

X

INTERACTIVE RESOURCE GUIDE



SAFER  
SCHOOLS  
TOGETHER



International Center for  
Digital Threat Assessment



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This is an interactive document. Click the underlined links to read more or navigate to the correlating section of the document.



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## INTRODUCTION

This Interactive Resource Guide and accompanying Micro Module will provide School Safety / Threat Assessment (SS/TA) Teams with a functional understanding of X and its use in online data collection.

To make this training most effective, we encourage SS/TA Teams to download the X application or access the X browser platform and follow along. In line with the recommendations provided in our Digital Threat Assessment® training, we suggest that your SS/TA Teams create an X account for data collection. Safer Schools Together (SST) recommends against using personal accounts when searching, as there is a possibility that the searching methods demonstrated may notify the Subject(s) of Concern (SOC).

## HISTORY OF X

X, previously known as Twitter, was acquired by Elon Musk in 2022 for roughly \$44 billion.<sup>1</sup> The company was then renamed by owner Elon Musk shortly after. The social media app was originally created in 2006 and has since gained immense popularity in the social media community. Although the name of the platform has changed, the common language of the platform has stayed the same (Tweets will still be referred to as Tweets).

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<sup>1</sup> [Elon Musk Completes \\$44 Billion Deal to Own Twitter](#)

## HOW TO USE X

X is a social media platform that consists of microblogging by sharing short blurbs (tweets) and/or media such as photos, videos, gifs, and private messaging. With approximately 619 million monthly active users,<sup>2</sup> X is one of the most popular social media platforms. Founded in March of 2006 and officially launched in July of 2006, X was initially designed to be a Short Message Service (SMS) with a limit of 140 characters per tweet, as this was the character limit on most cell phones. X has since increased the limit to 280 characters per tweet. However, for users that subscribe to X premium, they will be able to post up to 25,000 characters.<sup>3</sup> To use X, users must create an account. If a user does not have an account, they can view open profiles and tweets but cannot interact with other users or view their list of followers.

X profiles include many components of other popular social media profiles such as a profile picture, a cover photo, a short bio, a URL, date of birth, and location. Not all of these are required, but users do have the option to add this information. Ninety percent of the U.S. population is familiar with X (even if they don't use it).<sup>4</sup>

X is commonly used by individuals to discuss ideas, trends, and current events. These are often posted in real-time on the platform as incidents occur. The effectiveness of showcasing world events in real-time is extremely helpful for SS/TA Teams.

It is also important for SS/TA Teams to understand how to navigate through X. If SS/TA Teams already know the username of the X account belonging to a SOC, they can view the account without logging in. However, without being logged in, users are unable to view follower lists, post tweets, follow, retweet, or like posts.

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<sup>2</sup> [2024 X Stats](#)


<sup>3</sup> [X Premium](#)

<sup>4</sup> [2023 X Stats](#)



# Happening now

## Join today.

 Sign up with Google

 Sign up with Apple

or

[Create account](#)

By signing up, you agree to the [Terms of Service and Privacy Policy](#), including [Cookie Use](#).

## Already have an account?

[Sign in](#)

## X Limits

- **Direct Messages (daily):** The limit is 500 messages sent per day.
- **Posts:** 2,400 per day. The daily update limit is further broken down into smaller limits for semi-hourly intervals. Reposts are counted as posts.
- **Changes to account email:** 4 per hour.
- **Following (daily):** The technical follow limit is 400 per day. Please note that this is a technical account limit only, and there are additional rules prohibiting aggressive following behavior.
- **Following (account-based):** Once an account is following 5,000 other accounts, additional follow attempts are limited by account-specific ratios.<sup>5</sup>

## React to Tweets using Videos/GIFs

A new functionality that has become available for users is to post reactions to other user's tweets in the form of a video or a photo.

## X Communities

The new feature “Communities” enables users to create and share tweets with a specific group of followers (like Instagram Stories for close friends). Users will be able to post, and visibility will be restricted only to users who join the community. This can be an open community or invite-only.

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<sup>5</sup> [X Limits](#)

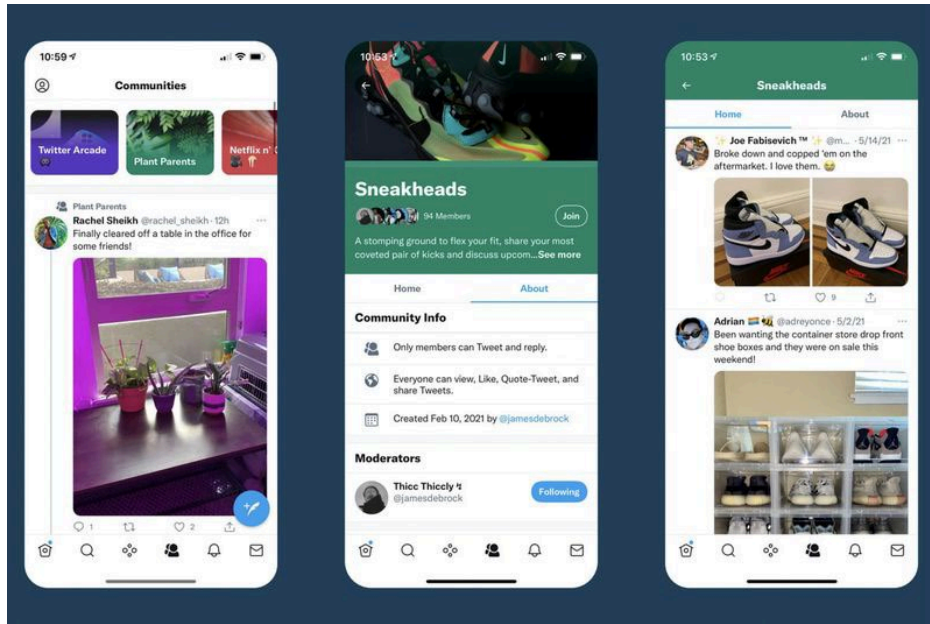
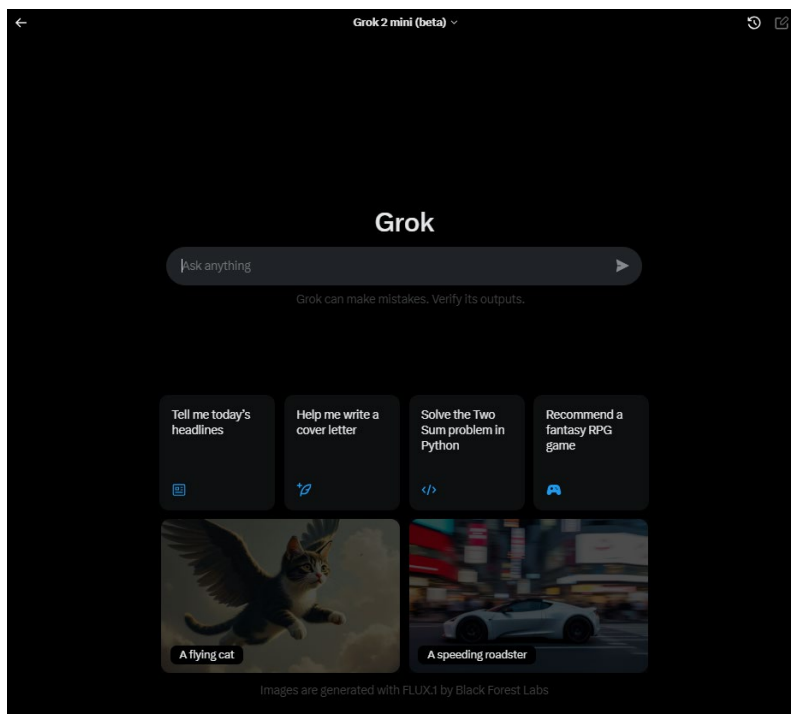


Photo courtesy of Social Pilot (2024)

## X's AI Assistant – Grok

Grok is a new enhanced search feature available to X Premium and Premium+ subscribers powered by xAI's state-of-the-art large language model (LLM) (Grok-1).<sup>6</sup> Grok-1 utilizes next-token prediction model weights (models that predict the most likely word or symbol to follow a given text sequence) to know how to perform certain tasks. Grok can create images, make posts, or search the web for relevant information. SS/TA Teams need to be aware of these capabilities as students may use them to create false threats/misinformation campaigns.



<sup>6</sup> [Grok AI](#)

It is beneficial to create an SS/TA account to access features such as tweets, comments, and view profiles followed/followers. This information can play a critical role in data collection when building the SOC's digital behavioral baseline. Click [here](#) to learn about account creation for Digital Threat Assessment®.

Setting up an email to be used by SS/TA Teams for creating accounts is imperative. Emails can be created using platforms such as [Tutamail](#), which is encrypted and free. This way, there is a centralized email address for SS/TA Teams to use as new social media platforms appear on their radars and subsequent account creation becomes necessary.

To begin the process of signing up for an X account on the desktop website, [click here](#). Signing up can also be done through the mobile application by downloading and opening the app for the first time. After opening the app, the user will be prompted with the option to sign in or create an account. SS/TA Teams should be aware that signing up for accounts should be done with the encrypted email, not by providing a personal phone number.

For school safety and threat assessment concerns, it is encouraged that SS/TA Teams do not provide identifiers of themselves, or use "false" identities to appear to be someone they are not. These accounts should instead feature stock images from websites such as [Pexels](#), [Unsplash](#), [Pikwizard](#), or Google Images.

SS/TA Teams should also post occasional retweets on their accounts. Retweets do not have to be about anything in particular, but retweeting will assist in X removing the account due to inactivity. Another way to keep the account active is to follow other accounts such as celebrity and/or news accounts. However, following the SOC is never recommended. Accounts should also have a display photo to avoid inactivity status.

## HASHTAGS

Hashtags (#) are used often on this platform. This gives people a way to be introduced to and follow other users with similar interests and see posts that are relevant to the topic.



*Photo Courtesy of Alenast via Getty Images.*

A hashtag is a symbol added before a word or phrase to create a searchable category indexed by social media (in this case, X) and becomes searchable by other accounts. Instagram, X, and TikTok are the primary platforms where hashtags are used. Hashtags are a way of making it easier to find, follow, and contribute to a conversation.

Clicking on a word with a hashtag in a post will show you other posts and profiles where that same hashtag was used.

It's important for SS/TA Teams to pay attention to hashtags – they could decode a secret language or trends that our students are using. An example of this is the [Secret Society 123](#) hashtags.

**#SecretSociety123**

repost if you battle with any of these and put the name in your profile

<b>Disorder</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
Anorexia	#Ana	#Rex
Bulimia	#Mia	#Bill
Paranoia	#Perry	#Pat
Anxiety	#Annie	#Max
ADD/ADHD	#Addie	#Andy
OCD	#Olive	#Owen
Borderline	#Bella	#Ben
Bipolar	#Bri	#Bob
Schizophrenia	#Sophie	#Skip
Insomnia	#Izzy	#Isaiah
EDNOS	#Ellie	#Ed
Self Harm	#Cat	#Sam
Depression	#Deb	#Dan
Suicidal	#Sue	#Dallas

On X, adding “#” to the beginning of an unbroken word or phrase creates a hashtag. Remember to not add any spaces in between words if you’re hashtagging a phrase or sentence. When users add a hashtag to a tweet, it becomes linked to all other posts that include it. Using a hashtag can provide context to a tweet and a conversation's longevity. Those that use the hashtag symbol before a word allow their tweet to appear more easily in the X search.

By clicking or tapping on a hashtag in any tweet, the user will be redirected to a new page that will display all tweets with that same hashtag. This is important for SS/TA Teams to note as it can give insight into what digital communities an SOC is interacting with and what type of information they are absorbing. This method of discovering digital baselines is an important part of Digital Threat Assessment® and data collection.

## VERIFIED ACCOUNTS



While browsing X, users may come across accounts with a checkmark beside the username called Verified Accounts. Verification check marks signify that X has verified the owner of the account. It is important to note that different colored checkmarks represent various levels of verification.

### **Grey checkmark**

The grey checkmark indicates that an account represents a government/multilateral organization or a government/multilateral official. Additional government and multilateral accounts can receive grey checkmarks through Verified Organizations.

### **Gold checkmark**

The gold checkmark indicates that the account is an official organization account through Verified Organizations.

### **Blue checkmark**

The blue checkmark means that an account has an active subscription to [X Premium](#) and meets eligibility requirements. These accounts may represent an individual or an organization.<sup>7</sup>

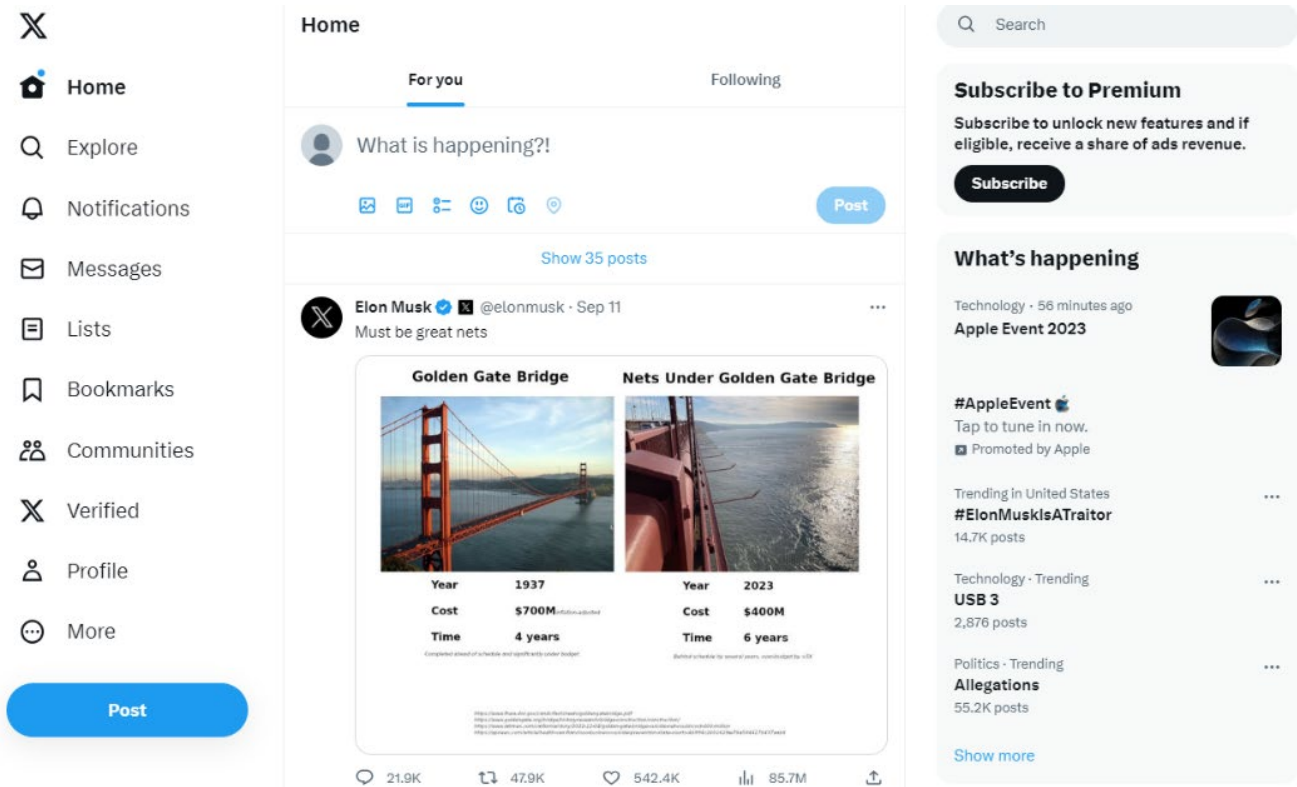
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<sup>7</sup> [X Verification](#)

## MOBILE VS. DESKTOP

X can be accessed by both the desktop platform and on both Android and iOS app stores for free. There do not appear to be too many differences in how X can be used when comparing the desktop and mobile versions. However, there are differences in the location of the features and how they are accessed.

When opening X via desktop, the main page has multiple features. On the left-hand side from top to bottom, the user is presented with multiple options to click/tap: Home, Explore, Notifications, Messages, Bookmarks, Lists, Profile, and more.



There are many features on the home page of X that SS/TA Teams should familiarize themselves with to effectively use X during the data and information-gathering process:

**Explore Page:** Displays content that is trending at that moment.

**Direct Messages (DMs):** Allows users to send and receive private messages with other users on X. Users can send messages, tweets, and/or media from their personal devices and can create group chats.

**Bookmarks:** They can only be seen with device or account access and enable users to save tweets to view in the future. Often, users save tweets that they enjoy or want to reference later. Each user is only able to view their own bookmarked tweets.

**Communities:** A dedicated place to connect, learn, and share topics that users care most about. Communities are managed by people on X who enforce Community rules and keep conversations informative and relevant.

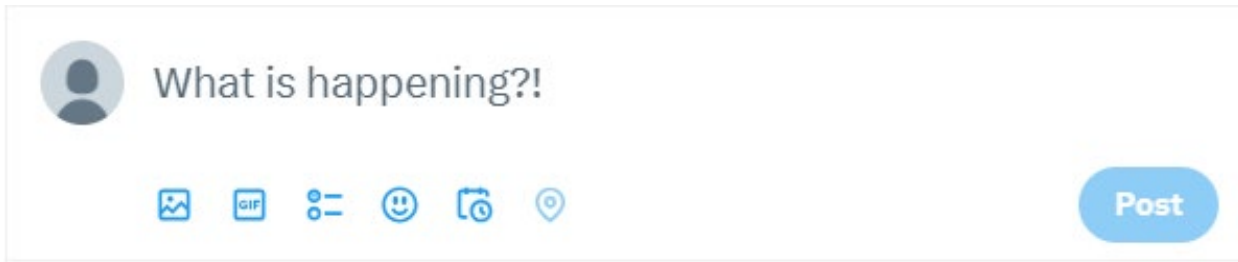
**X Verified:** Only for users who are subscribed to X Premium and pay a subscription fee monthly/yearly.

**Lists:** Allow users to customize, organize, and prioritize the tweets that they see in their timeline. Users can join lists created by others or create lists of their own and add other users that they find interesting. Lists can be public or private, depending on the user’s preference.

**Profile Page:** Shows everything a user has tweeted and retweeted, media they have posted, what they have liked, and any tweets they were mentioned in.

## Desktop Interface

At the top of the home page, users can compose and send a tweet and/or other media (as shown in the screenshot below).



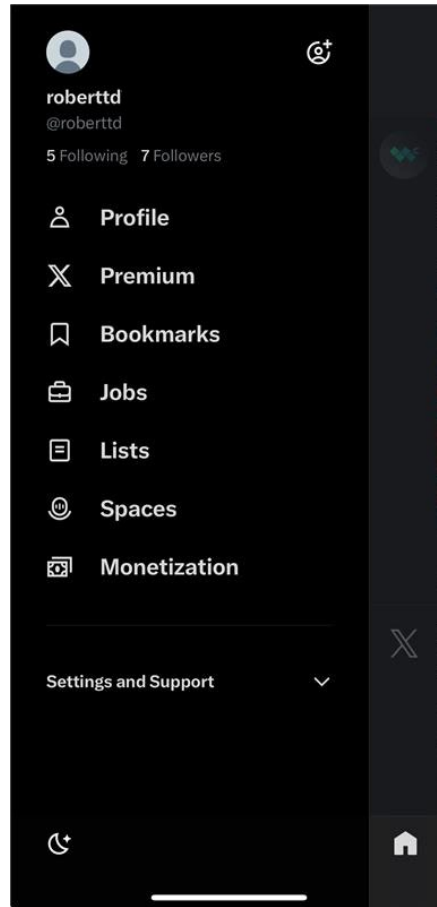
Shown below is the news feed showcasing all the tweets posted and retweeted by users you follow, and posts that are recommended to your account.

Located on the top right of X is a search bar, where users can search for hashtags, other users, and more. Below the search bar, you’ll find two boxes. The first box will either indicate “What’s happening” or trends in your location. This is where X will display trending topics such as people, tweets, and news that may be relevant to the user or their geographical location. At the bottom of the first box, there is a “Show more” button which will take the user to the Explore page.

The second box suggests “Who to follow”. This is X’s algorithm recommending accounts that the user can choose to follow based on all the user’s interactions within X.

## Mobile Interface

When opening the X mobile application, users are given the same options as the desktop version. This includes access to the menu, which requires users to tap on the three horizontal lines or profile image at the top left corner of the mobile app.



To compose a tweet on the mobile application, tap on the blue “+” icon that hovers just above the DMs.



## LANGUAGE/TERMINOLOGY

**Mention:** To mention another user means inserting their username in a tweet with the @symbol in front of it (e.g.: @Safer\_Schools). If SS/TA Teams are given access to an SOC's device, noting who they are being mentioned by is important, as it will provide the team knowledge of who the SOC interacts with on the app. Clicking or tapping on a tweet containing a mention may reveal an entire conversation between the two (or more) users.

**Follower:** A user who subscribes to the tweets and posts of a certain account.

**Reply:** Users can reply directly to a tweet, which will mention the author and create a thread of tweets.

**Retweet:** Users can retweet to share the tweet of another account to their profile. This allows their own followers to see the tweet.

**Like:** Users can click on the heart icon under a tweet to indicate that they "like" it. This tweet can later be found by going to their profile and clicking on the "liked" option, where SS/TA Teams can also find all the tweets a user has liked in the past. SS/TA Teams should be able to find what an SOC is viewing and check the content they have liked in the past. This will give SS/TA Teams a good idea of what type of content the SOC interacts with while using the platform.

**Share:** Users can share a tweet with another person or platform, such as through iMessage or Facebook, or they can save a tweet to their personal device to view later.

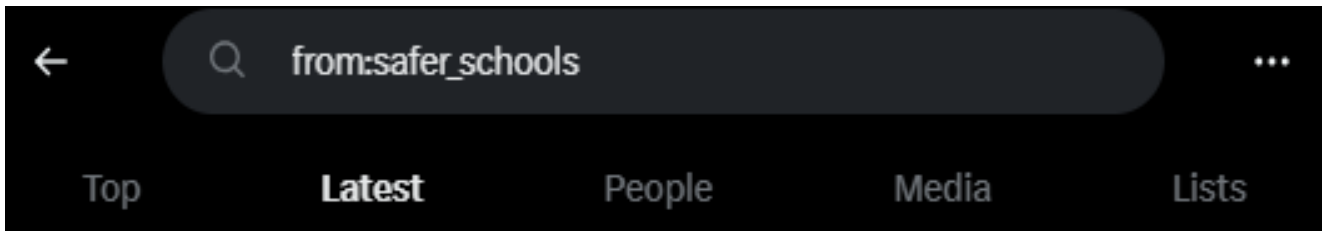
## ADVANCED SEARCHING

When it comes to using X, knowing how to effectively search is one of the most powerful tools our SS/TA Teams have. This skill allows them to stay on top of any trending topics in their community, as well as monitor for any potential threats that could affect their districts.

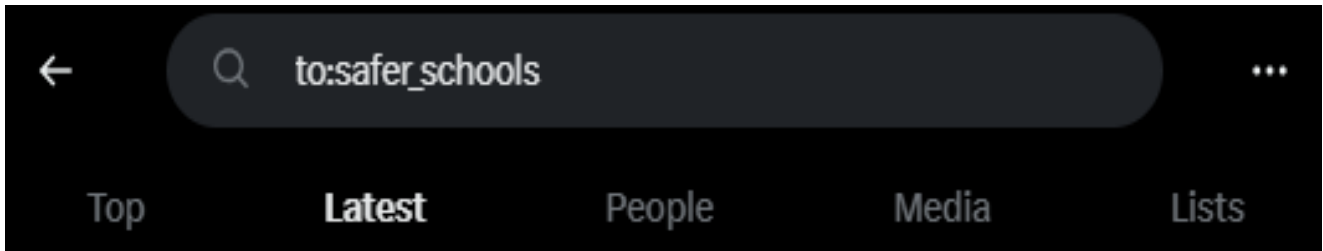
To locate the search bar, just head to [X.com/explore](https://x.com/explore) and look to the top center. Please note you will need an account to use this feature. The search bar allows us to find similar things we could on any other social media platform. We can search for users, locations, tweets, hashtags, photos, and videos. It doesn't stop there — X's search bar is very complex and knowing how to use it can really take our knowledge to the next level.

Users have the option to use advanced search features through the search bar to further specify what they want included in their search results. Users can search words, phrases, time periods, and places. Users can even choose which words they don't want included in the results.

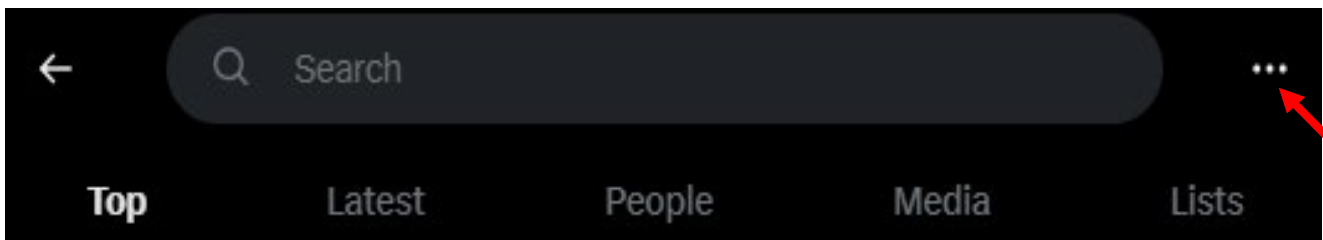
**From:User:** This search string will limit results to show only tweets sent by the user we are searching for. There cannot be a space in-between the colon and the username for this search string to work.

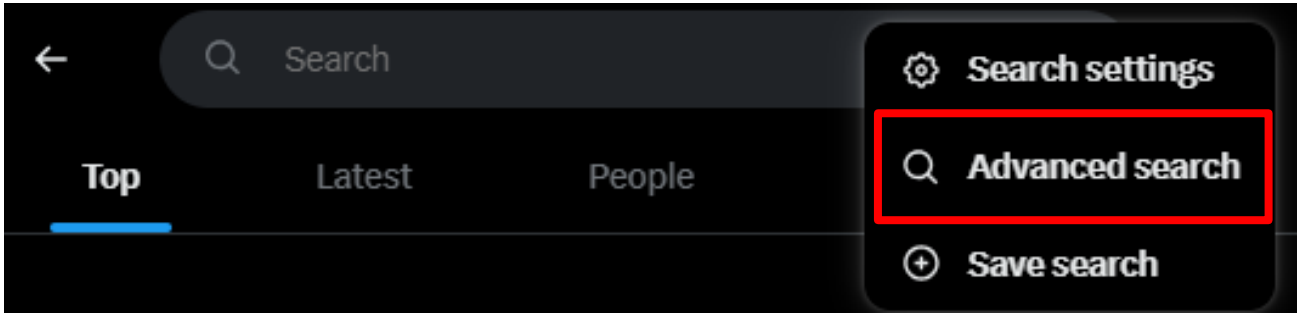


**To:User:** This search string will limit results to only tweets sent to the user we are searching for. Note that there cannot be a space in-between the colon and the username for this search string to work.



To get a full understanding of X's search capabilities, tap the 3 dots next to the search bar and click on Advanced Search.





**Geolocation/Geocoding:** This function is one of the most effective functions for SS/TA Teams. Geocoding will search tweets from a specific area determined by the search. An example of geocoding could look like: geocode:38.89834429015693,-77.03644396931067,5mi. This example of geocoding of the White House would search for tweets within 5 miles of the location. The benefits of X geocode search can help SS/TA Teams stay informed of their community baseline, and potentially monitor for active threats in their school or community.

## HOW TO GEOCODE SEARCH

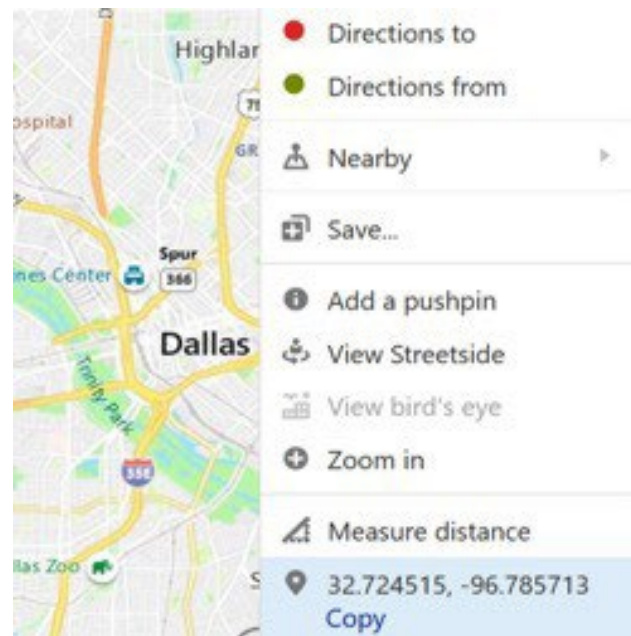
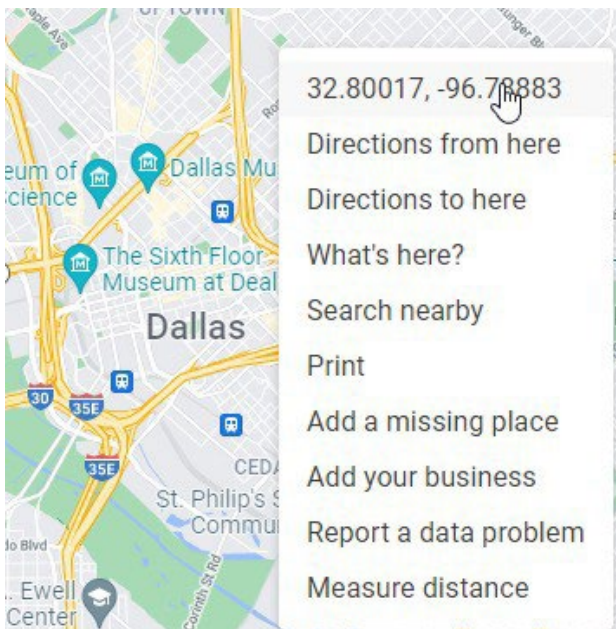
Seeing a search string like “geocode:38.89834429015693,-77.03644396931067,5mi” can seem intimidating and confusing at first. Once we understand the concept behind it, it becomes easy to search.

“Geocode:” refers to a command we are telling X — just like “To:” or “From:”. Since we are telling X to search for a location, we need to give it one to search. X searches in coordinates, so we use latitude and longitude. Lastly, we need to tell X how far it needs to search, so we’ll give it a radius. What this geocode search function translates to is: “search tweets from this location within this certain radius”.

Now that we understand the concept, let’s conduct a geocode search on X. Since X likes longitude and latitude, we can get those from either Google Maps or Bing Maps.

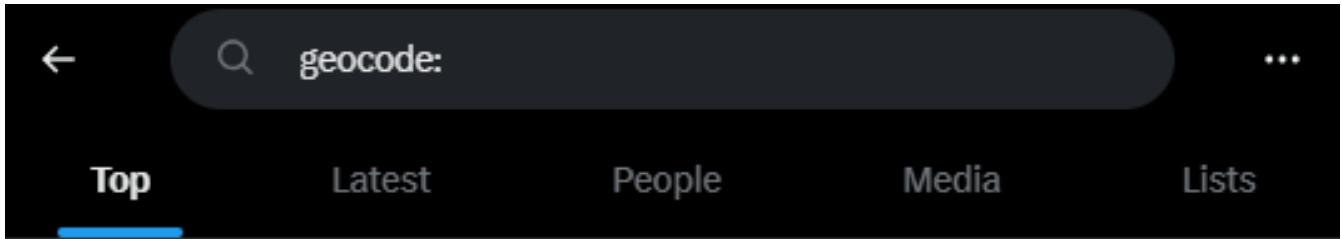
1. Open your browser and head to Google Maps or Bing Maps.
2. Search the location you want to be the center of your geocode search (School, house, city hall, etc.).
3. Once you have found where you want to search, right-click near the area.
4. Look for the coordinates and copy them to your clipboard.

Google Maps coordinates will appear at the top of the menu. Bing coordinates will appear on the bottom. Google coordinates will be longer while Bing coordinates will be shorter.

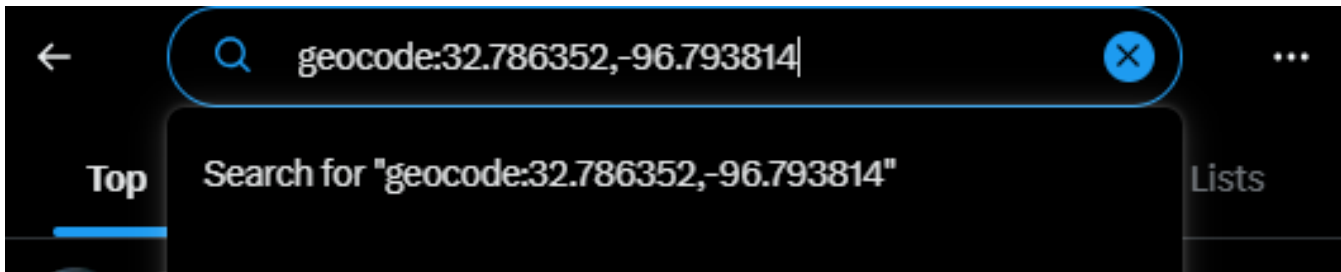


Once the coordinates have been copied to your clipboard, open a new tab and visit <https://X.com/explore>.

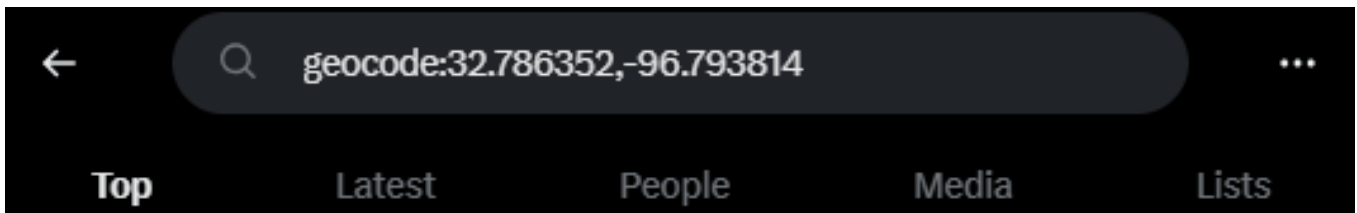
First, click on the search bar and type geocode:



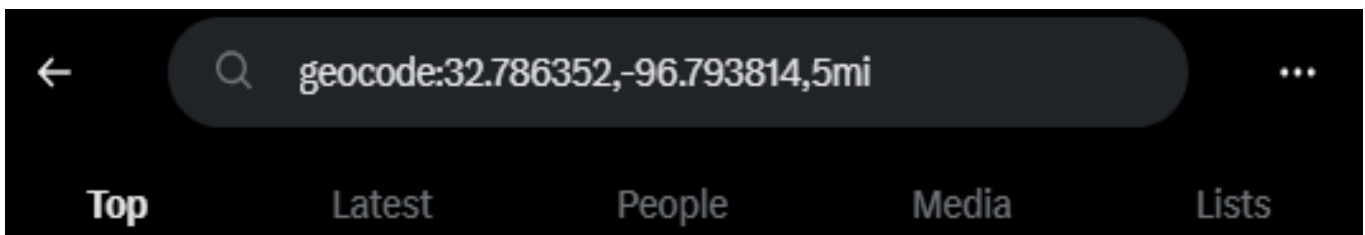
Next, right-click on the search bar and paste the coordinates in the search.



This next step is important. We must delete the space between the comma and the minus symbol in the middle. **For this to work properly, this search sequence can have no spaces.**

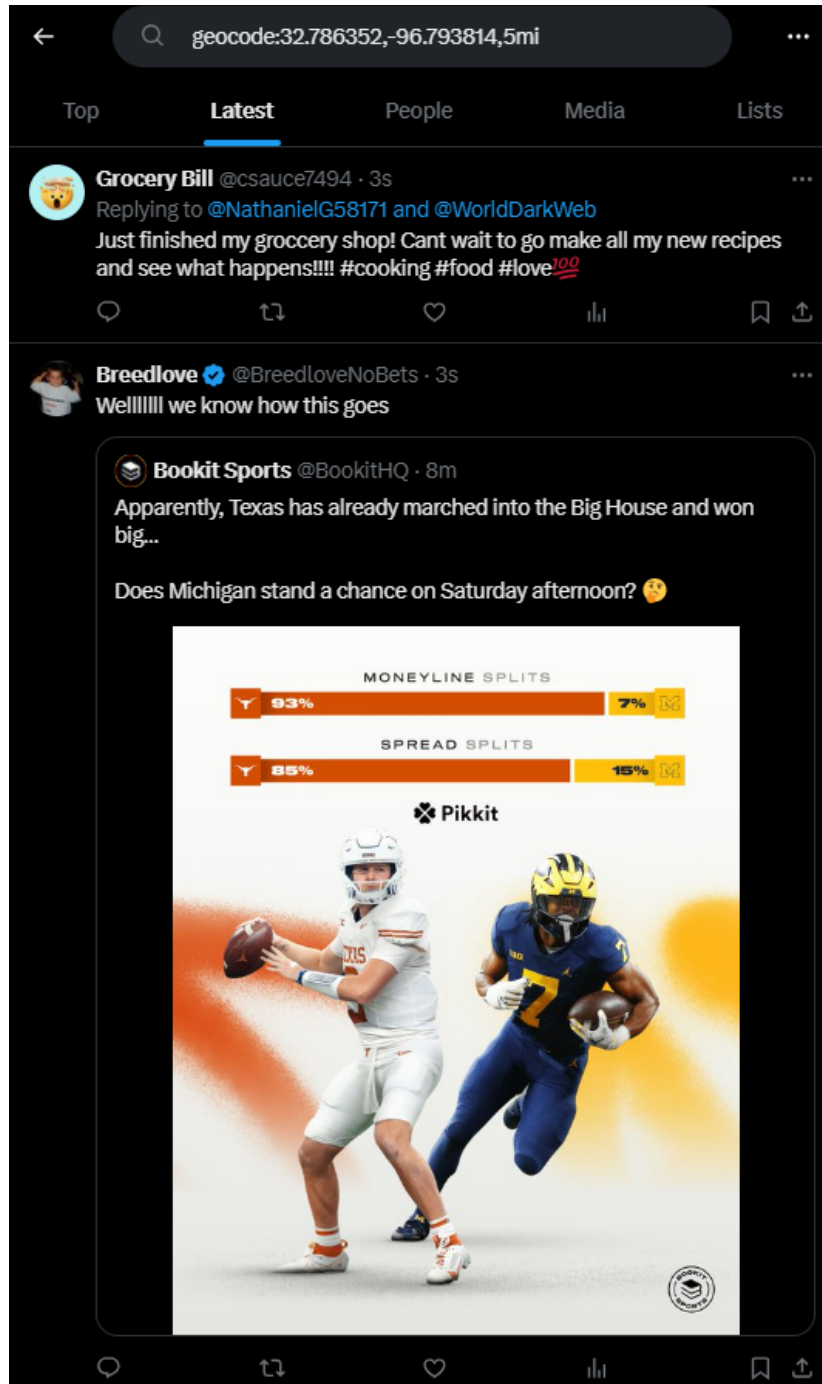


Now, we can go back to the end of our search and add the final piece: the radius. In this case, we used 5mi. The radius can be as large or small as we want it (e.g., from 1mi to 50mi). Be sure to either use miles (mi) or kilometers (km) when searching a radius, otherwise, it will not work. Again, no spaces should exist in this search. Once we have given it a radius, all we need to do is hit search!

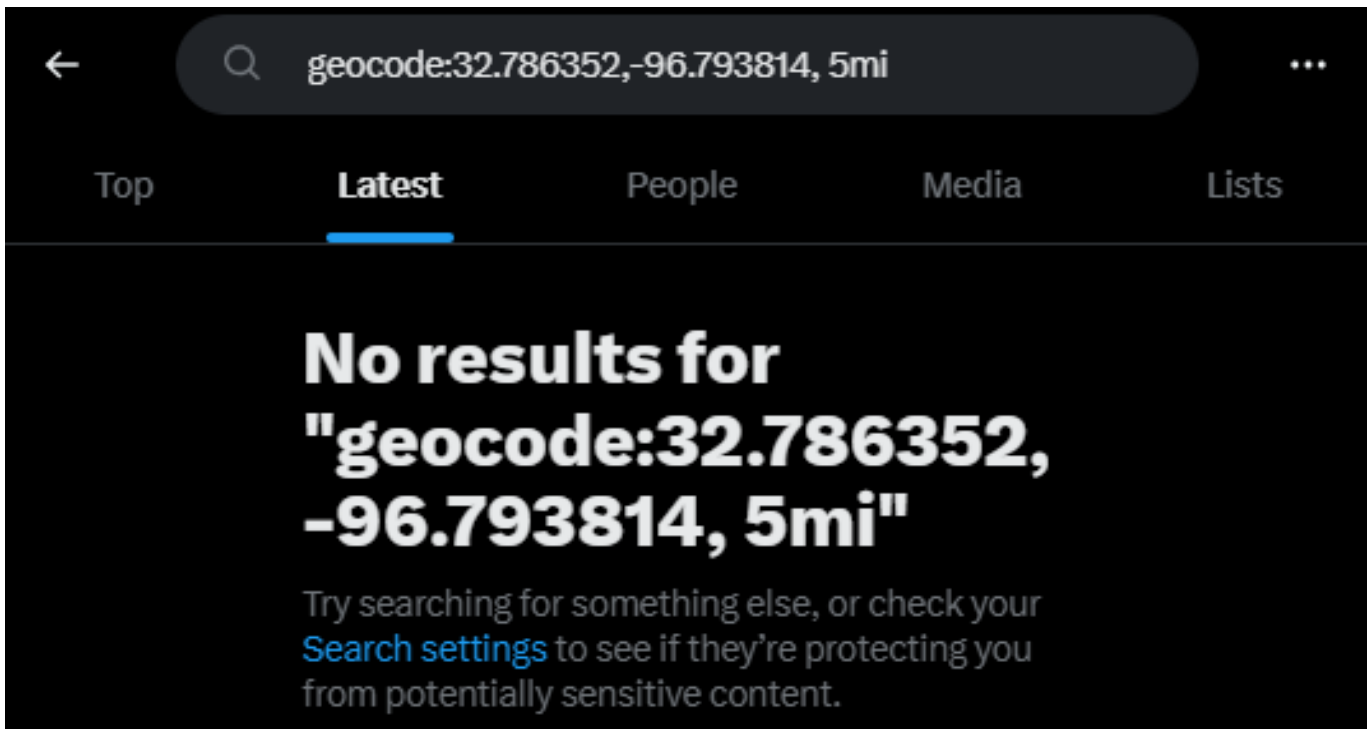


Once we hit search, by default, tweets will filter by top. We must click on the tab that says “Latest” to filter tweets in reverse chronological order.

In the screenshot below, it seems that there is someone who is about to go make some delicious food. We can see that this is happening in real-time — as early as 3 seconds ago.



If you notice that your search turns up no results and you see something like the screenshot below. It could be a couple of different things. There might be a space in the search. In our example, there is a space before entering the “5mi.” It’s a small thing, but it can mean the difference between finding information and not. If there are no spaces and no results, try expanding the radius to a larger area.



## Narrowing the Geocode Search

Now that we have a working geocode search, we might notice that there is a lot of “fluff” – Tweets and videos that we don’t really care about or want to see. The good news is that we can filter down our results even more by using keywords. We’ve prepared a list of worrisome keywords below to get SS/ TA Teams started.

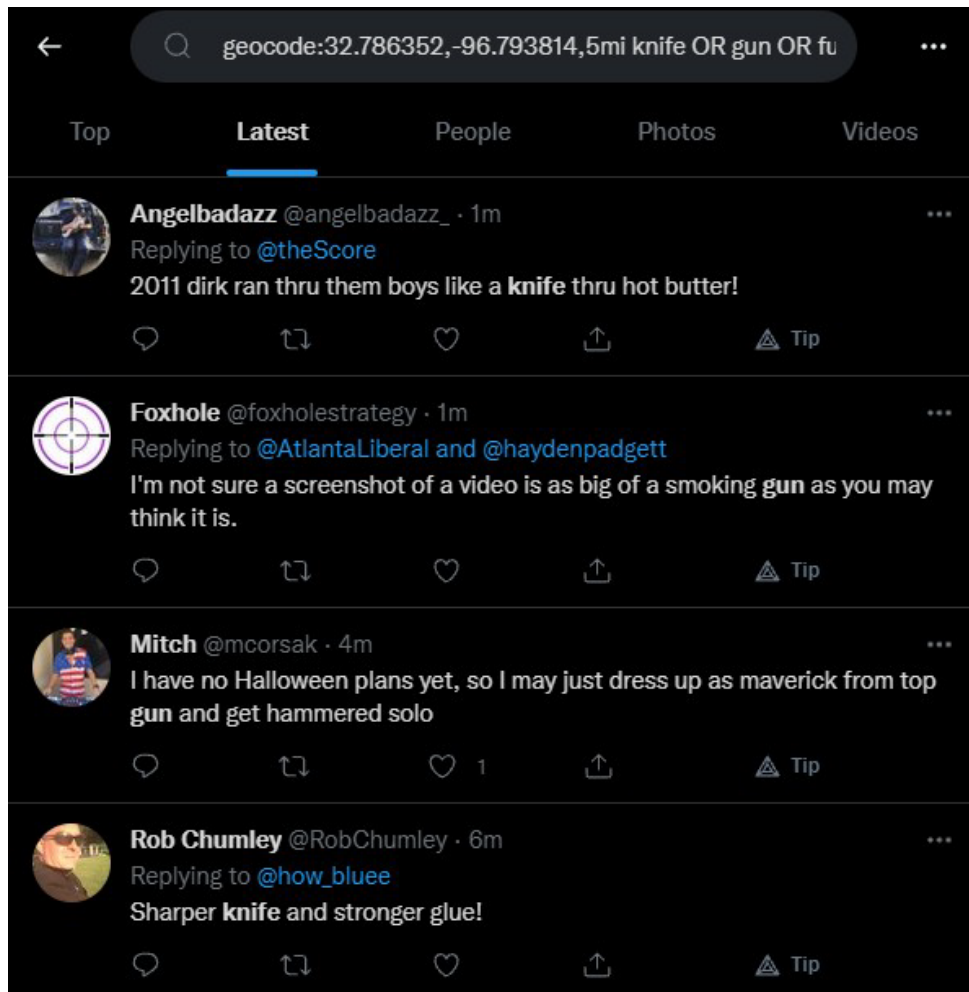
*kill OR fight OR gun OR shoot OR shot OR shooting OR glock OR rifle OR “blow up” OR burn OR slut OR drugs OR weed OR kush OR cocaine OR molly OR knife OR stab OR stabbing OR threat OR suicide OR cut OR cutting OR teacher OR principal OR “school shooting” OR terrorist OR cops OR die*

*depression OR depressed OR pills OR lean OR 420 OR 8 ball OR “angel dust” OR blaze OR blunt OR crack OR crystal OR dealer OR “dime bag” OR dope OR hash OR herb OR joint OR meth OR “purple drank” OR speed OR 9mil OR 9mm OR arrested OR “body found” OR bust OR busted OR “curb stomp”*

*“deuce five” OR “flying panda” OR fuzz OR gang OR “gang banger” OR mug shot OR pigs OR rape OR strapped OR whack OR weapon OR jacked OR jail OR K9 OR SWAT OR “hit and run” OR accident OR drunk OR smashed OR vodka OR hammered OR “clap out” OR “man down” OR “polar bear hunting” OR hitlist OR shitlist OR haterlist OR “hit list” OR “shit list” OR “hater list” OR commit OR school*

By no means is this list exhaustive. Every area will have different keywords with different definitions. SS/TA Teams are encouraged to come up with their own list of worrisome keywords. It is important to know that if SS/TA Teams are using more than one keyword, they must be separated with “OR”, and it must be capitalized. Spaces, in this case, are okay when searching keywords.

Here is an example of how we can narrow our previous example search to pull tweets in that area, matching the words “knife” and “gun” and “fugitive”. In X, it will look like geocode:32.786352,-96.793814,5mi knife OR gun OR fugitive.



We can see that the tweets have changed drastically. When we use “OR” while searching keywords, it is important to know that ANY or ALL our search terms can be present in the tweet. We can also add as many keywords as we want. At this point in time, we encourage SS/TA Teams to take a few minutes and try searching different keywords and a different radius. Find out which search string brings the most relevant results for your team and once a combination has been found, be sure to save that search string for our next tool.

# A powerful, real-time tool for people who live on X.

Monitor multiple timelines on a single screen. Track and organize content, and engage with your communities in real-time.

Sign up for X Premium

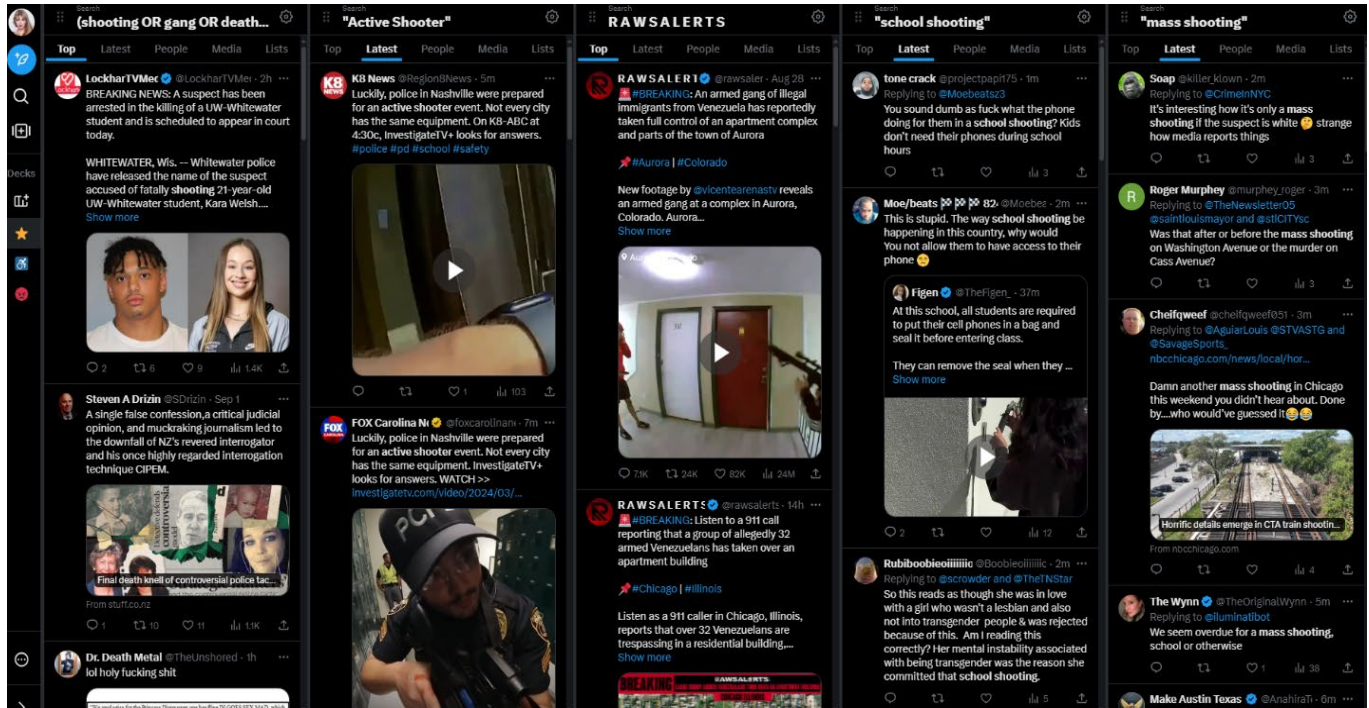
X-Pro is an invaluable tool that can be used by SS/TA Teams for X-based information gathering, as it allows users to follow multiple X feeds simultaneously. Each feed or column can be customized to search for a particular aspect of the information-gathering process. Possible feeds can include specific X accounts, tweets sent to or from an account, tweets mentioning an account, or tweets sent from a specific location. Please note this is now a **paid feature** through X's "Premium" services.

## To set up X-Pro:

1. Go to <https://pro.X.com/>
2. Sign into your SS/TA X account.
3. Click the "Premium" symbol on the left-hand side of the screen to add a column.
4. Sign-Up and pay for the Middle Tier subscription (Look for X-Pro as a feature listed).

In X-Pro, we can add our geocode search as a column, making it so that we only need to initiate a search once and have access to it anytime we want. By default, X-Pro will show tweets in reverse-chronological order.

Another benefit of X-Pro is that it allows SS/TA Teams to add specific users as columns. Part of a SOC's intervention plan includes periodic check-ins on their social media, so we're able to add their X profile as a column for easy reference.



## PRIVACY AND SAFETY

**Privacy Settings:** X gives users access to several privacy settings.

**Public Tweets (default setting):** Tweets are visible to anyone, whether or not they have an X account.

**Protected Tweets:** Only visible to your X followers. Note followers will still be able to capture screenshots of your Tweets and share them.

As we previously mentioned, Tweets are public by default – to have this switched to private or to “Protect Your Tweets,” the user will have to click on the “More” link on the left-hand side of the homepage. They will then click on “Settings and Privacy”. At this point, the user will click “Privacy and Safety,” then “Audience and Tagging,” which will allow the user to change their account settings, tweet settings, and enable other safety features. If a user decides to change their account to private, it will restrict who can see their tweets and who can follow the account.

**Blocking and Muting:** X allows users to restrict the tweets they will be exposed to. There are two main methods – blocking and muting.

Blocking ensures that the user will not see a specific account in the future, while also preventing that account from viewing their content. Blocking accounts will automatically unfollow that account and them to unfollow you. If a user decides to block an account, the account will not be notified that their account has been blocked.

Muting allows users to prevent themselves from seeing any tweets or media from a specific account but allows that account to still see what the user is posting.

To activate either of these settings, the user must go to the account they want to restrict. Then, click on the three dots located on the upper right-hand side of the profile. A list will appear with a variety of options that the user can engage with. Both blocking and muting options are on this list.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT GUIDES

[The X Rules](#)

[X Terms of Service](#)

[Guidelines for Law Enforcement](#)

[Legal Request Submission Form](#)

[X Help Center](#)

[How Rules Are Enforced](#)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Instagram Micro Module](#)

[TikTok Micro Module](#)

[Snapchat Micro Module](#)

[ICDTA®](#)

[Safer Schools Together](#)



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