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- » Creating your TikTok account
- » Understanding the basic TikTok interface
- » Making your first TikTok video

Chapter 1

Using TikTok for the First Time

Welcome to the amazing, different, and maybe even intimidating but addictive world of TikTok! There's a good chance your children or grandchildren sent you here, or you were swindled into trying out a TikTok dance, prank, or meme from a friend or loved one. Whatever the reason, the question I keep hearing is, "How do I use this crazy app?"

Well, I'm here, as your furry, lovable (repeating Grover from *Sesame Street*) TikTok creator, to show you how. I teach you the way I know best and am most comfortable with: by writing a book. (As you soon discover, younger TikTok users would wonder why I'm not creating TikTok videos instead.)

Downloading TikTok for Your Mobile Device

Downloading TikTok is the easiest part. TikTok works on both Android and iOS. I even got it to work on my children's Kindle Fire devices, which are Android-based. Because you already have one of these (see my foolish assumptions in the Introduction), search for the Google Play app (Android) or the App Store (iOS). After you are in either of these app stores, do the following:



TIP

1. **Find the search functionality in Google Play or the App Store.**

A big Search icon usually appears at the bottom or top of the screen. On my iPhone, the Search icon is in the bottom right.

2. **Search for *TikTok*, as shown in Figure 1-1.**
3. **Tap the download icon (iPhone) or the Install button (Android).**

The the download icon is a down arrow or a cloud if you've previously downloaded the app (as in Figure 1-1). It may look slightly different on your device.

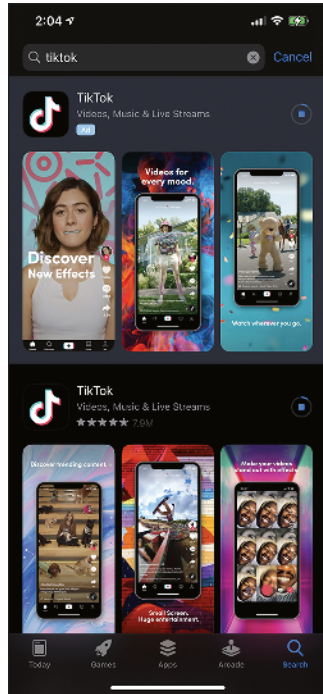


FIGURE 1-1: Searching and downloading the TikTok app.

That's it. Now I show you how to create an account so you can start using the app.



TIP

On Kindle Fire devices, the TikTok app is in the Kindle app store. However, keep in mind that your app experience may be limited on Kindle Fire in terms of camera quality and the speed of the app.

Creating Your Account

After you've downloaded the TikTok app to your mobile device, the first step in using the service is to create an account. When you open the app, you're greeted with a Sign Up for TikTok screen, as shown in Figure 1-2.

You can sign up with your phone number, your email address, or your Facebook, Apple (if on iOS), Google, or Twitter account. (Twitter is available by tapping the down arrow below the Continue with Google option.) Signing up with an account is the easiest option because TikTok autofills many of the sections.

Follow these steps to create your TikTok account:

1. Tap one of the following:

- *Use Phone or Email*
button: I recommend this option so you can understand the full registration process. Then continue with Step 2.
- *The button representing your Internet account of choice.* If you insist on taking the shorter route (hey — I don't blame you!) by tapping the Continue with Facebook, Continue with Apple, Continue with Google, or Continue with Twitter button (to see the Twitter option, tap the down arrow), just follow the on-screen instructions to log into your chosen account. After you're authenticated, skip to Step 5, where you're asked to choose a username.

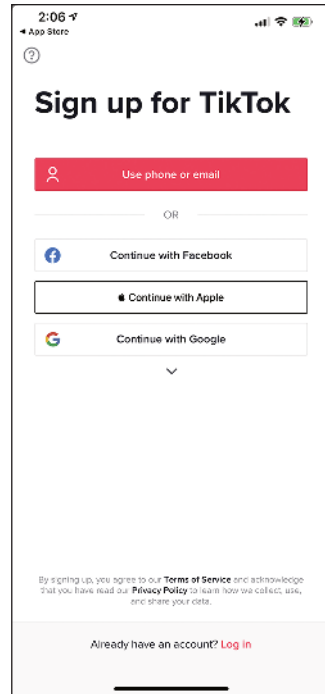


FIGURE 1-2: The account setup process.



2. Enter your birthday and then tap Next.

You must be 13 or older to use TikTok. While some parents lie about their children's ages so that their kids can use TikTok, keep in mind that many videos on TikTok have adult themes. Nudity and illegal activities are not allowed on the service, but your children will be exposed to adult topics and profanity if they use the app.

3. Enter your phone number or email address, tap Next, and complete the Captcha puzzle.

I chose to enter an email, which is selected by default. See Figure 1-3, left. Tap Email in the upper right if you prefer to use your phone number.

4. Enter a password, as shown in Figure 1-3, right, and then tap Next.

Your password must be 8 to 20 characters long, and must contain letters, numbers, and special characters. I recommend that you use a password manager such as LastPass.

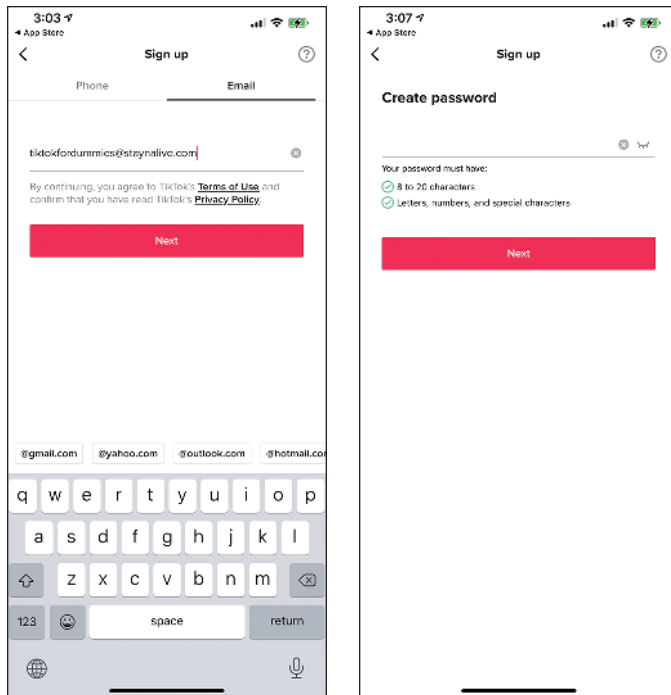


FIGURE 1-3:
Enter a password.

5. Pick a unique username for your account.

Your username is how your account will be identified publicly. If the username is taken, you see a message saying, *This username isn't available*. Don't worry — you can change your username later if you're not entirely sure which username to choose right now!

6. Choose your interests — or not. Then tap Next.

If you want, select what you want to see most on TikTok. If you'd rather not fill out this part, click the Skip link.

Congratulations! You have a TikTok account. The app will play a little video showing you how to use TikTok, and take you to the For You page, shown in Figure 1-4.



FIGURE 1-4: The For You page.



TIP

After you create an account and watch the introductory tutorials, the TikTok app will ask you to allow notifications on your phone, as shown in Figure 1-5 (if you haven't previously enabled notifications). I suggest that you turn on notifications for now so you can become familiar with the app and have the app top of mind as you learn how to use it. You can always turn off notifications later in your device's Settings screen.

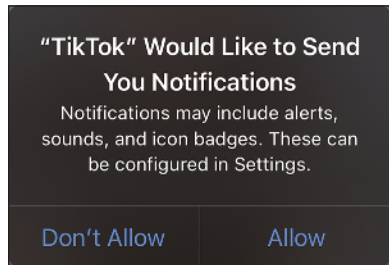


FIGURE 1-5: TikTok wants you to turn on notifications.



REMEMBER

TikTok, like all apps and social networks, is constantly making changes to its interface, and some options may be slightly different than they are here. Please feel free to ask questions in the Facebook Group I set up for this book at <https://facebook.com/groups/tiktokfordummies>.

The For You page (refer to Figure 1-4) is the default view for TikTok when you open the app. It's where you can discover new content and users to follow. The other view, Following, displays content from those you are already following. You can switch from one to the other by tapping For You or Following at the top of the page or by swiping right or left.

On either page, swipe up as often as you like for an endless dopamine rush of new content to explore! I discuss the For You and Following pages, and how to discover and follow new content, in Chapter 2.

Exploring Your Settings

People go to your profile page when they want to learn more about you. After you create your account and have had a chance to get acclimated, I recommend that you edit your profile to give the best picture of yourself to the outside world. You might want to update your profile picture (called your *avatar*), username, and description, along with other information. You might also want to change some settings so they are more to your liking.



TIP

If you're really excited about creating a video right now, you can skip this section and go to the "Creating Your First TikTok Video" section, later in the chapter. You can always change your profile and user settings later. However, editing your settings now (by adding a photo and bio) will ensure that others know who you are and give them a reason to follow you, which will help you get more views from the start!

Updating your profile

You can get to your profile from any main TikTok page by clicking the Me icon (the little person) in the lower right. Then to edit your profile, tap Edit Profile. The page shown in Figure 1-6 appears.

You change the following options on this page:

- » **Change Photo:** Tap Change Photo and then tap either Take Photo or Upload Photo (or Select from Gallery on Android). If you want to take a photo with your device camera, select Take Photo and then take a selfie. Otherwise, tap Upload Photo or Select from Gallery and select a photo from your device's photo library. (You can view the photo after you take or upload it.)



REMEMBER



TIP

The profile photo you choose appears next to every comment you make, so be sure your photo represents the way you want to be seen.

When you add a photo, TikTok also lets you add a video to your profile. Only those who visit your profile and click the video can see it.

- » **Name:** If you signed up using another social media platform, your name on that platform appears here. If you signed up using your phone number or email, TikTok generates a name, such as user1234567. This name appears at the top of your profile when other viewers visit your profile page, so be sure it's descriptive of you or your brand! If you want to change the Name field, tap Name, make your changes, and then tap Save.

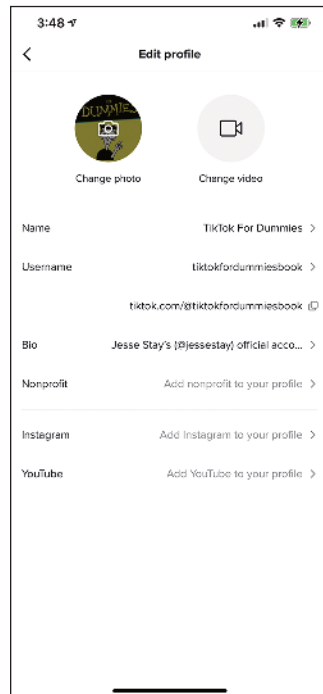


FIGURE 1-6: The Edit Profile page on my first visit.



WARNING

- » **Username:** You added a unique username when you created your account. To change it, tap Username, enter another unique username, and then tap Save. (Remember, a green check mark appears if the username hasn't been chosen by anyone else.)

You can change your username only once every 30 days. Also, it's unclear when or if TikTok releases old usernames, so choose carefully because you may not be able to reuse an old username.

- » **Bio:** Tap Bio and add a brief (80 characters or less) description about yourself. Your bio should grab people's attention and give them a reason to follow you. Be witty or funny if you like. Then tap Save in the upper right to return to the Edit Profile page.

- » **Nonprofit:** This option is new. If you want to choose a nonprofit you love, TikTok will display it prominently on your profile and give your followers an option to donate. I think the Nonprofit option will evolve over time.

- » **Instagram:** You can feature a single Instagram account on your profile by tapping Instagram and following the instructions in the Instagram authentication process.

- » **YouTube:** You can include on your profile a link to one of your YouTube channels. To feature a YouTube channel, tap the YouTube option, and then follow the instructions to authenticate your Google account and choose your YouTube account.

When all your info is filled out, your account should look similar to Figure 1-7. (I didn't add a YouTube or Instagram account to my profile page.)

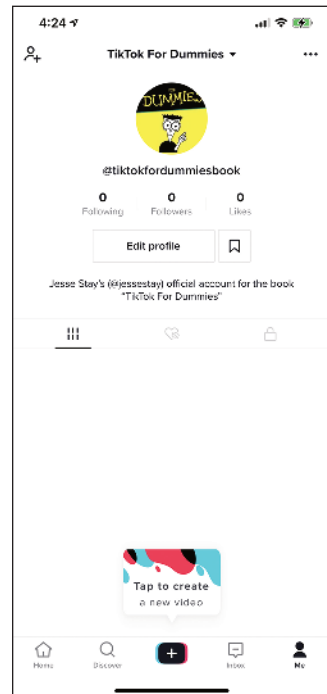


FIGURE 1-7: My simple profile page.

Your profile looks nice and pretty now! In the next section you learn how to make your TikTok experience safer by editing your profile settings and privacy features.

Updating your profile and privacy settings

Now that you've edited your profile to your liking, you should become familiar with the Settings and Privacy page. This is where you discover how to protect yourself, set the level of privacy you're comfortable with, and even gain access to your profile statistics. To start, tap the three dots icon in the upper right of your profile page (refer to Figure 1-7). The Settings and Privacy page appears, as shown in Figure 1-8.



REMEMBER

For space constraints, I list the most important options here (and describe some of them in more detail in Chapters 6 and 9). Many of the following options will change over time because TikTok regularly updates its design and functionality. If any of these options don't exist or look different, feel free to ask a question in the Facebook Group I set up for readers. You can join at <https://facebook.com/groups/tiktokfordummies>.

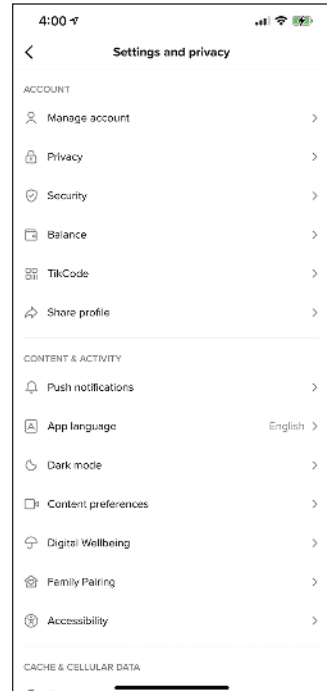


FIGURE 1-8:
The Settings and Privacy page.

Following are the major options available:

- » **Manage Account:** If necessary, add a phone number, add an email address, or update your password to log into your account.

You can also delete your account here if you want to start over (and start this chapter from the beginning). You can also switch to a free Pro Account, which enables you to get stats to study your account followers and video views (see Chapter 7).

- » **Privacy:** Set how public your account is, how people find you, what ads know about you, and communication preferences. If you're creating an account for your kids or are a private person, you can set the account as a private account. I talk more about privacy settings in Chapter 6.
- » **Security:** If you get an alert indicating suspicious activity, go here to see which devices are logging into your account. You can also set up two-step verification to make your account more secure. I describe security in more detail in Chapter 6.
- » **Balance:** Don't worry about the Balance setting right now because this option applies only when you have more than 1,000 followers. In case you do hit 1,000 followers, check out Chapter 9, where I talk about the Balance option and TikTok revenue-sharing features for livestreams.
- » **TikCode:** This option gives you a QR code to share with others. When people scan the code, they link directly to your TikTok profile.



TIP

Do this right now: Tap TikCode, tap Save to Device, and then share the image (it's usually in your device's Photos app) on your other social networks so others can follow you. People can also scan the QR code image on their phones to automatically load your TikTok profile and begin following your TikTok videos.

Figure 1-9 is the TikCode for the TikTok profile I set up for this book. Try scanning the QR code in the figure by tapping TikCode under Settings and Privacy in your TikTok



app, and then tapping the Scan icon at the bottom. This loads the book's TikTok profile. Then tap Follow to follow my updates for this book on TikTok!

A QR code is a square bar code that most modern phones can read. It usually represents a hyperlink to a website.

» **Share Profile:** The Share Profile setting, like the TikTokCode setting, is a way to share your profile with others. Tapping the Share Profile setting takes you to your mobile device's default Share screen.

The Settings and Privacy page has dozens of other options. For now, the ones I mention here are sufficient to get you started and keep you safe.

Now it's time to have fun. In the next section, I teach you some basic elements of the TikTok interface while you create your first video!

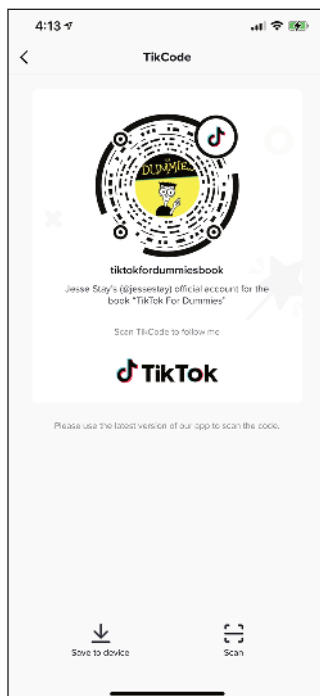


FIGURE 1-9: The TikTokCode for the TikTok account created for the book.

Creating Your First TikTok Video

Creating TikTok videos is easy. Maybe you already created a video when TikTok prompted you to try after you set up your account. I dive deeper into video creation and all its features in Chapter 3. Here, I describe the basic elements:

1. Tap the plus (+) icon.

The plus icon appears at the bottom of the screen after you log in (refer to Figure 1-7).

If this is your first time using the app or opening the recording screen, give the app permission to access your camera, audio, and photo library.

2. Look over the recording page, which is shown in Figure 1-10.

The recording page is the “movie studio in your pocket” that I reference throughout the book. For now, become familiar with the following elements:

- The big red record button near the bottom
- The Effects icon, to the left of the red record button
- The 60s and 15s video length options at the bottom of the screen

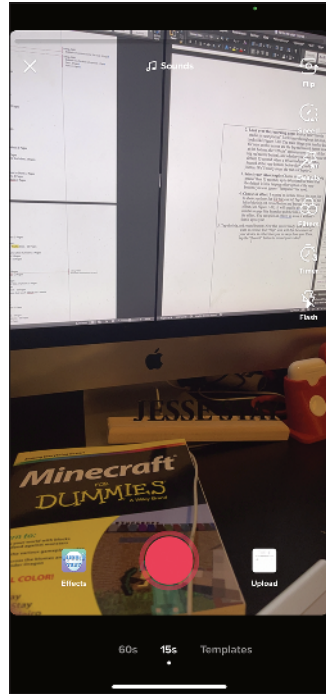


FIGURE 1-10: The recording page has everything you need to create content!

I describe the other elements on this screen in Chapter 3.

3. Select your video length.

Tap 60s for anything greater than 15 seconds (to a maximum of 60 seconds), or leave this option at the default 15s for videos up to 15 seconds.

4. (Optional) Choose an effect.

Effects are optional, but I wanted to include a description to show you how fun TikTok can be:

- Tap Effects to the left of the red record button and browse through the effects, as shown in Figure 1-11. TikTok, similar to apps such as Snapchat, usually provides instructions on how to use the effect.*

- b. Tap an effect you like and try it out by following the instructions on the screen. Select another effect if you don't like that one. Feel free to scroll through and try them all.*
- c. Tap anywhere outside the Effects dialog to return to the recording screen. Or tap the circle with a line in the upper left of the Effects dialog if you decide you don't want to use any effects. The effect begins when you start recording, as shown in Step 6.*

5. Place what you want to record inside the frame.

Choose what you want to record, and place that person or thing inside the camera frame. Note that you can tap the Flip icon or double-tap anywhere on the screen to flip the camera view.

6. Tap the red record button.

If you tap the button once, TikTok will record automatically until you either tap the button briefly again or your 15-second or 60-second time is up. You can also long-press (press and hold down) the record button, and the TikTok app will record for as long as you hold down that button or your time is up.



TIP

Long-pressing the record button can be useful for — wait for it (you're about to be smarter than 80 percent of TikTok users) — zooming! To try it, long-press the record button and, with your finger still down, slide the button up to zoom in and down to zoom out. Boom! Instant zoom as you're recording. When you release the button, TikTok stops recording.



FIGURE 1-11: Scroll through the many effects available on TikTok.

7. If you finish filming before reaching the time limit (15 or 60 seconds) click the red check mark in the bottom-right corner.

When you finish recording your video, the page shown in Figure 1-12 appears — either automatically or after you tap the check mark. (The figure shows me typing this very section of Chapter 1 — how meta!)

8. (Optional) Add sounds or additional effects. Then tap Next.

You can choose sounds and other effects to add to your video, which I cover in Chapter 3.

9. Add a description and configure sharing options.

On the next page, shown in Figure 1-13, add a description about your video (150 characters or less). I usually tap the #Hashtags button and select a popular hashtag or two to add to the video. (If you used an effect in your video, TikTok may automatically add a hashtag for that effect in the description; you can keep it or delete it.)

I also suggest turning on the Allow Duet and Allow Stitch options to allow others to share your video. Just tap each slider and it will move to the on position and turn green. I explain Allow Duet, Allow Stitch, and the other options you see here in Chapters 3 and 9.

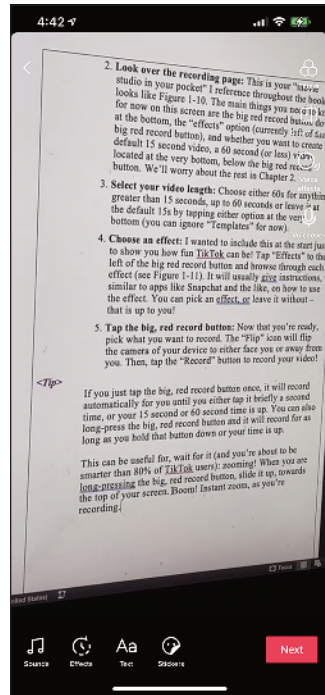


FIGURE 1-12: Editing your just recorded video.

10. To post your video, tap the Post button.

If this is your first time posting a video, you're asked to verify that it's okay to publish the video publicly. If you want your creation to be seen by the world, tap Post Now. If you would rather it remain private, skip to Chapter 6, where I cover privacy for your profile and your videos, or simply select Me Only under Who Can Watch This Video.

The For You page appears, with the video you just created uploading in the upper-left corner, along with videos from other recommended video creators, which TikTok selects for you, if you're not following anyone yet.

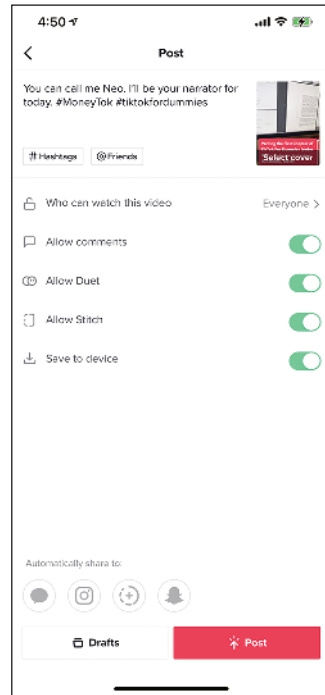


FIGURE 1-13: Your final recording page.

When the video has finished uploading, it will play automatically on the For You or Following page as long as you keep the app open, repeating itself over and over unless you tap the screen to pause. Congratulations! You just created your first TikTok video.

In the next chapter, you discover how to find and follow content on TikTok. Then in Chapter 3, you get to know the other recording elements and fully use the “movie studio in your pocket” that is TikTok video creation.

