

TWITTER FOR PARENTS

There has been steady growth in the number of parents and students who use Twitter.

Some parents still are unsure what Twitter is about, how to use it, and how to monitor their child so that they are safe and using this very popular social media channel appropriately.

As a result, the goal is to help parents understand the who, what, where, how, and why of Twitter.

WHAT IS TWITTER?

According to *Lifewire* Twitter is:

Twitter and 'tweeting' is about broadcasting daily short burst messages to the world, with the hope that your messages are useful and interesting to someone. In other words, *microblogging*.

Conversely, Twitter is also about discovering interesting people online and following their burst messages for as long as they are interesting.

Each message is called a Tweet and is limited to 140 characters which includes spaces.

GLOSSARY OF TWITTER TERMS FOR PARENTS

In order to learn more about Twitter it's important to understand the language of Twitter. The following are a list terms and definitions for words parents will hear surrounding the use of Twitter.

Tweet - a message on Twitter limited to 140 characters including spaces. A tweet can, and typically, includes a link to a web page, photo, or video. A tweet is public.

Hashtag - is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet. It was created to categorize messages using the # symbol. Hashtags can be seen by the public.

Reply - is any update posted by clicking the Reply button on a tweet. The tweet will include your twitter username with the @ symbol preceding it. A reply is public.

Mention - is any Twitter update that contains "@username" anywhere in the body of the Tweet. This is a way for someone to mention you. A mention is public.

Retweet - is someone else's Tweet that you chose to share with all of your followers. A retweet is public.

Favorite - represented by a small star icon next to a Tweet, are more commonly used when users like a tweet. Favoriting a Tweet can let the original poster know that you liked their Tweet, or you can save the Tweet for later. Favorites are public.

Direct Message (DM) - is a private message sent via Twitter to one of your “followers”. You can only send a direct message to a user who is following you; you can only receive a direct message from users you follow. While this type of message is intended to be private it can potentially be read by anyone. In short, treat them as public.

Following - a Twitter account means you are subscribing to their Tweets as a follower. This means you will see their tweets.

Followers - are people who receive your Tweets. In essence, they have subscribed to receive your updates.

Protected Tweets - when you sign up for Twitter you have the option to protect your tweets which means that your tweets will only be visible to your approved Twitter followers. In other words, if someone chooses to follow your Twitter account you will have to approve them to follow you. While tweets coming from a protected account are intended to have limited access they can potentially be read by anyone. In short, treat them as public.

Tweet Chat - is a pre-arranged chat that happens on Twitter through the use of Tweets that include a predefined hashtag to link those Tweets together in a virtual conversation.

CREATING A TWITTER ACCOUNT

1. Sign Up For Twitter

Twitter is free and it's very simple to sign up for an account. Simply go here: <https://twitter.com/> and enter your full name, email address, and a password then click the Sign Up for Twitter button.

2. Select a Twitter Username

You will then see a screen that allows you select your Twitter Username. While Twitter will suggest a username for you please take the time to think about the username you select. Ideally it would be great to get your name or a version of your name like last name, first initial. While you'll be able to change your username later I find it best to take time to set it up correctly the first time.

3. Follow People/Brands/Organizations

You will then be instructed to follow 5 Twitter usernames. Twitter will suggest accounts for you to follow, but I recommend searching and following people, brands, or organizations that are meaningful to you.

Here is an initial list for parents follow:

Palos School District 118: @Palos_118

Palos East School: @PalosEast118

Palos South Middle School: @PalosSouth118

Palos West School: @PalosWest118

4. Follow 5 More Accounts

Twitter will ask you to follow 5 more Twitter accounts. After you select 5 more, Twitter will ask you to select 5 more, but on the next screen they have a small Skip link at the bottom of the page.

5. Upload A Profile Image

Twitter will then ask you to upload an image of yourself and complete your Bio. Best practices suggest that you upload a recognizable image of yourself and then complete your Bio by telling people about yourself and what you are interested in.

6. Listen

After your account is created it is suggested that you “listen” for a short amount of time. Listening means to watch your Twitter stream and see what other people are tweeting and how they are interacting. At first, your Twitter stream might be a little overwhelming but have patience and in time it will become more familiar to you.

7. Engage

After you’ve listened for some time then you are ready to begin to participate on Twitter by sending your first Tweet. In order to send a Tweet simply look beneath your Twitter Photo and you will find a box that says, “Compose new Tweet....” Enter the contents of your first tweet into the box and click the button labeled Tweet. That’s it.

HOW TO SEARCH ON TWITTER

1. Enter your search into the search bar on twitter.com.
2. At the top of your results page, click More options and then click Advanced search.
3. Fill in the appropriate fields to refine your search results (see below for some helpful tips).

4. Click Search to see your results.

HOW TO FIND YOUR CHILDREN ON TWITTER

Now that you have a basic understanding of Twitter and have set-up your Twitter account you'll probably want to see what your children are posting on Twitter. In order to find your children on Twitter you have three options:

1. You can search for your child on Twitter using Twitter search. Search for your child's full name, or a variation that they use, and you should be able to find their Twitter account and follow them using your Twitter account.
2. If you are unable to find your child on Twitter using Twitter search then you can conduct a Google search using your child's name and adding the words "on Twitter" to the search, e.g. Brendan Jones on Twitter.
3. Finally, if you are unable to locate our child's Twitter username using the above methods you will have to ask them directly for their Twitter username.

Once you locate the username you'll be able to follow their account and monitor their usage to make sure that they are safe.