

Twitter to use own Web link shrinker this summer

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(AP) -- Twitter plans to start using its own Web link shortener on addresses that users include in tweets.

Starting this summer, Twitter will use its new "t.co" domain name to shorten [links](#) that users post directly on Twitter.com or through applications such as TweetDeck. That will help the posts stay within the service's 140-character limit. The company is currently testing its linking technology with some employee accounts.

Users won't always see their links displayed as "t.co" addresses, though. If you get Twitter updates sent to your phone via text messaging, a link might show up as a "t.co" address. But you might see the full address or the Web page's title when looking at that same post on Twitter.com.

"Ultimately, we want to display links in a way that removes the obscurity of (a) shortened link and lets you know where a link will take you," Twitter spokesman Sean Garrett wrote on Twitter's blog Tuesday.

Garrett said that this method of packaging links is meant to improve user safety and will help Twitter gather data for its "promoted tweets," which are Twitter posts paid for by advertisers to appear in search results on the site.

He also noted that in March, Twitter started using its own "twt.tl" address to automatically channel links that users sent in messages directed specifically at another user. That was a way for Twitter to spot

and cut down on the spread of [malware](#) and other unsavory content that links can lead to; Twitter can simply disable a "twt.tl" address if it led to a questionable site.

Twitter used to automatically shrink links on tweets as well - first using TinyURL, later using bit.ly - but the site doesn't currently do so. So if you want to share a long link with friends, you'd have to go to TinyURL, bit.ly or another service to shorten the link first.

Even after [Twitter](#) implements "t.co," Garrett said that users will still be able to use link shorteners of their choosing. This means you should still be able to take advantage of traffic analysis and other features that come with those services. But those shortened links will be converted into a "t.co" address.

The effect of Twitter's move on existing link shorteners is likely to be small. After all, they are also commonly used in e-mails, Facebook posts and other settings.

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