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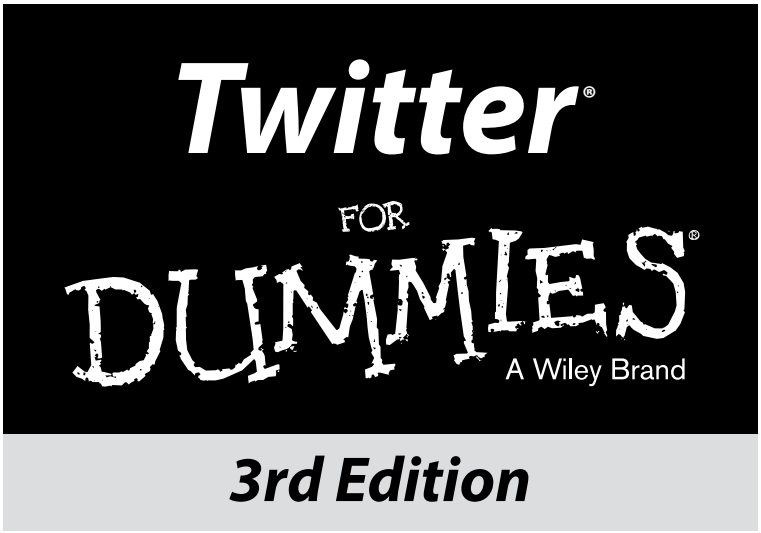

3rd Edition

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FOR DUMMIES®
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Foreword

Let's be honest: You're not a dummy.

Technologies are often designed to guard against the seemingly errant desires and mistakes of the commons. What's remarkable about this technology you intend to learn is its ability to immediately expose and evolve the true desires of the commons.

Although it may seem so, simple technologies like this don't happen overnight. What looks like a story of 1 to 3 years actually has a shadow of over 15 years of work, dumb mistakes, false starts, late-night frenetic insight, and patient distillation. Twitter is a life's work built around three tenets: minimize thinking around communication, expose trends in local and global circles, and spark interaction. What you're holding in your hands describes an essence of communication upon which millions will build their own value.

While not everything can be conveyed in under 140 characters, the essence of Twitter can: "Expect the unexpected. Whenever possible, be the unexpected." I expect you to build something unexpected. Start small, start here.

Jack Dorsey
Inventor, Founder, & Chairman, Twitter
San Francisco, California

Introduction

By now, you've heard and seen that all the world's a-twitter. But you're probably still scratching your head and thinking "I don't get it. What's the point? Why are some people *so* into Twitter?"

Twitter is a tool that you can use to read and publish short, 140-character messages (often called *updates*). These updates can come from almost anyone, anywhere: your friends, organizations you care about, businesses you frequent, publications you read, or complete strangers you've decided to read.

As a user of Twitter, you get to choose exactly whose updates you want to read — which people you want to *follow.* In turn, other users can elect to follow *your* updates. You can post messages publicly for the entire Twitter community, send them privately from one user to another, or, with a private account, post semi-publicly only to users whom you approve. You can view these updates, called *Tweets,* on any device connected to the Internet.

Twitter has changed and enhanced almost every type of media and community imaginable, from news and sports, to entertainment, to the way that people communicate with friends and companies. Twitter has empowered users to raise money for people in need, coordinate rescue efforts in the wake of a natural disaster, and alert authorities to emergencies and illegal activities both domestic and abroad. Twitter has even powered social and political movements, altering major global events and how (and what) we come to know about them as they unfold.

Skeptical anything could do all that in just 140 characters? Give us a chance to help you understand the power of Twitter. We hope you'll use it to create something `#awesome`.

With some time invested in Twitter, you may also find yourself communicating more effectively. You can say a lot with a few words. Because it only takes little scraps of time to read and update, we think you'll be surprised how easily you can get value from Twitter.

About This Book

We, the authors (Laura, Anum, and Brittany), aren't employees, representatives, or shareholders in Twitter. The opinions we give in this book represent what's worked for us and our networks, but not necessarily the Twitter world at large. We've been on Twitter for quite a while, and we have a good sense

about how people are using it. But Twitter is a living, breathing, and constantly changing dynamic community. Twitter itself may change its feature set, its privacy features, or general direction overnight, which changes the way that people use it.

In fact, since the first and second editions, Twitter has released thousands of changes to make it even easier to engage with the community and get value from using Twitter. Although the layout and the exact location of everything will continue to change around, the basics of Twitter likely will always be the same. After you understand how the service works, you can pretty easily find any feature that may have moved since the publication of this book. Note: When things change, keep in touch with `@dummies` or our personal accounts (`@Pistachio`, `@anum`, and `@bleaning`).

New for Third Edition

In this edition, we've added whole new chapters, trimmed old ones, created new Parts of Ten, and updated every single page of the book to reflect Twitter's extensive growth and changes in the five years since this book debuted.

As with the second edition, we've once again updated most of our screenshots and how-to's to reflect the latest changes in the Twitter.com interface. (However, remember that as an Internet product, Twitter can — and will — change at any time, so please use our guides as guides, not the be-all and end-all of the Twitter experience.) We also left in a vintage shot or two, for old times' sake.

In addition to feature changes, you'll find new case studies and examples to help you understand how the world has adjusted to Twitter. We reached out to some of the companies, not-for-profits, and individuals we feel are using Twitter in innovative and surprising ways, so look out for them in sidebars as you go through the book.

Lastly, *Twitter For Dummies,* 3rd Edition, debuts a new author team. Laura sold her startup oneforty to HubSpot, where she met rising social media stars Anum Hussain (say "un-num") and Brittany Leaning. Leslie Poston and Michael Gruen remain dear friends and incredibly important contributors due to their work on the first and second editions.

Motivation

We wrote this book to help more people understand, try out, and benefit from the incredible things Twitter makes possible. When we released the first and second editions, many still considered Twitter a fad. Trust us on this, Twitter has been outright changing lives for more than 8 years already. It's had such an incredible impact on media and journalism that we added an entire chapter just about that. Twitter can be fun, productive, supportive, and surprisingly powerful.

Just ask Laura. Before she "got" Twitter, she was practically homebound with two kids under two, trying to build her personal and professional network from scratch in a new city. Now she's a busy single mom who solo-founded, venture-capital-funded, and sold a company, wrote three editions of the book you're holding, and travels the world keynoting conferences like the Inc 500|5000. Twitter's lightning strike made all the difference. What can it do for you?

Conventions Used in This Book

In this book, we stick to a few conventions to help with readability. Whenever you have to enter text into your phone or computer, we show it in **bold**, so you can easily see what to write. `Monofont` text denotes an email address or website URL. We capitalize the names of Twitter pages and features — such as Settings. Numbered lists guide you through tasks that you must complete in order, from top to bottom; you can read bulleted lists in any order you like (from top to bottom, bottom to top, or any other way).

Note: Screenshots in this book show you what the interface was like in summer 2014. Expect that significant changes took and will continue to take place before, during, and surely, after the writing of this book.

What You're Not to Read

We wrote this book for the first-time Twitter users. If you've already created an account that's following some folks and has some followers, you can probably skip the chapters that talk about how to sign up and get moving — although you might find it useful to review the sections on how to dress up your profile. If you're a business and have already gotten rolling on Twitter, you can probably safely ignore many of the starting chapters and check out Parts III and IV. If you're a Twitter pro and could have probably written this book, feel free not to read anything and use this book as a doorstop (please recycle it when you're done!). Okay, we're kidding — it'll make a great gift for the Twitter-skeptics in your life!

Foolish Assumptions

In this book, we make the following assumptions:

- You're at least 13 years of age. (You have to be at least 13 years old to have a Twitter account.)
- You have access to a computer and the Internet (and know how to use them!).

- You have a working email address that you can access.
- You have a mobile phone and know how to send text messages (if you want to access Twitter by using your mobile phone).
- Bonus: You have a smartphone (if you want to use a mobile Twitter application).
- You can read.

How This Book Is Organized

Like other *For Dummies* books, each chapter in *Twitter For Dummies,* 3rd Edition, is self-contained, and you can read them in any order you want. However, we've organized the book into five parts; and, if you read them in order, you will gain a strong understanding of the Twitter landscape, from signing up to tweeting like a pro.

Part I: Twitter? Like Birds Do?

Part I introduces you to the very basics of Twitter, from understanding how the Twitter works to getting up and running with an account. You can figure out how to find friends and others already on Twitter, how to invite new friends to try it, and how to start communicating with your people both in public and in private. We also look at the different things that you can do with the Twitter.com interface, including some things that may not be immediately obvious.

Part II: Finding Your Flock

After you become familiar with the basics of Twitter, you probably want to know how to dig in a little deeper to find accounts and people you really want to follow, and to communicate in ways that make you look more comfortable using Twitter. We give you all that information in this part, and we provide a list of many resources that you may find useful in getting Twitter to work best for you.

Part III: Twittering in High Gear

Part III dives way into all the ways that you can interact with the Twitter interface, from desktop clients to mobile phone tricks to short-hand commands that can drastically improve the efficiency and information that you can get from Twitter. We dig a little deeper into hashtags, third party tools, and how to share visual content on Twitter.

Part IV: What's the Point? Using Twitter to Your Advantage

In Part IV, we ask you to ask the big questions about why you'd want to use Twitter and what sort of presence you might want to cultivate. We go through the different ways in which people, businesses, media, not-for-profits, and other organizations can use Twitter. We also provide case studies and examples for how brands and organizational presences have benefited other users on Twitter and themselves, and how they've successfully used Twitter to improve their brands' transparency and customer relations. There's a whole chapter on how Twitter and global media have changed each other over the past 8 years. Lastly, we show examples of Twitter's massive social and political implications, to give you a taste of some of the `#awesome` Twitter makes possible.

Part V: The Part of Tens

The final section is typical of every *For Dummies* book. In these chapters, we provide you with ten Tweets you can send today, ten cool ways to use Twitter, ten Twitter tools and services, and ten resources for Twitter glory.

Icons Used in This Book

Icons in this book point out important tidbits for you to look at, remember, and absorb. In this section, we go over the icons that we use throughout the book to guide you on your Twitter journey.

The Tip icon points out helpful information that's likely to improve your Twitter experience.

The Remember icon marks interesting or useful facts that we cover in detail in earlier chapters or something that's so important that you need to remember it while you're using Twitter.

The Privacy icon denotes that you should be careful about the Twitter activities that we're discussing. You may find yourself with a security or privacy concern.

The Warning icon highlights potential danger. When we use this icon, we're letting you know that you should proceed with caution.

Whenever you see this icon, rest assured that we're just letting our inner geeks run wild. Here we point out information that's interesting but not absolutely necessary to your understanding of the topic at hand. If you want all the details you can get, read these paragraphs. If you just want to know the basics, skip it.

Beyond the Book

Laura's daughter Zoe once asked her why we wrote *Twitter for Dummies* as a book instead of writing it "as a Twitter." Aside from being totally adorable, this was also a pretty good point for a first grader. We're excited that with this third edition comes significant, actionable online content to support your experience getting started on Twitter. Beyond the book that you're holding right now and of course our Twitter account (`@dummies`), we've created the following:

- **Cheat Sheet:** Go to `www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/twitter`, and you'll find our handy cheat sheet for using Twitter. We've organized the cheat sheet into several sections. You get at-a-glance guides to using Twitter's access points, defining the most commonly used Twitter mechanics, some Twitter guidelines to live by, and our short guide to what *not* to do on Twitter.
- **Extras:** On several of the pages that open each of this book's parts, you'll find links to web extras, which expand on some of the concepts discussed in that part. You'll find them at `www.dummies.com/extras/twitter`. The web extra for Part II helps you feel less anxious about getting started on Twitter by showing you 5 goofy first Tweets (including 2 written by your faithful authors). In the web extra for Part III, you'll find out how to rock Twitter with visual content the way Ellen DeGeneres, Bat Dad, and others have. Part IV has a web extra on how to wield Twitter like a conversational master. For Part V, we show you how to approach people you don't know yet using Twitter.

Where to Go from Here

If you haven't used Twitter before, mosey on over to Chapter 1 and start reading — we can get you up to speed in no time. If you've been using Twitter for a while and understand where everything is, but you want a better idea of how to use the service, head over to Part III, where we shift Twitter into high gear. If Part III is old hat for you, Part IV (particularly Chapters 11–14) gets into how Twitter changes business, media, socializing, and even social change. You'll find stories that can help you grow as a Twitter user.

With that, we'll see you online!

Part I

Twitter? Like Birds Do?

web extras

For Dummies can help you get started with lots of subjects. Visit www.dummies.com to learn more and do more with *For Dummies.*

In this part . . .

- Learn the basics of why you may want to use Twitter
- Set yourself up with a Twitter profile that you can call your own.
- Find all the basic stuff you need so that you can get started in no time.

Chapter 1

Getting Started with Twitter

In This Chapter

- Understanding what Twitter's all about
- Seeing how individuals, organizations, and businesses use Twitter
- Discovering what you can do with Twitter
- Getting into the microblogging mindset

You may have heard of Twitter but have no idea what it actually is. Twitter is basically a powerful social network that allows you to keep up with the people, businesses, and organizations you're interested in — whether you know them personally or not. It also lets you share what you're doing with the world — everyone from your family and friends to complete strangers. (You'll have to bear with us to find out why you would want to do that.) MIT Professor Andrew McAfee (`@amcafee`) describes Twitter this way: "With Twitter, my friends are never far away."

McAfee was most certainly right, because Twitter's company data in July 2014 showed that 115 million active monthly users were sending more than 53 million Tweets daily. That's a whole lot of tweeting! Additionally, of those 53 million Tweets, almost 40 percent were sent from mobile devices such as cellphones and tablets. (We talk more about tweeting from your desktop computer versus your mobile device in Chapter 4.)

Every day, we see dozens of new ideas and ways to use Twitter. In this chapter, we do our best to introduce the basic ideas and to explain how Twitter works and why it's so powerful.

Figuring Out This Twitter Thing

Twitter is a fast-evolving, surprisingly powerful new way to exchange ideas and information, and to stay in touch with people, businesses, and organizations that you care about. It's a social network — a digital abstraction that

represents who you know and who you're interested in (whether you know them personally or not) — that you can access from your computer or your mobile device anywhere that has an Internet connection.

Twitter has one central feature: It lets users instantly post entries of 140 characters or less, known as *Tweets,* through the Twitter website (`https://twitter.com`), through the Twitter application on a mobile device, or by way of the numerous third-party applications that are available for both. (We talk more about the different ways to tweet in Part III.)

On the most basic level, Twitter is a communications network that combines elements of text messaging; instant-messaging communication tools, such as iMessage on Apple devices; and blog-publishing software, such as Blogger and WordPress. As with blogging, your Tweets are generally published to the world at large, and anyone can read them on Twitter.com (unless you make your account private to protect your Tweets so that only those you choose can see what you share). Unlike blogging, Twitter limits you to just 140 characters. As with instant messaging, you can communicate directly with people (through direct messages), but each public message has its own unique resource locator (URL), so each message is actually a web page. Instant messaging also lacks the social network "following" features of Twitter and basic ideas such as "publish-subscribe" and one-to-many broadcasting of messages.

Think you can't say anything meaningful in 140 characters? Think again. *Twitterers* (people who use Twitter) are not only innovating clever forms of one-liners, haiku, quotes, stories, and humor, but also including images and links to things like websites and blog posts, which carry a lot more information and context. Writing 140-character messages seems trivial. But writing headlines and very short advertising copy is famously hard to do really well, and the right words can be quite powerful. Consider: "Man Lands on Moon."

Twitter sounds simple — deceptively simple. When you think about how millions of people around the world are posting Twitter messages, following other people's Twitter streams, and responding to one another, you can start to see the significance behind Twitter's appeal. In fact, Twitter has noticed that it acts like a "pulse of the planet," a record of what everyone is thinking about, talking about, doing, and feeling — right now. Now, that's pretty interesting!

True, Twitter can look like it's full of noise. But once you find interesting people and accounts to follow, your Twitter stream shifts from a cascade of disjointed chatter to one of the most versatile, useful online communications tools yet seen — that is, if you take the time to find out how to use that tool correctly.

Twitter is a great way for you or your company to connect with large numbers of people quickly and personally, just as though you were having a conversation. In tech-speak, Twitter is a microblogging tool; however, you can more easily think of Twitter as a giant cocktail party with dozens of conversations you can join (or start) at any moment. Or, if you prefer a work metaphor, Twitter is like the office water cooler, where any number of informal (or formal) conversations can take place.

If you're familiar with blogs, instant messaging, and web-based journals, you can start to understand what makes Twitter so unique. The web offers a lot of information. Twitter can turn those long articles, lengthy conversations, and far-reaching connections into easily digestible facts, thoughts, questions, ideas, concepts, and sound bites. In other words, when you have only 140 characters, you have to be succinct.

The origins of Twitter

Twitter connects a wildly diverse array of people from all over the world, erasing all barriers and boundaries. Some of the media hype has called Twitter nothing short of revolutionary. And because Twitter is so easily customizable and open-ended, it has continued to become more and more popular with people and companies.

But Twitter's beginnings, like those of so many other digital innovations, were humble. Twitter was built in 2006 by four technology entrepreneurs: Evan Williams, Biz Stone, Noah Glass, and Jack Dorsey. All four were then employed by a San Francisco–based web company called Odeo, which specialized in publishing software for *podcasting* (audio broadcasting over the web). Dorsey was the one who came up with the original concept, and the four subsequently built it as an internal tool for Odeo employees. At first, they had no idea that it would catch on the way it did.

A management shakeup led to Twitter's and Odeo's reincorporation into a new company, Obvious Corp. Shortly thereafter, Twitter was released to the public. Already a favorite among Silicon Valley's geek elite, Twitter had its real coming-out party at the South by Southwest Interactive Festival (SXSWi) — an annual confab of tech and media innovators in Austin, Texas — in March 2007, when it was about a year old. Not only did it win the conference's Web Award honor, but also, its rapid-fire messages became the de facto coordinating and communicating tool for thousands of SXSWi attendees. The company became the digital world's new darling.

Shortly after SXSWi 2007, Twitter was spun off once again, becoming its own company separate from Obvious Corp.: Twitter, Inc.

Now millions of people use Twitter to keep in touch with family and friends, to launch and expand careers, to connect businesses and reach customers, to build a brand, to report the news, and to do a whole lot more. No two people or businesses use Twitter exactly the same way, and that fact is part of the secret to Twitter's success. You might argue that there isn't really a wrong way to use Twitter (as long as you mind the terms of service and don't try to actively do harm), so you get to tool it to your own needs.

How Individuals Use Twitter

I'm starting to think Twitter has nothing to do with birds.

— Comedian Jim Gaffigan via Twitter February 15, 2012
(https://twitter.com/JimGaffigan/status/169975951118172160)

Looking at Twitter for the first time, you may be compelled to ask, "But *why* are all these people, many of whom seem like just random strangers, talking?" At first glance, Twitter seems flooded with disjointed conversations, interactions, and information. You can find news headlines, political debates, observations on the weather, and requests for advice. The idea of Twitter can be a bit confusing for new twitterers.

People have many reasons for using Twitter:

- **To connect:** Most people start using Twitter to forge connections and be part of a community. Others just want to be heard. Twitter lets millions of people around the world hear what you have to say; then it lets you connect with the ones who want to hear from you or talk to you about your passions, interests, and ideas.

  For more on the social side of Twitter, check out Chapter 13.

- **To record:** Some people tweet as a way to take notes on life. They use Twitter at conferences or events, or just while walking around to jog their own memories later about something that happened or what they've discovered. If you're walking down the street and notice a new restaurant you want to check out when you have more time, you might tweet about that. Now you have a way of remembering to go back to that interesting-looking place. Even the Library of Congress records Tweets. Yes, that stuff you publish on your humble little new account will end up in the Library of Congress. Whoa.

- **To share:** Some people use Twitter to share what they think, read, and know. They may tweet links to great articles or interesting items, or they may tweet original thoughts, ideas, hints, and tricks. Some people tweet quotes from speeches or classes, and others share choice bits of their inner monologue. Even when this information can get pretty obscure, with millions of listeners, someone's bound to find it informative or interesting.

- **To stay in touch:** Whole families and groups of long-term friends use Twitter to stay in touch. Twitter can send public or private notes to your friends, and it stores all sent messages, which means that you don't lose your thoughts when you close your browser (or your desktop or mobile

application). Connecting on Twitter is a great way to preserve an initial contact with someone you've just met, such as at an event or conference, in a way that lets you gradually get to know that person more over time.

Twitter is pretty easy to use, meaning that everyone from your 13-year-old cousin to your 92-year-old great-grandma can figure out how to use it to say hello. Because you can access Twitter by using a computer or mobile device (or both!), it fits into mobile lifestyles and brings you closer to the everyday thoughts of those you're interested in.

How Organizations Use Twitter

This #September, clean water means dignity and health in India. Watch the video and be a part of the story: http://youtu.be/6bH7SPNdSt4

— charity: water's September campaign announcement via Twitter, August 21, 2013 (`https://twitter.com/charitywater/status/370181463133528064`)

charity: water is a New York City–based charity working in 22 developing countries around the world, bringing clean water to people in need. Every September, the organization runs a campaign to solicit donations and raise awareness. Every year since 2008, Twitter has played a huge role in the success of the campaign, helping charity: water share educational materials about the cause as well as live updates during in-person fund-raising events.

Although charity: water has a huge reach of 1.4 million Twitter followers, the power of Twitter works for much smaller organizations, too. Groups such as churches and local charities can use Twitter to provide an additional way for members to connect, plan, and reach out beyond their immediate community. Preachers tweet about their planned sermons, youth group directors tweet about events, and local soup kitchens tweet when they need help. Whether it's extra hands for a project, far-reaching assistance with a fundraiser, or some other big idea, Twitter can enable organizations operating on a budget to think on their feet.

New organizations have also sprung up through Twitter. As Laura did for charity:water in December 2008, it's become very common for people to start their own donation campaigns on Twitter and encourage other Twitter users to donate and then tweet about it. But Twitter isn't just for charities. Enthusiasts of just about any interest have banded together on Twitter. You can find organizations for food and wine lovers who share recipes and swap restaurant reviews on Twitter. (You can search for the subjects that interest you at `https://twitter.com/search-home`.)

Musicians use Twitter to spread the word about concerts, song releases, charitable efforts, and their daily lives as celebrities. (Britney Spears' official Twitter account: @BritneySpears is one of the most widely followed) John Mayer (@JohnMayer) live-tweeted the Grammy Awards even back in 2010. Musicians working hard to make a name have used Twitter to engage thriving, and involved, fan bases.

Twitter has also been a big help for community efforts. Whether it's Amber Alerts, fund-raisers, searches for kidney donors, or the effort to "Bring Back Our Girls," 230 schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram Terrorists (#bringbackourgirls), Twitter shines as a tool for social good. Plenty of people in the world want to lend a helping hand, and Twitter's platform makes it easy to do so, in real time, with a global network of connections.

How Businesses Use Twitter

> *#coffee is trending. It's like twitter understands not only what we need, but what really gets us going. #tweetfromtheseat*
>
> *— Charmin via Twitter, August 6, 2014 (https://twitter.com/Charmin/status/497009506455658496)*

If individuals, community groups, and nonprofit groups can use Twitter (as we discuss in the preceding sections), businesses large and small can use it, too.

Discount airline JetBlue uses Twitter to advertise fare specials, put out weather alerts, and conduct customer service (@JetBlue). Coffee retailer Starbucks uses Twitter to connect with customers and spread company culture (@Starbucks), as does online shoe retailer Zappos.com (@zappos). Early on, computer manufacturer Dell started a Twitter account (@DellOutlet) to promote special deals on returned equipment. It announced in June 2009 that its Twitter account had generated more than $2 million in revenue. Predictably, Dell now has many more accounts: @Dell, @DellCares, and @DellEnterprise, just to name a few.

So why would a business want to establish a presence on Twitter? There are several reasons:

- To network with customers and see what they're saying.
- To answer questions.
- To finely tool a company image.