to pursue Pediatric Dentistry and I am proud to bring my fun-filled services to Houston, TX!") Just like that, you can easily describe what you offer and where you're located in a single sentence.

Twitter Glossary

- **Tweet** - a short, 140-character post that describes your current mood, train of thought, or response to something.
- **Tweep** - an active Twitter user.
- **#Hashtag** - a phrase preceded by the pound sign (#). Hashtags have been adopted by social media sites (namely Twitter) to append keywords to social media posts and categorizes users' tweets. When using hashtags, do not put spaces between numerous words pertaining to a single phrase (e.g. #CDA dentist instead of #CDA dentist).
- **Trending** - the most current "popular" tweets and hashtags.
- **Avatar** - your profile image that all tweeps and followers see.
- **"@"** - a symbol appended to a Twitter profile's username to call out or draw the attention of said user.
- **Follower** - a tweep who has subscribed to your Twitter posts. Followers are updated whenever you post a new tweet.
- **Following** - the act of becoming a follower to someone's account or a list of the people you have followed.
- **Retweet** - re-posting a tweet that was authored by someone else. Retweets automatically give the original author credit for the post even as you re-post it.



How to Tweet

Twitter is unlike Facebook or a Blog, in that you are only able to post 140 characters per Tweet. Without having to research and draft up an entire page of quality content, Twitter allows users to efficiently maintain a social media presence which is – extremely – helpful for busy professionals.



Use your 140 characters wisely by implementing word shortcuts, such as “w/” in place of “with”, or “btw” for “by the way”. Twitter users are accustomed to seeing these shorthand abbreviations and will understand your message. You can also keep tweets conversational by using contractions such as “can’t”, “don’t”, in place of “cannot” or “do not”.

When to Tweet

Knowing when to tweet is one of the biggest “difficulties” of Twitter, in that not everyone is paying attention or logged into their profile at similar times. Posting at a time when more users are logged-in increases your exposure and potential to reach prospective patients.

Research indicates that more people are on Twitter after lunch (around noon or 1) until 11 PM. Be considerate of your local time zone and your target audience, and post at times according to where they’re located.

Studies also show that Tweepers who post regularly are more likely to be followed than users who tweet sporadically. The most successful social media tactic is to post at least one valuable message per day.



Tweeting with a Text Message

Many new Tweepers are unaware that they can Tweet right from their mobile phone, via text message or mobile app. Twitter has both Android and Apple apps that allow full access to your account straight from your phone.

For mobile phones that are not Android or Apple devices, you can simply text tweets to your feed. To operate Twitter via text message, you must first log-in to your account on a desktop or laptop and again go to the “Edit Profile” page. In the left-hand menu there is a “Mobile” option. Clicking that will allow you to input your mobile phone number and “activate Twitter text messaging”.

Whenever you wish to tweet via text message, simply send your Tweet to “40404”. If you are having difficulty with Twitter, you can also text “help” to the same number, or turn off the text service by texting “off”.



Sharing Images and Links

After a few days on Twitter, you'll notice many users share images or links within a tweet. Considering some links are over the 140 character limit, you'll want to shorten the URL (web address) to fit within your Tweet. To do this, head over to <http://bitly.com/shorten> and create a free account. This account will enable you to copy and paste any link on the Internet and shorten it to fit within a Tweet.

Take our social media services page for example (www.prosites.com/services/social-media). When you put this URL into Bitly, it is shortened to "<http://bit.ly/UB4AV5>". Now, our Twitter followers can access our blog within a tweet, and we can type a better message to go along with it!



*Note: There are numerous URL shortening options available online. We prefer Bitly because their links allow users to Retweet them without losing the link, which increases your exposure among Twitter followers. Not every shortened URL maintains this functionality.

Make Your Keywords Count

As previously mentioned, you only have 140 characters per post. If you intend on incorporating hashtags into your tweet to increase your exposure, consider how much space each hashtag will take up. Keep your hashtags limited to only significant keywords that relate to your post. A post that is hashtag-heavy may lead users to think you're spamming, causing them to avoid your profile.

Hashtags that connote your location are always a good way to gain exposure among local prospects. (e.g. A plastic surgeon located in Beverly Hills could append "#beverlyhills" to the end of their Tweet to allow local searchers to find their profile more easily).

To learn more about using hashtags on your posts, please refer to our blog post "[Why #Hashtags?](#)"



Seamless Social Networking

As if a simple 140 character post isn't easy enough, there are several apps that make tweeting consistently even simpler:

<http://bufferapp.com/> and <http://hootsuite.com/>

These free apps allow you to create a set of Tweets in advance and set a time for them to be automatically posted. For example, if you are going on vacation or have an extremely busy week scheduled, simply log into your account, create a different post for each day that you know you won't have time to Tweet. Then, set the time and date you want the app to post each Tweet. It's that simple. You can even connect other social media profiles to the account and have the app send your Tweet to every social media profile you have, including Facebook and Google+.



Responsible Tweeting

It's a well-known fact that more businesses are utilizing social media to market their services. While this is extremely beneficial and cost-effective for you, it can irritate those using the social network to simply network. Being a responsible Tweep is key to gaining new followers and more exposure. When tweeting, keep in mind:

- **Not every post should be all about your services.** Sure, it's okay to sprinkle in the occasional self-promotion, but what people really want is a connection with your brand. Post informative facts or fun details about current happenings. For example, the California Dental Association (CDA) tweeted, "*Happy X-Ray Day! When's the last time you had one? bit.ly/YjMZiX #xrayday*". This message states nothing about the CDA itself; it recognizes a larger global event. These types of tweets that provide information or concern for the general public's interests and are what users care most about. They give prospects insight into your experience, knowledge, and life.
- **Now, you don't need to be concerned about every breaking news story or post about every holiday;** the occasional plug for a special discount you're offering or Tweet about an event you and your staff are attending are perfectly acceptable, but don't make these types of posts the majority. They will cause followers to lose interest and prevent you from gaining new followers.
- **Finally, don't forget to acknowledge fellow Tweeps supporting your services.** If someone mentions your practice within their Tweet, give them a "thanks" by adding the "@" symbol, directly followed by their username. (e.g. "@CDA_Dentists Thank you for mentioning our practice as a new CDA Member!"). The "@" symbol will alert the CDA that you have referenced them in a post, so they can be notified of your "thanks".

Tips and Tricks

The number one complaint from present Twitter users is the lack of concern Tweeps have for grammar. This does not include using shorthand versions of words, but rather having complete disregard for regular conventions such as periods or commas where necessary. Be sure your Tweets have correct spelling and grammar prior to posting them.

Within Twitter, users can "Retweet" your message, increasing interest in your profile among their followers. This is one of the best forms of exposure because someone else is referring to you as an authority, which establishes you as a credible, reliable Tweep. To account for "Retweets", Twitter suggests keeping the length of your post to 120 characters, which is 20 less than the maximum allowed. This shorter message makes it easier for users to Retweet.

If you are keen on increasing your exposure through the use of keywords, there are numerous online resources to find trending hashtags. <http://hashtags.org> gives users free access to the most popular hashtags of the moment, and it allows users to sort through hashtags based on their category. This feature is beneficial for Tweeps seeking to post about business or news and want the most current and popular keywords that users are searching.





Tweet Idea Bank

- Information about brands your practice carries
- Your reaction to local or world news events
- Information about your services (e.g. a dentist may post a link to an informative article about tooth decay).
- Link to an informative page on your website along with a short phrase about it (e.g. Have you considered #weightlosssurgery? Visit www.yourwebsite.com to learn more about the procedure.)
- Offer a special only for Twitter followers
- Innovations regarding your services – new products, research, etc.
- Effect of recent events on your practice (i.e. New York doctors Tweeting about the effects of Hurricane Sandy on their practice)
- Local activities you are attending or have attended
- Information about new employees or employee of the month

Join the Conversation

While the idea of social media marketing may have once seemed daunting, Twitter makes an online social presence simple with its easy-to-navigate interface, and short, 140 character post. Now is the perfect time to start reaching more prospective patients through social media marketing on Twitter.

