

# Twitter users can soon get blue check for \$7.99 monthly fee

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People walk outside Twitter headquarters in San Francisco, Friday, Nov. 4, 2022. Employees were bracing for widespread layoffs at Twitter on Friday, as new owner Elon Musk overhauls the social platform. Credit: AP Photo/Jeff Chiu

Twitter has announced a subscription service for \$7.99 a month that

includes a blue check now given only to verified accounts as new owner Elon Musk works to overhaul the platform's verification system just ahead of U.S. midterm elections.

In an update to Apple iOS devices available in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the U.K., Twitter said users who "sign up now" for the new "Twitter Blue with verification" can receive the blue check next to their names "just like the celebrities, companies and politicians you already follow."

But Twitter employee Esther Crawford tweeted Saturday that the "new Blue isn't live yet—the sprint to our launch continues but some folks may see us making updates because we are testing and pushing changes in [real-time](#)." Verified accounts did not appear to be losing their checks so far.

It was not immediately clear when the subscription would go live. Crawford told The Associated Press in a Twitter message that it is coming "soon but it hasn't launched yet." Twitter did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

Anyone being able to get the blue check could lead to confusion and the rise of disinformation ahead of Tuesday's elections, but Musk tweeted Saturday in response to a question about the risk of impostors impersonating verified profiles—such as politicians and [election officials](#)—that "Twitter will suspend the account attempting impersonation and keep the money!"

"So if scammers want to do this a million times, that's just a whole bunch of free money," he said.

But many fear [widespread layoffs that began Friday](#) could gut the guardrails of content moderation and verification on the [social platform](#)

that public agencies, election boards, police departments and news outlets use to keep people reliably informed.

The change will end [Twitter's current verification system](#), which was launched in 2009 to prevent impersonations of high-profile accounts such as celebrities and politicians. Twitter now has about 423,000 verified accounts, many of them rank-and-file journalists from around the globe that the company verified regardless of how many followers they had.

Experts have raised grave concerns about upending the platform's verification system that, while not perfect, has helped Twitter's 238 million daily users determine whether [accounts they get information from are authentic](#). Current verified accounts include celebrities, athletes and influencers, along with [government agencies](#) and politicians worldwide, journalists and news outlets, activists, businesses and brands, and Musk himself.

"He knows the blue check has value, and he's trying to exploit it quickly," said Jennifer Grygiel, a social media expert and associate professor of communications at Syracuse University. "He needs to earn the trust of the people before he can sell them anything. Why would you buy a car from a salesman that you know has essentially proved to be chaotic?"

The update Twitter made to the iOS version of its app does not mention verification as part of the new blue check system. So far, the update is not available on Android devices.



Baron Capital Group Chairman and CEO Ron Baron interviews Tesla CEO Elon Musk at the 29th Annual Baron Investment Conference in New York City on Friday, Nov. 4, 2022. Credit: Baron Capital via AP

Musk, who had earlier said he wants to "verify all humans" on Twitter, has floated that public figures would be identified in ways other than the blue check. Currently, for instance, [government officials](#) are identified with text under names stating they are posting from an official government account.

President Joe Biden's @POTUS account, for example, says in gray letters it belongs to a "United States government official."

Seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton, who has 7.8

million Twitter followers, told the AP, "I could actually just delete my Twitter account, I never use it. I find it really healthy to delete social media from my phone for periods of time."

"But it's also a really powerful tool to connect with people, so I appreciate that and I try to use it as that and not as something that's veering me off course of the journey that I'm on in life," he said.

The announcement comes a day after Twitter began laying off workers to cut costs and as more [companies are pausing advertising on the platform](#) as a cautious corporate world waits to see how the platform will operate under its new owner.

About half of the company's staff of 7,500 was let go, tweeted Yoel Roth, Twitter's head of safety and integrity.

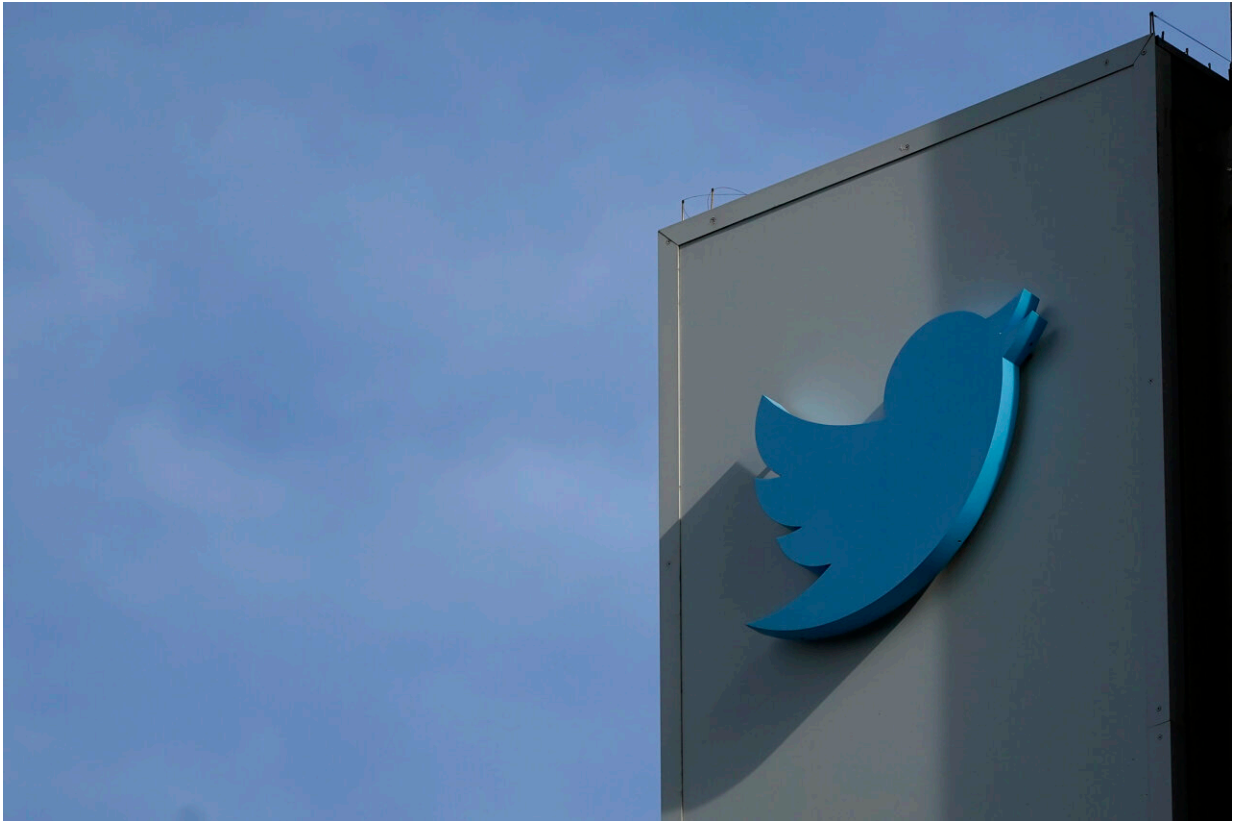
He said the company's front-line content moderation staff was the group the least affected by the [job cuts](#) and that "efforts on election integrity—including harmful misinformation that can suppress the vote and combatting state-backed information operations—remain a top priority."

Twitter co-founder and former CEO [Jack Dorsey took blame](#) for the job losses.

"I own the responsibility for why everyone is in this situation: I grew the company size too quickly," he tweeted Saturday. "I apologize for that."

[Musk tweeted](#) late Friday that there was no choice but to cut jobs "when the company is losing over \$4M/day." He did not provide details on the daily losses at Twitter and said employees who lost their jobs were offered three months' pay as severance.

He also said Twitter has already seen "a massive drop in revenue" as advertisers face pressure from activists to get off the platform, which heavily relies on advertising to make money.



A Twitter headquarters sign is shown in San Francisco, Friday, Nov. 4, 2022. Employees were bracing for widespread layoffs at Twitter on Friday, as new owner Elon Musk overhauls the social platform. Credit: AP Photo/Jeff Chiu

United Airlines on Saturday became the latest major brand to pause advertising on Twitter, joining companies including General Motors, REI, General Mills and Audi.

Musk tried to reassure advertisers last week, saying [Twitter would not](#)

[become a "free-for-all hellscape"](#) because of what he calls his commitment to free speech.

But concerns remain about whether a lighter touch on content moderation at Twitter will result in users sending out more offensive tweets. That could hurt companies' brands if their advertisements appear next to them.

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk on Saturday urged Musk to "ensure [human rights](#) are central to the management of Twitter." In an open letter, Türk said reports that the company's whole human rights team and much of the ethical AI team were laid off was not "an encouraging start."

"Like all companies, Twitter needs to understand the harms associated with its platform and take steps to address them," Türk said. "Respect for our shared human rights should set the guardrails for the platform's use and evolution."

Meanwhile, Twitter cannot simply cut costs to grow profits, and Musk needs to find ways to raise more revenue, said Dan Ives, an analyst with Wedbush. But that may be easier said than done with the new subscription program for blue checks.

"Users have gotten this for free," Ives said. "There may be massive pushback."

He expects 20% to 25% of Twitter's verified users to sign up initially. The stakes are high for Musk and Twitter to get this right early and for signups to work smoothly, he added.

"You don't have a second chance to make a first impression," Ives said. "It's been a train-wreck first week for Musk owning the Twitter

platform. Now you've cut 50% (of the workforce). There are questions about just the stability of the platform, and advertisers are watching this with a keen eye."

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