

Elon Musk says he's letting Donald Trump back on Twitter

Donald Trump is allowed to rejoin Twitter, Elon Musk has announced. Musk justified that decision based on the results of his own personal Twitter poll. The @realDonaldTrump account and its tweets are fully visible again, just days after Trump confirmed he will run for president again in 2024.

Shortly after taking control of the social network, Musk said he wouldn't be reinstating any banned accounts until the company had set up and convened a content moderation council with "widely diverse viewpoints."

Instead, on Friday evening, as people drifted off for the pre-Thanksgiving weekend, he decided to poll his own followers on Twitter. "Reinstate former President Trump," he tweeted, alongside a poll with buttons to pick "Yes" or "No."

"Vox Populi, Vox Dei," he added in a follow-up tweet, Latin for "the voice of the people is the voice of God."

The "Yes" responses won by a slim 52–48 margin. It is not clear how many of them may have been bots; Musk himself suggested that the poll was being attacked by bots. Musk also famously attempted to get out of the Twitter deal by claiming that as many as 20 percent of Twitter's accounts were fake, and he once suggested that bots were responsible for the results of his controversial poll about Russia and Ukraine.

Over 134 million people saw the poll, according to Musk, though it wound up with just over 15 million responses. That would suggest only around 11 percent of those who saw it clicked on one of the buttons.

We will likely never know whether Musk actually made the decision based on the poll or whether he already made up his

mind. In November 2021, he sold 10 percent of his Tesla shares after he polled his followers, and the majority responded that he should. At the time, he wrote, "I will abide by the results of this poll, whichever way it goes." But *The Wall Street Journal* revealed he'd already made the decision to sell those shares by September, two months earlier, as part of a preset trading plan meant to keep executives from insider trading.

Former President Trump was banned from Twitter on January 8th, 2021, "due to the risk of further incitement of violence" after Trump's role in inciting the January 6th Capitol attacks. Twitter said at the time that Trump's messages broke its rules against the glorification of violence. From that time until this evening, visitors to his Twitter profile were greeted with an "account suspended" message, instead of seeing his tweets.

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During the long and rocky process of purchasing Twitter, Musk said he would restore Trump's account. "I do think that it was not correct to ban Donald Trump," said Musk in May. "I think that was a mistake because it alienated a large part of the country and did not ultimately result in Donald Trump not having a voice ... So I guess the answer is I would reverse the permaban."

It's not clear whether Trump will come back to Twitter, invited or not. After being booted off Twitter, Trump joined Truth Social, a right-wing social media company developed by a firm founded by the former president. Following Musk's comments on allowing him to rejoin Twitter, Trump said he

would stay on Truth Social regardless of whether he was invited back. “Twitter’s become very boring. They’ve gotten rid of a lot of good voices on Twitter, a lot of their conservative voices,” said Trump at the time.

On Saturday, after being asked about Musk’s poll during a Q&A, Trump suggested he might not rejoin, saying, “I don’t see it because I don’t see any reason for it.” But Trump *also told his followers* on Truth Social to vote for the Twitter poll on Saturday afternoon, roughly three hours before the poll closed.

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Musk has described himself as a centrist in the past, but said in May 2022 that he “can no longer support [Democrats] and will vote Republican.” Just ahead of the US midterms, Musk publicly suggested to his followers to vote Republican as well.

Musk also announced that Jordan Peterson, Kathy Griffin, and *The Babylon Bee* would all be reinstated, without making any mention of the aforementioned content moderation council having been set up. Musk made no mention of a content moderation council alongside this evening’s decision to reinstate Trump, either. It is not clear what happened to his promise that “no major content decisions or account reinstatements will happen before that council convenes.”

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If Trump decides to return to Twitter, it could have a significant effect on the 2024 US election, with the former president once more in possession of his favorite megaphone: a Twitter account watched by the world's media that he can use to direct both support and abuse – and the implicit support of that platform's owner in doing so.

<https://www.theverge.com/2022/11/19/23467280/donald-trump-twitter-back-elon-musk-poll>