A banner for Namecheap featuring the logo on the left, the text "As low as \$3.98/year" in the center, and a "Register Now" button on the right. There are also small icons of a person and a speech bubble.

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# How to be awesome on Twitter in 5 steps

Twitter's new features are making the network more welcoming to newbies, but there are some pitfalls to watch out for.



Credit: Martyn Williams



[Lisa Schmeiser \(/author/Lisa-Schmeiser/\)](/author/Lisa-Schmeiser/) | [@lSchmeiser \(https://twitter.com/lSchmeiser\)](https://twitter.com/lSchmeiser)  
Contributor, Macworld Oct 8, 2015 3:30 AM

The great thing about Twitter is it's a way to get a peek into someone else's stream of consciousness. It's a way to eavesdrop on someone's conversations. It's a way to insert yourself into discussions that interest you.

The drawback is that anyone can do that to you too. And while you're probably already well-versed in how not to tweet like a sustained public service announcement against social media, there's another, subtler form of headache you'll want to avoid: Doing or saying something that prompts unwanted or angry responses from the people you know and like.

There are ways you can reduce the potential for creating or amplifying the kind of Twitter exchange that leaves you in a bad mood, begets drama offline, or gets forwarded around for everyone else's rubbernecking entertainment.

## **Tip #1: Remember that social media is a *mass* medium**

In other words, it doesn't matter how few followers you have; what counts is that you are aware that you're tweeting to the whole world. Even if you delete your tweet later, there is no guarantee someone hasn't screen-captured it and turned it into an endlessly recirculating image.

"It's a little old-fashioned to talk about newspapers' front pages, but it's a simple way to remember a rule that still works: Don't do something you wouldn't want to see on the front page of your hometown newspaper," says communications consultant Laura Mecoy.

She points out that social media is now something that potential employers look at, your family monitors, or the authorities appropriate during civil or criminal investigations. So before you tweet, imagine how that little quip will play in a court of law or over the Thanksgiving table.

## **Tip #2: Respect other people's privacy**

Not everyone is going to have your tolerance for sharing details of their whereabouts, how they look that day, or who they're out with. Take your cues on what's acceptable from their own Twitter streams. If these folks don't share a lot about get-togethers, now is not the time to include them in your tweet about tripping balls at Burning Man.

Ask before posting photos that include other people. This rule goes double for anyone who's gotten in trouble for posting unflattering photos in the past.

"If you've been told in the past that you've posted unattractive photos on social media—simply ask first," says advice columnist April Masini. "It's simple, and it may slow down your posting, but that's not a bad thing."

### **Tip #3: Favorite wisely and well**

Whether you want to star a tweet because someone said something nice about you, because you like what someone said in general, or because there's a link you want to follow up on, favorites are basically the bookmark function of your Twitter stream and they should be managed as such.

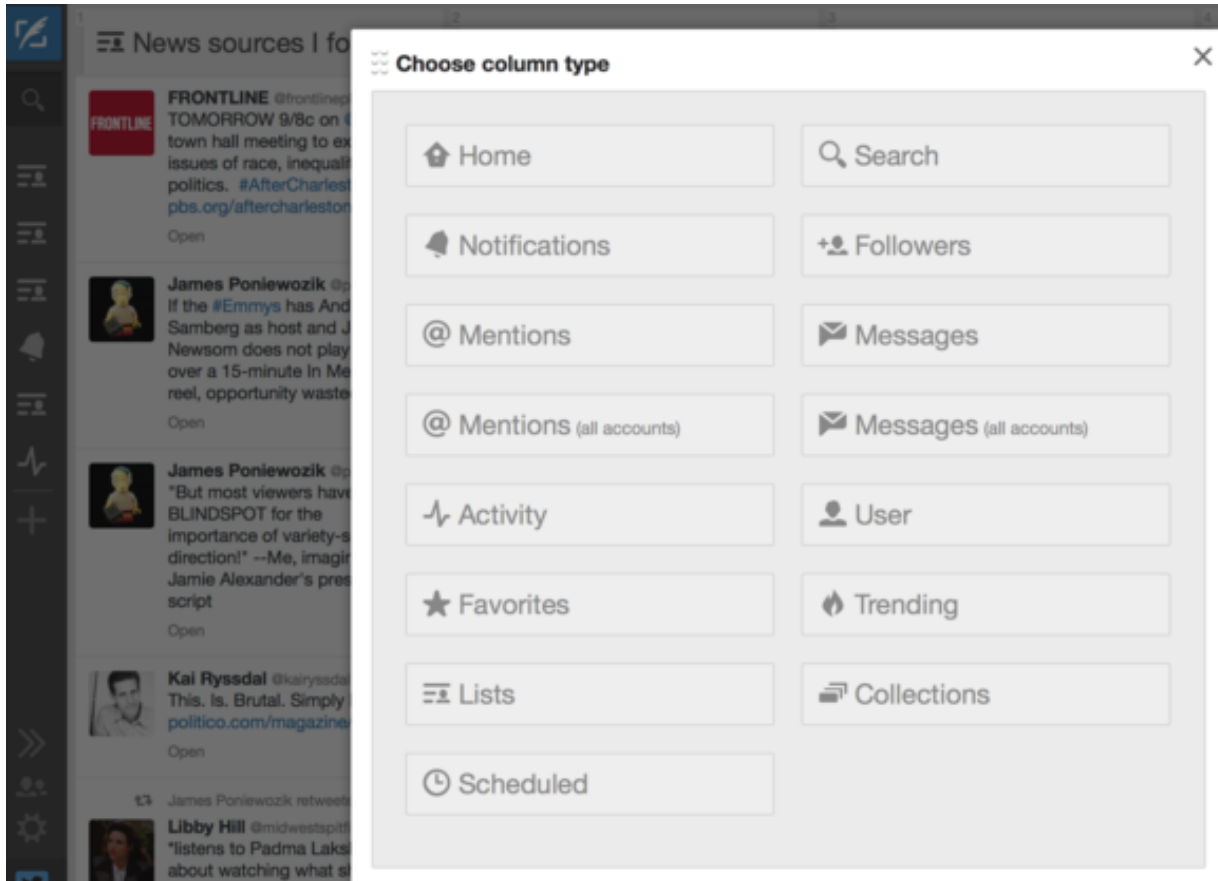
I personally like using the service If This Then That (<https://ifttt.com/>) to automatically file my favorited tweets into an Evernote notebook. This way, I can easily search them later. (Twitter's search function with regard to your own tweets and favorites is severely lacking.) Here are recipes on If This Then That for filing favorited tweets to an Evernote notebook (<https://ifttt.com/recipes/118393-save-twitter-favorites-to-evernote>) and for filing your own tweets to an Evernote notebook (<https://ifttt.com/recipes/112339-save-all-your-tweets-to-evernote-including-replies-and-rts>), which is infinitely easier and quicker than requesting your Twitter archive and searching it.

One downside to favoriting: It's public, and so it'll show up in the Tweetdeck Activity feeds of anyone who's following you on Twitter. If you don't want people seeing what you endorse or pay attention to, think twice about favoriting.

### **Tip #4: Use a Twitter client instead of Twitter.com**

## Using a Twitter client like TweetDeck

(<http://www.techhive.com/article/2036388/make-your-twitter-feed-less-annoying-in-3-simple-steps.html>) is a great way to sift through and categorize all the different Twitter feeds you follow. The bonus of using a client like TweetDeck is that you can add something called the Activity Feed, which shows you what everyone you follow is up to – who they're following, what they favorite, who they add to their lists (and what their lists are).



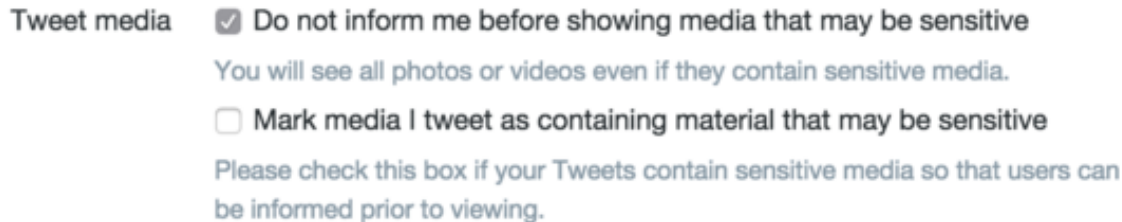
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Click the plus sign in TweetDeck to add columns that let you sift through the medium. Activity is great for seeing what my friends are up to.

Why would you do that? Because it's a great way to get introduced to new feeds that you're not yet following, to see what topics are quietly percolating up through people's streams, and to generally see more of Twitter through the trusted filter of the people you already know and pay attention to.

## Tip #5: Think about your definition of “sensitive”

Twitter offers you the option to be warned of tweets with “sensitive” media, and to have your tweets carry a warning if they contain sensitive material. It’s worth noting that Twitter considers “nudity, violence or medical procedures” to fall under the umbrella of “sensitive” content.



[http://images.techhive.com/images/article/2015/10/twitter-tips\\_sensitive-material-100620536-orig.png](http://images.techhive.com/images/article/2015/10/twitter-tips_sensitive-material-100620536-orig.png)

Find the option to be warned—or warn others—of sensitive materials in your settings.

If you’re concerned you might put people off by live-tweeting your naked rugby league’s brutal matches and subsequent DIY first aid, maybe consider going to your account settings, looking under content, and checking the option that marks media you tweet as containing sensitive material.

Kidding aside, be aware that you may lose followers if you post things that upset or unnerve people. And it’s up to you to accept that your right to post whatever you want is counterbalanced by people’s right to unfollow or block you. There are consequences for tweeting. So long as you are aware of these and you have an idea of when you’re willing to assume those consequences, you’ll be fine.

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Lisa Schmeiser is a San Francisco-based reporter, editor and blogger. She also publishes a thrice-weekly news digest, [So What, Who Cares?](http://tinyletter.com/lischmeiser) (<http://tinyletter.com/lischmeiser>) , and podcasts regularly at [The Incomparable](https://www.theincomparable.com/) (<https://www.theincomparable.com/>).

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