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Back to the*
BASICS

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Lord Help Me, I'm on Twitter

BY: LISA A. BEACH

I finally took the plunge. I dragged myself kicking and screaming into the Twitterverse.

I get Facebook (mostly). I love the visual appeal of Pinterest. And I wonder if anyone over the age of 40 actually uses Google Plus, Reddit, Tumblr, Four Square, Instagram or other social media du jour.

But Twitter? I'm feeling like a Twidiot.

I might as well be learning to speak Mandarin, that's how foreign Twitter feels to me. From Hashtags and Retweets to Direct Messages and Mentions, I'm walking around in a social media haze.

Hashtags, in particular, confuse me because when I look at this: # I see the pound sign, thanks to my high school typing class. The only time I actually get hashtags are when Jimmy Fallon does a skit about them with Justin Timberlake on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*. (Search for this on YouTube for a laugh. You'll thank me.)

As I learn more about blogging and social media and try to get back on track with my freelance writing, I feel pressured to be on Twitter, if nothing else than to boost my marketing efforts, follow editors for the inside scoop on their editorial needs and read funny Tweets from Ellen. But I've been avoiding Twitter like a flu shot. It might be good for me, but I just keep putting it off.

Finally, after one too many deer-in-the-headlights looks when asked if I'm on Twitter, I caved and joined "the voice of the world." But to me, Twitter is just one more piece of technology to stumble through.

On Facebook, it took me weeks to figure out how to upload photos and how to not only "like" a page but also "follow" and "get notifications," because apparently, they're all somehow just a little different. And, before I understood private messaging, I shared way too many personal comments on friends' Facebook pages, like, "How's that weird rash of yours? Is the ointment helping?"

On Pinterest, I'm trying to figure out how to add "rich pins," write SEO-friendly captions, include pin-worthy images and create secret boards for things I might not want to share with everyone, like wine porn and celebrity crushes.

And now, I've got to get myself up to social media speed on Twitter. So I'm poring through the FAQs in the Twitter Help Center, trying to learn the Twitter lingo, Googling "Twitter for Dummies" and scanning Twitter cheat sheets. And yet, despite all this help, I think I just Tweeted myself. *Oh my.*

My first mistake? Thinking I had 140 words to share in my Tweets. *That* I could handle. But 140 characters? That's barely even a run-on sentence. It will take me 10 minutes just to compose, revise, edit, rewrite, proofread, re-edit and re-proofread every Tweet. It might actually be possible to edit a Tweet once you post it, but I don't know how. And with my giant gorilla thumbs constantly hitting wrong letters (and typing things like "titter" instead of "Twitter"), I don't want to hit the Tweet button a moment too soon.

Plus, like any social media platform, there are Twitter rules, tips and etiquette to follow. As a writer, I'm not liking some of them. According to *Twitter for Dummies*, rules of grammar and punctuation fly out the window when you send a Tweet. I'm such a grammar nerd that I literally speak punctuation marks into my iPhone when I'm creating a voice-to-text message (which I use because of my gorilla thumbs problem). How am I going to impress an editor on Twitter with bad grammar and abbreviations? (#writerproblems)

A FEW OF MY FAVORITE RULES SO FAR:

- **Don't pull a Twitter one-night stand**, where you follow someone and then dump her as soon as she follows you.
- **Don't Tweet that you are bored.**
Now I am too. (HaHa! *Love* this one.)
- **Strike a balance between lurker and spammer.**
So I don't want to be shy girl in the Twitter corner, but I don't want to deluge followers with my every thought. Got it---no need to overshare.
- **Capitalization makes all the difference**, as duly noted by Susan Boyle's PR team when she released her new album with this Tweet: #susanalbumparty.

SO, IF YOU WANT TO FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER, I'M GIVING YOU A BOGO:

- My Tweenior Moments handle is @TweeniorMoments (*for blog-related and humorous stuff*).
- My freelance writer's handle is @LisaBeachWrites (*for writing-related and professional stuff*).

I have *absolutely no idea* yet what I'm doing. Please forgive me when I commit a Twitter faux pas. If I get so frustrated with the learning curve, my Twitter account might suffer the same fate as my failed attempt to do a Color Run. •••



AND, IF THE WORLD ADDS EVEN ONE MORE DARN SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM, I AM DONE!