Chapter 13

Twitter UI Design

Because so many Twitter clients already exist on iOS, there are already a number of design paradigms out there that you should be aware of when you create your app.

This section will discuss the visual, navigational, and interactional paradigms that we believe you should avoid, revise, or pay homage to.

**Usability Priorities**

If you’re going to design a Twitter API project with an adequate user experience, you should get your priorities on paper first. For most Twitter API projects, this means putting the most time and energy into the following:

- **Loading and scrolling**: What is today the official Twitter app for iOS began as Tweetie, a one-man project devoted to one key feature: fast-scrolling Tweets. Since Tweets are a centerpiece to most Twitter apps, you should make lists, content, and Tweets load as quickly and smoothly as possible.

- **Using images, URL shorteners, and Geo-tagging**: If your app creates Tweets, these three features have become standards and are expected anywhere a Tweet is made.

- **Keeping users inside your app**: Tweets are attached to schemas of actions and content: pictures, contacts, URLs, Retweets, @replies, and so on. Try to handle all relevant operations inside your app, without resorting to Web views or launching one of the system apps. Ejecting users from your app is confusing and it slows them down.

- **Honoring privacy first and foremost**: Don’t print Tweets without permission from the author. Use real Tweets from real accounts that are operated internally or that you have permission from the user to display. When showing example content, always use screenshots of your own Twitter profile (with your own Tweets).
**Anatomy of a Tweet**

Twitter is supremely specific about how it wants Tweets displayed. In fact, it has even specified that we should capitalize Tweet when writing a book like this. You can see how Twitter expects Tweets to be displayed in its “Anatomy of a Tweet” graphic, which is from the following URL (see Figure 13–1):

http://dev.twitter.com/pages/display_guidelines

![Anatomy of a Tweet graphic](image)

**Figure 13–1. The “Anatomy of a Tweet,” according to Twitter’s official design guidelines**

Let’s examine all the elements shown in Figure 13–1 in greater depth:

1. **Tweet Author**: Twitter says you must present the handle of a user’s Tweet; however, displaying a user’s real name next to her handle is optional. Tapping the username should link to the user’s Twitter profile, preferably within your app. Twitter design guidelines dictate that the username and the real name (if you show it) should be in different styles. Don’t put an @ symbol in front of a user’s handle.

2. **@mentions**: Mentions of other Twitter users inside a Tweet should be linked to their user profile. Tapping that username should lead to the profile of that user, preferably within your app.

3. **Hashtags**: If a user includes a hashtag in a Tweet, it should link to a Twitter.com search for that query term inside your app.

4. **URLs**: URLs in a Tweet should be presented as tappable hyperlinks to the location passed through the API.