

Twitter's new downvote feature is nothing like Reddit, YouTube. Here's why

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Select Twitter users found a new feature upon opening up the app

Friday: a downvote button, available only to some as Twitter tests the feature on a global scale.

Twitter isn't the first social platform to embrace a downvote button—Reddit and YouTube each sport the feature in different forms. But the addition sparked debate Friday as users weighed in on the measure.

The downvote button is still in testing, and its limited unveiling Friday came as a surprise to many users selected to try out the feature, who tweeted about their confusion. Twitter announced the rollout from the Twitter Support account Thursday, specifying it would be available on web and soon on Android and iOS.

The downvote option was tested earlier in June 2021 with some iOS users, though this new, wider rollout doesn't appear to show an upvote button in place of the usual like button. Still, some users found the change to be reminiscent of Reddit.

How Twitter's downvote button works

Unlike on Reddit, Twitter does not show downvotes or downvote proportions on posts, nor do they factor into the overall likes, or for Reddit, upvotes, on the post. Google-owned YouTube, another major platform with a [dislike button](#), made the number of dislikes on videos private in 2021. The dislike button remains, though the company said in a blog post from November that its decision had reduced targeted dislike attacking behavior. The major difference in YouTube's approach is creators can see exact dislike counts for videos.

If you have access to the new feature while in testing, you should see a notification from Twitter when you open the website or app. The downvote button will appear as a downward-facing arrow to the right of

the heart-shaped like button.

Here's an example of the kind of tweet Twitter sees as downvote-worthy, based on its examples sent Thursday: An original tweet asks "Does anyone have restaurant recommendations for New York City? I'm going for the first time and I'm overwhelmed." A downvoted reply to this tweet reads "The city is overrated. Not worth the traffic."

Many were quick to criticize the fact that the downvote option is currently only for replies, while others found its position frustrating.

The notification introducing users to reply downvotes explains a few aspects of the feature: downvotes aren't public, nor will they be shared with the tweet's author or others on the timeline. Twitter describes the button's purpose as meant to let the platform know when a reply "isn't adding to the conversation." Under the heading "help us make Twitter better," the company says downvote feedback will help the platform prioritize higher quality content.

Thumbs up or down on Twitter downvoting

Not everyone is convinced the feature will be used as intended, with some users pointing to the potential that mass downvoting might silence marginalized groups such as transgender people. Others had sarcastic responses to this new step in the platform's ongoing battle against online hate speech, which has repeatedly flared up as a point of criticism for Twitter in particular.

In a short thread Thursday, Twitter Safety shared information on why people clicked the downvote arrow, reporting that most users found the reply in question offensive, irrelevant or both. The platform claims downvoting will help to customize one's timeline and avoid showing similar content in the future, though it's not clear what methods will be

used to do so.

What else is new on Twitter

The downvote wasn't Twitter's only rollout this week. On Wednesday, the platform announced all web and Android users globally would be able to add one-time warnings to photos and video, along with some iOS users. Some iOS users will now see a DM icon on tweets to help them reply directly to the author. And in Brazil, Twitter introduced an experimental feature prompting users to reconsider replies using harmful language, Twitter Safety announced. The company claims users changed or deleted the replies nearly a third of the time.

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