



using Instagram

TO GROW YOUR
ONLINE BUSINESS
IN 2021



How to use Instagram to grow your online business in 2021

The question of which social media platform to invest your time in is a big one for creators. After all, you only have so much energy to pour into social media!

Your choice will depend on your preferences, but we think Instagram should make the shortlist. Boasting over [25 million business profiles](#), Instagram is an attractive option for many businesses. Robust analytics, targeted advertising, and a thriving community make the platform an obvious choice for growing brands.

But even aside from the business-specific features, Instagram is designed for creators. It's highly visual but also has a strong text component. It's flexible. And it's full of consumers ready to buy from small businesses!

In this guide, we're covering everything you need to know to use Instagram to grow your online business.

Why Instagram is important for creators

Flexible post types let creators share their work, their way

Instagram started as a purely image-sharing app. No longer. Today, Instagram supports multiple video formats, as well as more text-based options, making it ideal for any creator to share their work, no matter their medium.

Creators can share work in the following formats:

- Long videos up to 60 minutes long on IGTV
- Shorter, personal videos on [Stories](#)
- Short, creatively edited videos on Reels

- Images or graphics on the Grid
- Slideshow images on the Grid

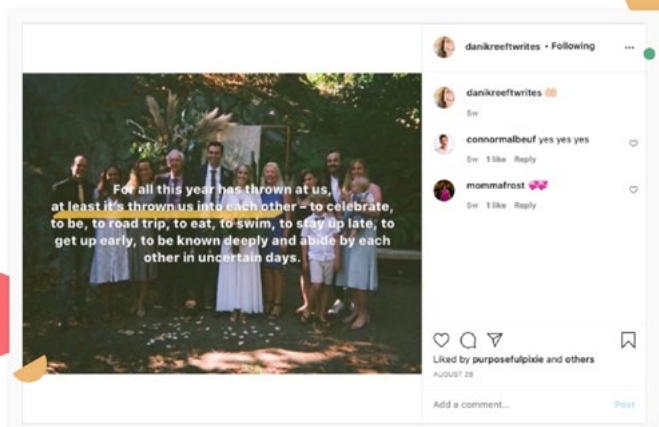
That's a lot of options!

For inspiration check out how [@rozeacademy](#), an ebook creator, is using IGTV to share long, behind-the-scenes content for her audience:



Ebook creator Bri uses IGTV to share BTS content of the creation process. Image via [@rozeacademy](#).

And follow writer [@danikreeftwrites](#) for beautiful text-based graphics and Grid posts of her writing snippets:



Dani Kreeft shares images overlaid with text. Image via [@danikreeftwrites](#).

High levels of engagement compared to other platforms

No one wants to put a ton of work into social media only to feel like they're shouting into a void. This is where Instagram really shines: Engagement.

With an [average engagement level of 1.6%](#), Instagram's engagement is much higher than other social media platforms. For example, Twitter's engagement level average is hovering at only .48%. That's over 30% less than Instagram's.

Easy to make meaningful connections with your target audience

Instagram manages to make business profiles feel the opposite of spammy, even when they're showing up alongside your real-life friends' and family's posts.

Unlike some one-way platforms (such as Facebook), Instagram facilitates conversations between creators and their audience. As a creator, you can easily engage with your target customers' content on Instagram as much as they can engage with your content.

Additionally, *customers* are increasingly looking to Instagram to [find products and develop relationships with businesses](#):

- One of three *most-viewed* Stories are created by business profiles
- 200+ million people specifically visit business profiles every day on Instagram

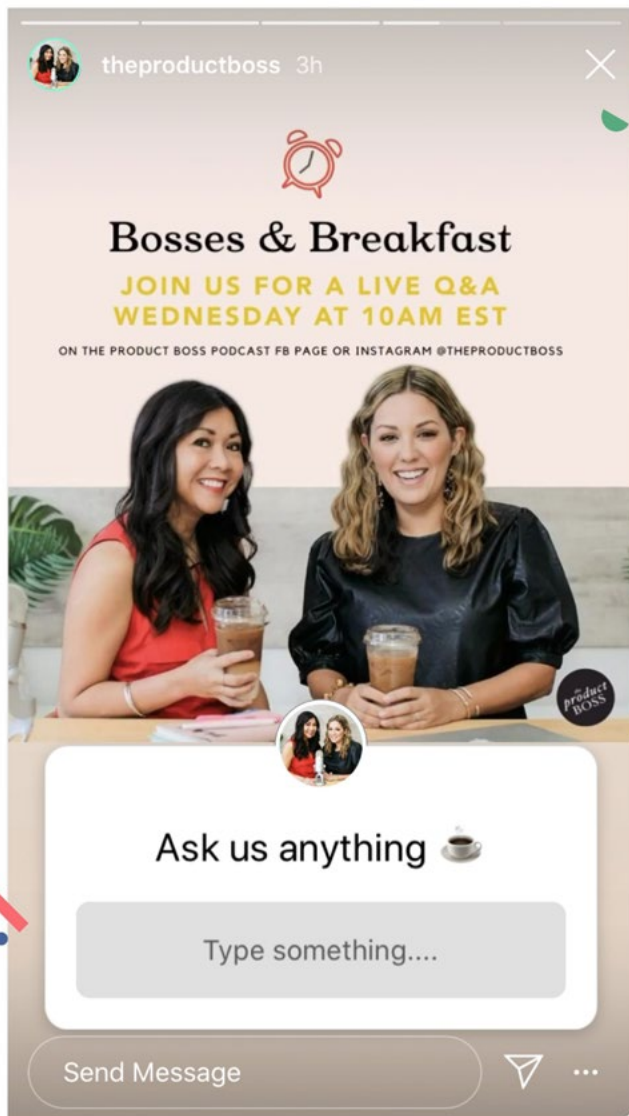
Those two-way conversations are what makes Instagram a unique and compelling choice for growing an engaged audience.

Highly interactive and collaborative features

Instagram is a great place to find collaborators (or even to host collaborations) and interact with your audience. This is due to Instagram's deliberate features designed to encourage this sort of behavior:

- [Stories Poll Stickers](#) and Question Stickers are simple market research tools and Q & A tools
- Shareable features, like the ability to share a post to Stories, allow other people to share your content easily (and vice versa)
- Ability to tag other users in your posts and Stories means you can showcase collaborations easily

For inspiration, check out [@theproductboss](#), a coaching business that recently used the Question Stickers feature to host an informal Q & A with their audience:



Coaching company *The Product Boss* uses Question Stickers in Stories to gather content for their live Q & A session with their audience. Image via [@theproductboss](#).

Q & A's help creators understand their audience better while also providing valuable content for consumers.

Business-friendly features to extend your reach and impact

Over the years, Instagram has continually launched business-friendly features to make the platform more appealing for small business owners.

Some of the best business features include the following:

- **Business profile** where you can share a [brief bio](#) and offer a call-to-action
- **Link-in-bio** to direct profile visitors to a targeted landing page, like the [quick and beautiful page you can build in ConvertKit](#) in minutes
- **Shopping feature**, which allows you sell products directly from Instagram
- **Business partnership tags** to showcase collaborations in Stories and Posts
- **Swipe-Up feature** in Stories to direct viewers straight to a webpage, email opt-in, blog post, and more
- **Insights feature** to [see audience demographics](#) and how your audience behaves
- **Hashtags**, which [work like a search engine](#) to allow your account to be found by more people
- **Easy-to-set-up advertising** to expand your reach beyond your followers

Let's take a look at a few examples to show how these business features can make Instagram a worthwhile time investment for creators.

Headband creator [@twistederzi](#) uses the Shopping feature to sell her handmade products directly from her profile:

How to use Instagram to grow your online business

Many creators have already been using Instagram as a consumer for years. But using Instagram for business growth is different than using it for fun—success requires being strategic with what you share and how you share it.

We're breaking down the steps to put Instagram to use for your online business:

First, set up an Instagram business account

To use all of Instagram's business features we mentioned earlier, you'll have to have a business account, not just a regular account.

Creating a business account is simple. But there's one trick: You have to create a business Facebook account first, and then link that account to your Instagram. Facebook has laid out the easy steps to creating a business account in [this step-by-step guide](#).

Second, develop an Instagram strategy

There's no point in "winging it" if you hope to get results on Instagram. You need to create an [Instagram strategy](#) that aligns with your business goals. This brings us to the first step of creating your strategy...

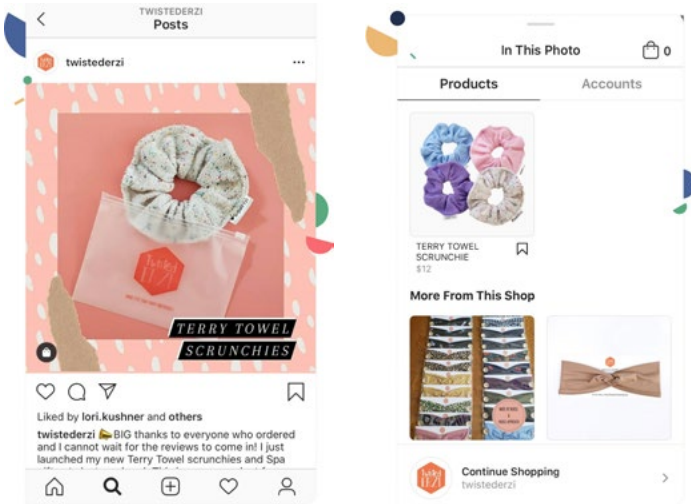
1. Define your goals for Instagram

Your goals for your Instagram account will depend on what type of creator you are. Most product-based businesses need to sell hundreds (if not thousands) of products a month to be successful, so they should aim to create a big, broad audience on Instagram.

Service-based creators, on the other hand, don't need to sell as much per month to have a sustainable business. But the price of their service is likely high. So, they should aim to build a smaller, highly qualified audience.

2. Explore your competition

To get a headstart on your strategy, borrow from the best. What are other creators doing well on Instagram?



Headband shop Twisted Erzi uses the Shopping feature to allow followers to buy her products directly from her Instagram grid. Image via [@twistederzi](#).

Meanwhile, juice brand [@drinkjuicemimi](#) strategically uses the link-in-bio feature to direct viewers to a special product collection:



JuiceMi, a juice brand and bar, uses the link-in-bio feature to call followers to action to make a purchase online for a special collection. Image via [@drinkjuicemimi](#).

The algorithm promotes organic growth

Despite [the backlash](#) every time the [Instagram algorithm is updated](#), it seems that the platform continues to promote organic growth versus paying for ads.

This is huge for small business owners because it means quality and strategic content from talented creators can help you succeed on Instagram even more than a huge advertising budget would.

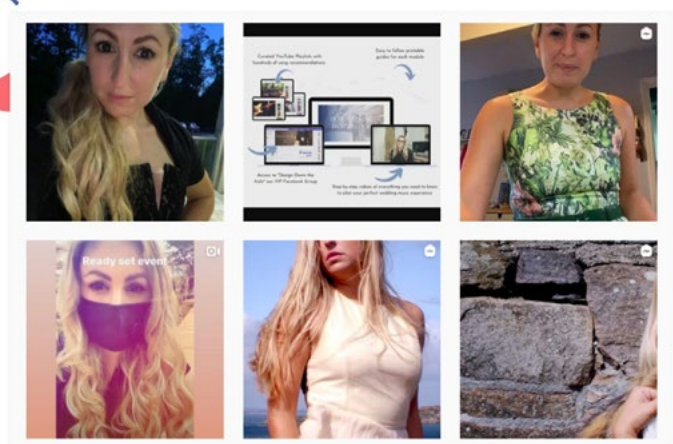
Where could you outshine them? What hashtags are they using?

Make a list of things you see others doing that you could also do well, and then incorporate those things into your strategy.

3. Create your brand identity

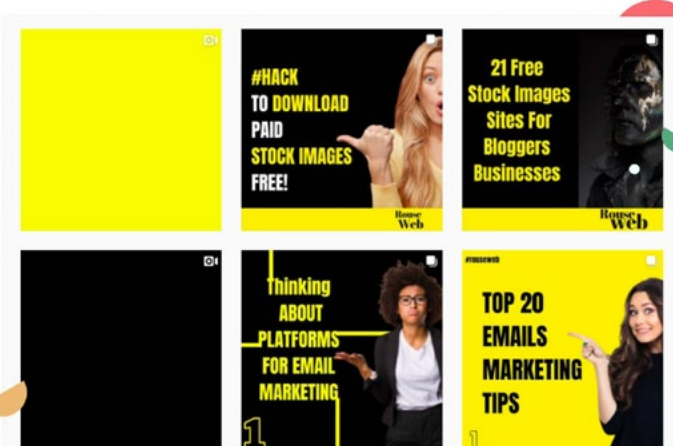
Instagram is a visual-first platform, so your visual branding matters a lot. And your brand identity for Instagram goes beyond what you might have already on your website and business cards.

You'll need to choose a style for your images. For example, you could opt to share casual images like [@violingirlnyc](#):



Some creators, like this violinist, opt for a more personal, casual brand image on Instagram. Image via [@violingirlnyc](#).

Or, you could create a more professional, less personal brand identity with more graphics than photos, like marketer [@rouseweb](#):



Some creators, like [Rouse to Web](#), create a highly professional brand image on Instagram, using graphics and stock images. Image via [@rouseweb](#).

Next, create and share content consistently

Once you have a direction for your Instagram content, it's time to do what you do best: Create!

The key to succeeding on Instagram is to post content regularly. People love to follow accounts where they can expect consistent content—both in terms of timing *and* topics.

Ask yourself:

- What types of content will I share? Videos, photos, infographics, or something else?
- What will my content topics be? Will they be around a singular topic, or will I have a few different content pillars?
- How often will I post on Instagram? Make sure to choose a schedule that you can keep up with. (You can also take a cue from the universal [best times to post on Instagram](#).)

Finally, track your progress!

Tracking how you're doing is a crucial part of any strategy. It allows you to see what's working and what's not so that you can adjust your strategy as needed and get the results you want faster.

Fortunately, you don't have to use a third-party app to track your progress. Instagram's Insights feature reveals key metrics like audience growth, engagement, link clicks, and more.

Instagram marketing best practices for 2021

If you've followed along to this point, you've already launched a business account on Instagram, created an Instagram strategy, and created and shared your content.

But you're not done quite yet. There's more you can do.

We created an in-depth guide including [16 best practices to grow your Instagram in 2020](#). But we'll include a few of the best tips here:

Engage with other users

Actively seek out other Instagram accounts in your target market or industry and engage with their content, by commenting on their posts or replying to Stories. This guarantees that these accounts will see your profile (and may even follow you). It's a fast-track to [growing your account organically](#), without ads.

Use hashtags

Take advantage of the hashtag feature! Use hashtags you suspect your target audience is following so that your content shows up in the search results for that hashtag.

For example, website designer [@olivewingedesigns](#) uses hashtags that her target market of female entrepreneurs will likely use, like #womenontherise:



Website designer Olivewing Designs uses hashtags her target audience uses to get more reach on Instagram. Image via [@olivewingedesigns](#).

Make your captions engaging

Yes, Instagram is visual-first. But it's your captions that drive action!

[Make your captions engaging](#) by telling stories, focusing on the first 140 characters, and always providing value.

Partner with brands and other creators

An easy way to get instant exposure to large audiences is to [create content in partnership with brands](#) or other creators.

A tag in a post by a large brand can skyrocket your growth in minutes. But collaboration with smaller accounts can be highly beneficial too, especially if their audience is your target market.

Consider doing a joint Instagram Live, a post swap, or even just tagging one another in your Stories for mutual exposure.

Pay attention to your image sizes

Images that don't quite fit right in Instagram's various sharing channels (Stories, IGTV, Posts, Reels) can make your content seem unprofessional.

When you're creating, double-check that your images will be the [right size for Instagram](#).

Understand the Instagram algorithm

Instagram is constantly updating its algorithm, which dictates how and when people see your content. This can be crucial for knowing how to engage with the platform for the best results.

For example, in the early days of Instagram, the platform displayed content chronologically. So, it was incredibly important *when exactly* you posted. Now, there's a lot more that goes into how many people see your content.

Read [our complete guide to understanding the Instagram algorithm in 2020](#).

Take your Instagram growth further with a free Convertkit account

Instagram can be awesome for creators. But relying completely on Instagram for your business is not the smartest move. Social media platforms change daily and can even [shadowban](#) your account without warning. If this happened to you, you'd instantly lose your way of connecting with your audience!

That's why strategic creators safeguard their Instagram growth by driving their Instagram audience to their email list. You own your email list outright—and no one can take it away!

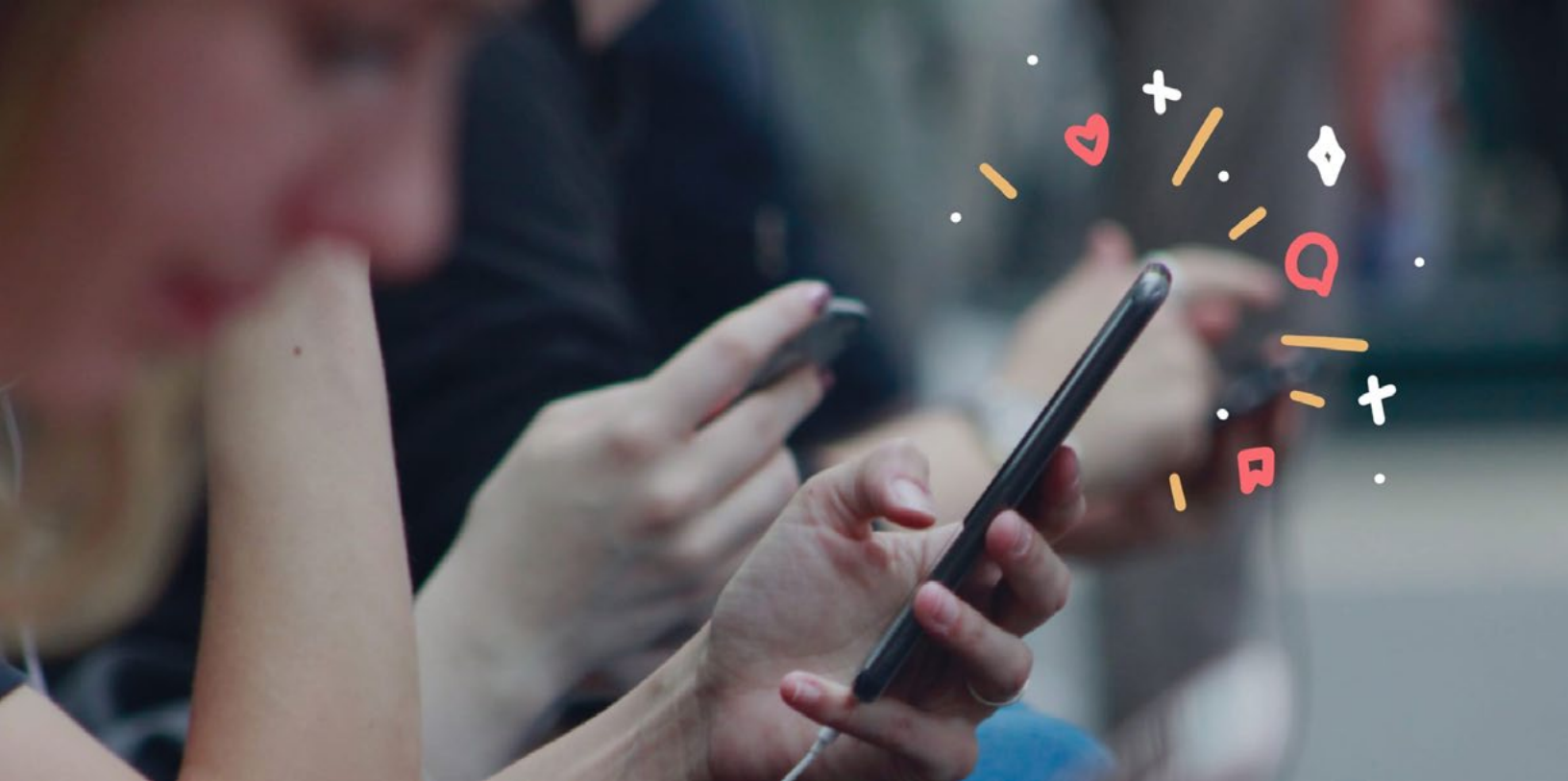
Also, email is a great way to deepen your relationship with your Instagram followers. You can pop directly into their inbox, create funnels to sell more effectively, and make sure your content is always seen by your audience.

With a free Convertkit account, you can start email marketing today, including:

- Sending automated emails with easy to design templates
- Building custom landing pages, with shop now features
- Creating free downloads to grow your list

What are you waiting for? [Get started](#), today!

 *Kaleigh Moore*



How does the Instagram algorithm work?

Ever since [Instagram nixed their reverse-chronological feed](#) back in 2016, online creators have asked questions (and spread rumors) about how the Instagram algorithm works.

Should I post more photos or videos? How many hashtags should I be using on each post? Will Stories or IGTV help more people see my post? Why isn't anyone seeing my latest posts?

For a long time, Instagram has kept how the algorithm works a secret. But despite the rumors and the secrecy, the Instagram algorithm isn't some mysterious beast that can't be tamed.

It turns out [the key to growing your Instagram following](#) lies in understanding the basic principles behind what the Instagram algorithm does, and how it chooses which posts to surface. Once you know the principles behind how the algorithm works, you can fine-tune your Instagram strategy to work with the algorithm instead of trying to fool it.

To give you a head start, I've collected all the latest information on how the Instagram algorithm works, and busted some of the most common myths around how the algorithm works. We'll be sure to keep this post up-to-date if any of this information changes in the future.

Let's dive in.

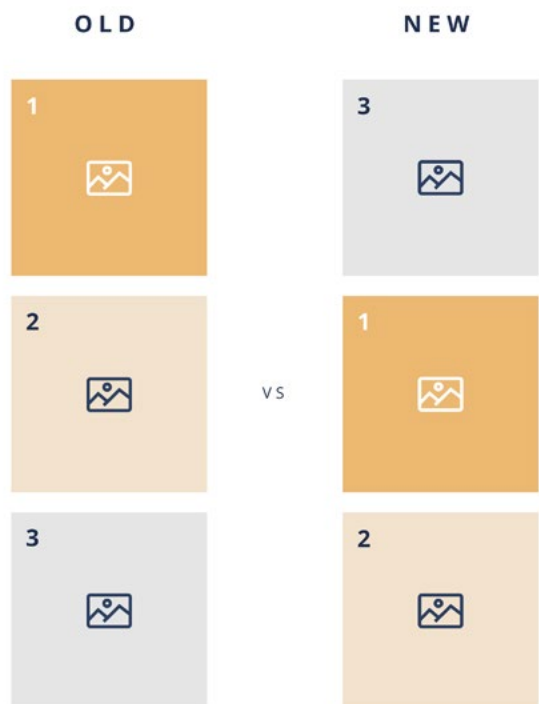
Out with the old, and in with the new (algorithm)

To understand how the Instagram algorithm works, you need a little background on how Instagram's business works. Instagram, like most other social media platforms, is in the business of selling advertising. A lot of advertising—the platform brought in [more than \\$20 billion dollars in ad revenue in 2019](#) alone.

The more time users spend browsing photos and videos from their friends (along with the odd [cat video](#)), the more

money Instagram makes. Every change to the platform is designed to grab your attention, and keep it for as long as possible.

When Instagram first launched, all Instagram feeds were [shown in reverse chronological order](#). The newest posts were shown first, and users could scroll through their feed to see every post from people they follow. The experience was simple, but it wasn't the best for engagement rates. In fact, Instagram claims users were [missing 70 percent of the posts in their feed](#).



At some point, though, Instagram determined that showing every post from every follower in reverse order wasn't the best approach for keeping users engaged, and the Instagram platform changed forever.

How the Instagram algorithm works

The Instagram algorithm is a complex formula that decides what photos you and other users get to see in your feed. It's the algorithm's job to decide what users are most likely to enjoy seeing on Instagram, and serve those posts first, with the goal of maximizing the time users spend in the app.

“To improve your experience, your feed will soon be ordered to show the moments we believe you will care about the most.” – [Instagram announcing the new algorithm in a 2016 blog post](#)

The Instagram algorithm changes all the time, using machine learning (along with a huge amount of data) to create a unique feed for everyone based on past behavior. All the posts from people you follow are still there—the app just shows them in a different order.

The actual formula for the algorithm itself is a closely guarded secret. But in 2018 Instagram engineers [shared the main factors influencing how each users' feed is displayed](#):

Factor #1: How interested you'll be in a post

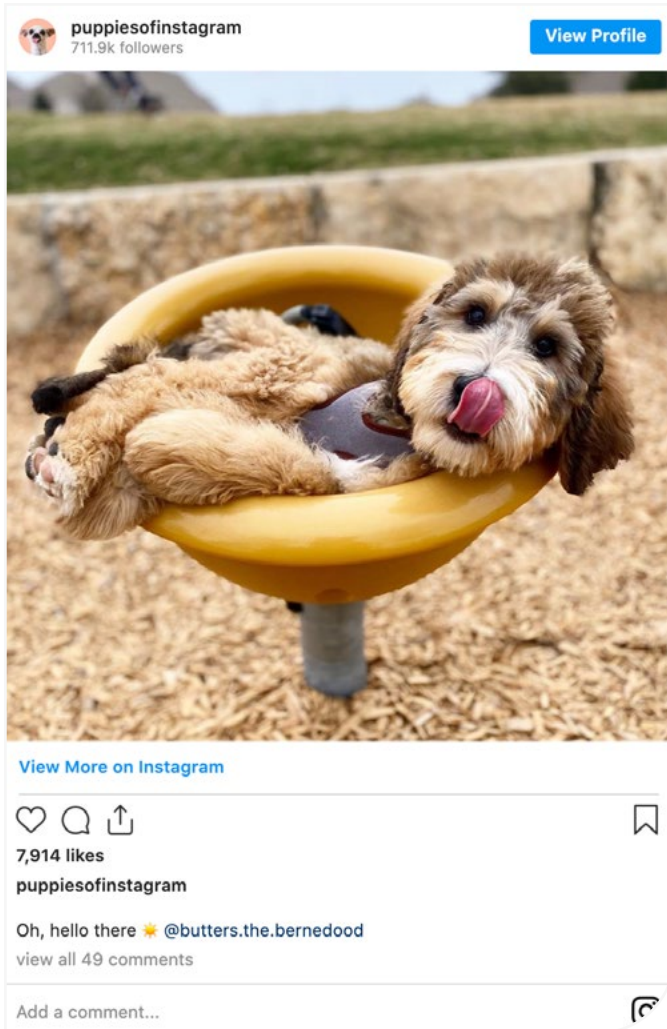
The Instagram algorithm predicts which posts you'll like the most, based on a few different factors.

First, the posts that end up at the top of your feed are [the ones you're most likely to engage with](#). The algorithm works this out in real-time based on all your past Instagram behaviors:

- Posts you've viewed
- Posts you've liked
- Posts you've commented on
- Posts you've shared
- Friends you interact with
- Stories you watch
- Posts you're tagged in

It's not just your behaviors that affect post ordering, either. The algorithm also uses image recognition tech to analyze the content of each post. Think of it like an invisible hashtag.

Say you frequently engage with pictures of cute puppies (I mean, who doesn't, really). The Instagram algorithm will give preference to dog-related posts when constructing your feed.



Who doesn't like cute puppies in their Instagram feed? Image via [Puppies of Instagram](#)

Posts on Instagram are ranked based on past behaviors for similar content, with top-ranking posts receiving prime placement in users' feeds.

Factor #2: How recently a post was shared

Another top-ranking factor in the algorithm is the timeliness of each post.

Instagram knows users are most likely to engage with a post soon after it's shared. So the algorithm serves the most recent, relevant posts to each user.

To show you what I mean, I just cracked open the app on my phone and the first post that came up was this mural from ConvertKit creator [Eric Friedensohn](#):



Instagram prioritizes timely posts in users' feeds. [Image via Efdot Studio on Instagram](#)

Recent posts are prioritized over weeks-old ones—Eric shared this post yesterday—it wasn't even the most recent post he had shared. But it showed up first in my feed.

Prioritizing posts by recency is great for seeing more content you like. But it makes it unlikely that regular users will see posts shared more than a few days ago. It's important to make sure you're posting at times when your audience is most likely to see your posts—I'll explain how you can do this later in the post.

Factor #3: How close you are to the account sharing each post

Ever followed someone and then started seeing ALL their posts show up at the top of your feed? That's not an accident.

We tend to engage more with posts from friends, family, and people we're close to. Instagram's algorithm takes advantage of this by giving higher rankings to accounts you've interacted with a lot in the past, like commenting on their posts, being tagged in photos together, or following the same users.

For example, Hollie Arnett of [Black and White Studios](#) (who creates the wonderful illustrations for many of the posts on our blog) and I follow a few of the same people, so her posts tend to show up frequently in my feed:



The Instagram algorithm prioritizes posts from those close to you. [Image via Hollie Arnett on Instagram](#)

The more you interact with another user through comments, DMs, or tags, the more that person's post will show up in your feed.

Factor #4: How much you use Instagram

The way you use Instagram and the amount of time you spend on the platform affects your feed as well, although not quite as much as the first three factors we've seen.

Instagram always tries to show the best posts since your last visit. If that last visit was, say, 10 minutes ago (no judgment, but you know who you are), your feed will seem more "chronological", since there aren't as many new posts to rank. On the flip side, if it's been a few weeks since you've logged on, your feed will be sorted more by what you like.

Likewise, if you spend a lot of time browsing Instagram, the algorithm will dig deeper into the catalog of posts to give you more variety. Short sessions will only surface the most recent and relevant posts—kind of like a stream of highlights.

Factor #5: How many people you follow

Last but not least, your feed adapts automatically based on the number of accounts you follow. If you happen to follow a lot of people, Instagram will pick posts from a wider range of accounts to place in your feed, so the chances of seeing every post from a specific person will be slim.

Does the Instagram algorithm actually work?

So the Instagram algorithm is built to show the highest-engagement, most relevant posts first.

Why is this important? It means showing up consistently and posting fantastic content is essential to growing your audience—and your business.

[Posting regularly](#) means you'll always be at the top of your followers' minds (and feeds), helping more people see your posts and helping the algorithm work for you.

The only problem with this approach?

Creating great content takes hard work and consistency.

If you don't post consistent content with high engagement, it's more likely that a smaller percentage of followers will see your posts.

Now that's not because Instagram is limiting your reach, as a lot of people believe. It's because the algorithm places the new post so far down a user's feed that they don't ever reach it.

Because of this, not everyone has been pleased with the new algorithm.

Because Instagram was so vague with updates around how the algorithm worked, some creators started seeing less reach with their posts. “As more users and businesses join Instagram and post more often, but feed browsing time stays stable per user,” [this article on TechCrunch explains](#), “the average post will get drowned out and receive fewer views.”

This uncertainty led some creators to assume the new algorithm was limiting their reach, due to “[shadow banning](#)” (where the algorithm hides your posts from users who don’t follow you) or other tactics.

To their credit, Instagram [did try to clear up rumors](#) about the algorithm negatively affecting users’ follower growth at the start of 2019.

Despite the backlash about confusing ordering, Instagram now says relevancy sorting has led to its 800 million-plus users [seeing 90 percent of their friends’ posts and spending more time on the app](#) compared to the previous reverse-chronological feed.

Seven tips to make the Instagram algorithm work for your business

The best way to take advantage of the algorithm for your business is to create super-engaging content that stands out in a crowded feed.

Here’s how you can create content that the Instagram algorithm is incentivized to promote, and get the algorithm working for you:

Tip #1: Stop blaming the algorithm

Especially when you’re new to Instagram, it’s easy to blame the algorithm for your lack of reach or engagement.

Some Insta-myths [busted by Instagram’s engineers](#):

- Instagram does not hide posts in the feed, and you’ll see everything posted by everyone you follow if you keep scrolling.

- Instagram’s feed doesn’t favor users who use Instagram Stories, IGTV, or other special features of the app.
- Instagram doesn’t downrank users for posting too frequently or for other specific behaviors
- “[Shadow banning](#)” (where the algorithm hides your posts from users who don’t follow you) is not a real thing, and Instagram says it doesn’t hide people’s content for posting too many hashtags or taking other actions.

Scrambling to switch your content strategy to adapt to the algorithm is only a short-term “hack” that will distract you from creating quality content. Once you accept that the algorithm is what it is, you can move on to Tip #2.

Tip #2: Engagement counts more than ever

As we’ve seen, the Instagram algorithm shows users the posts they’re most likely to engage with. This means your top goal should be to encourage views, likes, and comments, so you remain at the top of your followers’ feeds.



Engaging posts are more likely to be promoted by the Instagram algorithm. [Image via Levi Allen on Instagram](#)

How do you find the most engaging posts? If you haven't already, sign up for an Instagram Professional account, and [take a look at the Instagram metrics for your existing content](#).

Sort your feed by engagement—this will put the most engaging posts at the top of the list. These are the posts most likely to be promoted by the Instagram algorithm. Focus on creating more of these types of posts.

Likewise, scroll to the bottom—these are your least engaging posts. Adjust your strategy so you're sharing fewer posts that don't see engagement, and you should quickly see a positive impact in your audience growth.

Tip #3: Differentiate yourself from the noise

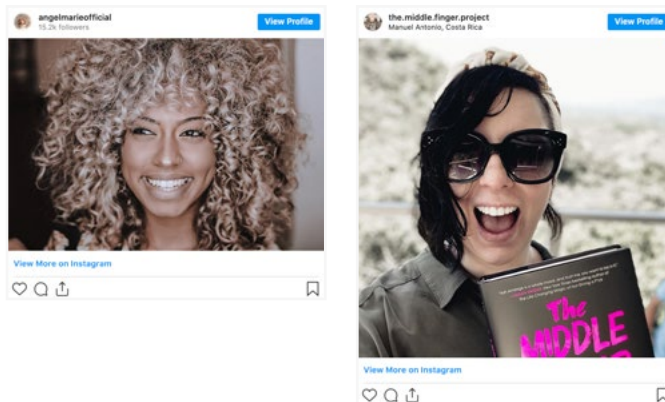
Instagram is a busy place full of diverse people. It's important to find what helps you stand out from the noise—either the topics you post about, or the types of content you share.

Your target audience might be interested in anything from digital products and video marketing to contemporary art or even raising goats.

(Seriously, we know at least two goat-bloggers using ConvertKit. We're thinking of organizing a goat-off).

Ponder this: Why would people follow you over everyone else that's creating similar content?

To show you what I mean, take a look at [Angel Marie's Instagram feed](#), and compare it to that of Ash Ambirge over at [The Middle Finger Project](#). Both women post about roughly the same topics (namely business and personal development) and both have roughly the same number of followers. But their styles couldn't be more different:



Differentiating your brand helps the Instagram algorithm promote your posts. Images via [Angel Marie](#) and [Ash Ambirge](#) on Instagram

If you can't answer this question, it's likely that your content isn't very differentiated, and it's worth taking the time to reconsider your strategy.

Tip #4: Photos and videos are treated equally

Pro tip: the Instagram algorithm doesn't prefer image posts or video posts over the other.

That said, the algorithm promotes posts that each user is most likely to engage with—and [video posts on Instagram see twice the engagement of images](#). Videos also play automatically in your followers' feeds, so they're a great way to grab attention and encourage users to share and comment on your posts.

If your audience spends more time watching videos than looking at photos, there's a good chance your videos will appear more frequently in their feeds. Try experimenting with a good balance of content—image posts, video posts, Stories, user generated content, and even IGTV—and see if your engagement rises.



Video posts and image posts are treated equally by the Instagram algorithm. [Image via A Beautiful Mess on Instagram](#)

Tip #5: Business or personal account? The choice is yours

Just like with post types, [the Instagram algorithm doesn't give any preference to business accounts versus personal accounts](#). Switching won't help you show up any more frequently in your audience's feed.

One caveat: You do need a business account to access Instagram Insights. As you experiment with growing your audience, Instagram Insights can help you monitor how your content is performing and pull valuable insights to improve your strategy and speed your growth.

[If you want to learn more about using Instagram Insights to grow your following, check out this post!](#)



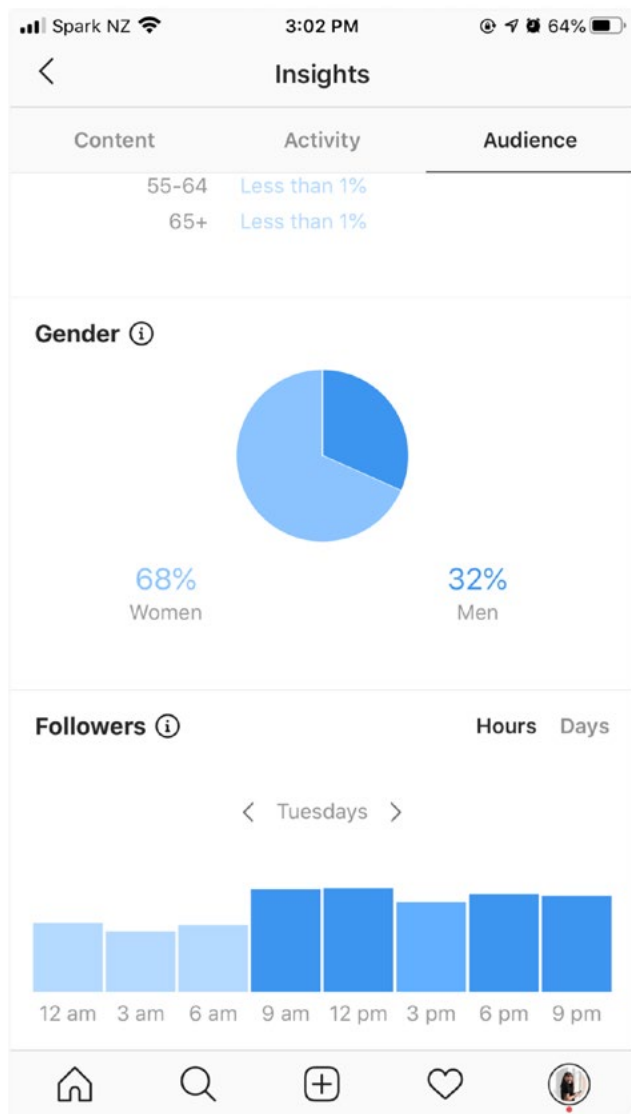
The Instagram algorithm doesn't prefer personal or business accounts. [Image via Creators on Instagram](#)

Tip #6: Stick to a consistent posting schedule

The more frequently and consistently you post, the more likely your audience will see and engage with your content.

To [find the best times to post](#), crack open your Instagram Insights and head to the Audience tab. At the bottom, you'll see a graph showing the times of day your audience is online—pay attention to which times have the highest bars on the graph. This will give you an idea of when your posts are most likely to see higher engagement.

Remember: The best posting schedule is one you can stick to. Posting multiple times a day might grow your audience faster, but if you have client work or other commitments, that might not be possible for you. Choose a posting schedule that works for you, and try to stick to it as best you can.



Tip #7: Use captions to drive engagement

Conversations encourage interactions—and the best way to start a conversation with your audience is through your captions.

[Writing a killer Instagram caption](#) is just as important as posting great content. Captions can help you encourage more engagement on your post including likes, comments, and even drive clicks to your website or landing page. Captions also let you provide more context with posts, helping your audience understand your brand better.



The Instagram algorithm promotes posts with engaging captions. [Image via Mariah Coz on Instagram](#)

A few tips for writing great Instagram captions:

- **Longer captions tend to perform better.** Hubspot found that [captions longer than 500 characters drive the most engagement](#). Play with both long and short captions, and see what works best for your audience.
- **Always include a call-to-action (CTA) in your captions.** That could be as simple as asking followers to like, share, or comment on your posts, or it could also include a link to [check out a landing page](#) or a page on your website.
- **Experiment with using fewer hashtags.** Instagram's image recognition tech can organize posts based not just on [the hashtags you include](#), but also on the content within the posts themselves. According to HubSpot, [using more than six hashtags per post can decrease your engagement](#). Try using fewer hashtags and see if your engagement stays steady.

The secret to “beating” the Instagram algorithm?

Contrary to popular belief (and despite the clickbait headline), there's no secret tricks or hacks to “beat” the Instagram algorithm.

(Sorry to disappoint you.)

It all comes down to posting high-quality, engaging content. The Instagram algorithm might be constantly changing, but your content strategy needs to be solid as a rock.

The new Instagram algorithm forces you to be more authentic, personal, and engaging. So don't worry so much about the numbers—focus on creating and sharing great content, and you'll automatically find that the algorithm starts working for you.

Now that you know what to do, it's up to you to put in the hard work. I know you can do it!

You know what doesn't have an algorithm? Your email list. [Sign up for a free ConvertKit account](#), and start growing your email list today!

 *Kieran Tie*



16 best practices to grow your Instagram following

Did you know that [68% of Instagram users hop on Instagram to interact with creators](#)? It's no secret that Instagram is a powerful social media platform for creators to share their work!

But whether you're new to the platform or are a seasoned pro, the tedious task of staying up-to-date with Instagram's best practices can be a challenge.

So to help make things a bit easier for you, I've put together a list of the best practices you should be following on Instagram, so you can be confident with your marketing strategy!

Why should you care about the best practices for Instagram?

Instagram is a growing platform with no sign of slowing down (which is great news for creators).

But as Instagram grows, it can feel challenging to get your content seen by your audience. Not to mention, the algorithm can sometimes be a tricky nut to crack.

So if you feel like you're being drowned out, you're not alone.

Following these best practices will help you be confident that your account will continue to thrive and remain true to your brand, regardless of the competition and potential changes to the algorithm!

16 best practices to guide your Instagram marketing

Let's unpack the 16 best practices that you can start implementing today!

1. Understand your audience

The followers you want to attract are real people with genuine interests, and as a creator, your job is to create content that resonates with those interests.

Successful marketers are able to tap into the minds of their audience and develop a deep understanding of them.

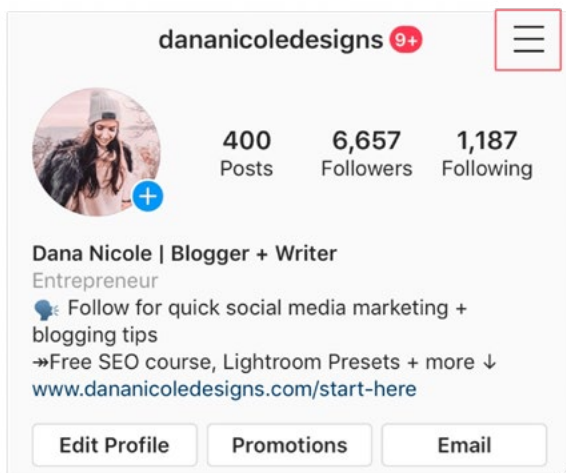
The first (and quickest) way to see what types of content your audience finds most valuable is to view past high-performing posts. You can get a good idea of what your audience wants to see more of just by looking at your past content!

Another way to understand your niche audience is by [creating an audience profile](#) to help you understand their pain points and aspirations.

Once you identify what makes your audience tick, you'll be able to tailor your content to their needs.

2. Find the right time to post

When you find the best time to post on Instagram, you'll be able to maximize potential engagement and reach more people.

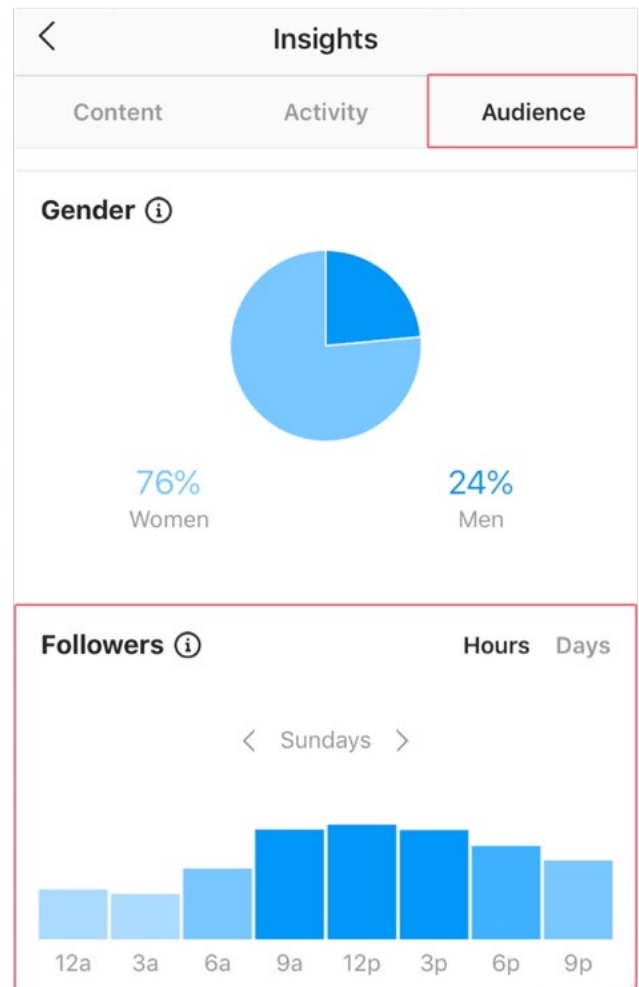


Click on the hamburger icon to access your analytics. [Image via Dana Nicole's Instagram](#)

You can easily find the optimal time to post by clicking on the hamburger menu on your profile.

Next, tap on "Insights" and go into the "Audience" tab.

If you scroll to the bottom, you'll see some information about your followers. When you are in the "Hours" tab, you'll be able to see what hours of each day your followers are most active.



Click on the "audience" tab to find which hours of the day your audience is most active. [Image via Dana Nicole Instagram](#)

3. Convert to a business account

Having a business account will give you the right tools to analyze and grow your business, so you definitely want to convert your account if you haven't yet.

You can [set up a business profile](#) in only a couple of minutes, where you will be able to:

- Access Instagram Insights (analytics for your account)
- Create Instagram ads to further promote and grow your account
- Utilize the “swipe up” feature for Instagram Stories (for accounts with more than 10,000 followers)
- Add handy action buttons to your profile
- Add shoppable posts

With the many benefits of converting to a business account, there's no reason to not make the switch.

4. Have a strong profile

When a potential follower lands on your Instagram page, a strong bio will increase the chance that they hit that “follow” button!

Your bio should be clear and help your followers understand who you are. You only have 150 characters to get the message across, so make it short and snappy!

If you are struggling to come up with a bio, try to fill in the blanks:

- “I help _____ (who do you help) _____ (what will you help them do).”

[Morgan's bio](#) is an excellent example of how to use the real estate in your bio to communicate with your followers who you are and how you can help them.



ConvertKit user [Morgan](#) has written a bio that is clear, concise and helps visitors understand what she does. [Image via @morganrhodeslifestyle](#)

After you've spruced up your bio, you should take a look at your Instagram profile photo. You can use an image of yourself or your logo as long as it's easy to see.

Lastly, you want to make sure your followers know where else they can find you. Include a link to your website or [landing page](#), any relevant contact information (email and phone number) and your location, so your followers can find all the information they may need in one convenient place.

5. Write compelling copy

A picture may be worth 1,000 words, but a great caption can add immense value to your posts.

While there's no ideal length for your caption, there are some best practices to keep in mind if you want captions that draw your audience in.

Maintain your brand voice

[Eighty-nine percent of consumers stay loyal to brands](#) because they share the same values.

One way to communicate your values to your audience is by developing a strong [brand voice](#). Your brand voice should be used consistently across all social channels and your website.

Provide value

Value can be added to your caption in many different ways. You can tell a story that helps your followers envision themselves in a specific scenario, you can provide tips to help them overcome a problem or you can write an uplifting message to encourage your followers.

Whatever you choose to add to your captions, it must provide some sort of value to your audience.

6. Include a call-to-action on your posts

Every strong Instagram post has a call-to-action (CTA). When many people think of CTAs, they think of promotional

ones such as “click here to buy now” or “sign up to receive 10% off”, however, your CTA doesn’t always need to be promotional.

Successful CTAs that aren’t promotional will encourage your audience to complete some kind of action. It could be as simple as asking them to “like” your post or tag a friend in the comments.

You can experiment with different CTAs to see which deliver the highest amount of engagement.



The CTA for [IKEA USA](#) asks users to tag their mom in the comments below. [Image via @IKEAUSA Instagram post](#)

7. Reply to your audience

Engagement on Instagram is incredibly important, and it’s good practice to reply to direct messages and comments on your Instagram account.

Not only would it be off-putting for your audience to be ignored, but the relationship you develop with your followers (through interaction) is also one of the main [ranking factors](#) for [Instagram’s algorithm](#).

Replying and liking messages and comments can be done through a desktop computer or right within the app, and if you block off a chunk of time during the day, you can easily reply to all your messages in one sitting.

8. Grow your account authentically

When trying to understand the best practices for Instagram, your focus should be to foster a real community with genuine engagement.

Instagram can feel challenging at times, and it might feel tempting to [buy Instagram likes](#), followers or use blackhat growth techniques (such as mass following/unfollowing).

While these tactics might give you an instant boost, overall, it won’t help you grow an engaged community, and these tactics should be avoided at all cost.

Remember: it’s more important to have a small community full of people who are passionate about your content than a large community of people who don’t care about what you have to offer.

9. Incorporate user-generated content

User-generated content (UGC) is a piece of content that was created from your audience, rather than by you. UGC can be as simple as a testimonial or a photo of a follower using your product.

Brands love UGC because it is [35% more memorable](#) than other forms of content, and [70% of consumers look to UGC](#) to form purchase-making decisions. Not to mention, it takes a load off your content-creation process since you won’t need to take as many photos.



Chatters Hair Salon frequently uses UGC to share their products. Image via Chatters Instagram post

The easiest way to start collecting UGC is to create a [branded hashtag](#) for your audience to use whenever they post media using your products.

Here are some quick best practices when making use of UGC:

- Always ask for permission before reposting
- Give credit to the original poster (preferably in the first line of the caption so the credit is visible without needing to click "more")
- Tag the original user in the photo



Chatters asks users to use the hashtag #ShareTheChatter to be featured. Image via @chattershairsalon

10. Post quality content

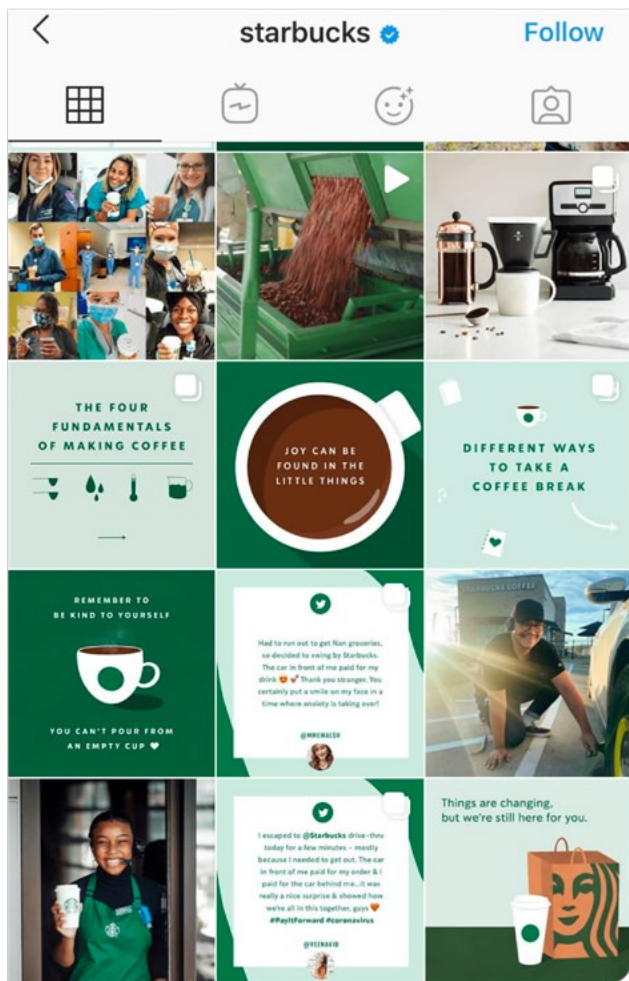
We know that Instagram users love seeing high-quality content and accounts with excellent content will thrive and stand out.

Quality visuals

Your Instagram feed is your chance to let your personality shine! Developing an [Instagram theme](#) that compliments your brand will help you attract and retain more of your ideal followers.

Take a look at Starbucks, for example:

On top of posting crisp, clear images, Starbucks has created an Instagram feed which incorporates their brand's color palette. It's visually striking and aesthetically pleasing to look at.



Starbucks incorporates brand colors into their Instagram feed theme. [Image via @starbucks](#)

Instagram feed themes are memorable and can help you stay atop your followers' mind.

You can achieve a cohesive Instagram feed by using similar filters and presets to edit your photos.

The following apps are free and are great photo editing apps to achieve a flawless feed:

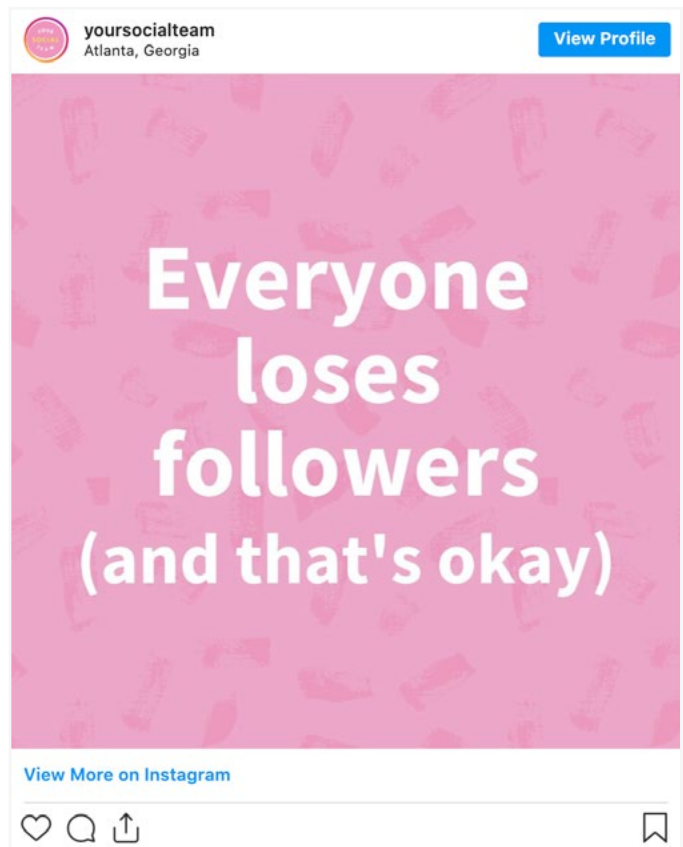
- Adobe Lightroom CC (iOS and Android)
- Snapseed (iOS and Android)
- VSCO (iOS and Android)

Quality insight

On top of perfecting your aesthetics, you'll also want to ensure your posts have value.

Your content should be a healthy mix of promotional posts and posts that offer special insight for your audience.

An insightful Instagram post can range from helpful tips, practice advice or sharing a story that your followers can relate to.



[@yoursocialteam on Instagram provides beneficial Instagram tips for their audience. Image via @yoursocialteam Instagram post](#)

Try to get into the mind of your audience to understand what types of content they want to engage with. If you are struggling to come up with ideas, you can turn to your peers and other influential creators in your niche to see what kind of content generates the most buzz.

11. Include relevant hashtags in your content

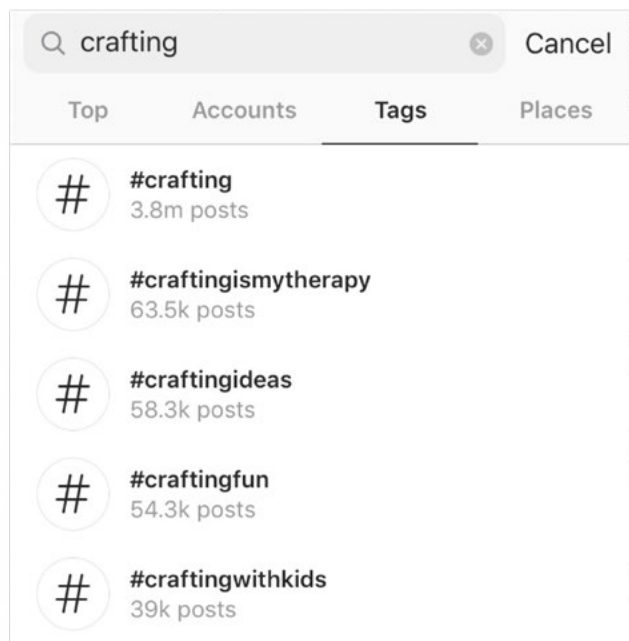
[Hashtags on Instagram](#) are like keywords for your Instagram photos that can help potential followers find your content. Instagram posts with at least one hashtag average [12.6% more engagement](#) than posts without hashtags, so don't forget to add those hashtags to both your Instagram posts and Instagram Stories.

Currently, users can use a maximum of 30 hashtags for posts and 10 hashtags for stories, but research on how many hashtags is best to use is split. A study from [Sprout Social](#) suggests the ideal number of hashtags is between two and five, while [Agorapulse](#) found that using all 30 hashtags resulted in the most likes

Each account will be different, so you should experiment with different numbers of hashtags in your posts to see how many are best for you.

When deciding what hashtags to use for your Instagram content, avoid using generic hashtags such as “#love” and instead use hashtags you think your audience would search for.

To quickly generate a list of relevant hashtags, go into your search page and search for one relevant hashtag. For example, let's say we are trying to find hashtags for crafting:



Searching for #crafting yields many related hashtags.

When you search for hashtags, Instagram automatically recommends other related hashtags. You can quickly and easily generate a list of hashtags this way!

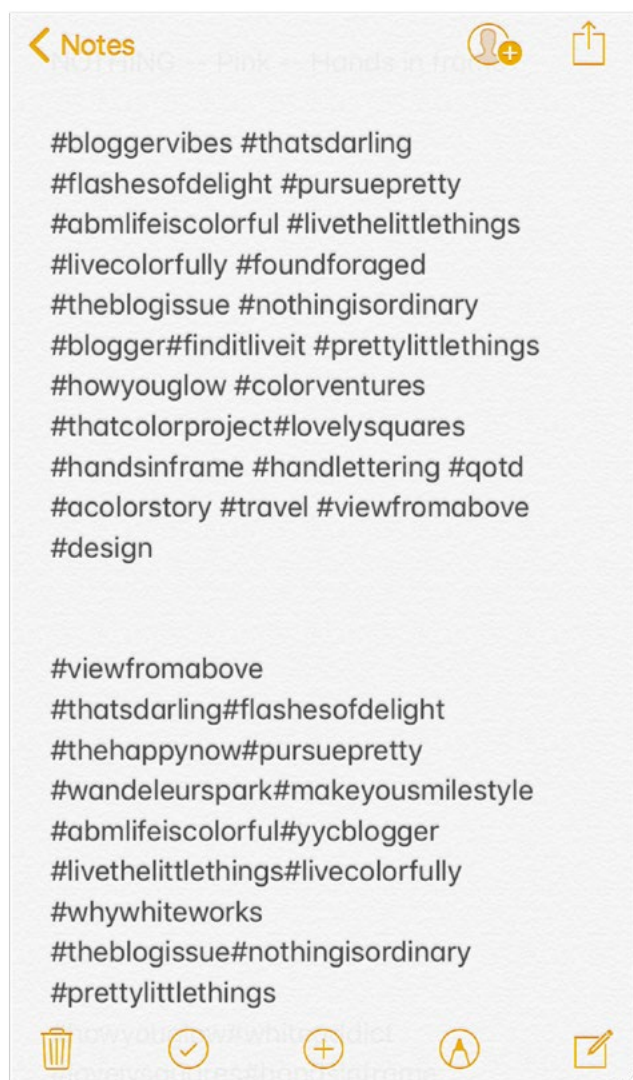
Another way to compile hashtags is by using a free [hashtag generator](#).

Whichever way you decide to find your hashtags, make sure to click on “View Insights” under your Instagram post to see how your hashtags are performing:



Your Instagram Insights show you the number of impressions generated from your hashtags.

I like to save groups of hashtags in my “Notes” app on my phone so I can easily copy and paste them to my photos.



Saving hashtags in my notes app allows me to quickly copy and paste them to my Instagram posts.

12. Take advantage of Instagram's features

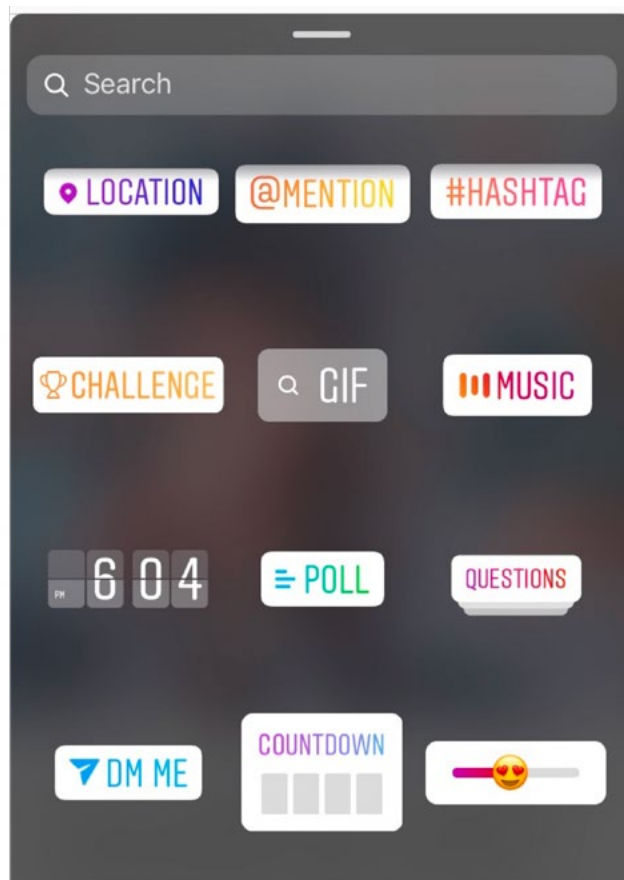
Instagram makes it easy for creators to sell their products and share their ideas. If you aren't using all the features Instagram has to offer, you're missing out!

Here are some features you can incorporate into your Instagram strategy.

Instagram Stories

Instagram Stories offer many [different ways for you to engage and interact with your followers](#). Some of the current Instagram Story features to incorporate into your stories are:

- Location tagging
- Mentions
- Hashtags
- Challenges
- Music
- Poll
- Questions
- Countdown
- DM
- Quiz
- Emoji sliders
- Instagram Live



There are lots of different Instagram Story features to use to engage your audience.

Instagram is always adding new features, so make sure to check often for new things to try!

IGTV

Instagram videos uploaded to your feed can only be one minute long, but IGTV videos can be up to 10 minutes long (verified brands can upload videos up to 60 minutes).

IGTV previews can be [shared to your Instagram feed](#), making it the perfect way to capture and direct the attention of your followers to your IGTV.

Shoppable stickers

[One hundred and thirty million users tap on shopping posts each month](#). If you sell a physical product, you'll want to take advantage of [shoppable stickers](#) on Instagram.



*Anthropologie uses shoppable posts to promote products.
[Image via @anthropologie Instagram post](#)*

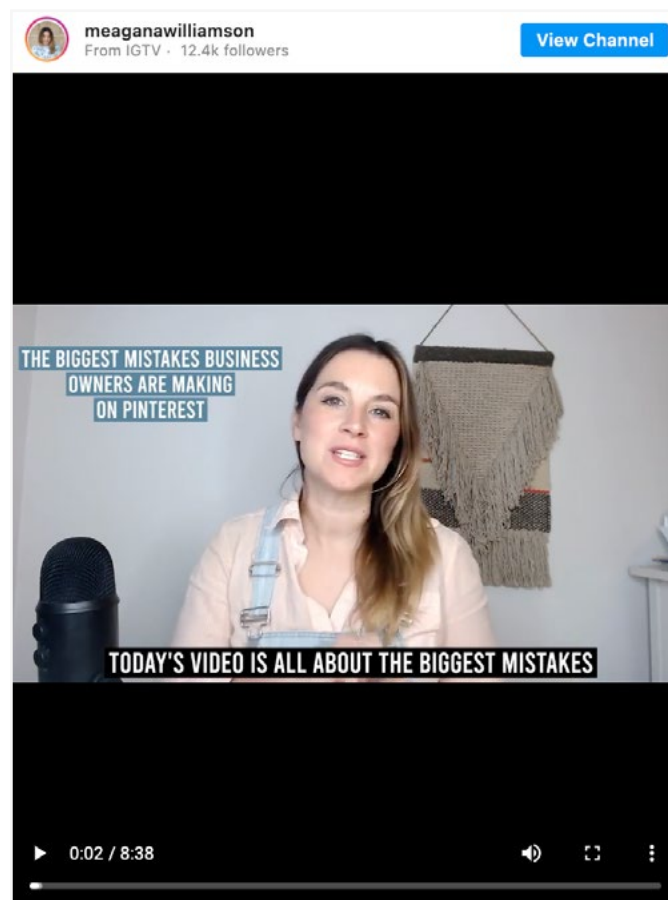
13. Make your Instagram accessible to everyone

When it comes to best practices and Instagram, accessibility might be something you haven't thought about yet. [Thirty percent of Instagram Stories are watched with the sound off](#), and many other users on Instagram are hearing/visually impaired. You don't want anyone to miss out on your content simply because they weren't able to access it in the first place.

Here are some easy ways you can ensure your content is accessible!

Add captions to videos on Instagram

Adding either captions or text that summarizes your talking points can help those who can't hear the sound so they can still engage with your content.



Meagan adds captions to her IGTV videos. [Image via @meaganawilliamson's IGTV video](#)

[Clipomatic](#) is an app that automatically transcribes your videos for you, making it easy to upload content with captions.

Make use of Instagram's alt text

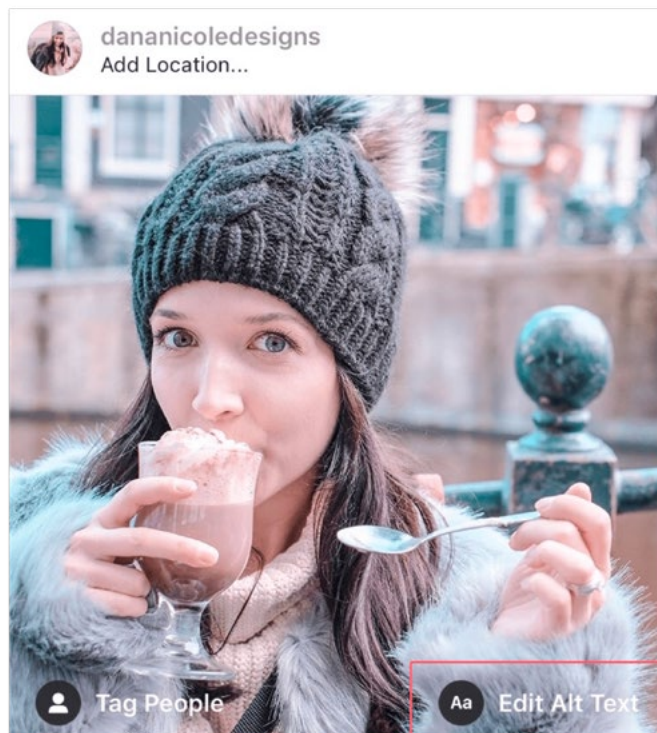
Alt text (also known as “alternative text”) is an HTML code used to describe an image. This code is primarily used by screen readers for those who are visually impaired. Instagram allows you to add in your own [alt text for your images](#) so that those who are visually impaired can hear the alt text .

To edit the alt text of your photo, first, go to the image you'd like to add the alt text to and click on the ellipses in the top right corner.



Click on the three “...” to edit your photo.

Next, click on “Edit”. After you've opened the image to edit, you'll be able to click on “Edit Alt Text”.



Click on “Edit Alt Text” to add alt text to your Instagram photos.

Your alt text should be a simple description of the image.

Cancel	Alt Text	Done
Alt text describes your photos for people with visual impairments.		
A girl drinking hot chocolate outside.		

Descriptive alt text for the example above.

When someone with a screen reader is scrolling through Instagram, the screen reader will read what you have placed in the alt text.

14. Create a content schedule

Lots of content is being added to Instagram on a daily basis, in fact, [brands post an average of 1.5 times per day](#).

Trying to come up with daily content on the fly is a mammoth task and can quickly lead to burn out.

Instead of trying to come up with your posts the day of, try creating a content schedule.

Having a content schedule for your Instagram account will help you remain accountable, come up with post ideas and stay consistent!

15. Repurpose your Instagram content

The [average lifespan of an Instagram post is 48 hours](#), and engagement starts to slow around the six-hour point.

I don't know about you, but I'd rather stretch my posts to last longer than 48 hours, especially after I've put so much work into them!

The easiest way to increase the lifespan of your posts is to simply repurpose your content. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Turn a high-performing Instagram post into a blog post
- Take several Instagram stories and turn them into an IGTV
- Share your IGTV video to YouTube and Facebook
- Upload an Instagram Live to IGTV for those who missed it

16. Analyze your content

To tie it all together, the last best practice you can follow on Instagram is to analyze your content. As your audience changes and grows, you need to make sure they are still interested in the content you are posting.

Your [Instagram Insights are packed with stats](#) to help you understand what content your audience wants to see more of and can help you form your marketing strategy.

Don't put all your eggs in the Instagram basket

As with any social media platform, it's best practice to not rely on just one channel. I like to make sure that I can connect with my audience on various platforms, which is why I like to encourage my followers to sign up for my email list.

And don't forget that [the algorithm can change](#). You need to make sure that whatever changes come your way, you'll always be able to stay in touch with your Instagram followers.

To connect with your audience off Instagram, you can [build a free landing page with ConvertKit](#). Your landing page comes with a unique URL that you can add to your Instagram bio where your followers can sign up for your email list.

Now that you know the best practices for Instagram, it's time to put them into action on your own Instagram account!

 Dana Nicole



How to organically grow your Instagram: 5 proven ways to attract followers

“If only I could get more followers on Instagram, this whole online business thing might get easier.”

It's a problem I hear all the time from new creators.

It's easy to feel envious of influencers when their Instagram accounts are overflowing with followers. Presumably, along with their bank accounts.

But here's the problem. It's not easy getting new followers on Instagram, especially if you're just starting out.

And to make things worse, a lot of Instagram growth advice is a little misguided.

That's because pushing for more—more followers, more likes, more shares— isn't always better.

The quest for more can lead you to attract the wrong audience for your business. You might attract more followers, but those people likely won't stick around for long—and they certainly won't buy your products or services.

As an independent creator, though, there's a better way to grow your audience on Instagram—without resorting to questionable tactics or breaking your budget.

Organic growth—building a community of followers on Instagram without paying for adverts or sponsorships—is far more sustainable in the long run. More importantly, your business results are unquestionably better—an

organically-grown audience will help you generate more leads, more sales, and a thriving online business.

So how do you get started? Let's find out—but first, it's helpful to know why organic growth is so hard in the first place.

Why is organic Instagram growth so difficult?

When Instagram first launched, fewer users meant it was easy to stand out from the crowd and quickly attract an audience.

You post a photo, video, or story. Your existing followers share their adoration by liking and commenting. Their followers notice and join in the party—and suddenly, you're awash with new followers.

But these days, growing an organic following isn't so easy. With [over 200 million Instagram users visiting at least one business profile daily](#), you'll face a lot of competition.

A few common reasons why creators struggle to grow an organic audience on Instagram:

Sharing content your audience doesn't enjoy

Sharing family photos, personal updates, and [fun Story polls](#) might give you a thrill—and maybe even juice your engagement numbers for a short period—these types of content don't really help with business growth. Growing an organic audience that drives new leads and sales means [being strategic with your Instagram content](#). Every post needs to provide value to your audience.

Focusing on the wrong goals

It's easy to [look at influencers with huge followings](#) and think, "I want to be like that!" It's easy to beat yourself up for not reaching enough people, particularly if you're still new to Instagram. This pressure leads people to try unethical growth hacks like buying likes and follows, automating comments with bots, or asking for follow backs. The problem? Shortsighted growth hacks don't lead to sustainable organic growth. Reaching the wrong audience can often be worse than reaching no audience at all.

Posting content sporadically

There's a lot that goes into maintaining a steady social media presence. Especially if you're working alone, finding enough time to edit photos and videos, share Stories, write captions, and comment on posts feels like a constant uphill battle. For online creators, growing an organic following means testing ideas, seeing what works, and doubling down.

It's not all your fault

Unfortunately, some of the difficulties with organic growth are outside your control. As Instagram and other social networks push their revenue-earning advertising features more and more, organic reach will naturally become more difficult—but not impossible.

Instead of resorting to sketchy tactics to grow your following—or investing money in Instagram ads before you're ready—you should work toward planting seeds that will lead to organic growth.

5 simple tips to organically grow your Instagram following

Just like gardening, attracting new followers organically on Instagram comes down to a few key factors.

First, you have to prepare the soil by really getting to know your audience—their motivations, struggles, and the types of content they crave. Next, you need to get out there and plant some seeds—ask questions, start conversations, and engage with other peoples' content. Finally, you can grow some authentic and engaging (and delicious) content of your own.

Ready to plant some seeds? Let's go!

Tip #1: Really get to know your audience

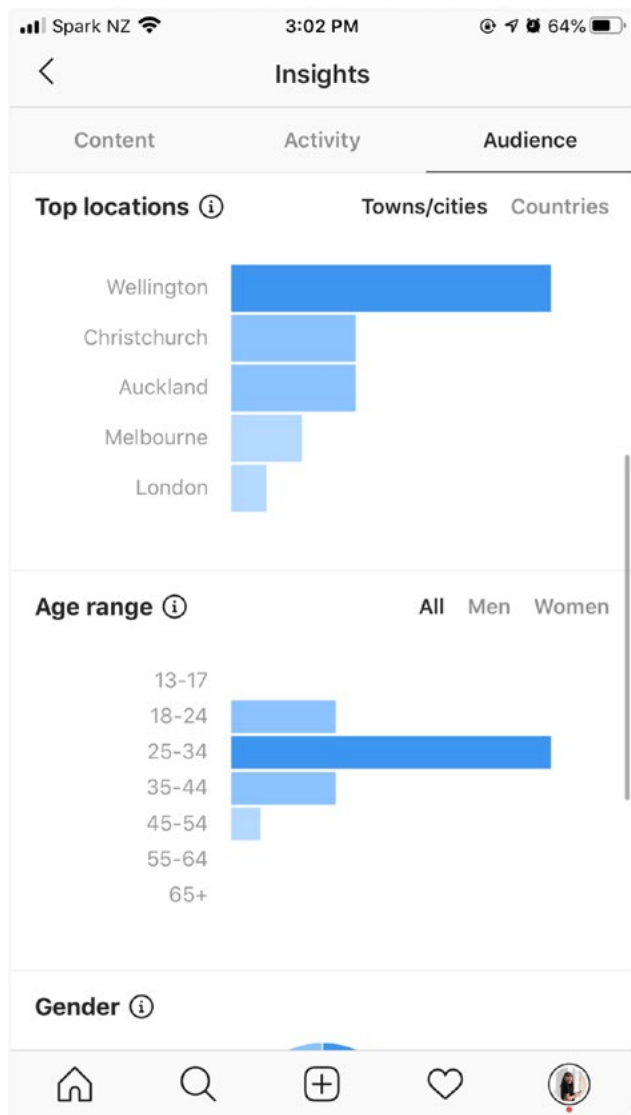
The key to growing an organic audience on Instagram is thoroughly understanding who you're trying to reach.

Understanding your audience takes time, but it's worth the effort. You want to dive deeper than surface-level demographics (like your audience member's age or gender) and uncover their fears, struggles, and motivations.

Once you *really* get to know your audience, you'll find yourself creating content your audience can relate to, pushing your profile higher in Instagram rankings and organically attracting more followers who are interested in what you do. Knowing who you're targeting will also guide your efforts on which accounts you should engage with, which I'll get to in a moment.

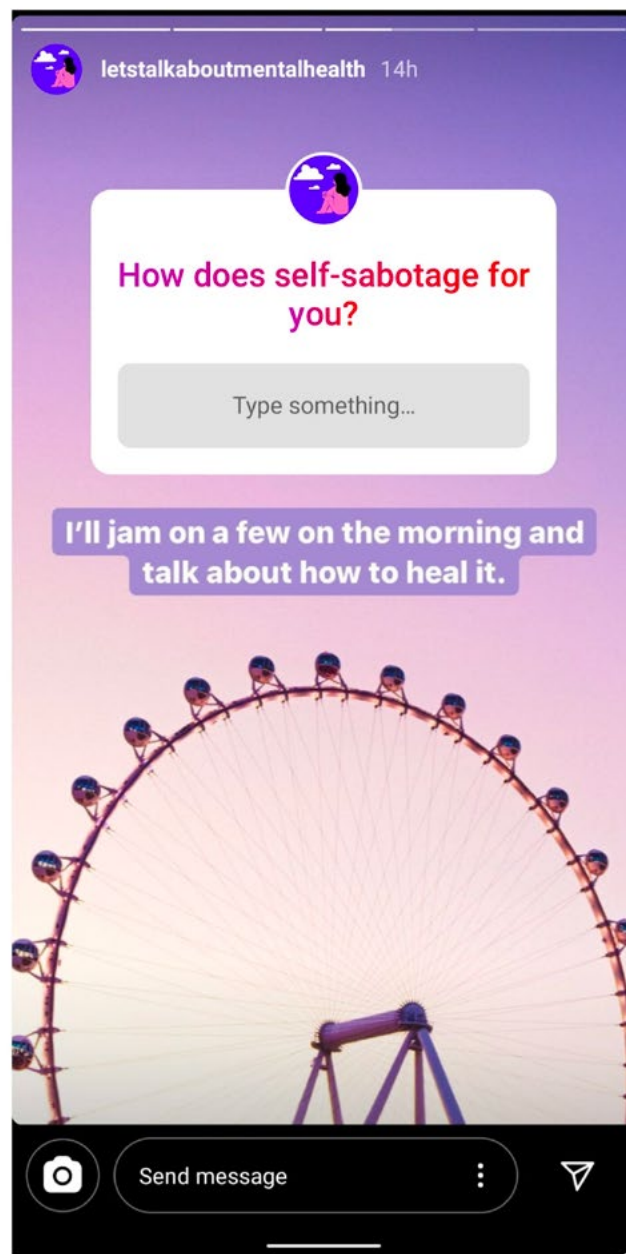
A few quick suggestions on getting to know your followers:

- Make sure you're reaching the right audience. [Instagram Insights](#) gives you plenty of data around your audience to tweak your content strategy and reach the right audience.



Instagram Insights includes useful information on your target audience demographics.

- Ask your audience what they want to see! Use [Instagram Story polls to survey your followers](#) on what they want to see more in your feed. This data can give you a solid starting point for coming up with content ideas your audience adores.



Asking your audience what they'd like to see you post can help you grow your organic following. [Image via letstalkaboutmentalhealth on Instagram](#)

Tip #2: Maximize your exposure by engaging with other users

Your Instagram feed shouldn't be a one-way conversation.

Remember, Instagram is a social network—emphasis on *social*.

Sharing great content isn't enough to grow an organic following. You also need to engage with your audience through likes and comments—both on your own content and those shared by others.

Actively taking the time to answer DMs and to share and comment on posts from peers and audience members helps you connect with more users and build a loyal following.

Plus, [these signals help the Instagram algorithm](#) know which content is most engaging, boosting the chances your posts will be seen by others outside your network.

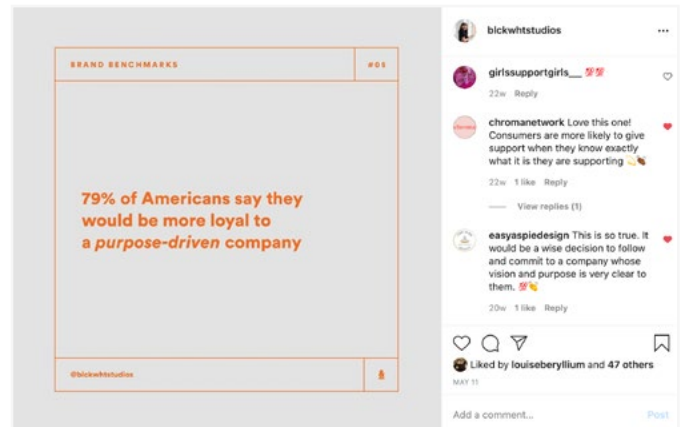
A few tips for maximizing your exposure on Instagram:

- Start conversations in your own posts. Use your captions to ask your followers questions, and prompt them to respond in the comments, like the below example from life coach [Sam Laura Brown](#). Always respond to everyone who engages with your posts—taking the time to join the conversation shows them you're listening.



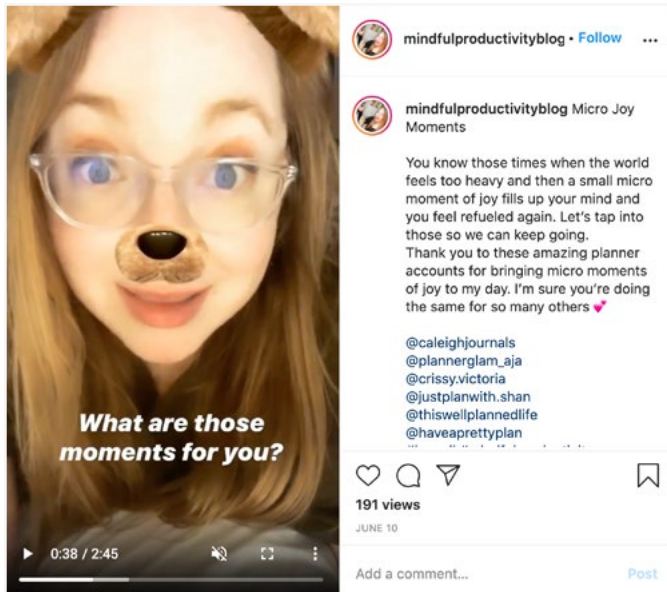
Try using your post caption to prompt your audience to respond in the comments. [Image via samlaurabrown on Instagram](#)

- Like, share, and comment on posts from peers, audience members, and relevant influencers. You can find people by searching commonly used hashtags, seeing who has posted recently, or checking out who follows your peers. It only takes a few minutes to leave a thoughtful comment, answer a question, or simply like a post—just like how Instagram user [chromanetwork](#) responds to Hollie Arnett from [Black & White Studios](#) below. Over time, these small gestures will have a significant impact on your organic Instagram growth. Just make sure you're genuine with your comments—don't automate your replies, and definitely don't spam.



A quick response to audience comments can help boost your organic Instagram growth. [Image via blckwhtstudios on Instagram](#)

- Don't forget about tagging other users! If you're collaborating with one of your peers or reposting content from another account, tag a friend in your captions to give them credit, like productivity blogger and educator Sarah [Steckler of Mindful Productivity](#) does in the example below. Chances are they'll repay the favor with a like, comment, or share, helping to push your post further up the feed.



Tag other Instagram users in your posts to maximize your organic growth.

- Use hashtags for extra traction. Sharing the right hashtags with your posts can help spread your content to new people and grow your audience. [Be strategic with the hashtags you choose](#)—try to include 5-7 popular hashtags with each post, either in the post caption itself (like business coach [Rachel Rodgers](#) does in the example below) or in the first comment. Make sure your chosen hashtags aren't so common you get lost in the noise, and be sure to avoid obscure hashtags that people aren't searching for.



Include hashtags with post captions or in the comments to help Instagram users find your content. [Image via rachelrogersesq on Instagram](#)

Tip #3: Invest in content quality over quantity

Pick any random blog post about Instagram growth, and you'll probably come across some hand-wavy advice to [post "quality" content](#).

But what does "quality" even mean?

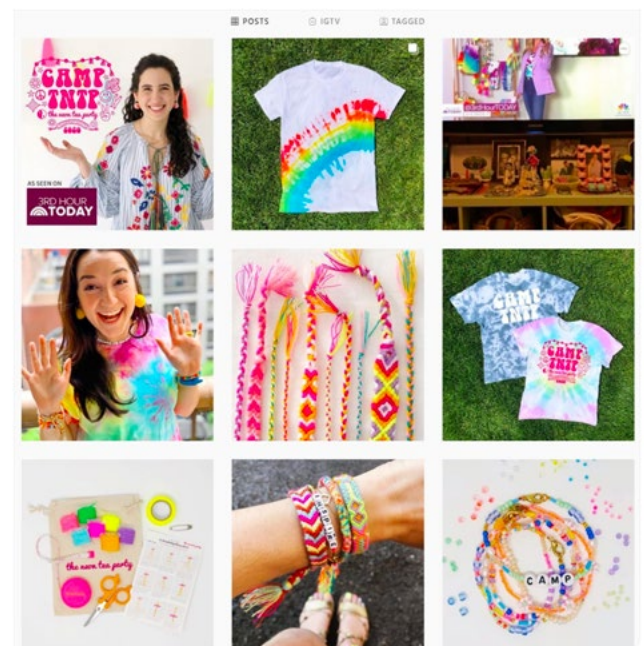
Well, there are two parts to posting quality content:

- Your content needs to be compelling and exciting for your audience
- Your content needs to provide value to your audience

Let's dig into the first—compelling content.

The most important thing is to find what makes your content stand out. Instagram is a noisy place—[over 100 million posts are uploaded every day](#). Unlike other social platforms, Instagram is visual—your feed needs to be attractive to your audience. Posting stock photos or quotes doesn't cut it anymore—your content needs to be unique and engaging for your audience to follow you.

To show you what I mean, check out Marisa's feed from [The Neon Tea Party](#):



Post a variety of unique and exciting content on Instagram to stand out and grow an organic following. [Image via the neonteaparty on Instagram](#)

Marisa keeps her audience interested with a variety of slideshows, videos, product images, and personal photos—all on her core topic of crafting, and matching her unique tie-dyed branding.

Don't just stick to photos—Marisa experiments with various different types of content in her feed. Video posts in particular tend to see higher engagement, [boosting the chances of the Instagram algorithm promoting your content in users' feeds](#). Try posting photos, videos, and Stories, and see which posts get the highest engagement.

High-quality doesn't always mean polished perfection—incorporating authentic content into your feed is a great way to organically grow your following. More and more creators and brands are posting more authentic and “real” content, sharing untouched photos, messy workspaces, and behind-the-scenes looks. [Instagram Stories are a great way to share](#) behind-the-scenes views of your business, personal updates, and more, like how creative educator Justin Harris of [EnvisionWithJustin](#) shares his daily workout in his Stories:



Sharing personal updates and stories helps you connect with your audience. [Image via envisionwithjustin on Instagram](#)

The second aspect of quality content—and arguably the more important aspect—is posting valuable content. You might have the most polished feed, but glamor alone won't help grow your business.

Value doesn't always mean teaching your followers something new. A few suggestions for things you can try:

- Share behind-the-scenes insights into your work process
- Tell an insightful story
- [Offer free resources or lead magnets](#)
- Inspire your audience with motivating content
- Answer audience questions (again, Stories are great for this!)

No matter what kind of content you're sharing on your Instagram feed, always ask yourself: Is this something your audience will find valuable?

Pro tip: Wondering what kinds of posts are the most helpful in growing your following? You can use Instagram's built-in analytics tools to track which content your audience is most interested in, so you can create more posts that work well (and fewer posts that flop).

Did you prompt users with a question in your caption? Maybe you used a different hashtag? Perhaps your post was more personal, and your audience ate it up?

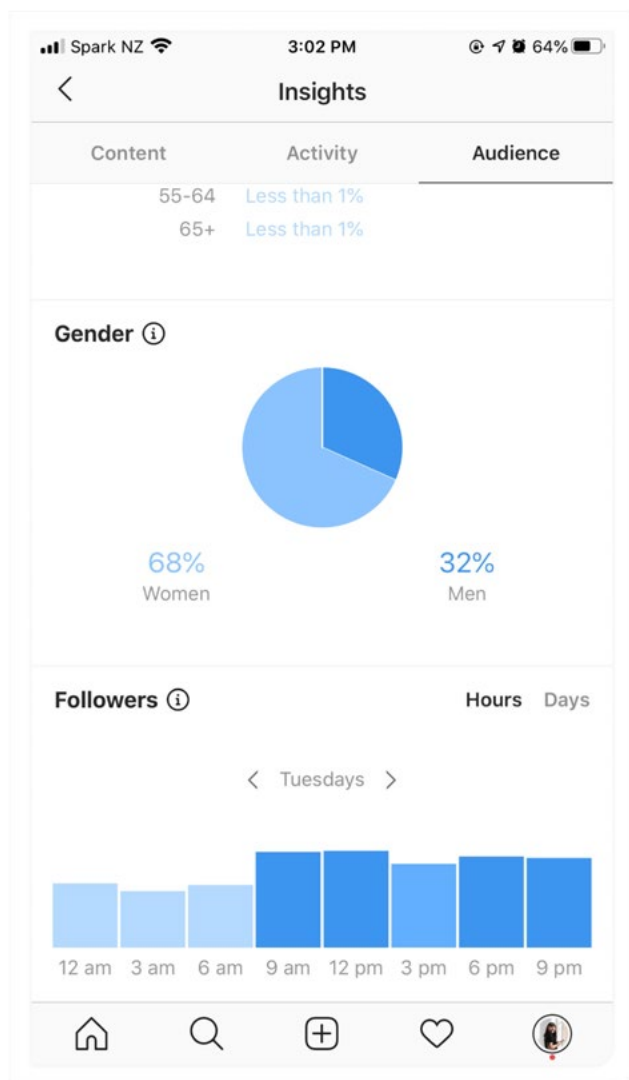
Find what works, and use what you learn to guide your future posts.

Tip #4: Stay consistent with your posting schedule

Like blogging or other content marketing channels, Instagram is a numbers game. [You can't rely on your posts going viral](#) to grow your organic following—instead, you need to be consistent, posting regularly and at the ideal time to maximize your chances of success.

Why is consistency so important? [Showing up consistently builds](#) trust and helps you stay top of mind with potential clients or customers. Your audience knows they can count on you for high-quality content, and therefore will be more likely to trust your newsletter, blog posts, products, or services.

You want to time your posts for when your target audience is online and engaged—that way, you'll increase your reach and boost your engagement. Different studies have found wildly varying results for the optimal time to post on Instagram, but you can use Instagram Insights and other free tools to [find the best time to post on Instagram](#) for your audience.



Instagram Insights shows you when your audience is most likely to be online.

The ideal frequency for posting on Instagram varies widely. Large brands with dedicated social media managers might post multiple times a day—but for independent creators like yourself, that kind of frequency isn't sustainable.

Posting once a day is a good target to aim for, but if that's too frequent, you can cut back to once every few days. The best schedule for growing your organic following is the schedule you can maintain. You can also lean on automation tools like [Buffer](#) or [Edgar](#) to schedule your Instagram posts in batches and make the most of your time.

Tip #5: Promote your Instagram across different channels

Instagram might be an excellent channel for reaching your audience—but it shouldn't be your only marketing channel.

In fact, promoting your Instagram account across different marketing channels—like your blog, [email newsletter](#), marketing videos, or [even other social networks](#)—can be a great way to grow a thriving organic following on Instagram.

Cross-promoting your Instagram helps grow your visibility, attracting people that might have otherwise happened across your profile. After all, it's easier to increase your follower count on Instagram if they're already aware of your business or brand through other channels.

Some ideas for cross-promotion you can try:

- [Write a blog post](#) expanding on ideas you share on your Instagram feed
- [Mention your Instagram account in your YouTube videos](#) (and vice-versa, link to your YouTube profile in your Instagram bio!)
- Embed your latest Instagram photos in a widget on your blog
- [Update your email signature](#) with a link to your Instagram profile
- [If you sell physical products](#), try including a card with a link to your Instagram profile (and perhaps a discount code) in any packages you send to customers

Pro tip: for bonus points, you can also [remix and reuse your Instagram content](#) [across other channels](#) and social media networks to get even more return from your content investment. Neat!

Plant the seeds of organic Instagram growth

Growing a thriving organic following on Instagram might feel challenging or awkward at first—but I know you can do it.

Just remember—Instagram is all about community. If you're spending more time worrying about your numbers than your audience, you'll forever be fighting an uphill battle.

Instead, try putting your audience first. Test out a few of the above ideas on your Instagram account, and soon you'll be well on your way to growing an organic Instagram following—and a sustainable online business.

Own the relationship with your audience

Don't be at the mercy of algorithms when it comes to connecting with your audience. Now that you know how to grow your Instagram following, it's time to [turn those followers into email subscribers](#) so you can reach them directly in their inbox.

 *Kieran Tie*



How to increase your Instagram engagement (in under 1 hour per week)

Having a large following on Instagram might give you the warm fuzzies—but not every follower is created equal.

In fact, your follower count doesn't matter a whole lot.

The number of Instagram followers you have means nothing if those followers aren't paying attention and engaging with the content you share.

That's why engagement is a much better measure of success on Instagram than follower count.

Higher engagement means [more visibility for your brand—and more sales for your business](#). When your followers like, comment, save or share your Instagram posts, it shows they're interested in what you're sharing. And a

smaller audience paying close attention will be [far more likely to buy from you or work with you than a broad but disinterested audience](#).

When you're working to [turn your side hustle into a career](#)—and especially when you're just starting out—you need to keep an eye on your Instagram engagement rate. But how do you make sure the time you spend on Instagram is strategic and not a waste of your precious energy?

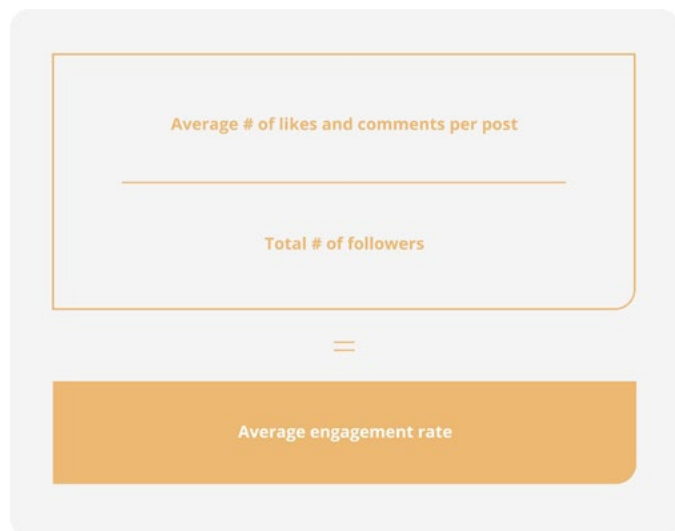
When I was researching this post, I found a lot of Instagram "tips" and "hacks"—but hardly any advice on building a concrete, actionable plan for growing your Instagram engagement.

So today, I want to give you a step-by-step plan you can follow to increase your Instagram engagement. You'll learn how to uncover the types of content your audience loves, build relationships with influencers and colleagues, and improve your engagement rates—all in only an hour or so each week.

Let's get engaged!

A quick refresher on Instagram engagement

Your Instagram engagement rate is simply the average number of likes and comments you get on each post, divided by your total number of followers.

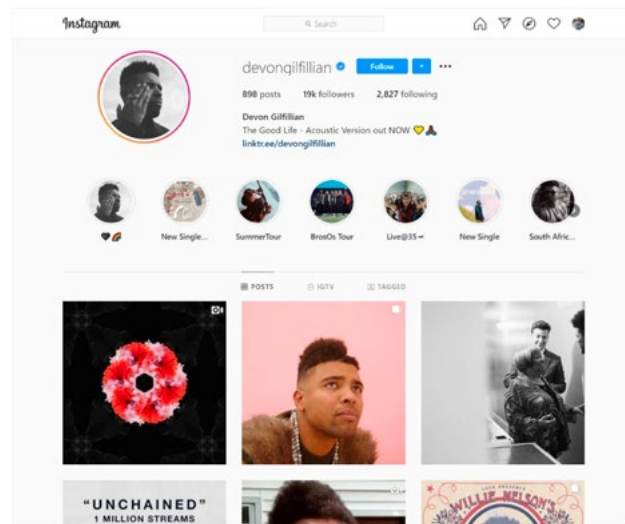


Average engagement rate = Average # of likes and comments per post / Total # of followers

Why likes and comments, and not other actions, like follows or messages? Likes and comments are the easiest to measure and track over time—they give a good representation of how connected your followers are, so we'll use those two metrics to measure engagement.

And why divide by the number of followers? Simple—having more followers makes it easier to attract more likes and comments on each post. Dividing by the number of followers normalizes the engagement rate for accounts large and small, giving you a more accurate engagement measure.

Let's look at an example from musician [Devon Gilfillian](#).



Musician and Instagram user Devon Gilfillian uses Instagram to grow his audience. [Image via devongilfillian on Instagram](#)

At the time of writing this article, Devon has [19,003 followers on Instagram](#). Looking at the last 20 posts Devon shared, he receives an average of 783 likes and 49 comments per post, for a total of 831 engagements per post. Plug those numbers into the equation above, and you end up with an average engagement rate of 4.38%. Great work, Devon!

Pro tip: If you haven't heard Devon's music, check out his [special performance on our Creator Sessions series on YouTube](#). I'll wait here 'til you come back!

What's a "good" engagement rate on Instagram?

Unfortunately, there are no hard numbers when it comes to engagement rates.

Iconosquare looked at more than 30,000 Instagram accounts across various industries and came up with an overall average engagement rate of 4.7%.

Instagram Engagement Benchmarks per Industry

	Engagement rate	Reach rate	Engagement on reach	Number of media posted per day
Shopping & Retail	2,8%	29,54%	8,26%	0,99
Media	5,55%	37,47%	13,21%	1,34
Food & Beverage	4,13%	36,00%	9,53%	0,60
Consumer Brands	4,39%	32,07%	11,68%	0,81
Travel	4,94%	39,94%	11,31%	0,62
Public Figure	5,77%	33,35%	17,06%	0,62

iconosquare blog.iconosquare.com

According to Iconosquare, the average Instagram engagement rate is 4.7%. [Image via Iconosquare](#)

Keep in mind, though, that this number depends on many different factors, from your [audience and business niche](#) to the [types of content you share](#) and your [content and business goals](#).

Our advice? Don't compare your engagement rate to other Instagram users, and don't aim for a specific target when measuring your Instagram engagement rate.

Instead, measure your current engagement rate and use it as a benchmark to see how your engagement changes over time. A "good" engagement rate is one that is continually improving with each new post you share.

How to increase your Instagram engagement (in under 1 hour per week)

Making an independent living from your creativity is great—but sometimes it feels like [there's never enough time in the day](#). Since I'm guessing you don't have a team of social media experts backing you up, you need to make the most of your time.

To help you get started (and avoid wasting your precious time and energy), I've put together a quick six-step plan for growing your Instagram engagement. The plan should only take about an hour or so each week to complete, and you can spread the tasks out however you like.

Follow this plan, and you'll start attracting an engaged community of Instagram followers in no time!

#1: Like or comment on 5 posts within your niche (10min)

The best way to grow your audience and engagement on Instagram? Be social. After all, you can't grow your engagement without first engaging with other people.

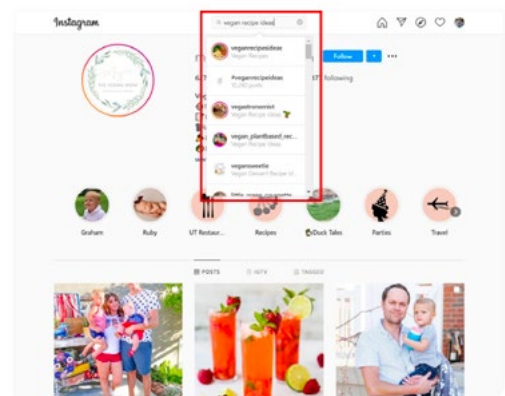
The best way to kickstart engagement on Instagram is to participate and engage with people in your community. That means liking and commenting on their posts, and perhaps sharing your admiration and your own thoughts via DM.

Joining existing conversations will help position you as thoughtful, trustworthy, and as someone worth following, leading to higher engagement on your posts in return.

You don't have to spend a lot of time on this—10 minutes is enough time to find and engage with your first five posts.

Start by scanning your feed and find five posts you could like or comment on. You can also find posts or accounts who have the same interests as you by searching for popular hashtags relevant to your field—Instagram will help you out by recommending other related hashtags in the search results.

Let's say you run a blog sharing vegan recipes for busy parents, like [Megan the Vegan Mom](#). You might start by searching for "vegan recipe ideas"—Instagram gives you a list of hashtags and accounts related to vegan recipe ideas you could engage with.





Respond to every comment and DM to boost your Instagram engagement. [Image via glographics on Instagram](#)

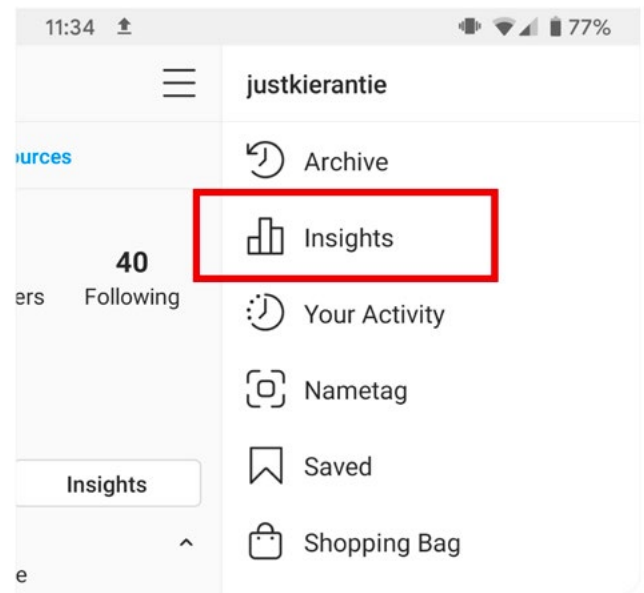
As you begin attracting a bigger audience, this might take more than 10 minutes—but it's still worth responding to as many people as possible. If Glo can manage it, you can too!

#3: See which past posts generate engagement (10min)

Now you're starting to engage with other peoples' posts and comments, let's take a closer look at your existing photos, videos, and [Stories](#) to see if any posts and formats had higher (or lower) engagement than others.

Getting a baseline on your current engagement levels will give you an idea of what "good" engagement looks like for your Instagram account. It'll help you make better decisions around the best content types to share for growing your engagement.

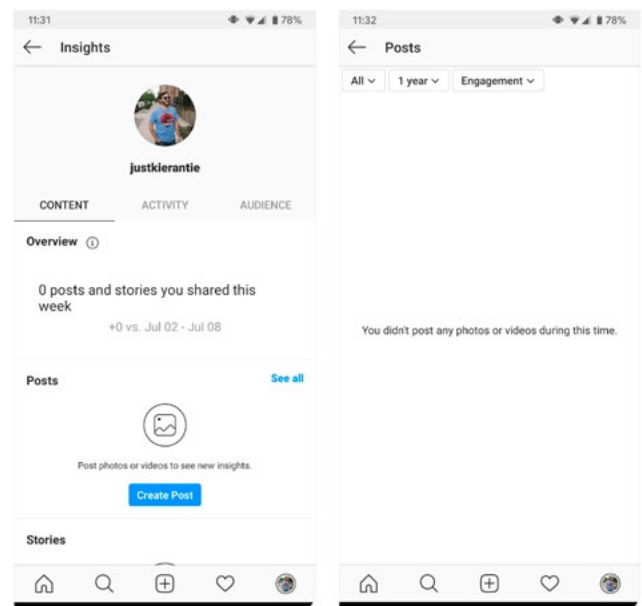
To get started, [use Instagram Insights](#) to find your most engaging posts. Open up your Instagram app, tap your profile picture, then in the menu at the top right, tap on Insights.



Instagram Insights makes it easy to uncover your most engaging content.

Next, tap on See All next to Posts, and then adjust the filters at the top to sort by All / 1 year / Engagement. Now you should see all your posts from the past 12 months, with posts that garnered the most likes and comments at the top. You can also sort by Likes, Comments, Follows, or other types of engagement if you want to get more specific.

Pro tip: Post to Instagram more often than I do!



Sort your past Instagram posts by Engagement using Instagram Insights.

Once you've sorted your posts, take a few minutes to look for common patterns. Find the posts that show engagement above the average we calculated earlier, and ask some questions:

- Do they share the same style (for example, curated photos versus off-the-cuff)?
- Do video posts get more engagement than photos?
- Are there any hashtags that lead to higher engagement?
- Are there similarities in how you write your captions?
- Do longer or shorter video posts see higher engagement?

Write down what makes your most engaging posts similar to each other and keep this list handy—you'll refer back to this when you're creating future content.

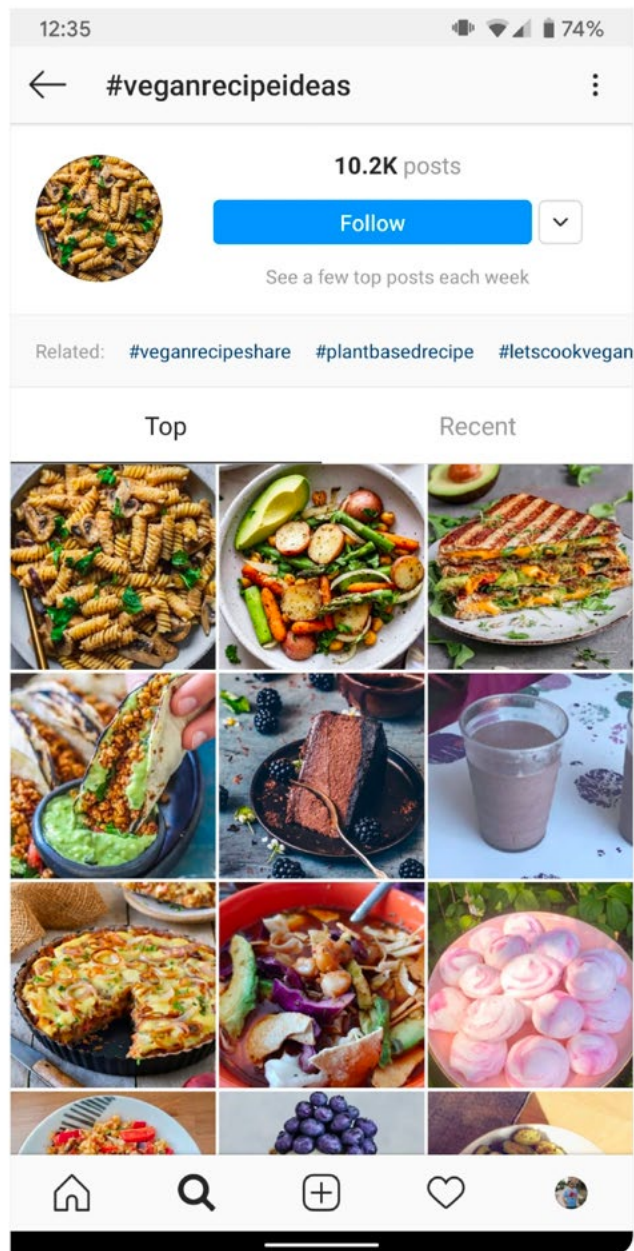
Pro tip: Total up the engagement counts (the number of likes and comments) for each of your top 10 posts over the past year, then divide that by 10. Finally, divide by your current follower count. This gives you an engagement benchmark for your top Instagram content. You can use this to compare your engagement numbers against other accounts in your niche.

#4: Compare engaging content across different topics (10min)

Next, let's take a few minutes to see what other accounts in your industry or niche are posting. That way, we can look for opportunities to improve your Instagram strategy and share more engaging content.

Crack open the Instagram app and search for some common hashtags among accounts in your space. Posts in search results are automatically sorted by engagement—this gives you an easy way of finding the most engaging content for a particular topic. You'll also need to run your search in the Instagram mobile app since the web version only shows you the top 9 most popular posts in the search results.

Here's what shows up when I search for [#veganrecipeideas](#):



Search by hashtags to find the most engaging content for a topic. [Image via Instagram](#)

Another place you can look for engaging content ideas is on the Explore page. The Explore page is where Instagram surfaces the most engaging posts from accounts you follow, along with high-engagement posts from across the Instagram network.



You can tell I follow a lot of food-related accounts on Instagram from my Explore page.

Just like you did for your own content, look for patterns among the most engaging posts for each topic. Try to write down at least 5 ideas you can apply to your own strategy.

Pro tip: Don't merely copy what other accounts are doing. Looking at their engagement levels gives you another data point outside your own account, but their audience and business are different from yours.

#5: List ideas for improving your content strategy (10min)

At this point, you should have a list of ideas about what makes Instagram content engaging—now it's time to turn those ideas into a concrete plan.

Having a strategy is vital when you're growing your engagement on Instagram. You might not have the time or resources to nail your strategy overnight, but the guidelines you've listed will help give you a clear direction you can aim for with your content.

Take a look at the high-engagement content patterns you've written down from both your own content and other topics within your space. Compare what you've written down to the types and styles of content you're currently posting.

Take a few minutes and write down at least 5 specific ways you can tweak your content strategy to more closely match the patterns you've uncovered:

- Maybe you find that most of your top-performing posts are videos, so you should try doubling down on video content.
- Including one specific hashtag seems to dramatically boost engagement—make sure you include that hashtag in every new post you share.
- Off-the-cuff photos and behind-the-scenes videos getting more engagement than curated content? Try making your feed a little more personal.
- Perhaps posts with more detailed captions garner more engagement than those with shorter captions—see if writing longer captions on your future posts lead to higher engagement.

Once you've written down your five tactics you'll try, keep them handy – you'll need them or our next section.

#6: Create content ideas you could post this week (10min)

Now for the fun part—coming up with new content ideas that your audience can't help but engage with!

You don't have to create the content now. In fact, it's better if you keep ideation and creation separate since these two activities often require different mindsets and different approaches.

It's best to do this while your ideas about what makes for high-engagement content are still fresh—coming up with a plan now will help the creative process run far more smoothly. I promise, your future creator-self will thank you!

Take 10 minutes to list at least five ideas for posts you could share this week—Stories, photos, videos, live streams, or other post types. Jot down a few rough notes about what each post will include, making sure you're following the guidelines you've listed.

Later, when you're ready to create your content, you can refer back to these notes and create an entire week's worth of Insta-worthy material at once. Then, you can use tools like [Buffer](#) or [Edgar](#) to [schedule all your Instagram posts for the optimum time](#). You'll never end up feeling rushed to come up with new content ideas to post again!

Repeat this process each week to boost your Instagram engagement

One last thing before we wrap up: growing your Instagram engagement is all about consistency.

There are no shortcuts to growing an engaged and devoted Instagram. You can't run through this plan just once and expect to see results.

The best audience relationships—and the most valuable businesses—are built one like, comment, or DM at a time.

You need to show up every week and do the hard work of engaging with other peoples' content, replying to messages and comments, and tracking which content is most engaging.

Now set aside the next hour, run through the plan, and start growing your Instagram engagement today!

But don't let your audience engagement end at Instagram

To truly connect and engage with your audience, you need to be in their inbox. You don't want to be at mercy of the algorithms, right?

Having an email list means you get a direct line to your subscribers inbox any time you want. You have their undivided attention, and that my friend, is priceless.

If you haven't already, [start growing your email list for free with ConvertKit's Free plan](#).

 *Kieran Tie*



How to craft a five-star Instagram strategy (in 8 easy steps)

Instagram is brimming with opportunities for online creators—but it can often be tough to crack.

Get it right, and you'll attract a thriving community of followers eager to share your content (and open their wallets).

Get it wrong, however, and you'll end up sinking countless hours into creating content your audience may not ever see—let alone enjoy.

The good news? [Building an engaged and loyal audience](#) on Instagram and growing your online business is 100% achievable—you just need to be strategic with your efforts.

You need to get clear on what you're planning to share, who you're hoping to attract, and how you plan to reach your business goals—all while still running your business.

In other words, you need an Instagram strategy.

Think of your Instagram strategy as your roadmap for using the social network to grow your audience and business. Starting with a clear roadmap helps you build trust with your audience, making coming up with content that drives conversions a breeze instead of a burden.

But building an Instagram marketing strategy from scratch can feel downright baffling, especially when you're [balancing marketing](#) with all the other aspects of your business.

Don't worry—I've got your back. Here's everything you need to know about creating an Instagram marketing strategy and building a presence you're proud of. In no time at all, you'll be attracting followers with the best of them.

Onward!

Step #1: Define your Instagram goals

Success on Instagram means different things to different people. Before you start planning out your Instagram strategy, consider what you're hoping to get out of your time on the platform.

Whether you're [a coach](#), [a freelancer](#), or [a blogger](#), you need to make sure your Instagram strategy supports your overall business strategy—even if Instagram only makes up a small part of your business strategy.

Say you're working toward [launching your first ebook](#), like Sonia Ross of [Full Circle Therapy Services](#), and you're trying to grow a broad audience of potential customers. You'll probably want to focus on increasing your follower count and increasing engagement on your posts.



Launching an ebook? Focus on maximizing engagement. [Image via fullcircletherapyservices on Instagram](#)

On the other hand, maybe you're a high-value coach who only needs to work with a smaller handful of clients to maintain your business. In that case, you should probably focus more on [driving qualified traffic to your lead magnets and landing pages](#), just as Cici from [The Six Figure Chick](#) drives leads from her Instagram posts to her Business Bootcamp challenge:



Coaches and consultants can use Instagram for lead generation. [Image via _thesixfigurechick_ on Instagram](#)

After you decide on your Instagram goals, you'll also need to clarify how you'll track your progress. The best way to do this is to [choose a single Key Performance Indicator \(KPI\)](#)—a metric you'll follow over time to see how well your Instagram strategy works.

Setting concrete and measurable KPIs for Instagram will help you track how well you're reaching your goals.

A few examples of Instagram goals you might consider and how they map to measurable KPIs:



I'll cover how to measure and track your KPI a little later in this post. But first, let's look at the next step in our Instagram strategy—getting to know your audience.

Consider:

- **What are my overall business goals?**
- **How can Instagram help me achieve those goals?**
- **What KPIs can I track to measure my success?**

Step #2: Get to know your Instagram audience

Instagram is a busy place. With [over one billion users](#) browsing the platform each month and [more than three-quarters of US businesses](#) posting to Instagram, it's more important than ever to make sure your marketing efforts aren't lost in the noise.

If you already have a well-defined persona for your business, you can use the same information to guide your Instagram efforts. You can also check out the people who already follow your business on Instagram, along with the people that follow your competitors and look for similarities among your audience.

If not, [consider the typical customer or client](#) for your business:

- How old are they?
- Where in the world are they located?
- Do they have a specific job title?
- What are they interested in?
- What's their biggest goal?
- What do they struggle with?
- Where do they hang out online?

That last question is a big one. If your audience isn't already spending time on Instagram, you might want to choose a different social media platform as the core of your social strategy.

By spending just a little time upfront defining your audience and assessing the best way to reach them, you'll save yourself a lot of time (and headaches) down the road.

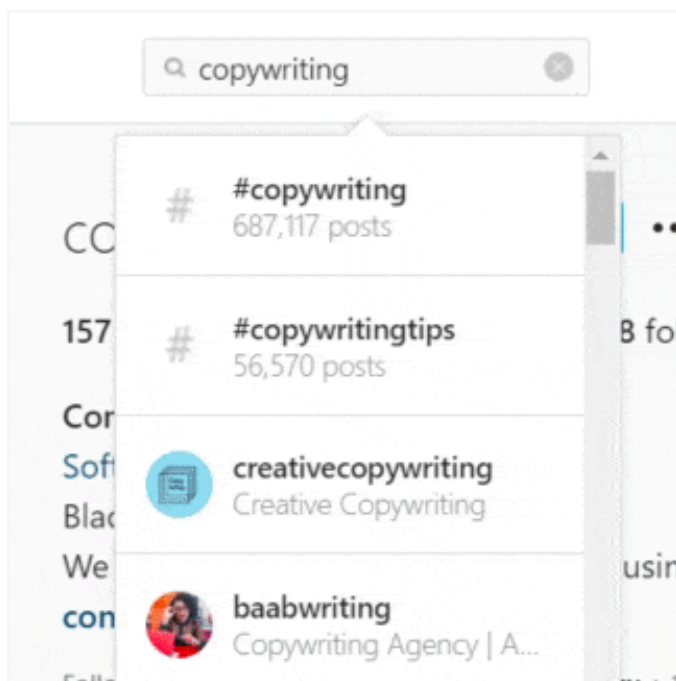
Consider:

- **Who am I trying to reach for my business?**
- **Are those people already spending time on Instagram?**
- **What patterns can I see within my ideal audience?**
- **How can I locate more of those people?**

Step #3: Scope out the competition

Now you've defined who you're trying to reach, it's time to get some inspiration from your peers and colleagues. You can learn a ton by looking at what your competitors are already sharing on Instagram, and those insights can help guide your Instagram strategy toward success.

Analyzing what other people in your niche are posting (and how strategic they're being) should take less than an hour. Look at your top competitor's Instagram accounts, or find others in your industry or niche by searching for keywords or hashtags. [Here I searched for "copywriting"](#) and came up with multiple relevant accounts and related hashtags I could check out:



The Instagram search tool can help you research your competitors' Instagram strategies.

Pick out three to five competitors, and take a close look at what they're posting. Create a quick summary of the number of posts in the last week, the types of posts they're adding, and any posts that see above-average likes, comments, or shares.

A few examples of things to look for:

- What types of content do they post?
- Do they use the same hashtags with each post?
- What do they include in their bio?
- What kinds of posts see the highest engagement?

Now compare their posts to your own KPIs you set earlier and consider your competitors' goals. Are their goals the same as yours or different? Note any obvious gaps or opportunities they appear to be missing—you can leverage these in your own Instagram strategy.

Always remember: there's a fine line between [inspiration](#) and imitation. Use what you learn from your competitors' strategies to guide your own strategy, but don't merely copy what they're doing. Most likely, [your business goals will be different from theirs](#), so it's essential you create your own unique strategy.

Consider:

- **Who are three to five peers whose Instagram strategies you can analyze?**
- **Are their Instagram goals the same as yours, or different?**
- **What types of content are working well for them?**
- **Are there any gaps in their strategy I can fill with my content?**

Step #4: Define your Instagram brand

Before you start sharing content, you need to get clear on how you want your brand to be perceived on Instagram. [Creating a consistent identity](#) and making your brand a core part of your Instagram strategy makes you instantly recognizable to your audience and helps you grow your audience more quickly.

Building your Instagram brand involves more than just adding your logo to your profile picture and keeping the same color scheme in your posts. Your brand includes every part of your Instagram profile—from your bio and profile picture to your feed, captions, hashtags, and even the accounts you follow.

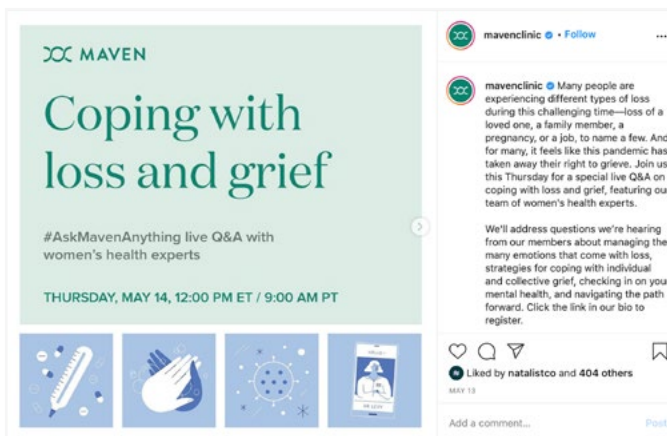
As you develop your Instagram strategy, think about how you want your audience to perceive your brand on Instagram.

Is your brand casual and personal, like [business coach Sarah Morgan](#)?



Leaning into your personal brand makes for a consistent Instagram strategy. [Image via xosarahmorgan on Instagram](#)

Or approachable yet still business-related, like the online women's healthcare service [Maven](#)?



You can still make your Instagram brand personal while driving business results. [Image via mavenclinic on Instagram](#)

Maybe you'd like to come across as informative and educational, like online course consultant [Mariah Coz](#):



You can use your Instagram strategy to educate and inform your audience. [Image via mariahpcoz on Instagram](#)

Or inspiring and motivating, like graphic designer and educator [Michelle Hickey](#):



Use your Instagram strategy to inspire your audience. [Image via michellehickeydesign on Instagram](#)

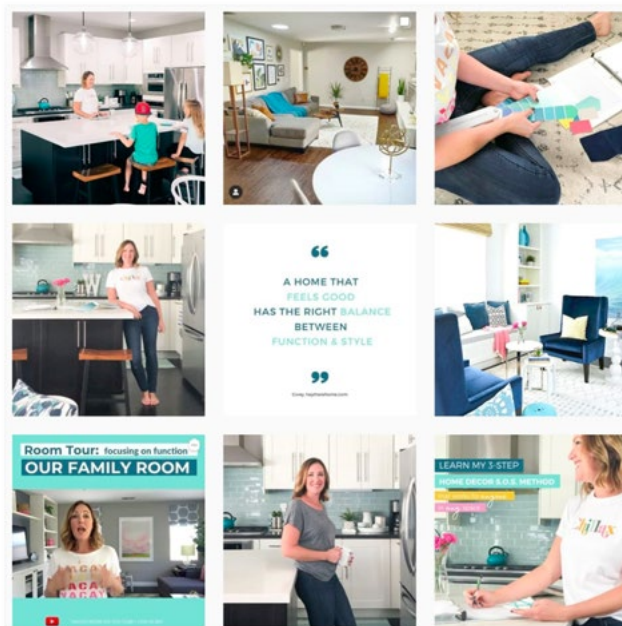
Once you've narrowed down your brand personality, you can hone your imagery and language to match.

Imagery

Try to stay consistent with your color palette and design style, so your audience can instantly recognize who's posting without even seeing your profile. If you already have brand guidelines around fonts, colors, and other branding elements (take some inspiration from our [branding guidelines](#)!), make sure you use those consistently in every post. You can also make sure your [Stories](#) stay on-

brand by using the same stickers, fonts, graphics, and filters each time you post.

For example, interior design blogger Corey of [Hey There Home](#) uses the same fonts and color palette to keep her Instagram feed consistent and on-brand for her blog and business:



Make consistent design a part of your Instagram strategy. [Image via heytherehome on Instagram](#)

Pro tip: To save time, try collecting stock images that match your brand in a Google Drive folder and use those as a library of images each time you need to post.

Copy

Your branding doesn't just apply to your visuals, either. The words you share in your bio and post captions give you the perfect opportunity to demonstrate your brand and attract your target audience—but only if you keep things consistent.

Your Instagram bio and post captions should both reflect your brand and business values. To help keep your captions on-brand, try creating a branding cheat sheet that lists common words, phrases, your fave emojis, and writing styles you use across posts. Check out this inspiring post caption written by Tasha from [Kaleidoscope Living](#):



Use your bio and post captions strategically to reflect your brand. [Image via tasha.kaleidoscope on Instagram](#)

Refer back to your cheat sheet whenever you're creating new Instagram content. As a bonus, you can easily hand this off to a VA or social media manager [when you're ready to delegate some tasks](#).

Consider:

- **If my brand was a person, how would it come across to my audience?**
- **Can I describe using adjectives what my company is (and is not)?**
- **How can I reflect my brand in my visuals?**
- **How can I reflect my brand in my bio and captions?**

Step #5: Review your existing Instagram content and profile

Now you have a solid plan for where you're heading, let's take a look at where you've been. Auditing your existing Instagram content against your new strategy ensures your entire profile—past and present—is working together to help you reach your goals.

First, take a look at your profile and bio.

Does the language you use accurately reflect your brand?

Does your bio clearly explain who your ideal audience is and what your business does?

Here's a great example from online business coach Toi Smith. Her bio includes everything her audience needs to know—who she is, who she serves, what she does, and how they can find out more about her work.



Audit your existing Instagram bio to align with your strategy. [Image via toimarie on Instagram](#)

If your bio doesn't reflect your strategy, try writing a few variations on your bio, and see what you can come up with.

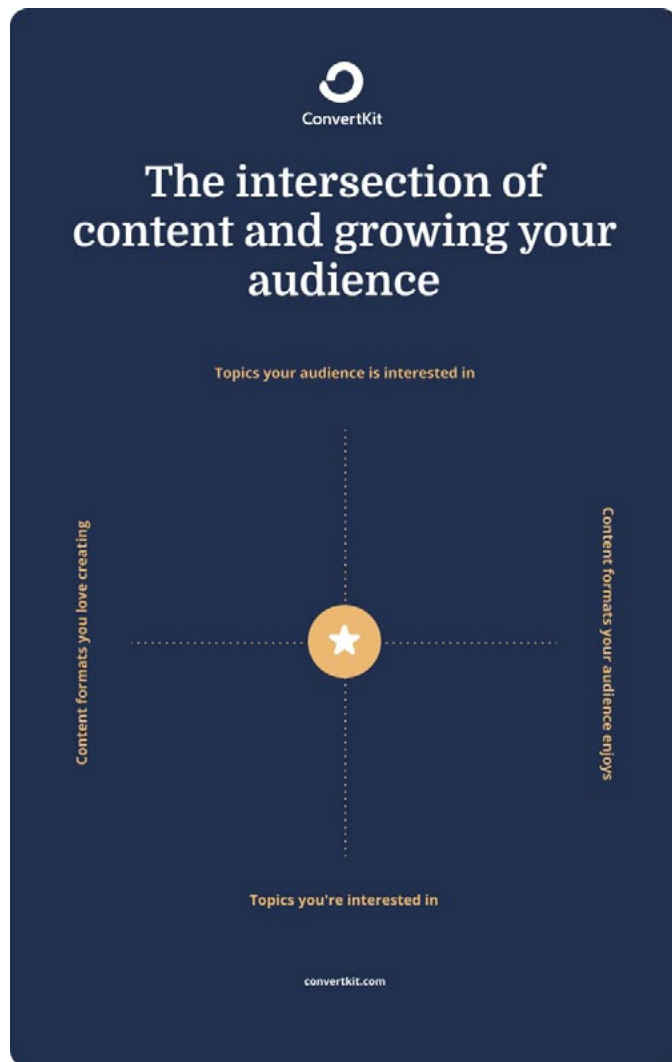
Next, check that you're guiding visitors in the right direction. Instagram only lets you post a single link in your bio, so you need to make the most of it. If your current link isn't up-to-date, or [if your CTA doesn't align with your business goals](#), try swapping it out with a link to a new landing page or your latest content.

Lastly, take a look at what you've already posted on Instagram and consider whether those posts are still relevant to your business goals you defined above. Update any captions to match your branding guidelines, and [make sure to include any branded hashtags or other relevant hashtags](#) within the caption for each post. Don't be afraid to delete or update old content if it isn't serving your Instagram goals.

Consider:

- **Do my current bio and post captions reflect my new branding guidelines?**
- **Does my current CTA match my business goals?**
- **Are my existing posts relevant to my business?**
- **Are my existing posts interesting for my target audience?**

Step #6: Plan the content you'll share



Now we're finally ready to get into the fun part of your Instagram strategy: your Instagram content strategy.

Creative, compelling content needs to be at the core of your Instagram strategy. Being deliberate with the content you share on Instagram helps you generate more followers and grow your audience more quickly than sharing random content.

Uncovering the right balance of content and growing an audience on Instagram means finding:

- Topics your audience is interested in
- Topics you're interested in

- Content formats you love creating
- Content formats your audience enjoys

Let's take a look at choosing the right content format first.

Instagram gives you plenty of options for content: videos, [photos](#), slideshows, [Stories](#), IGTV, and more. Within these, you've also got multiple types of content: educational content, personal updates, user-generated content, behind-the-scenes, and curated content from other accounts.

When you're planning your content formats, always play to your strengths.

Do you love being front and center with your business? Then [video might be a good choice](#).

If not, maybe try sticking to photo posts, or outsource some of the work you don't enjoy (like writing captions) to others.

Once you find your natural strengths and make them a core part of your Instagram strategy, creating consistent content will become more manageable.

When it comes to topics, always remember you're posting content *for your audience*, not for yourself. Photos from your family camping trip might be cute, but they most likely aren't relevant for your business.

List topics relevant to your business (like writing), then break those down further unto sub-topics (like headlines, editing, or promotion). Your chosen topics should be of interest to your audience, and should also overlap with the products and services you sell.

Use these topics as a filter for what content you should (and shouldn't) share. Everything you post—from behind-the-scenes updates to curated content—should be related to your chosen topics.

Consider:

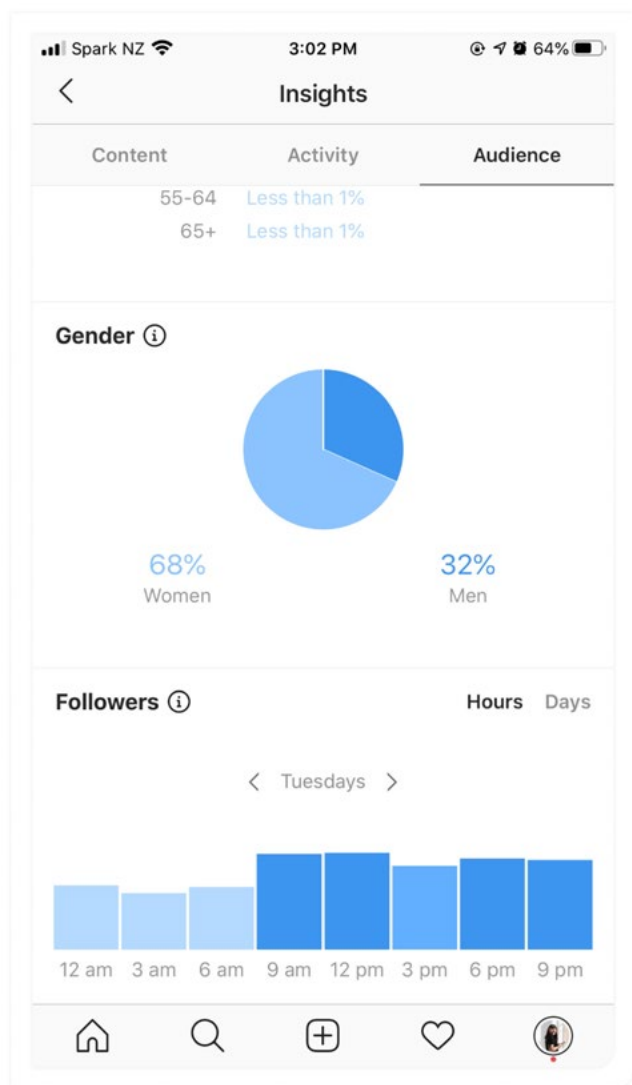
- **What are 2-3 topics I can create content around?**
- **Are these topics of interest to my audience?**
- **What are my natural strengths when it comes to creating content?**
- **How can I leverage those strengths in the content I share on Instagram?**

Step #7: Set up a consistent posting schedule

Now you have a plan for what you're going to share on Instagram, you need to define when you're going to share posts and how often.

Uncovering [the best times to post on Instagram](#) takes a little work, but it's worth the effort. You always want to post when your audience is most likely to be online—that way, you'll have the best chance of potential customers and subscribers coming across your content.

Instagram's built-in [Insights tool](#) gives you plenty of data on when your followers are most active, and there are plenty of third-party tools you can use to narrow down your ideal posting time even further.



Instagram's Insights tool can tell you when your audience is most likely to see your posts.

There's no right or wrong answer when it comes to [how often you should post to Instagram](#). A schedule that works for a food blogger, for example, might not work at all for a business coach.

[The best posting schedule is one you can maintain over the long haul](#). Generally, posting once or twice a day gets the best results when growing an audience on Instagram, but you'll have to experiment and see what works best for your audience.

If you can't come up with new content that frequently, though, don't fret. You can always plan ahead and schedule a bunch of Instagram posts at the same time. Try setting aside an hour at the start of each week to fill your social queue. Tools like [Buffer](#) can help you schedule all your content to post automatically throughout the week, saving you time and avoiding any last-minute panic.

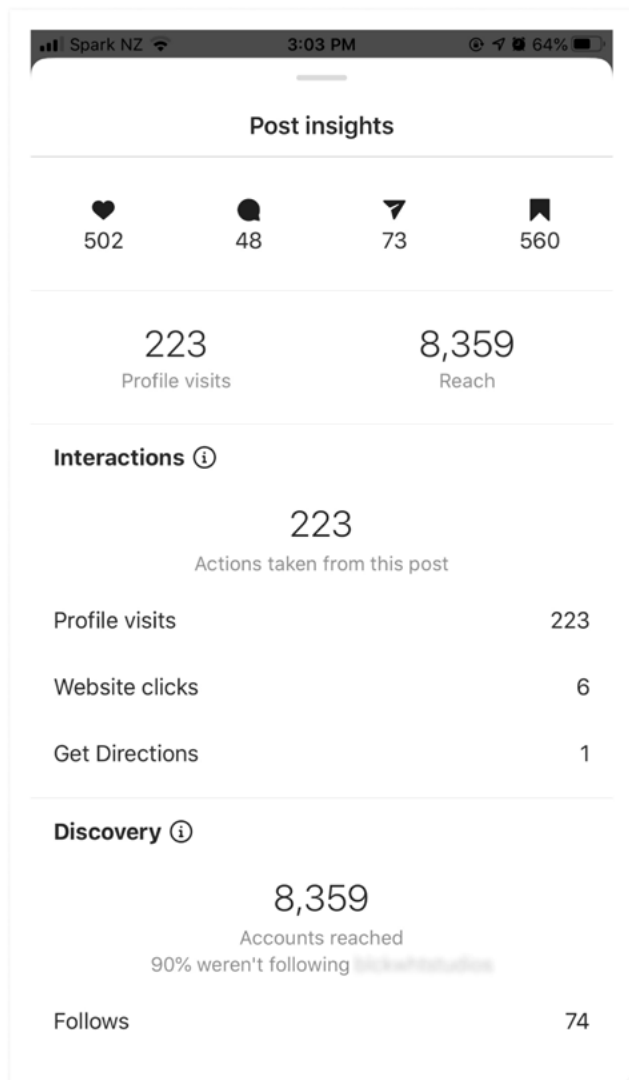
Consider:

- **When is your ideal audience most likely to be online?**
- **How frequently can you come up with new and engaging content for your audience?**
- **How much time (or money) can you devote to meeting your Instagram goals?**

Step #8: Track your progress against your goals

As you begin putting your strategy into action, you'll want to regularly check back in against the goals and KPIs you set earlier to make sure you're moving in the right direction.

[Instagram Insights](#) includes plenty of valuable data on which content is performing best (or worst). That way, you can make educated decisions around the best content to post—and grow your audience more quickly.



Instagram Insights gives you insights into how your strategy is working.

Make a habit of regularly checking your analytics to see how your content is performing. Are your KPIs meeting the goals you set earlier? If not, what can you tweak to improve your performance?

Keep an eye out for any posts with above-average engagement—perhaps you used a different hashtag, or shared a different type of content to the norm. Try to work out why that post performed so well, so you can duplicate it in your future content.

If you're new to Instagram, analytics can feel a little overwhelming—but you can learn everything you need to know about using Instagram metrics to improve your strategy [right here](#).

Consider:

- Am I reaching the goals I set for myself?
- Is there anything I tweak to reach my goals faster?

Be strategic with your Instagram growth

Coming up with a clear strategy for how you'll use Instagram is a great first step to growing your audience—and your business. Once you have a roadmap for where you're heading, you'll find it much easier to attract new followers, convert them into customers or clients, and reach your business goals.

Don't forget:

- Define your goals
- Know your audience
- Understand the competition
- Illustrate your brand
- Review your existing content
- Plan what you'll share and when
- Track your progress

That's it!

Create your plan, stick to it, and before you know it, you'll be well on your way to growing a sustainable online business.

Instagram is a great way to reach new audiences—but it isn't the only way. Make sure you're not putting all your eggs in one Insta-basket—[sign up for your free ConvertKit account](#), and start using Instagram to drive visitors to your website and email newsletter today!

 Kieran Tie



How to get the most out of your Instagram bio

Human beings are wired to make snap judgments.

It only takes a [blink of an eye](#) to form a first impression of a work colleague, a potential client, a stranger at a party—or a new account on Instagram.

If you're building your personal brand or running an online business, it's essential you make a great first impression. And on [Instagram](#), that first impression starts with crafting a remarkable Instagram bio.

Like in real life, most Instagram users will quickly scan your bio when sizing up whether they should [check out more of your content](#) or follow you. If your Instagram bio is boring, confusing, or poorly formatted, you'll lose their interest immediately—along with any chance of them becoming future clients or customers for your business.

To help you get the most out of your Instagram bio, I've put together everything you need to know to create a standout Instagram bio, with tons of Instagram bio ideas and inspiration to help you [attract your ideal audience](#), turn those visitors into subscribers or customers, and make more sales.

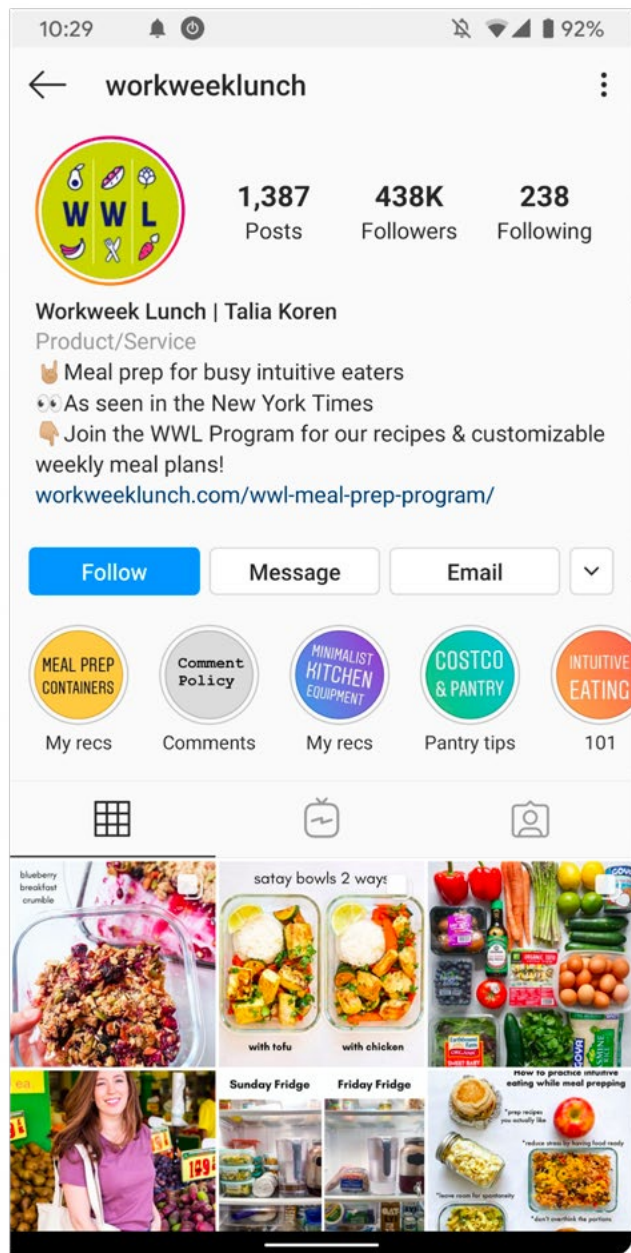
But before we dive in, let's take a quick refresher on what an Instagram bio is, and why it's so important.

What is an Instagram bio?

Your Instagram bio is part of your Instagram profile—specifically the area of text underneath your name and profile picture on your Instagram feed. It's a 150-character text field that can include custom text, emojis, links, hashtags, and contact information.

“Your bio is your elevator pitch,” explains design educator Kelsey Baldwin of [Paper & Oats](#). “You’ve got just a few lines to tell people what you’re about, how you can help them, why they should follow you, and sprinkle in a bit of your personality along the way. I’ve changed mine up a lot over the years, often inspired by someone else who had something interesting in their bio that caught my eye and made me want to learn more about them.”

Here’s a great example of an Instagram bio and profile from Talia Koren of [Workweek Lunch](#):



An example Instagram bio. [Image via workweeklunch on Instagram](#)

Talia’s bio has all the essential elements of a great Instagram bio:

- A strong and distinctive profile picture
- A descriptive name and username
- A well-written and comprehensive bio
- Email contact details for her business
- [A call-to-action \(CTA\) link](#) to her coaching program

We’ll dive into Talia’s bio in more detail in a moment, but first, let’s see why creating a standout Instagram bio is so important.

Why is your Instagram bio so important?

Your bio is often the first thing Instagram users see when they open your profile. That makes it your best opportunity to introduce yourself and your brand, help your audience understand what you do and who you serve, and prompt them on the next steps.

With only 150 characters of text to play with, your Instagram bio needs to:

- **Showcase your brand and personality.** Your bio lets you show off your brand and business, planting your flag to attract your ideal audience.
- **Explain what you do and the audience you serve.** The best Instagram bios instantly tell visitors if they’re in the right place, and what they can expect from following you.
- **Share your contact details and company info.** Your bio should let visitors know how to get in touch with you or visit your business.
- **Prompt readers to take action outside Instagram.** Instagram bios need to include a single call-to-action guiding visitors on what they should do next.

Little bio—big responsibility. Let’s find out how you can set your Instagram bio up for success.

How to set up your Instagram bio for success

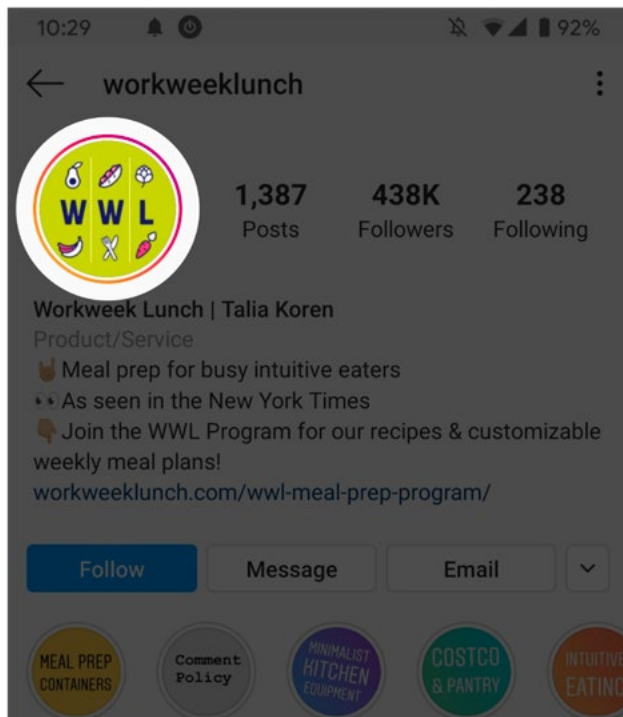
As I mentioned above, your Instagram bio includes more than just the text blurb on your profile. Your profile picture, username and name, bio text, category, and call-to-action buttons all need to work in sync for your Instagram bio to do its best work.

Let's walk through Talia's profile we saw above, and see what you can learn and put into action on your Instagram bio.

Start by choosing your Instagram profile picture

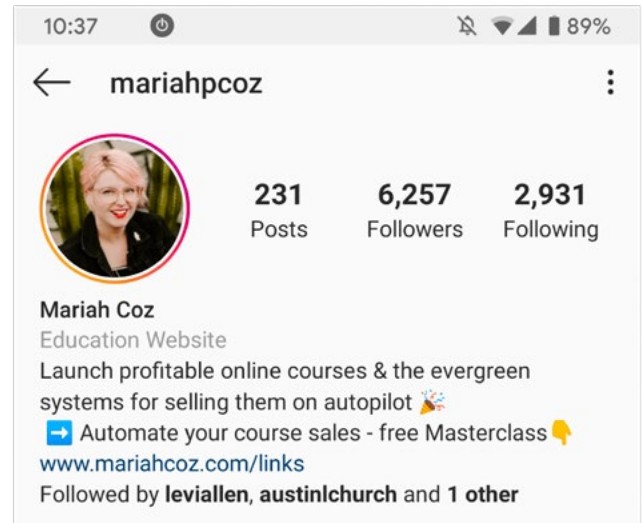
Your Instagram profile pic sets you apart in a crowded feed. It's the first thing many Instagram users see when they open your profile, so you need to make a great first impression.

Picking the perfect profile pic (try saying that 10 times fast!) doesn't have to be complicated. If you're running a brand like Workweek Lunch, you can use your company logo or mark, or an image of your product. Just make sure the image you choose is easily recognizable, even when your profile picture is tiny.



Brands should choose their logo as their Instagram profile picture. [Image via workweeklunch on Instagram](#)

If you're building your personal brand on Instagram (say, you're a coach or blogger), the choice is simple—pick a great headshot and use that as your profile picture, like this example from business coach [Mariah Coz](#):



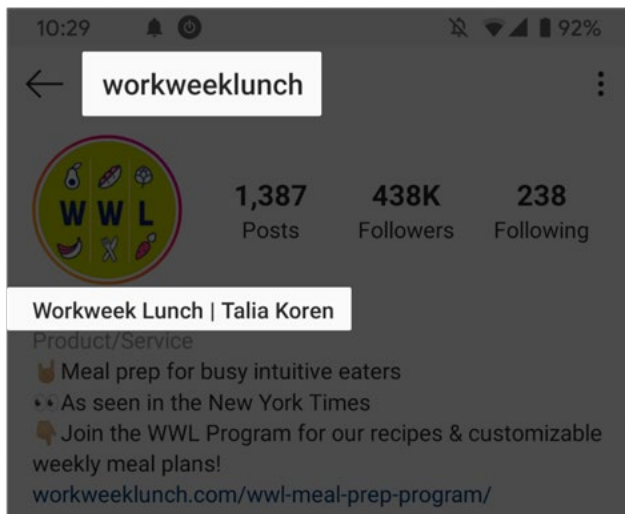
Building a personal brand? Use your photo as your Instagram profile picture. [Image via mariahpcoz on Instagram](#)

No matter which profile picture you choose, [try to use the same photo across all your social media profiles](#). Keeping things consistent helps ensure your audience will easily recognize you, no matter where they happen to find you.

Next, list your name and username

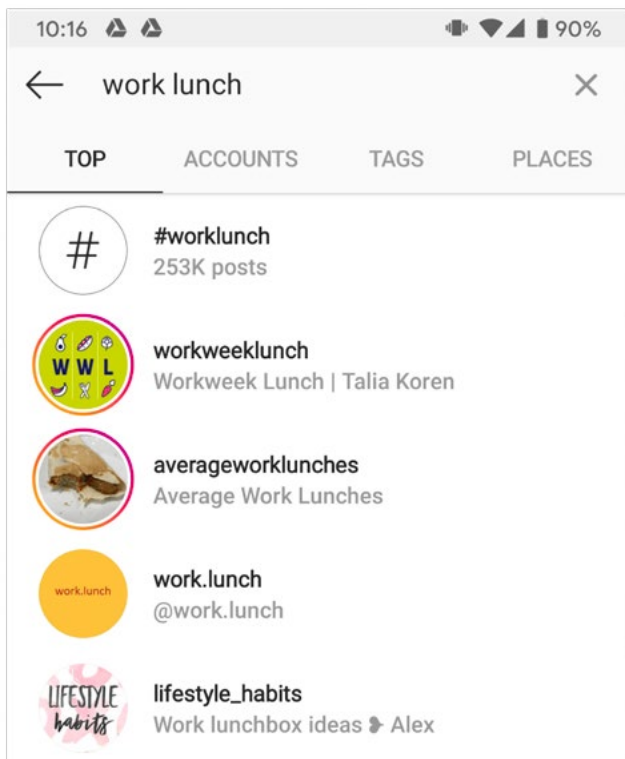
[Your name and username are entirely different fields](#) on your Instagram profile, and you can customize them in different ways.

Your username or handle appears at the top—it's how people will link to your profile and tag you on Instagram. Your name shows below your profile picture in bold text.



Your name and username are separate fields on your Instagram bio. [Image via workweeklunch on Instagram](#)

Instagram lets you customize the name field however you like, without needing to change your username or handle. And most importantly, both fields are searchable from within Instagram:



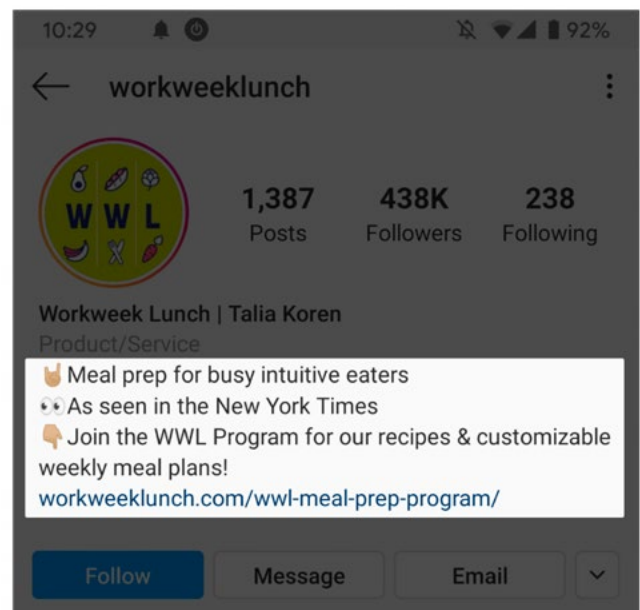
Both your name and username are searchable fields on Instagram.

Since your name is searchable, it's the perfect place to share important details about your business. Most creators I came across when researching this article included their personal name or brand name in the username field, and sometimes additional descriptive keywords in their name field, like how Talia includes both her name and her business name in the example above.

Think about the keywords most clients or customers would be searching for on Instagram—either your brand name, like in Talia's example, or your business category, like "business coach." Be sure to include those terms in your Instagram name field to help potential customers find you.

Fill out your bio

Your bio is the most critical part of your Instagram profile. It's your chance to let your brand shine, share details about your business, and prompt visitors to take action.



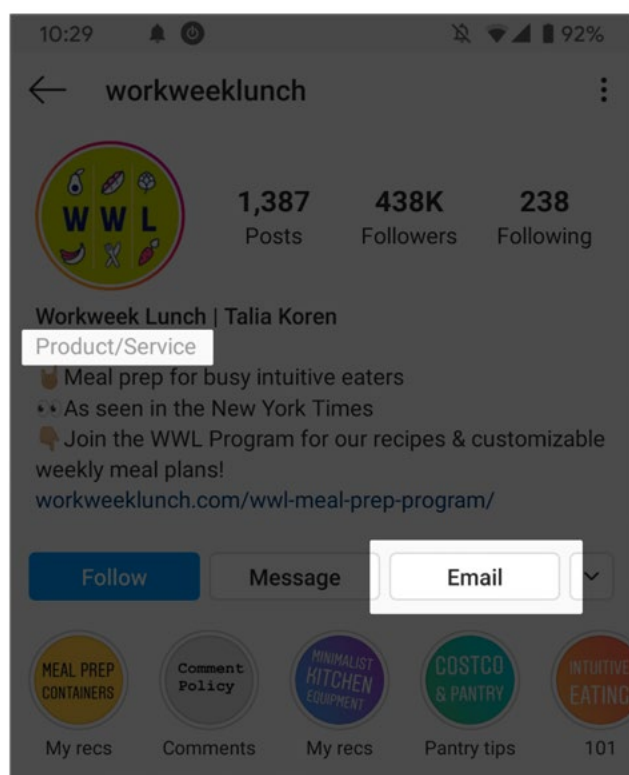
An example bio on Instagram. [Image via workweeklunch on Instagram](#)

There's a lot that goes into writing a great bio, so I'll show you how to write an excellent Instagram bio in a moment—but first, let's look at the other fields.

Include your contact details and choose a business category

If you've [converted your Instagram account to an Instagram Business profile](#), you can add additional contact details and [call-to-action \(CTA\) buttons](#) right on your Instagram profile. You can add links to your website, and your phone number and email address so people can get in touch with you. Adding contact details to your profile makes it easier for customers to get in touch, and also lets you conserve the precious text in your bio for other uses.

You can [also select a relevant category for your business](#), which shows up underneath your name.



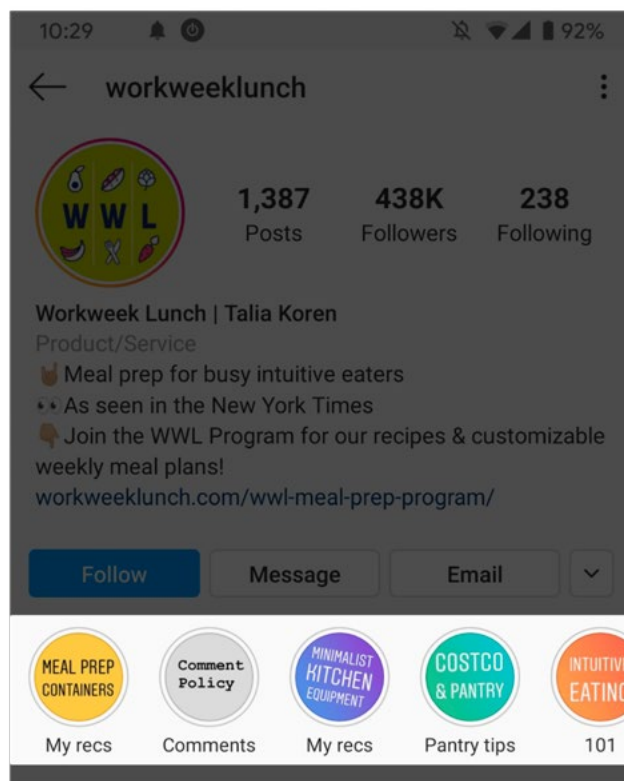
Add contact details to your Instagram Business profile. [Image via workweeklunch on Instagram](#)

Switching to an Instagram Business profile also unlocks other benefits for your business, like access to [Instagram's built-in Insights tools](#) and the ability to [run ads and promote posts](#). If you haven't converted your account already, it's a great time to get started.

Highlight your best Instagram Stories

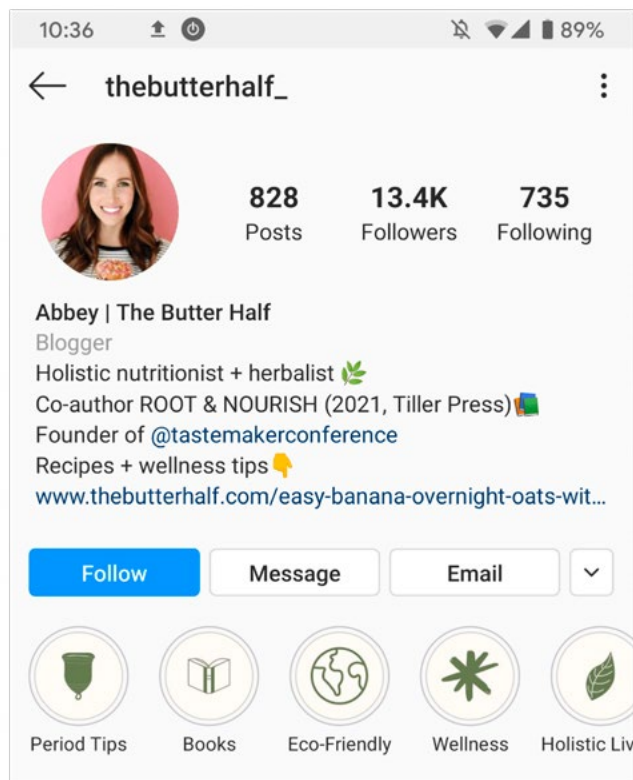
Have you seen those circles that show up below the profile on some Instagram feeds? Those are called [Stories Highlights](#)—top Stories chosen by creators to pin to their feed permanently.

Stories appear below the CTA buttons on your feed, and clicking on them opens them up like a regular Instagram Story.



Highlight your best Instagram Stories as part of your bio. [Image via workweeklunch on Instagram](#)

To add Story Highlights to your feed, simply click the + button on your profile underneath Story Highlights, and choose one or more Stories you'd like to add. By default, Instagram will pick a cover photo (the image shown on your bio) from your Story. If you want to keep your bio neat and tidy, you can also upload a custom photo for each Story Highlight, like Abbey from [The Butter Half](#) does on her Instagram bio:



Add custom cover photos to keep your Instagram Story highlights consistent. [Image via thebutterhalf_ on Instagram](#)

Your new Story Highlight will appear on your profile automatically—they're a great way to share a snapshot of your best content with new followers.

4 top Instagram bio tips for online creators

Now the rest of your Instagram profile is ready to go, let's take a closer look at writing the perfect Instagram bio.

There are a million different ways you could write your Instagram bio—but the best of the bunch (especially when you're using Instagram to grow your business) tend to include a few common elements. Let's look at a few top Instagram bio examples, and some top tips for crafting your bio.

Tip #1: Be clear about who you serve and how you help

You might only have 150 characters to play with, but that doesn't mean your Instagram bio can't help attract your

ideal customers and subscribers. Instagram users are looking to follow people like them or people they want to be like.

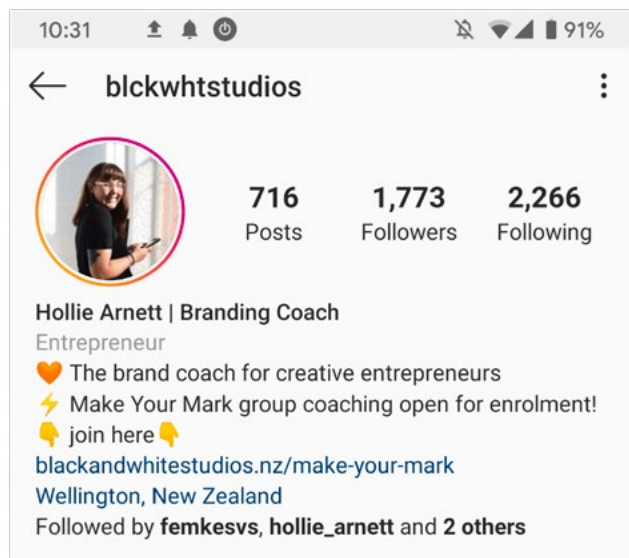
Being clear in your bio about your business and your ideal customers helps attract the right followers—the ones more likely to follow you on Instagram, join your mailing list, and (fingers crossed) [become clients](#) or customers.

Always try to use first-person in your Instagram bio. Speaking directly to your target audience, like how weight management coach Jen from [Coaching by Jennifer](#) does in her bio, builds trust and shows your audience you understand their needs.



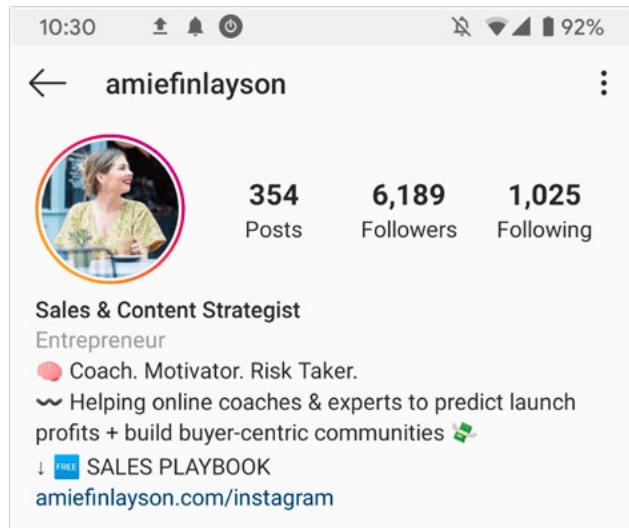
Speak directly with your audience in your Instagram bio. [Image via coachingbyjennifer on Instagram](#)

The best Instagram bios explain precisely who you are, what your business does, and for whom—often all in one sentence. To show you what I mean, check out how Hollie Arnett of [Black & White Studios](#) sums up what she does (brand coach) and who she serves (creative entrepreneurs) in one short sentence:



Be clear in your Instagram bio about the audience you serve. [Image via blckwhtstudios on Instagram](#)

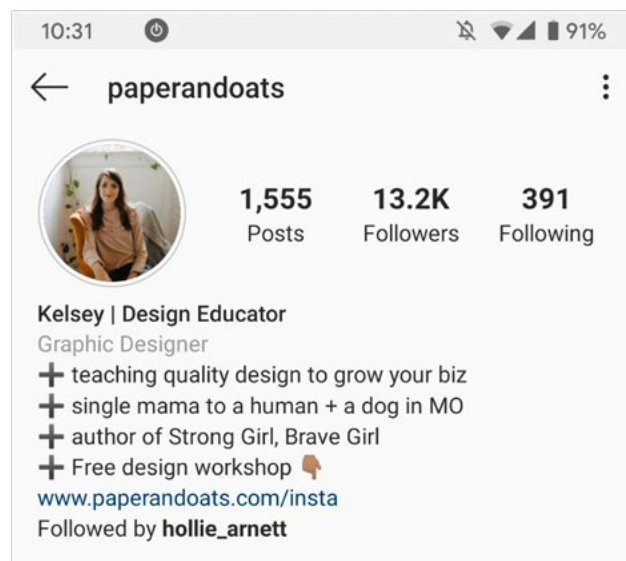
Here's another excellent example from sales and content strategist [Amie Finlayson](#). Like Hollie, Amie is super-clear on who she serves (online coaches and experts) and how she helps them (predict launch profits and build buyer-centric communities).



Use your Instagram bio to describe your business and audience. [Image via amiefinlayson on Instagram](#)

Last but not least, don't be afraid to let your personality shine. Simply being yourself is a great way to help your business stand out on Instagram and reach the right audience. Adding a few personal touches to your Instagram

bio, like how Kelsey Baldwin mentions that she's a mom, instantly lets visitors know if they want to follow you—even before they've seen your Instagram feed content.



Include a few personal details in your Instagram bio to attract the right audience. [Image via paperandoats on Instagram](#)

Think about the most important things you can share in your Instagram bio to attract your ideal customers and clients, and make the most of those 150 characters.

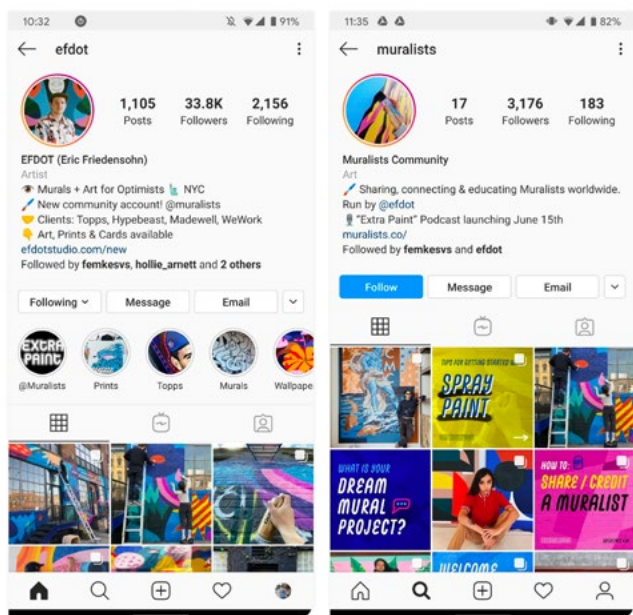
Tip #2: Grow your community with hashtag links and tagged accounts in your bio

You might only be able to add one external link to your Instagram bio—but you can [add as many hashtags](#) and profile usernames as you can fit.

Every hashtag and profile username you add to your bio becomes a clickable link that leads visitors directly to the hashtag or profile you link. Simply type "@" or "#" followed by the account username or hashtag that you'd like to link, and Instagram will automatically turn it into a clickable link. It's a handy way to link between your personal and business feeds on Instagram, list clients and customers, or share your brand hashtags.

The best way to use this feature is to link between multiple accounts you run. For example, check out how [Eric Friedensohn](#) of Efdot Studio promotes his new community account [@muralists](#) in his bio. Eric also links right back to his personal profile from the community profile bio,

giving potential clients and customers twice as many opportunities to reach him.



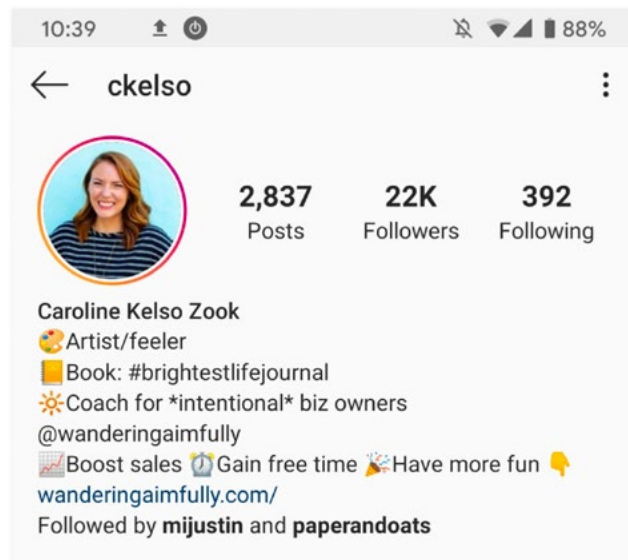
Link to related accounts using profile links in your Instagram bio. Images via [efdote](#) and [muralists](#) on Instagram

Let's say you run a podcast with a separate Instagram profile. You can add a link to the podcast profile in your bio, like how blogger and online business coach [Melyssa Griffin](#) links to her [Limitless Life podcast](#):



Try linking to your podcast profile in your Instagram bio. [Image via melyssa_griffin on Instagram](#)

You can also add branded hashtags in your bio to make it easier for people to discover your content. Any hashtag you add to your bio will automatically become a link to all posts with that hashtag, like how artist Caroline Kelso Zook of [Wandering Aimfully](#) uses the hashtag [#brightestlifejournal](#) in her bio and many of her posts:



Grow your community by adding branded hashtags to your Instagram bio. [Image via ckelso on Instagram](#)

Adding links like this can help drive more visitors to your posts and related accounts and grow your community—it's well worth the space in your Instagram bio.

Tip #3: Make your bio attractive and easy to scan with emojis and line breaks

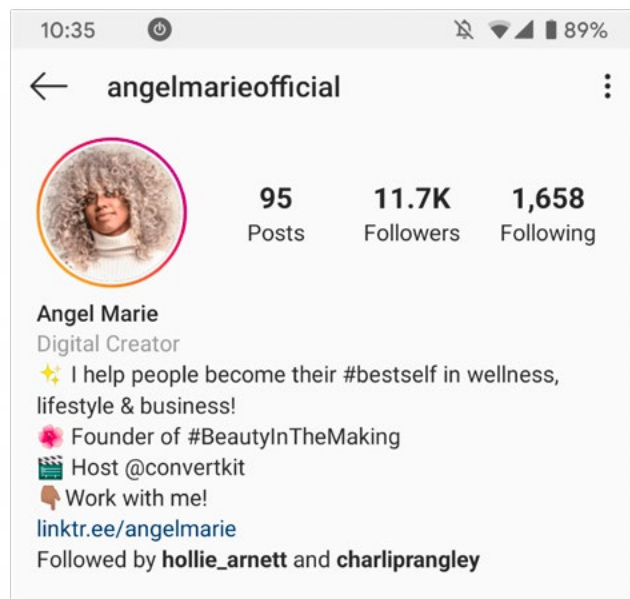
Instagram's a noisy place—most visitors will quickly scan your bio to see if it's interesting—you need to immediately grab visitors' attention with your bio. Avoid posting a wall of text—use emojis and line breaks to punch up your bio and help you stand out from the crowd.

Emojis and line breaks make your bio more interesting to read, boosting the chances that visitors will follow you or click on your links. You can include as many emojis in your bio as you want—check out how email marketing consultant [Tarzan Kay](#) breaks up her Instagram bio and shares some of her unique personality using emojis:



Every great Instagram bio deserves at least 15 pieces of flair.
[Image via tarzan_kay on Instagram](#)

You can also use emojis to draw attention to the links in your bio. See that little hand in lifestyle and business coach [Angel Marie's bio](#)? It might be a small touch, but it makes visitors more likely to spot (and click on) the link to her landing page.



Use emojis to draw attention to links in your Instagram bio.
[Image via angelmarieofficial on Instagram](#)

As a bonus, emojis also save valuable bio space for your persuasive copy. Neat!

Tip #4: Always include a call-to-action and link in your bio

"Social media is great," explains Kelsey, "but it's rented space. It's super important to move people off that platform and onto your email list where you have a guaranteed way of communicating with them in your controlled environment, instead of hoping they see your post in their feed."

That's all well and good, but Instagram restricts you to only having a single link in your bio. Since you can't add links to the post descriptions, it's even more crucial for you to make the most of your bio link.

There are two parts to this: The call-to-action text instructing visitors on why they should click, and the link itself.

First, make sure your bio includes a clear call-to-action that explains precisely what visitors will get out of clicking your link. "The biggest mistake I see online creators make in their Instagram bio is not having a clear call to action," Kelsey explains. "The link should be intentional and go to an email signup of some kind, but it's also important to include a line at the end of the bio itself that gives the literal call to action, telling them what that link is, what they get if they sign up, telling the viewer what next step to take."

Check out this example from business strategist [Addi Ganley](#). Addi's bio explains exactly what's behind her Instagram bio link—she also shares the price (free) and the format (a workshop).



Always include a clear call to action in your Instagram bio.

[Image via addiganley on Instagram](#)

Next up, you need to send visitors to a high-value link where they're likely to convert. "For many years, I just had my main website home page as the link in my bio," Kelsey explains, "but I realized I could do more targeted list building if I made my bio link go to a free download or some other opt-in that got them off Instagram and into my world via my email list."

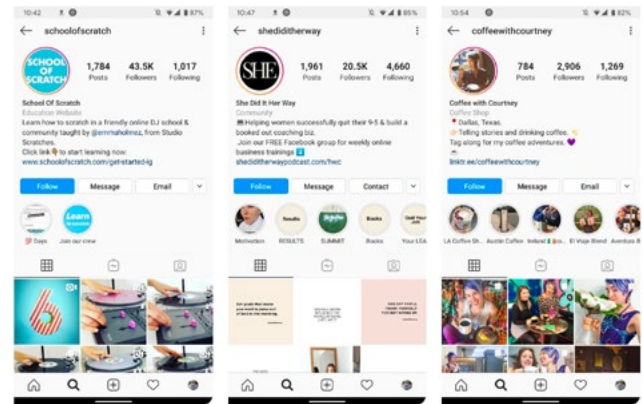
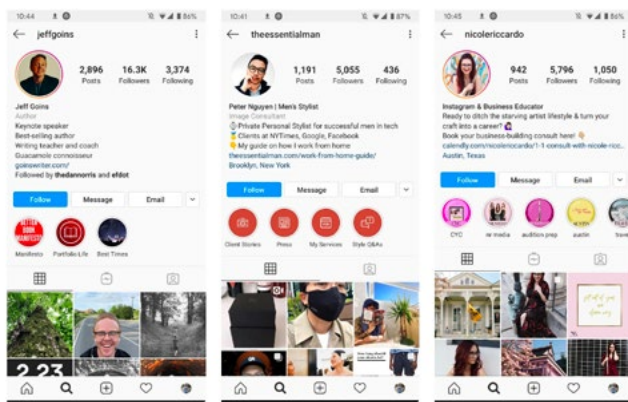
So how do you know which link to add?

What's the best way to drive traffic from your Instagram feed to your mailing list or landing pages?

Well, it turns out there's only one wrong answer—sending them to your home page. "Don't just send them to your home page," Kelsey clarifies, "and hope they'll poke around. Be intentional with the link you put there, and don't be afraid to change it out and test different opt-ins."

Experiment with different ideas for your CTA link. You could try linking to:

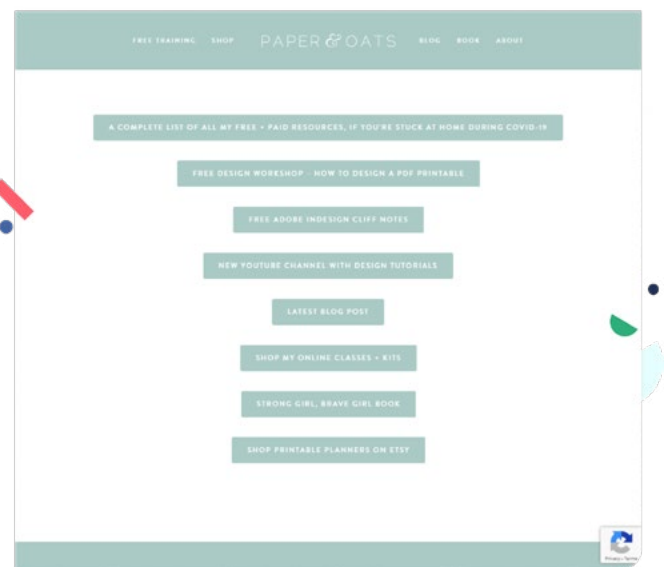
- Your website, like author [Jeff Goins](#)
- A blog post, like Peter Nguyen from [The Essential Man](#)
- Your calendar signup page, like Instagram consultant [Nicole Riccardo](#)
- A free downloadable lead magnet, like friendly DJ school [School of Scratch](#)
- A free Facebook group, like women's coaching service [She Did It Her Way](#)
- A landing page with links to other pages, like Courtney from [Coffee With Courtney](#)



Examples of links you could add to your Instagram bio. Images via [jeffgoins](#), [theessentialman](#), [nicolericcardo](#), [schoolofscratch](#), [shedidherway](#), and [coffeewithcourtney](#) on Instagram

Since Instagram only lets you include a single link in your bio, you'll see a lot of Instagrammers using services like [Linktree](#). Linktree makes it easy to build a landing page with multiple links to other pages. You can then link to your Linktree landing page from your Instagram bio, making it easier to share multiple links with your followers.

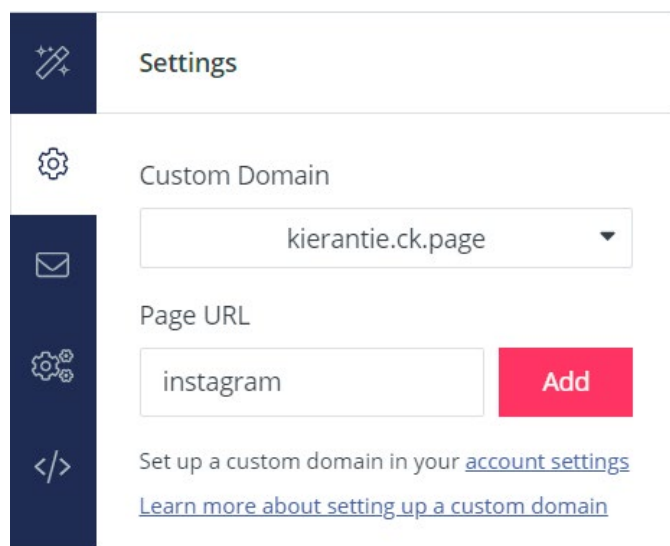
If you don't want to use Linktree, you can achieve the same effect with your landing page, like Kelsey of Paper & Oats does with [her landing page](#).



An example of a link tree landing page. [Image via Paper & Oats](#)

Linktree might be an easy solution, but it adds friction for your audience—every time they need to make a decision around which link to click, you run the chance of losing their attention. Instead, I'd recommend choosing one best offer for your Instagram audience—[usually a free lead magnet](#)—and creating a free landing page to grab your lead magnet. Add the link to your landing page to your Instagram bio, and you're golden.

The one downside of this is that you need to update the link in your Instagram profile every time you want to share a different page. One trick to getting around this? [Set up a landing page on ConvertKit with the custom domain](#) and the URL **yourdomain.com/instagram** or similar.



Set up a landing page for your Instagram bio in ConvertKit.

Then, instead of updating your Instagram profile, you can simply switch out the URL to a different landing page within ConvertKit, and voila!

Get more from your Instagram bio

Your Instagram bio shouldn't be an afterthought. A thoughtful and creative Instagram bio can help you attract more followers, share critical business information, and drive more traffic to your mailing list, products, or services.

If you're not making the most of your Instagram bio, now's your chance to take your bio to the next level. Follow the above tips, grab some inspiration from the example bios we've listed from other online creators, and start making a fantastic first impression today!

Setting up your Instagram bio? Try linking to one of a landing page you can create in just a few minutes. [Grab your free ConvertKit account, and set up your first landing page today!](#)

 Kieran Tie



How to write engagement-driving Instagram captions

In 2020, the [Instagram algorithm](#) will reward **engagement** more than anything else. The more engagement a post gets, the higher it will appear in your followers' feeds.

This means that engagement should be your goal for most of your Instagram posts if you want to grow your account, gain higher visibility, and build an online community around your brand.

And although Instagram started as a visual platform, it's no longer about the images alone.

A great image can grab someone's attention as they scroll. But there must be something else to cause them to stop long enough to comment, share, or save your post. (In other words: Engage.)

That something else? Your caption.

In this article, I'm explaining how to write Instagram captions to drive engagement.

11 steps to improve your Instagram captions

As you work to improve the Instagram captions you write, here are 11 easy-to-deploy steps that'll make the entire process easier. Follow these tips and you'll be on the path to creating engagement-driving posts.

Provide value in your Instagram captions

The most effective way to drive engagement with your captions is simple: Write good Instagram captions full of value.

Create content that's so valuable that people can't help but want to engage with it. This could mean sharing actionable how-tos, provocative insights, original inspiration, and

more. As long as you're creating content that your audience loves, you're adding value.

For instance, small business bookkeeper [Arielle Gelosi](#) shared a powerful insight in a recent caption:



You can use your Instagram captions to provide value to your followers. [Image via Arielle Gelosi's Instagram.](#)

Aim for about 150 characters

Recent research by [Sprout Social](#) revealed that Instagram posts with the most engagement have captions between 138-150 characters. Good Instagram captions are those that are short and sweet because they are easiest for followers to read.

Longer captions can also drive engagement, and the engagement might be more meaningful. But, it's less likely that every follower who sees it will read the whole thing, leading to lower engagement levels overall.

Coffee mug brand [Compliments N' Coffee](#) has found success with short, inspirational captions like this one:



Captions between 138-150 characters tend to get the highest engagement rates. [Image via Compliments N' Coffee's Instagram.](#)

Focus on the first 140 characters

In the main feed, you only see [140 characters](#) of the caption before you have to click "more" to view the rest. However, [one study](#) found that Instagram caption lengths are trending up, doubling between 2016 and 2019.

So how do you get followers to read your longer captions?

Make sure the first 140 characters are enticing.

Don't bury the most important information at the end of your caption. Instead, lead with the main idea, and ensure that people will want to find out more about it.

For example, take a look at this enticing start to a caption by writer and speaker [Austin Channing Brown](#):



Use the first 140 characters to entice followers to click "more." [Image via Austin Channing Brown's Instagram.](#)

Tell a story

Research has shown that humans remember things [22 times more](#) when they're shared with us within a story.

Try using more stories in your Instagram captions to keep readers engrossed all the way to the end and help them remember your point long after they've moved on.

For inspiration, check out this long caption that's a delight to read despite its length, by writer [Liz Pabon](#):

When COVID struck, she wanted to help. At home, she arranged a neighborhood group buy; picking up toilet paper, Clorox wipes & other essentials, in bulk, to share on her block.

In her business, she put a pin on her first big ticket course & dropped her how-to course prices by 30%.

Jane was making me feel like a lazy slacker. Until she said this...

The neighborhood bulk buy? Jane thought it was a good idea. Brilliant actually. Her neighbors? Not so much.

They didn't want to buy wipes or TP or canned sardines from her garage supermarket stash. It felt like she was trying to profit from a bad situation, they said.

And her business? She got concerned emails from students & subscribers. Was SHE in dire straits? Could they somehow help HER?

OMG, I started to understand the fascination with reality tv.

Jane was miffed. She offered her neighbors & her audience what she felt was helpful and kind and right. And the whole thing worked against her.

Head to my stories today for a checklist* that'll help you create a simple listening process so you can give your peeps what they want.

Because brands that listen are brands we love and respect. This week, I'll be posting ideas to help your brand become just that.

*Jane's got the checklist now too - so she doesn't have to back peddle & defend her well intended actions.

In her candid messages, Jane reminded me of a basic brand (& marketing) principle...

Listening.

Her neighbors weren't wishing they had a point of entry person to make bulk shopping runs. She assumed they'd want one.

Her students & subscribers weren't talking about needing lower course prices. She assumed they'd want to save some cash during a difficult time.

Friends, listen to your audience. THEN respond.



Ask your followers to do something after they read your caption, like answer a question in the comments. [Image via Lev Apparel's Instagram.](#)

Make your Instagram captions easy to read

Instagram doesn't allow for much customization in captions. You can't use bolded text, italics, or different font sizes to break up the text. As a result, it's easy to end up with a block of small, uniform text that's challenging to read.

If people can't easily read your caption, they probably won't. (And they won't engage, either.)

That's why you should get creative and use tricks to break up your captions into skimmable paragraphs. Use a mix of line breaks, emojis, punctuation, and all caps to create makeshift headings and layouts.

Attorney [Taylor Tieman](#) recently used these tactics to make her long caption easy to read:



Telling a story in your captions helps people remember your point. [Images via Liz Pabon's Instagram.](#)

Ask for engagement

Good Instagram captions give followers instructions on how to engage. These instructions could be in the form of a question to answer in the comments, a suggestion to save or share the post, or a prompt to tag a friend.

Sometimes the barrier to engagement is not knowing what to do with a post you enjoyed. Asking for a specific form of engagement takes away the stress of that decision and makes followers more likely to engage.

Clothing brand [Lev Apparel](#) did this well in one of their recent posts, asking their followers to answer a question in the comments:

Use line breaks, emojis, and all caps to break captions into easy-to-read chunks. [Image via Taylor Tieman's Instagram.](#)

Use creative writing skills

Most of us understand that our images should be interesting and well-done to capture attention on Instagram. The same is true for your captions. Just as you would use photography or design skills to create an eye-catching image, you should use creative writing skills to create a caption that's fun to read.

Use imagery, adjectives, and storytelling to bring your ideas to life. Hint: Try to be as specific as possible to avoid cliches or vagueness.

For inspiration for how to write Instagram captions creatively, check out a recent caption by copywriter [Laura Belgray](#) (also known as Talking Shrimp). She uses hyper-specific analogies, a personal story, and interesting adjectives to create word pictures for her followers:



Use creative writing skills to create captions that are fun to read. [Image via Talking Shrimp's Instagram.](#)

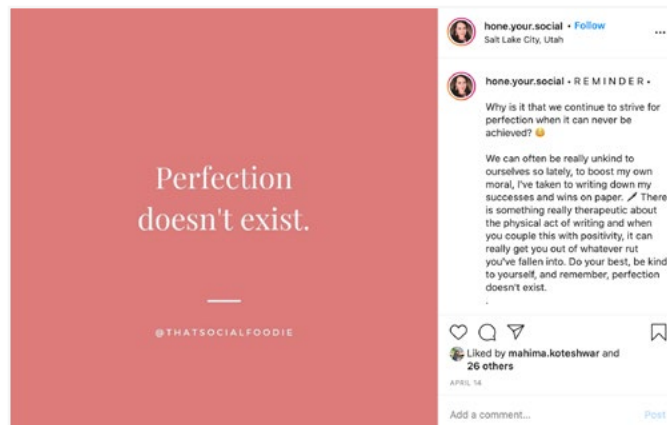
Define your Instagram caption style

Just as you create a consistent aesthetic for your Instagram grid, you should aim to create a consistent "style" for your captions. This helps your brand feel cohesive and be recognizable in your followers' feeds, leading to higher engagement.

You can define your caption style by deciding on a consistent post structure and common elements. Start by asking yourself:

- Will you use emojis? How often? Which ones?
- Will you use dashes, periods, or ellipses to make line breaks?
- Will you use all caps or asterisks for emphasis?
- How will you start and end each caption?

Social media strategist [Hone Your Social](#) always structures her captions the same way to maintain a recognizable brand:



Style your captions to create a consistent look. [Image via HoneYour Social's Instagram.](#)

Include hashtags the right way

Hashtags help your post be seen by more people, which leads to higher engagement. But make sure you're using hashtags correctly.

- Here are a few quick tips to keep in mind:
- Use hashtags that your ideal followers are using
- Use both popular hashtags and niche hashtags
- Make sure your hashtags are relevant to your content
- Use local hashtags if applicable
- Separate hashtags from your main caption

For example, candle brand [Remedy Candle Co.](#) used a variety of hashtags on a recent post, ranging from local hashtags to broader hashtags:



Include hashtags in your captions to reach more people and increase engagement. [Image via Remedy Candle Co.'s Instagram.](#)

Mention other users in your Instagram captions

If it's relevant to your post, mention other users in your captions to extend your post's reach to their audience.

When you mention someone else, they receive a notification and are likely to view your post and share it. All those extra views are likely to lead to more engagement.

But, be wise: Don't mention another account in your caption unless the caption has something to do with them. Otherwise, it'll look like spam.

For example, Amazon consulting firm [Stanczak Retail Consulting](#) tagged a contributor to their blog in a post:



When relevant, tag other users in your captions to increase your reach and engagement. [Image via Stanczak Retail Consulting's Instagram.](#)

Get personal in your Instagram captions

When brands share personal content about the people and decisions behind the brand on Instagram, it humanizes them. Followers will be able to relate, making them more likely to engage with your account.

Also, this type of content can prompt followers to share a related story about themselves in turn, deepening the level of conversation happening on your post.

Take inspiration from a recent post by [Vision Quest Shoes](#), where the founder shared a selfie and her "why" for starting the brand:



Share a personal story in your caption to humanize your brand and engage followers. [Image via Vision Quest Shoes' Instagram.](#)

Captions are crucial for driving engagement

Images will capture initial interest and get people to stop scrolling and pay attention. But only for a moment. It's up to your caption to keep them reading and prompt them to engage in a meaningful way with your post.

These engagements propel your content to the tops of your followers' feeds. Ultimately, this makes them more likely to become part of your community, buy your product or service, or reach out to collaborate.

The bottom line: Your captions play just as important a role in your Instagram success as your images do. Especially when it comes to driving engagement.

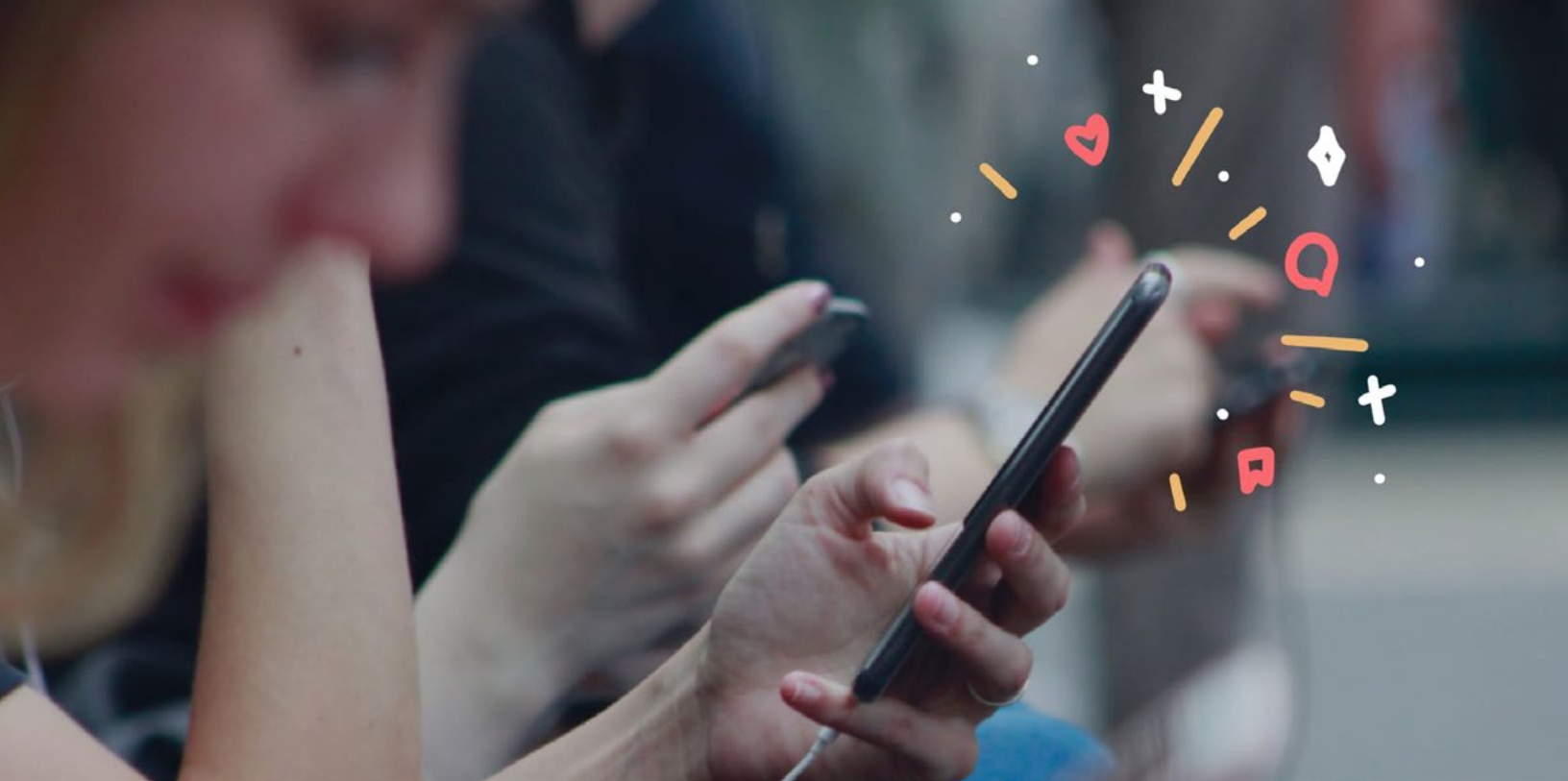
Hopefully, this article has given you a great starting place to learn how to write Instagram captions that drive engagement.

Want to take your followers beyond Instagram?

Instagram is a great source of visibility for your brand. But, you have little control over how your followers see your content.

Convert your Instagram followers into [email subscribers](#) to reach them on your own terms. With a free ConvertKit account, you can make sure your followers are always up to date on your latest offers, products, and services.

 *Kaleigh Moore*



The creator's guide to Instagram image sizes

When [Instagram](#) first launched in 2010, people thought it was [just a fad](#).

Fast forward a decade, and the 'Gram has become one of the most popular social media platforms around the world. Now, it's far more than just a channel to share funny videos of your cat or photos of what you made for dinner—it's grown into [a top platform for online creators](#) to attract attention, show off their brand, and grow their community.

With over [one billion monthly users](#) and [63% of those users](#) logging in at least once per day, it's worth taking the time to create the best Instagram feed you can.

For online creators and business [owners, the 130 million Instagram users who tap on shopping posts each month](#) (read: making purchases from Instagram) pose a [significant opportunity to market your brand, services, or physical or digital products](#).

For online creators and business owners, the 130 million Instagram users who tap on shopping posts each month (read: making purchases from Instagram) pose a great opportunity to market your brand, services, or physical or digital products.

For online creators and business owners, the 130 million Instagram users who tap on shopping posts each month (read: making purchases directly from Instagram) pose a great opportunity to market your brand, services, or physical or digital products.

The problem? Polishing your feed to Insta-perfection feels daunting when you're just starting out. Photos, videos, IGTV, Stories—there are tons of post types and image dimensions to wrap your head around.

So to help you wrap your head around your grid, we've put together the most comprehensive guide on Instagram image sizes, along with recommended resolutions and aspect ratios for each post type.

We'll make sure we always keep the guide up-to-date, so drop the link in your bookmarks and come back anytime you need to create the most stellar content for your feed.

Are you Insta-ready? Let's dive in!

Why choosing the right Instagram image sizes is important

Unlike other social platforms, Instagram is built around sharing photos and videos.

With such a visual platform, the size of any images and videos you upload to Instagram matters more than other social networks.

Filling your feed with great photos, videos and graphics—all of which are top-quality, not cropped, and not pixelated or blurry—can be the key to growing your audience on the platform.

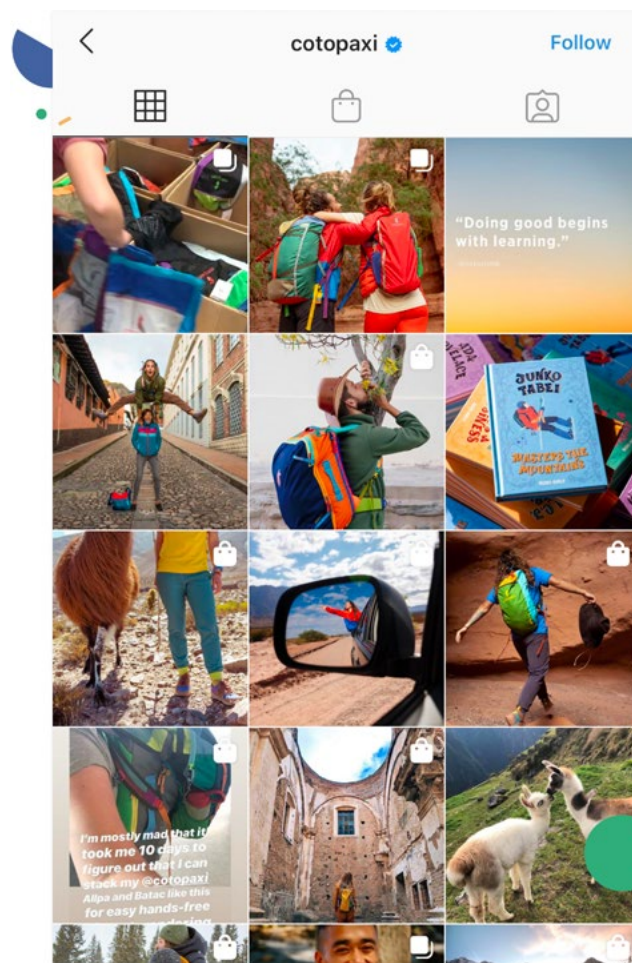
The right size images can help you:

- **Attract followers' attention.** Choosing the right image sizes can help your content stand out among the sea of images. For example, selecting a portrait photo over the standard 600-pixel square image size can catch the eye of scrolling users, like this post from clothing retailer Anthropologie:



Choosing a more unique image size can help you attract attention in a crowded feed. [Image via Anthropologie](#)

- **Create a consistent brand.** Followers who join your audience expect a certain level of consistency in your feed. Letting your feed bounce around as you [try distinct image sizes, colors, and filters](#) can damage the trust you're building with followers. Keeping your Instagram feeds polished and on-brand can help build consistency and establish your community. Take the Instagram feed of recreational wear retailer Cotopaxi: their feed showcases their brand and products in a way that's consistent and cohesive.



Maintaining a consistent brand in your feed builds trust with followers. [Image via Cotopaxi](#)

- **Optimize your ad results.** Instagram is a mobile app—that means optimizing your content for small screens is key. This is important for [paid efforts, like Instagram ads](#). Just like in your feed, using portrait images for ads can help your ads stand out, driving more clicks to your website (where you can [convert social followers](#) into email subscribers).

Instagram dimensions are important, but it won't matter unless you use the correct aspect ratio and resolution. If that sounds complicated, don't worry—we're breaking it down in the next section.

A refresher on Instagram aspect ratio and resolution

Instagram posts come in all shapes and sizes. Some images work well for one post type but could be a flop with another. Along with image size, the two other important components of creating high-quality Instagram content are aspect ratio and resolution.

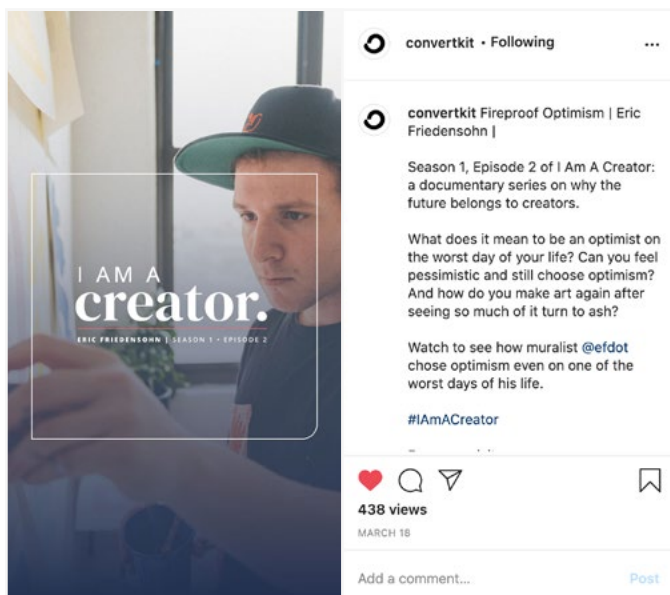
To help you get your head around it, here's a quick refresher on the relationship between aspect ratio and resolution.

Aspect ratio

Aspect ratio refers to the width of an image as a proportion to its height. We commonly express this as a ratio, like 4:3 or 16:9. The first number represents the width, and the second represents the height.

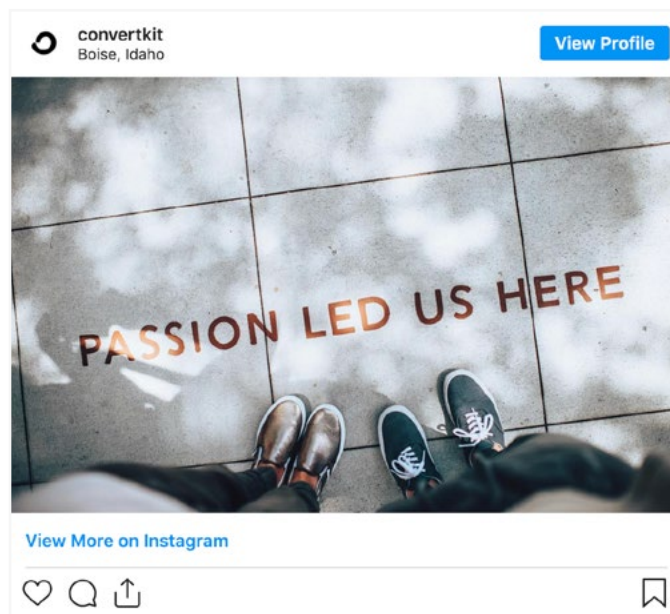
When thinking about aspect ratio in terms of the type of photo, here's a quick cheat sheet for you:

- **Portrait:** The image is taller than it is wide (e.g., 4:5)



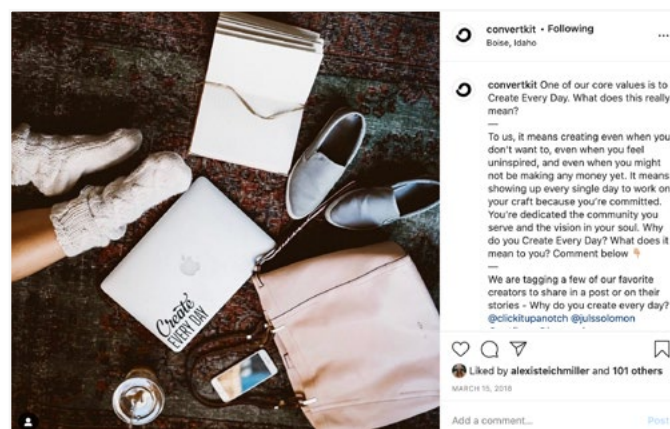
An example portrait video post on Instagram. [Image via ConvertKit on Instagram](#)

- **Landscape:** The image is wider than it is tall (e.g., 16:9)



An example landscape photo post on Instagram. [Image via ConvertKit on Instagram](#)

- **Square:** The image has an identical width and height (e.g., 4:4)



An example square photo post on Instagram. [Image via ConvertKit on Instagram](#)

So why is aspect ratio so important? If you're creating, say, a square post on Instagram, and you upload a photo that's formatted for landscape, Instagram will crop your post awkwardly. By choosing the right aspect ratio, you'll ensure your posts look great every time.

Resolution

Resolution represents the number of pixels that make up the images you post on Instagram. It's typically expressed as two numbers, representing the width and height of your image in pixels, like, 1600 x 900 pixels or 4000 x 3000 pixels.

So why is resolution important? Instagram only allows photos and videos with a minimum resolution of 320px wide, and a maximum resolution of 1080px wide. This means Instagram will scale down any posts with a higher resolution, and scale up anything with a higher resolution—both of which impact the quality.

It's always best to match the original image resolution you upload to the ideal resolution of the post type you're creating, to ensure you don't lose any image quality when Instagram compresses your images.

Now we've covered the essentials, let's dive into the best image sizes and aspect ratios for each different Instagram post type.

The best sizes for Instagram photo posts

When Instagram first launched, you could only upload images that were square. But back in 2015, Instagram updated their app to support portrait and landscape images as well—although with a few important limitations, which I'll explain below.

With several sizes to choose from, what's the best size for engagement? It turns out there isn't one image post size that will always yield great engagement on Instagram. Mixing up which sizes you use for your photos is good for breaking things up in your feed—and keeping users scrolling.

The best size for Instagram square photos

The classic square photo is still the most popular, despite the new formats. Since the Instagram grid crops all images to a square aspect ratio, square images give users the best experience. You know precisely what your audience will see, no matter if they come across your post in their feed, on your grid, or elsewhere.

The square Instagram picture size is perfect for framing products and creating a cohesive grid, like ConvertKit creator Nicole of Hue Loco does in her feed.



An example of a square photo post on Instagram. [Image via Hue Loco](#)

Square images should have an aspect ratio of 1:1, of course, and should have a resolution of 1080px x 1080px to avoid quality loss. Keep in mind, the final displayed image will be shown close to 600px x 600px.

Best aspect ratio: 1:1

Best resolution: 1080px x 1080px

The best size for Instagram landscape photos

As I mentioned earlier, changing up your Instagram photo size is a brilliant way to catch followers' eyes while they're scrolling. Having various image sizes to choose from also comes in handy when you have an exceptional photo you want to share, but a simple square just won't cut it.

The landscape image size is best for wide images, like ones you'd snap while traveling, while at a concert, or to document a career milestone, like this post from musician Kayla Steen:



An example of a landscape photo post on Instagram. [Image via Kayla Steen](#)

For landscape images, Instagram recommends an aspect ratio of 1.91:1, which, coincidentally, is the same resolution as a Facebook link preview image (so you can use the same image size for your Instagram and Facebook ads). You can use a maximum aspect ratio of 16:9. The ideal image resolution to reduce quality loss is 1080px x 566px.

Best aspect ratio: 1.91:1

Best resolution: 1080px x 566px

The best size for Instagram portrait photos

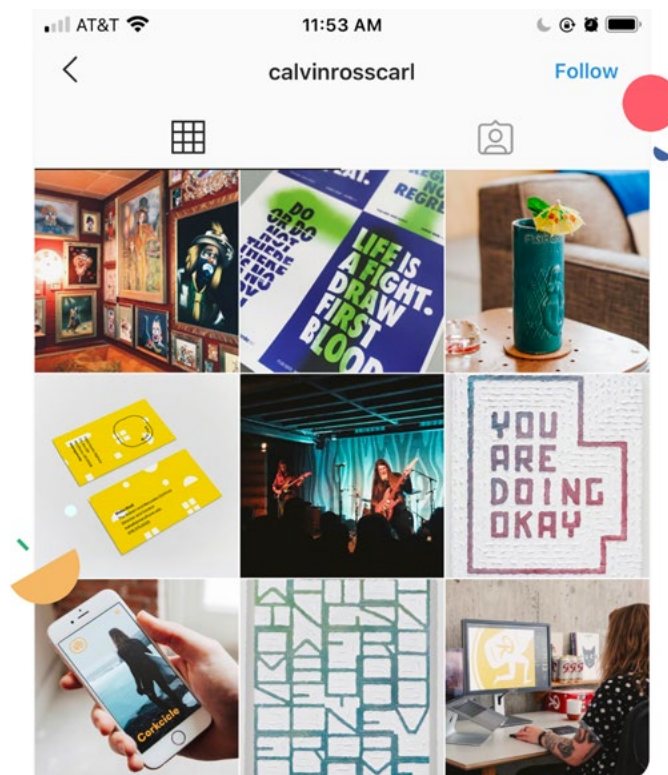
Most users browse their Instagram feeds on their phone—and Instagram's portrait image size is prime for mobile. In a feed full of square images, a portrait image can be super eye-catching. With new smartphones squeezing as much screen space onto a device as possible, it's even more crucial to make the most of that extra screen real estate.

Remember, though, Instagram will crop your image to a square in your grid, so place any important elements—like text—in the middle. Take this image from Calvin Ross Carl, for example:



An example of a portrait photo post. [Image via Calvin Ross Carl](#)

Here's that same image but in Calvin's grid. Notice the slight crop at the top and bottom?



Portrait photos are cropped at the top and bottom in the Instagram grid. [Image via Calvin Ross Carl](#)

For portrait images, Instagram recommends an aspect ratio of 4:5. Instagram will automatically crop anything taller than that at the top and bottom. The ideal image resolution for avoiding quality loss is 1080px x 1350px.

Best aspect ratio: 4:5

Best resolution: 1080px x 1350px

More top tips for Instagram image posts

There are a few additional things to consider before uploading images to your Instagram feed:

- All file formats should be PNG or JPG
- The maximum image size is 30MB

- The maximum caption length is 2200 characters, though [shorter captions around 50 characters typically yield the most engagement](#).

Now that we have a good grasp on the best Instagram images sizes, let's look at the best video sizes.

The ideal sizes for Instagram video posts

As with photo posts, you can share videos on Instagram either as square, landscape or portrait orientation. Video is a great opportunity to get even more imaginative with your content, so it's worth playing with a few different Instagram post sizes.

The ideal size for Instagram square videos

Just like with square photos, square videos are an Instagram staple. This classic size is great for all types of video content—product updates, educational videos, or sharing behind-the-scenes footage of your online business.

This video from ConvertKit creator [Michelle Carlton](#) is short and sweet—a perfect job for the square video format.



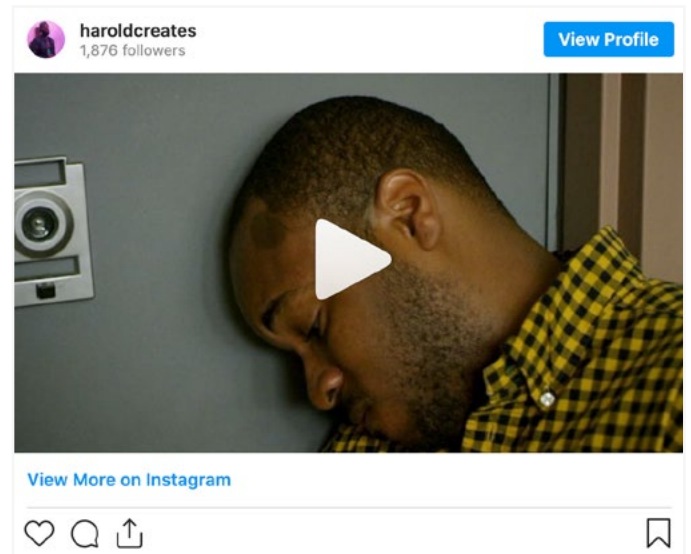
An example of a square video post on Instagram. [Video via Michelle Carlton](#)

The same rules apply for square videos as with square photos—stick to a 1:1 aspect ratio and a 1080px x 1080px resolution to give followers the best experience.

Best aspect ratio: 1:1
Best resolution: 1080px x 1080px

The ideal size for Instagram landscape videos

Landscape video is super-versatile—great for capturing long angles, drone footage, and more. Harold Williams is a writer, producer and ConvertKit creator who chose the landscape video format to depict the trailer of his upcoming film:



An example landscape video post on Instagram. [Video via Harold Williams](#)

Just like landscape photos, Instagram landscape videos can have an aspect ratio between 1.91:1 and 16:9. Based on the measurements of the landscape video size, the ideal resolution is around 1080px x 607px.

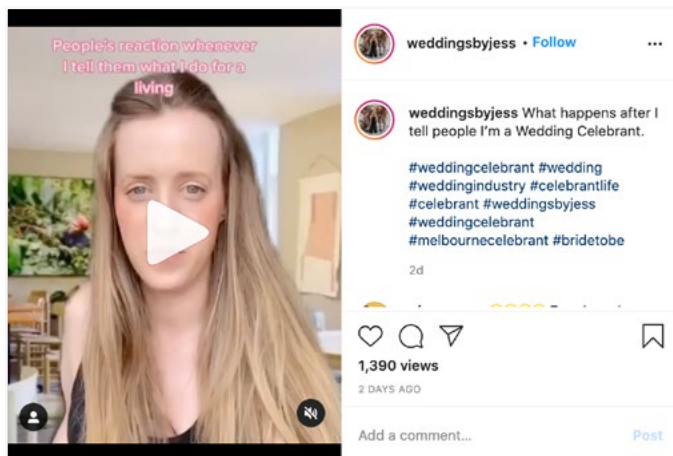
Most video editing software will let you export videos at this custom resolution, but for the most part, you can get close by recording your video in 720p. Most phones and cameras will record natively in the 16:9 aspect ratio, so it's often best to keep things simple and stick to a 16:9 aspect ratio.

Best aspect ratio: 16:9
Best resolution: 1080px x 607px

The ideal size for Instagram portrait videos

Surprise, surprise—the same rules apply here again as with portrait photos. Stick to a maximum aspect ratio of 4:5, and a video resolution of 1080px x 1350px.

Remember, if your vertical videos are too large, Instagram will automatically crop them to scale. Take this portrait video from wedding designer Jess, owner of [Weddings By Jess](#):



An example portrait video post on Instagram. [Video via Weddings By Jess](#)

When you tap on the actual video, you see the full-size, uncropped version. But when you scroll through her grid, you'll notice Instagram cropped her video on the top and bottom. Here, the video looks properly formatted no matter which way you view it, but had it been even bigger, it could have resulted in some awkward cropping.

Best aspect ratio: 4:5

Best resolution: 1080px x 1350px

The best size for Instagram Stories

Instagram has developed quite a bit over the years, with one of the biggest changes being the introduction of Instagram Stories. Stories give businesses the opportunity to entertain, engage, and promote in ways that differ from traditional photo and video content. Plus, with 500 million people (yes, you read that right) using Instagram Stories every day, there's a lot of opportunity to reach new customers and grow your audience.

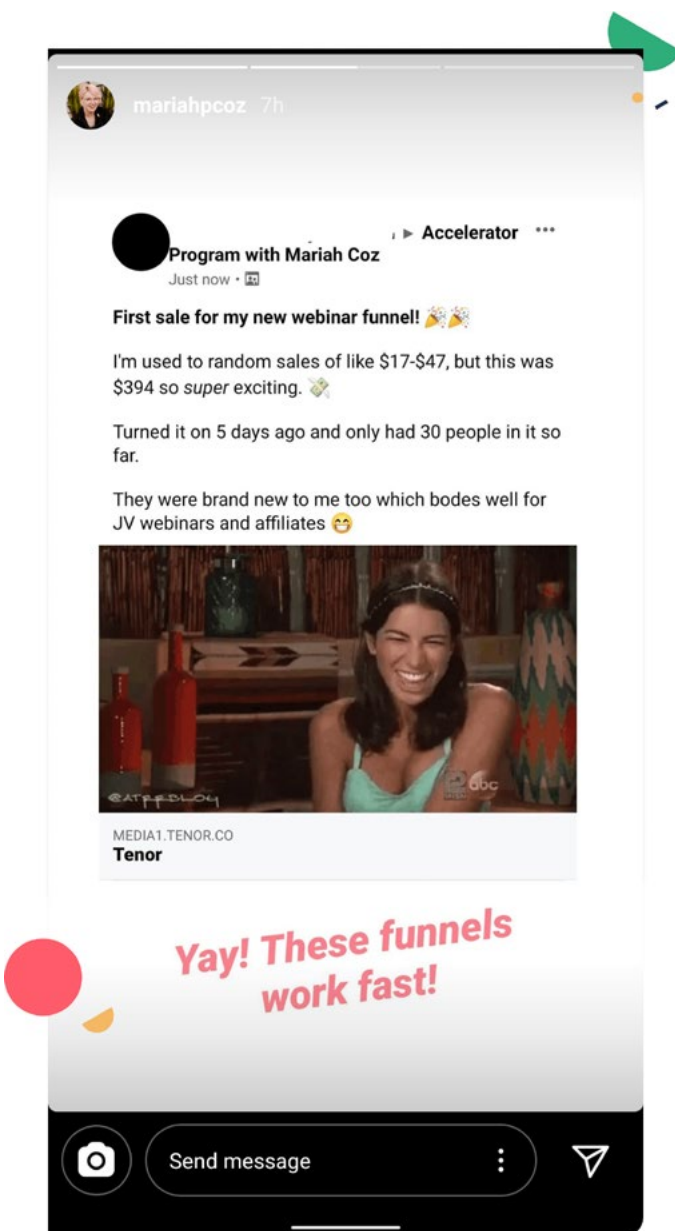
Just a few of the ways we've seen online creators using Instagram Stories:

- Share behind-the-scenes content
- Announce giveaways

- Launch a new online course or digital product
- Ask for feedback about a product or service
- Promote content on your website

Unlike videos in your Instagram feed, Instagram Stories give you more room to experiment with aspect ratios. Just about any aspect ratio will work for your Instagram Stories, as long as it's between 1.91:1 and 9:16.

So what size should you use? Well, since most your audience will view Instagram Stories on their phones, using an aspect ratio of 9:16 (which corresponds to a resolution of 1080px x 1920px) ensures the video fills the entire phone screen, like this Story from online business coach Mariah Coz:



An example Instagram Story. [Image via Mariah Coz](#)

Best aspect ratio: 9:16

Best resolution: 1080px x 1920px

The best video sizes for IGTV

As if video content couldn't get more powerful on Instagram, IGTV launched in 2018 and it's been another great avenue for creators to engage with their audience.

Unlike Instagram Stories, IGTV allows creators to upload videos that you would find on platforms like YouTube and Facebook. IGTV videos can be portrait or landscape. Portrait IGTV videos can have a maximum aspect ratio of 9:16 and landscape IGTV videos can have a maximum aspect ratio of 16:9.

Check out this example of how brand strategist DK Jonah uses IGTV to promote her content:



An example IGTV post on Instagram. [Image via DK Jonah](#)

It's important to note that the Instagram app crops IGTV videos in your audience's feeds and grid. Portrait-size videos are cropped to a 4:5 aspect ratio in your followers' feeds. In other words, a bit will be cut off from the top and bottom of the video. Last, both portrait and landscape IGTV videos will be cropped to a 1:1 square when viewed in your grid.

Best aspect ratio: 16:9 (landscape) or 9:16 (portrait)

Best resolution: 1920px x 1080px (landscape) or 1080px x 1920px (portrait)

With IGTV, you also have the option of adding a cover photo to your videos. The IGTV cover photo appears on both your channel page and in the IGTV categories list, so it can't be edited after you've uploaded it. Instagram recommends using images with a 420px x 654px resolution for your cover photos.

Best aspect ratio: 1:1.55

Best resolution: 420px x 654px

The best size for Instagram Live videos

Instagram Live videos are another marvelous way to reach your audience in the moment. Unlike Instagram Stories (which are shown at the top of the feed), Instagram Live videos place your stream at the front of the Stories reel with a "live" icon that shows to users you're broadcasting live.

IG Live streams are an excellent opportunity to engage with users in real-time or make an exciting announcement. Plus, after your live stream has ended, you can post it to your Instagram Story, where users can view it for 24 hours after the live stream is over.

Because Instagram Live videos are meant to be broadcast from your phone, the aspect ratio you're looking for here is 9:16. Since your Stories will be limited to the screen width of your phone, don't worry about changing the resolution or aspect ratio of the video. Just roll with what your phone uses natively.



An example of an Instagram Live on Instagram. [Image via Joshua Noom](#)

The best size for Instagram profile pictures

It may be tiny, but your Instagram profile picture has an enormous responsibility. Your profile picture is often one of the first things visitors will see when landing on your profile and it's visible on nearly every other screen in the Instagram app, so it's worth spending time creating the perfect image.

For profile pictures, Instagram recommends 110px x 110px as the best resolution for your profile picture, though a maximum resolution of 180px x 180px is supported. Take travel and lifestyle blogger Angelica Talan of Clarendon

Moms, for example. Her profile photo is not only sized so it can be clearly viewed on a desktop—or more importantly, mobile—but it's also consistent with her branding.

Remember, Instagram crops your profile picture to a circle, so always keep the contents of your photo or logo centered.



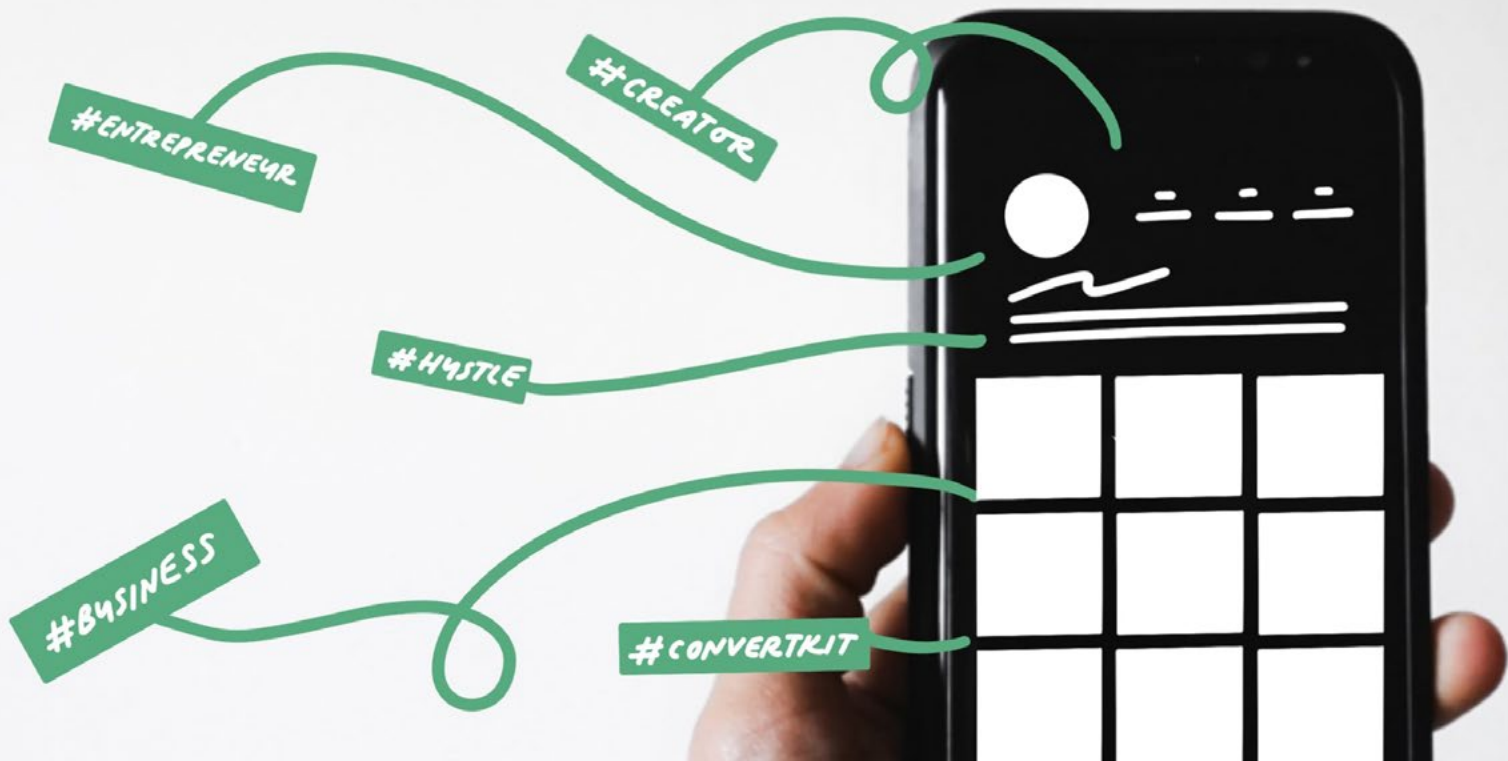
An example of an Instagram profile picture. [Image via Angelica Talan](#)

Grow your audience with Instagram

Instagram has become a powerhouse of marketing opportunities for online creators and brands across every industry and niche. With enough post types, tools, and features to leverage your content in just the right way that resonates the most with your audience, Instagram is a social media platform that packs a punch (in the best way).

Don't forget: browsing Instagram is fun, but did you know that you can [add your Instagram photos right into your landing pages](#)? Sign up for your free ConvertKit account and start growing your audience today:

[Kieran Tie](#)



Instagram hashtags: How, when, where, & why to use them

With [83% of users](#) discovering new products and services on Instagram and another 80% using the platform to decide whether to buy a product or service, brands can't afford not to supercharge their Instagram strategies right now.

Smart marketers know that success on Instagram (or social media in general) doesn't mean scheduling posts, crossing your fingers, and hoping for the best. There's a lot that goes into creating a thriving Instagram account—from crafting content that resonates with your audience to answering DMs and staying on top of trends.

But one of the underdogs of success on this platform is none other than (drumroll, please) **Instagram hashtags**.

I get it—hashtags aren't exactly new to the social media landscape. In fact, hashtags are a significant feature of most popular social media channels.

The thing is, not everyone is using them correctly.

In this post, I'm sharing the what, why and how behind Instagram hashtags.

But, as they say, you gotta crawl before you can walk. Let's cover the basics of hashtags first.

Types of instagram hashtags

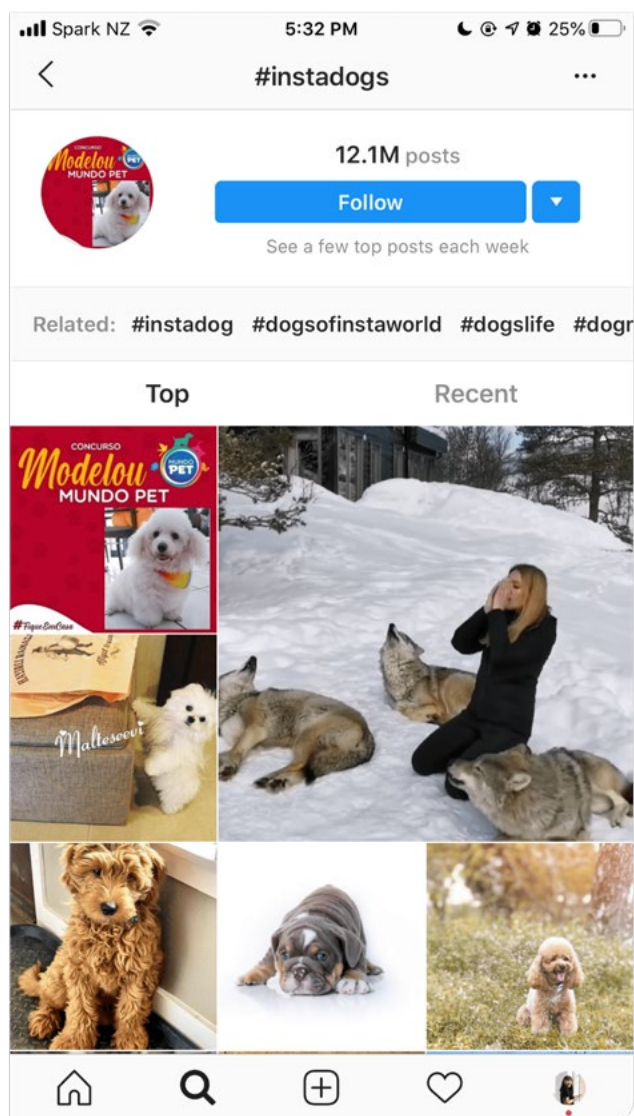
What are Instagram hashtags, and why should brands use them?

Instagram hashtags are clickable tags that can be attached to posts to increase a brand's discoverability, to connect with an audience, or to contribute to an existing conversation. Any word or phrase can become a hashtag as long as it has a # symbol in front of it.

Instagram hashtags are beneficial to brands for several reasons:

- Boost your discoverability
- Put you in front of the right customers without paying for advertising
- Encourage users to engage with your brand, even if they have no prior engagement with you

When you tap on a hashtag, you're taken to that hashtag's discovery page. Take this very important hashtag #instadogs, for example:

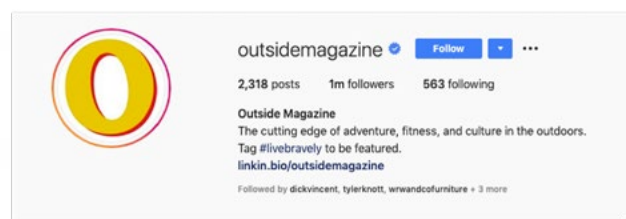


Hashtags help group photos together based on topic. [Image via Instagram](#)

Not only are you able to see other posts from users who have also used the #instadogs hashtag, but you can filter the results by the top and most recent posts. Users can also follow a hashtag they're interested in and discover related hashtags as well.

Instagram hashtags aren't just for photo posts—they can be used in Instagram Stories and bios, too.

[Outside Magazine's](#) branded hashtag, #livebravely, is featured in their Instagram bio. (We'll talk more about branded hashtags later in this post). Not only are users able to easily explore posts this way, but it helps them make the association between Outside Magazine and this hashtag, which is helpful for brand recognition.



You can put a hashtag into an Instagram bio. Image via [Outside Magazine's Instagram](#)

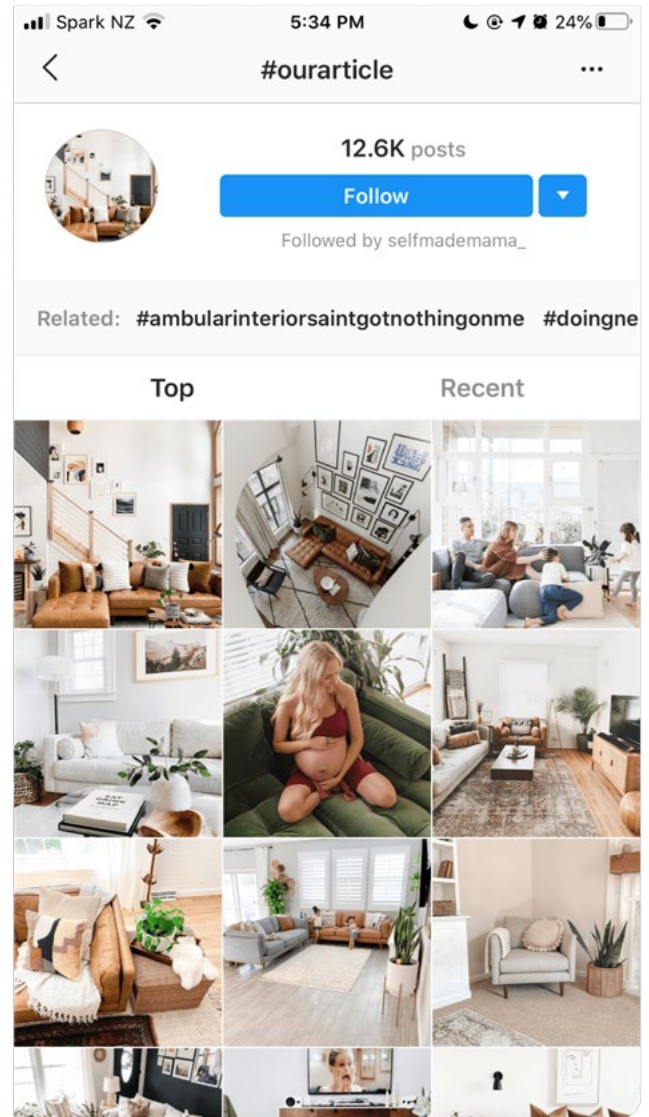
For Instagram Stories, you can add the hashtag [sticker](#) to your story. Once users click on the hashtag, they're taken to that hashtag's discovery page, just as they would through a standard Instagram post or bio.

Take this Instagram Story from mid-century modern furniture company, [Article](#):



You can create hashtags in Instagram stories with stickers.
[Image via Article's Instagram](#)

Users can explore posts that use the #OurArticle hashtag to discover other Article products as well as home decor inspiration from other users.



How to add hashtags to your Instagram posts

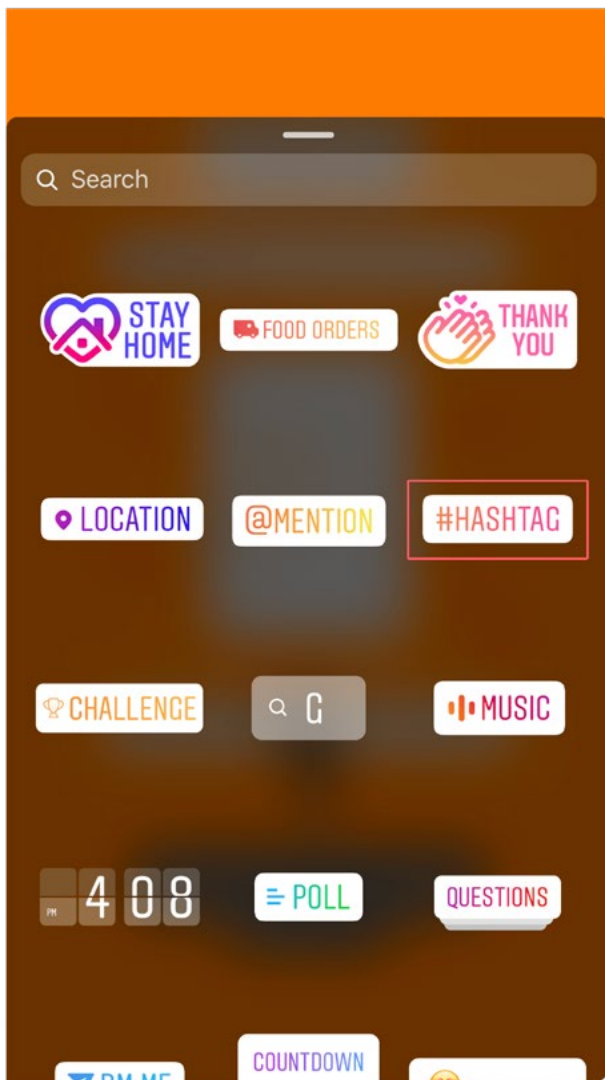
Adding Instagram hashtags to your posts is easy. To add hashtags to a standard post (photo, video, and multi-asset), simply add them to the caption. Typically, hashtags are included after a caption, but they can be used in a sentence, too.

Kimberly Brooks, [an artist and ConvertKit creator](#), uses hashtags to help users discover her posts and to contribute to the artist community on Instagram.



You can add hashtags to your Instagram posts. [Image via Kimberly Brooks' Instagram](#)

To add hashtags to an Instagram Story, tap the sticker button in the upper right-hand corner of the Story creator and tap the #hashtag sticker.



From there, you can add your hashtags and even see suggested hashtags others have used in their posts. Then, you can move the sticker where you want on your post and change the color of the text and the size.



Lastly, adding a hashtag to your Instagram bio is as straightforward as editing your bio with the hashtags you want to use.

But how many hashtags are too many?

According to a report from Sprout Social, the [optimal number of hashtags](#) to use in a post is between two to five. The report also says that the optimal amount of hashtags to use depends on your brand.

The bottom line: Start with a few hashtags and experiment. See which hashtags perform the best and if you can find your optimal number.

How to use Instagram hashtags

Using Instagram hashtags is simple, but you want to be strategic about it. Because hashtags are a discovery tool, it's best to use them frequently but in a way that makes sense for your brand.

Before you start adding hashtags to your posts, do some research beforehand to see what hashtags might work best for your brand, depending on your industry and what's trending.

A few questions to consider when researching hashtags include:

- Which hashtags are your audience using or following?
- Which hashtags resonate or relate to your brand the best?
- Which hashtags will help your brand get in front of the right audience?

Before we discuss ways you can research hashtags, let's take a look at some of the different types.

Branded hashtags

Branded hashtags are associated with (you guessed it!) a brand. These hashtags are exclusive to your brand and can help your audience build an association. You can also encourage users to share their own content while using your branded hashtag, which you can then share on your own Instagram account.

For example, florist [Farm Girl Flowers](#) uses the branded hashtag #fgflove:



You can create hashtags that are specific to your brand. [Image via Farm Girl Flowers' Instagram](#)

Users can add the #fgflove hashtag to their posts, which makes it easy for Farm Girl Flowers to discover and share their posts.

Location-based hashtags

With more and more people turning to Instagram to discover new products and services—81%, to be specific—location-based hashtags can give you a discoverability boost. Plus, location-based hashtags help users find your brand, all without you having to spend money on ads.

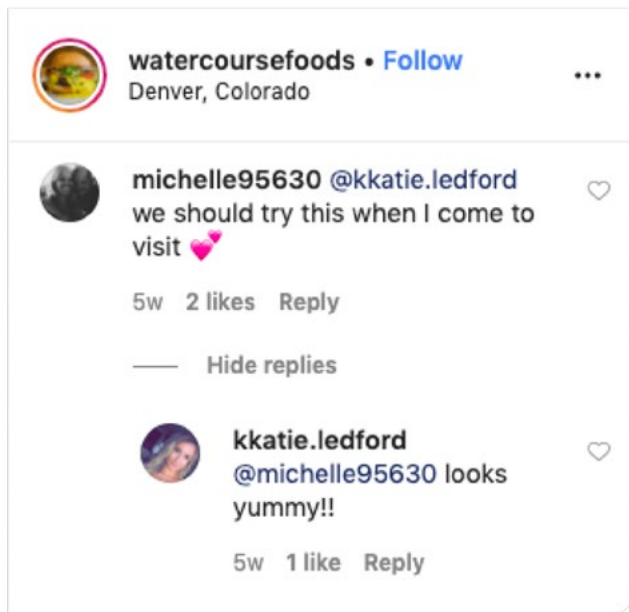
Hashtags that include the name of the city or town where you're based, coupled with what you offer customers, can be great for boosting your discoverability and the likelihood of customers purchasing from you.

For example, the #denvereats hashtag is used by many restaurants local to Denver. If you're a restaurant, what better way to get people to try your menu than a drool-worthy Instagram photo?



You can be a part of a location-based hashtag. [Image via Watercourse's Instagram](#)

This post from the Denver restaurant, [Watercourse](#), is an excellent example of location-based hashtag usage.



(Source: [Watercourse](#))

Judging by the comments on this post, this type of hashtag is impactful.

Tone of voice hashtags

A carefully crafted, on-brand Instagram caption can go a long way, but adding hashtags that allude to your brand's voice is also a great practice. These may not be the most highly searched hashtags, but they're a great chance to let your brand voice shine.

This post from the clothing brand [ASOS](#) is an excellent example of using a tone-of-voice hashtag: #PyjamasEveryday.



You can create hashtags that promote your brand culture.
[Image via ASOS Marketplace's Instagram](#)

General interest hashtags

These hashtags can be applied to almost any post due to their generic nature. Hashtags like #love, #ootd, and #happy are used often, which can lessen the impact they can have on your posts.

Trending hashtags

Jumping into conversations through trending hashtags—where it makes sense for your brand—is a great way to connect with your audience.

Ask yourself: *What are people talking about on Instagram right now? Is there a way your brand could fit into the conversation?*

The easiest way to view the most popular hashtags is to search for a hashtag and see which hashtags populate as well as how many posts use it. You can also tap the search icon at the bottom of the navigation bar and see what some of the most popular topics are, like style, TV and movies, travel, and more.

Niche hashtags

Instagram hashtags are meant to help users discover a variety of brands, products, and other content, but they're also a great way to reach an audience with a specific interest. Vegan users, for example, are likely interested in hashtags like #vegan, #veganrecipes, or #cleaneating.

Tanya, a [food blogger](#) and [ConvertKit creator](#), demonstrates how niche hashtag usage is done in the example below.



Hashtags help your niche audience find you. [Image via My Forking Life's Instagram](#)

Niche hashtags are a great way to connect with a particular audience that's already interested in a topic. Remember, only use niche hashtags that apply to your brand and your content. Otherwise, your posts may come off looking like spam.

Event hashtags

Are you having a giveaway or participating in an Instagram takeover? Hashtags that correlate with specific events—whether they take place entirely on Instagram or in-person—are a great way to promote the said event.

Hashtags like #giveaway and #igtakeover alert your audience that there's something for them to tune into, while hashtags like #BOGO and #flashsale attract users who are interested in sales and discounts.

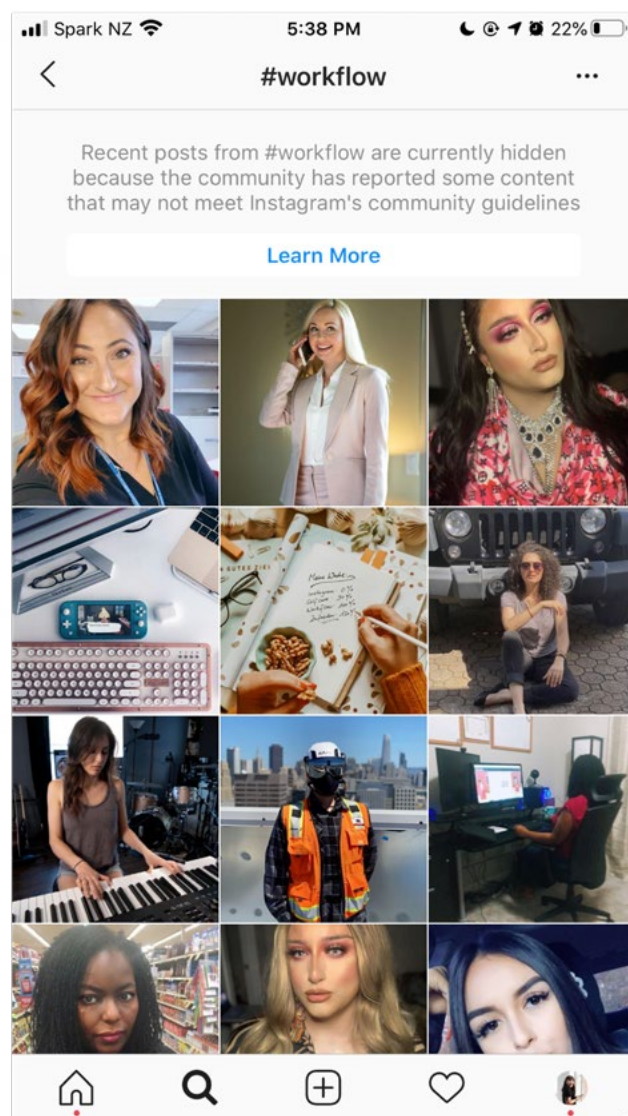
Banned hashtags

We know that hashtags are great for boosting brand discoverability, but not all hashtags are good for business. When conducting your hashtag research, make sure you pay attention to banned hashtags—or the hashtags Instagram has [blocked or suspended](#)—because they violate Instagram's terms and conditions.

To find a banned hashtag, follow these steps:

1. Navigate to Instagram's Explore page
2. Search for the hashtag you want to use
3. If the hashtag doesn't appear under the "Tags" section of the search results, it's banned, and all recent posts that use that hashtag will not appear

For example, #workflow is currently banned:



Make sure you aren't using a banned hashtag. [Image via Instagram](#)

Last, when researching Instagram hashtags, it's essential to switch up which ones you use to avoid coming across as spam. Though it may be tempting to copy and paste the same hashtags for every post, that could harm your engagement rates.

Instead, focus on the hashtags that your audience is most likely searching and that align with the content of your post. If you do that each time, your posts will always be relevant to your audience.

Tracking hashtags to optimize your Instagram posts

As with any online marketing effort, tracking the performance of your hashtags will give you the most insight into what is working well and what hashtags you should try.

Several tools make tracking hashtag performance not only easy but can help you make sense of how hashtags are impacting your overall marketing strategy.

Here are a few notable tools that are great for Instagram:

- **Later:** Quickly and easily plan your Instagram posts all from one dashboard, plus get the most ROI on your hashtag research with Later's collection of tools.
- **Sprout Social:** Comprehensive reporting and planning for all your Instagram content
- **Tailwind:** Schedule photos and videos, and boost your engagement with hashtag suggestions
- **Iconosquare:** Analytics that are easy to understand coupled with mighty a scheduler and suite of monitoring tools

Start using Instagram hashtags today

Instagram hashtags do a lot of good for brand awareness and discoverability. But because every brand is unique, there isn't a one-size-fits-all protocol when it comes to using Instagram hashtags.

The best way to get the most from them is just to start and see what works best. Take a look at the examples we included throughout this post and take some inspiration from those brands.

The bottom line: What works for others when it comes to Instagram hashtags might not work for you. Experimenting, tracking performance, and revising as needed will help you get the most from these helpful tags.

Want to build a cohesive funnel from your Instagram page? If you're looking to take all that good promotion from your hashtags to another level, you can build landing pages to

promote your products or services. When readers click that landing page link in your bio, you can give even more information to help them make that decision to opt-in.

And did you know you can put your Instagram photos right on landing pages in ConvertKit? Yep, that means you can create a cohesive flow for your readers to go from seeing your images in Instagram to seeing them on your landing page. [Check out this direct integration](#) and build a landing page today.

 *Kaleigh Moore*



How to find the best time to post on Instagram

Finding the best time to post on Instagram is a struggle many creators face. With 24 hours in the day to choose from, I've often felt overwhelmed by trying to narrow down the perfect moment that will result in the highest level of engagement.

If you try to Google the "best time to post on Instagram", you'll find lots of great studies to help you find that optimal time.

When [Later](#) performed a study on the matter, they concluded the best time to post was between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. EST.

[Sprout Social](#) did their own study and found the best times to post on Instagram are Wednesday at 12 p.m. EST and Friday from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. EST.

And [HopperHQ](#) conducted another study and found that weekdays from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., and 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. (in the timezone you're located) resulted in the best results.

As you can see, the data varies across the board. And because your account is unique, you're going to want to find a time to post that is right for you!

Why is it important to know when to post on Instagram?

A lot of thought (and work!) goes into crafting the perfect piece of [Instagram content](#) for your audience.

After you've [written a compelling caption](#) and found the [best hashtags](#), your next step is to try and maximize the number of people who see your post.

Posting your content at that perfect moment, when your audience is online and engaged, will help you increase the reach of your post and improve engagement.

Some people may argue that because the Instagram feed is no longer chronological, the time you post is not relevant anymore.

However, [Instagram's algorithm](#) takes three main factors into consideration when placing it in the feed:

1. **Interest:** The level at which Instagram believes a follower cares about a particular type of content
2. **Recency:** Instagram will prioritize fresh content over content that is older
3. **Relationship:** The closer you are with your followers, the more likely your content will appear in their feeds

As "recency" is a primary ranking factor, it's still important to be posting when your audience is online and can view new content from you.

So how do you figure out when to post on Instagram?

How to find the best times to post on Instagram

Narrowing down the best times to post to your Instagram feed will take a little bit of work, but luckily, every method we will talk about today is straight-forward and easy to implement.

Instagram Insights

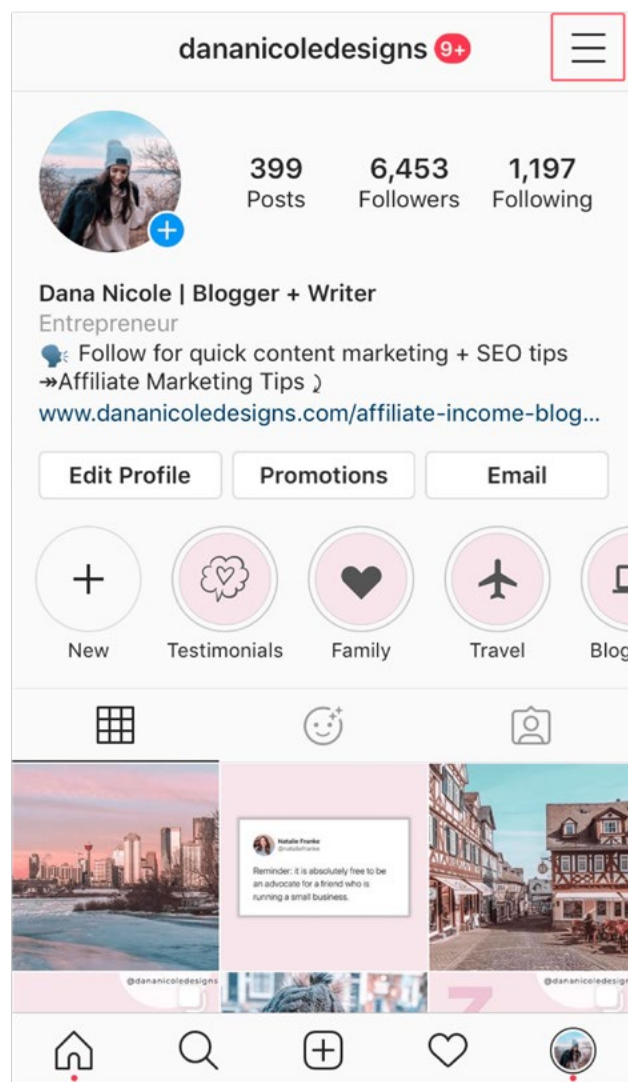
Instagram Insights is chock-full of juicy analytics you can use to your advantage, especially when trying to figure out when to post to your feed.

To access Instagram Insights, you'll first want to make sure you have an [Instagram Business account](#) set up.

Along with getting access to Instagram Insights, having an Instagram Business account will allow you to:

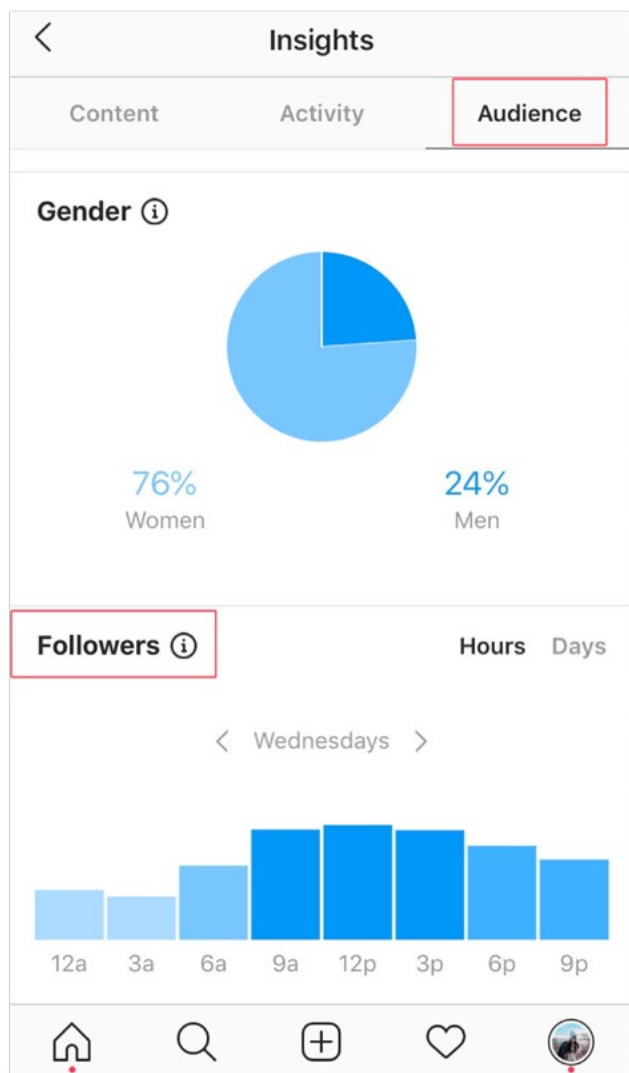
- [Create Instagram ads](#)
- Add the "Swipe Up" feature to your Instagram Stories (for accounts with more than 10,000 followers)
- Add a contact button to your Instagram profile

To access the information we need, click on the hamburger menu in the top right corner on your profile page and then click on "Insights".



Click on the three lines to access your Instagram Insights.
[Image via Dana Nicole Designs.](#)

Next, click on the "Audience" tab and scroll down to the "Followers" breakdown.



The section of your Insights that show the times your audience is most active.

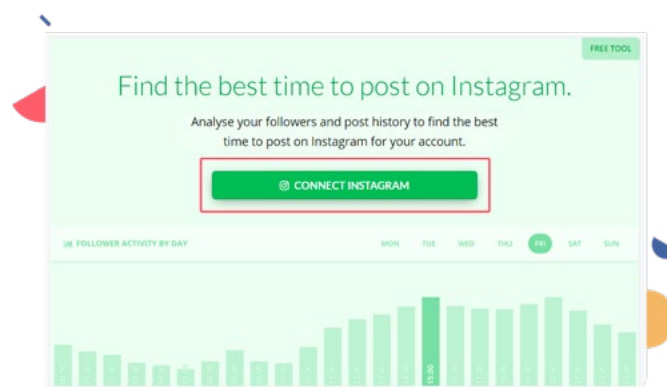
Here, you'll see a bar graph showing you the most popular times when your followers are active in your timezone, broken down by the days of the week.

Your Insights will give you a nice starting point, however, as the bar graph is broken down into three-hour increments, we will want to take it a step further to try and find an exact time to post on Instagram.

Free tools

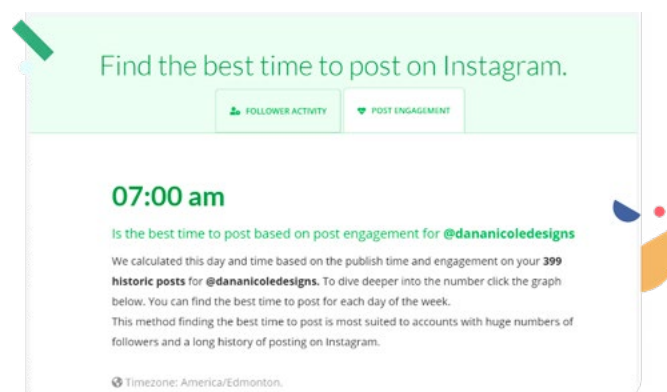
With the click of a button, [HopperHQ's](#) handy free tool will help you determine the best hour for you to post, personalized to your account!

To uncover the best time to post, connect your Instagram by clicking "Connect Instagram" as shown below:



HopperHQ's free tool reveals your best time to post to Instagram. [Image via HopperHQ](#)

Once your Instagram account is connected, you'll be given two different times: follower activity and post engagement.



HopperHQ provides you with two different times to post based upon follower activity and post engagement. [Image via HopperHQ](#)

Manually

Lastly, we'll look at how you can manually figure out the best time to post on Instagram to increase your reach.

To track your posts on Instagram, we recommend creating a spreadsheet with the following columns:

- link to your Instagram post
- date posted
- day of the week
- time

- number of likes received
- number of comments received
- number of saves received
- number of shares received
- total engagement
- reach

Link to Instagram Post	Date Posted	Day of Week	Time	Likes	Comments	Saves	Shares	Views (videos only)	Total Engagement (total of columns E-H)	Reach
https://www.instagram.com/p/ABC123/	March 28, 2020	Monday	11:15 AM	150	5	8	2	120	165	1,500

The columns you should use to track the time you post on Instagram.

You should check your spreadsheet periodically to see if any posting times stand out.

With Instagram Insights, HopperHQ's free tool and your spreadsheet, you're going to know precisely when to post to Instagram for maximum reach!

Finding the best time to post your Instagram Stories

When it comes to your Instagram stories, you'll want to determine the best time to post along with the best day to post.

Here's why.

Unlike your posts, which can be seen in your followers' feeds several days after you've posted, your stories only have a 24-hour lifespan before they disappear.

Let's say you are posting about an upcoming promotion you are having. If you want to maximize the number of people who see your stories, you'll want to post them on days when your audience is most active.

Here's how you can find this out:

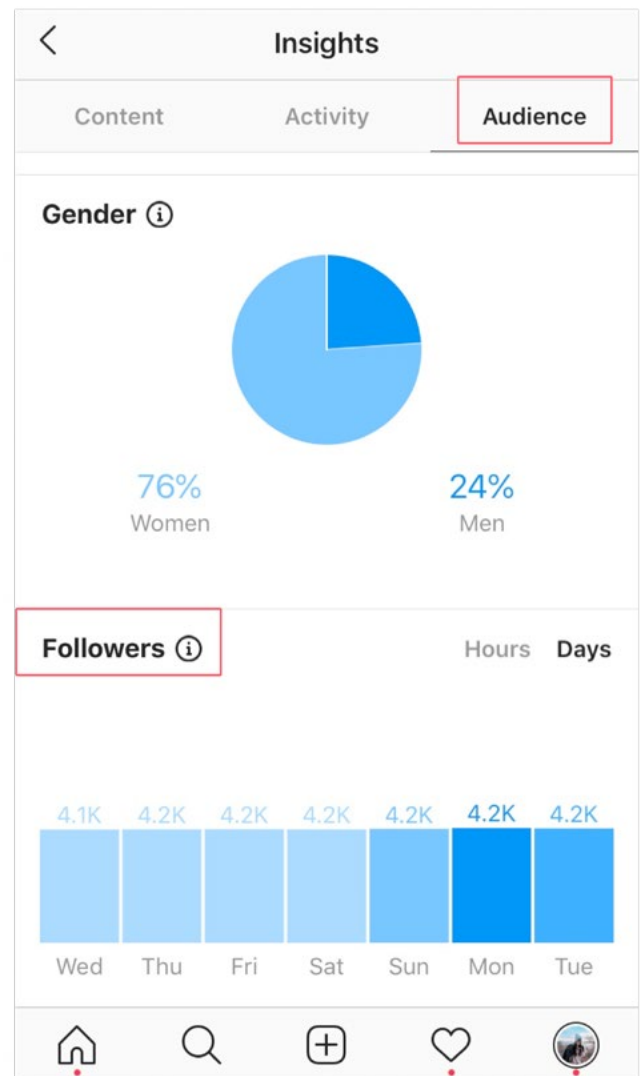
Instagram Insights

To figure out what days of the week your audience is most active, head back into your Instagram Insights and look

under the "Audience" tab and scroll down to where it says "Followers".

In this section, you can look at the time when your followers are most active for each day of the week, or you can view what days of the week they are most active.

Click on "Days" and then tap on the blue bars to bring up the total numbers.



Here's where you can see what days of the week your followers are most active.

As you can see in the screenshot above, these followers are most active on Mondays (represented by the darkest blue bar) and are the least active on Wednesdays.

Knowing this, you'll be able to confidently schedule important information to be shared via your Instagram Stories.

Manually

To track your Instagram Stories, you can create a spreadsheet (like the one we mentioned to track your Instagram posts!) to get a clear picture of the best days and times to post to your stories.

In your spreadsheet, it would be helpful to track the day of the week you posted, the time, and the number of views your story received.

After collecting enough data, you'll be able to see patterns in certain days of the week that resulted in higher views. You can then use that data to formulate an Instagram Stories strategy to grow your account.

Experiment and evaluate the times you post

As your Instagram account grows and you acquire more followers, your account will change and the best time to post might change as well.

The easiest way to find the best time to post on Instagram is through experimentation and evaluation. Don't be afraid to try new times and see how they work – you might be surprised!

After you've found the best times to post to Instagram, it's a good idea to evaluate those times each quarter, or every few months, to make sure you're still on the right track.

Other tips for finding the best time to post on Instagram

Analyzing your analytics is a great start to help you find the perfect moment to post on Instagram.

Here are a few more helpful tips to ensure you are always posting content when your audience is online!

Holidays and seasonal changes

Other factors can have a significant influence on what times you will be posting to your Instagram. For instance, holidays, weekends and even changes in seasons can impact your audience's behavior on the 'gram.

The best thing you can do is test and see what days or times of the year result in less or more engagement.

The more familiar you get with your audience and their activity on Instagram, the better you'll be able to adapt and change the time you post for different occasions!

Different time zones

I once came across a great question: "how do I grow my Instagram account with people from different countries?"

If your business is local, you probably won't benefit from followers outside your region.

But if you want to grow an international following, it may help to do some research to determine the best time to post in different timezones.

You might even find that your current audience spans over several different time zones!

You can use Instagram Insights to figure out what timezone your followers are in by going into the "Audience" section and scrolling down to "Top Locations".



Here's where your Insights will show you what cities and countries your followers are largely from.

What is the worst time to post on Instagram?

Your Instagram strategy wouldn't be complete without identifying the worst time to post.

We've already determined that the best time to post is when your followers are on the app and consuming content.

So it makes sense that it's probably not ideal to post when your followers are:

- working
- sleeping
- spending time with family (such as dinner time)

The quickest way to find out the time you should avoid posting at is to look at the data in your spreadsheets. As you begin to collect data manually, you'll simultaneously be able to identify what times result in high engagement and what times result in low engagement.

Growing your email list through Instagram

Once you've identified the days and times that will result in the highest engagement, your next step is to use that engagement to your advantage!

And what better way to do that than to grow your email list?

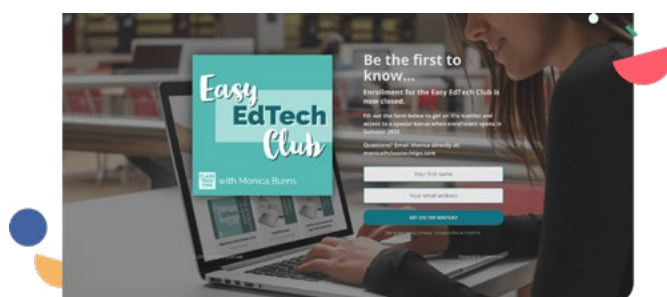
When it comes to Instagram, most people don't realize just how easy it is to grow an email list.

The [benefits of email marketing](#) are massive. For every \$1 spent, [marketers see an average ROI of \\$38](#). That kind of return is hard to ignore for freelancers, creators and small business owners!

Many creators shy away from starting an email list because it seems overly complicated.

With a free ConvertKit account, you can create compelling landing pages to collect leads in a snap! Each landing page comes with a unique link that you can add to your Instagram bio (no need for you to purchase a domain if you don't have one).

Take this landing page from [Dr. Jennifer Williams](#):



Example of a landing page from ConvertKit. [Image via Dr. Jennifer Williams](#)

Dr. Williams uses a landing page to gather a waitlist for a new product.

When your followers click on your link (as directed by your Instagram caption call-to-action), they're sent to your very own landing page to sign up for your email list.

Just imagine how much easier it would be to launch your next product or sell your current offering if you had an email list full of eagerly-awaiting customers...

[Click here to build your dedicated Instagram landing page with a free ConvertKit account.](#)

 *Dana Nicole*



The complete guide to Instagram Stories for creators

Instagram Stories are one of my favorite aspects of Instagram. I love the ability to quickly share content in a snap and interact with my followers.

But they are often overlooked when it comes to [creating content for Instagram](#). We tend to focus so much energy on our Instagram grid that our stories become an afterthought.

However, what if I told you that using Instagram Stories is not only incredibly simple, it's also the perfect way to build a connection with your audience, grow your brand, and make sales?

If you want to learn more, keep reading, because I'm going to break down absolutely everything you need to know to rock your Instagram Stories strategy!

What are Instagram Stories?

Instagram Stories are a fun and creative way to share photos, videos, and text throughout your day with your audience.

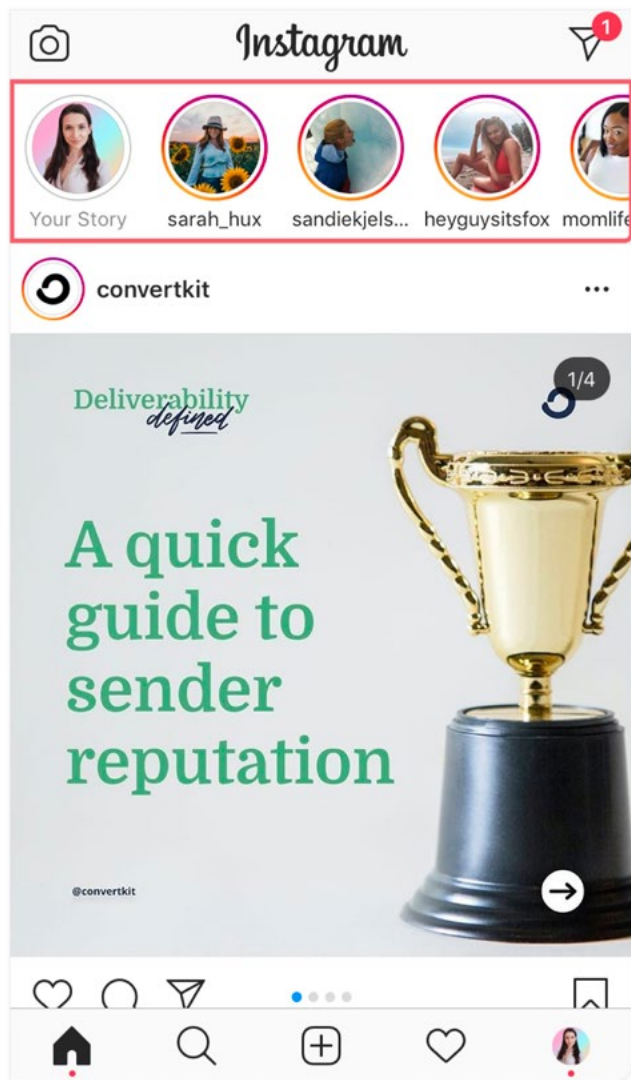
Each story is only available for 24 hours (so you'll want to make it count) and it will disappear once your story has expired.

With [500 million daily users](#), Instagram Stories offer creators the ability to connect with their audience without having to post content to their Instagram feeds.

Where to view Instagram Stories

Instagram Stories can be viewed in a few different areas.

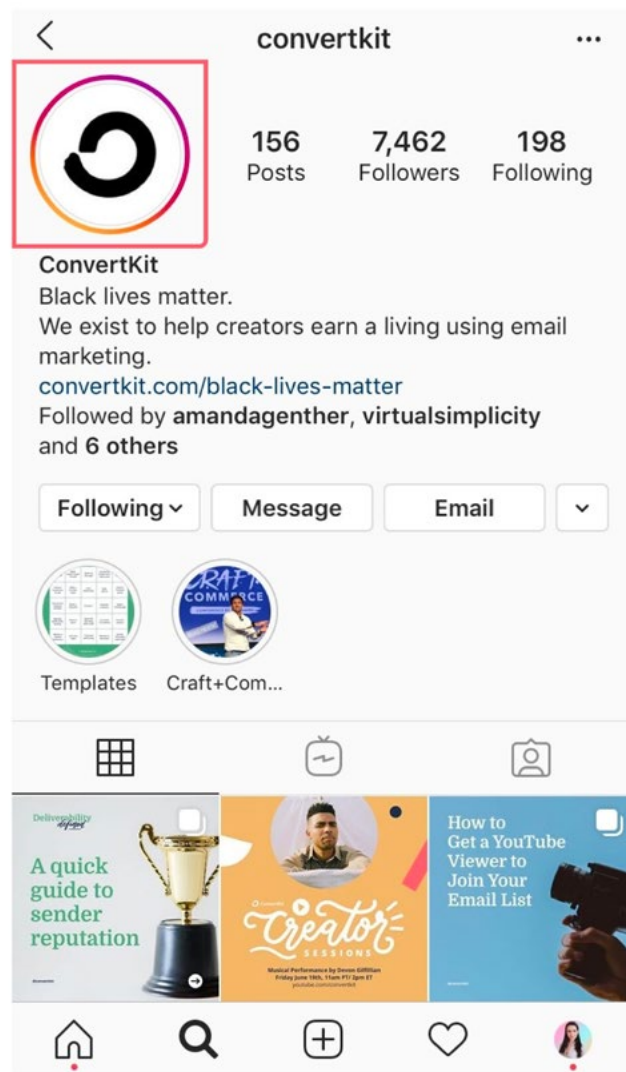
The main home of your Instagram Stories can be found in the top bar of your Instagram feed or by clicking a user's profile photo within your Instagram feed:



You can find Instagram Stories to watch on your home feed.

You'll know when someone has uploaded a new story because their profile photo will have a purple/orange gradient circling it.

You can also go directly to a person's profile to view their stories.



View Instagram Stories from a user's profile by tapping on their profile image. [Image via ConvertKit's Instagram.](#)

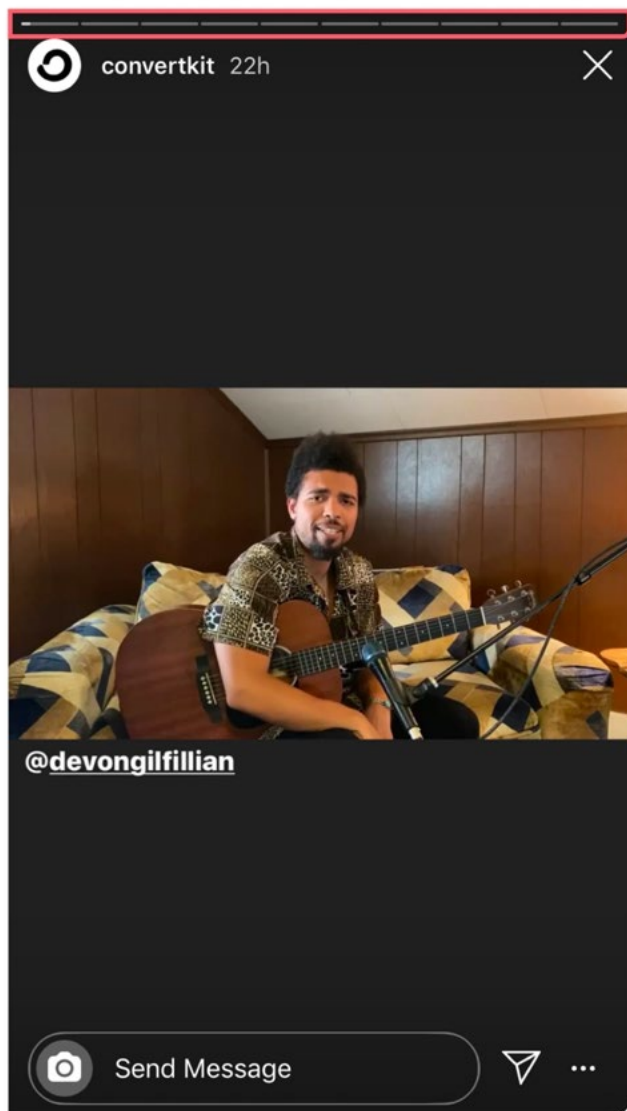
The ability to view stories from so many different places helps you as a creator, because your audience won't have to search high and low to find your content.

How to use Instagram Stories

Like I mentioned earlier, Instagram Stories are simple to use.

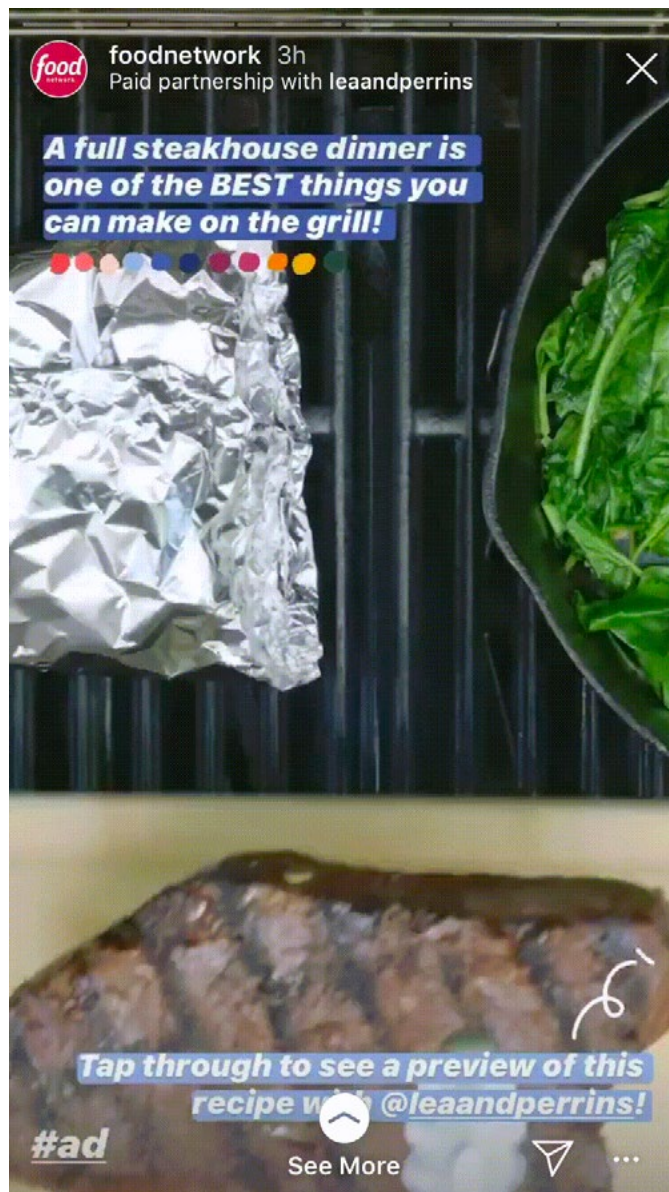
Because they are nice and short (fifteen seconds maximum) both you and your audience will be able to consume much more of your content in a shorter amount of time. And with [dwindling attention spans](#), providing digestible content for your audience is incredibly important.

When going through someone's Instagram Stories, you can tell how many stories they have uploaded based upon the segment lines located at the top.



The lines at the top of the story indicate how many segments a user's story has. [Image via ConvertKit's Instagram Story.](#)

To watch all of the stories, tap forward on the right side of your screen. If you missed something and want to rewatch a story, you can go backwards by tapping left on your screen.



Tap left to view a previous story and tap right to view the next story. [Image via Food Network's Instagram Story.](#)

If you prefer to watch Instagram Stories hands-free, you can also just let them play on their own.

You also don't need to go through all of the stories posted by a single user. If you'd like to skip past someone's stories and go to the next person in the queue, you can easily do that by swiping left.



Swipe towards the left to view the next user's Instagram Stories. Image via [Vivian Kaye's Instagram Story](#) and [Aveeno's Instagram Story ad](#).

To stop watching stories completely, you can swipe down which will bring you back to your Instagram feed.



Swiping downwards will exit you out of the queue. [Image via Vivian Kaye's Instagram Story](#)

How to make Instagram Stories

Now we get to the fun part: creating and designing your Instagram Stories!

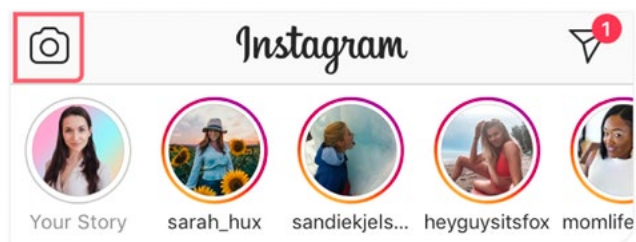
You have a few options to access your stories.

If you don't have any active Instagram Stories, you can create one by clicking your profile photo with the "+" sign.



Click on the “+” sign to upload your first story. [Image via Dana Nicole Designs’ Instagram.](#)

To add more Instagram Stories, once you’ve already uploaded one, click the camera icon in the top left hand corner, located on your home feed.



Click on the camera icon to upload a story.

From there, you can either take a photo or video, or upload one by tapping the square in the bottom left hand corner.



Tap on the square in the bottom left hand corner to upload your own image or video.

If you decide to create content right within Instagram, you’ll be able to choose from seven different formats:

1. Live
2. Create
3. Normal
4. Boomerang
5. Layout
6. Superzoom
7. Hands-free

Instagram Story formats

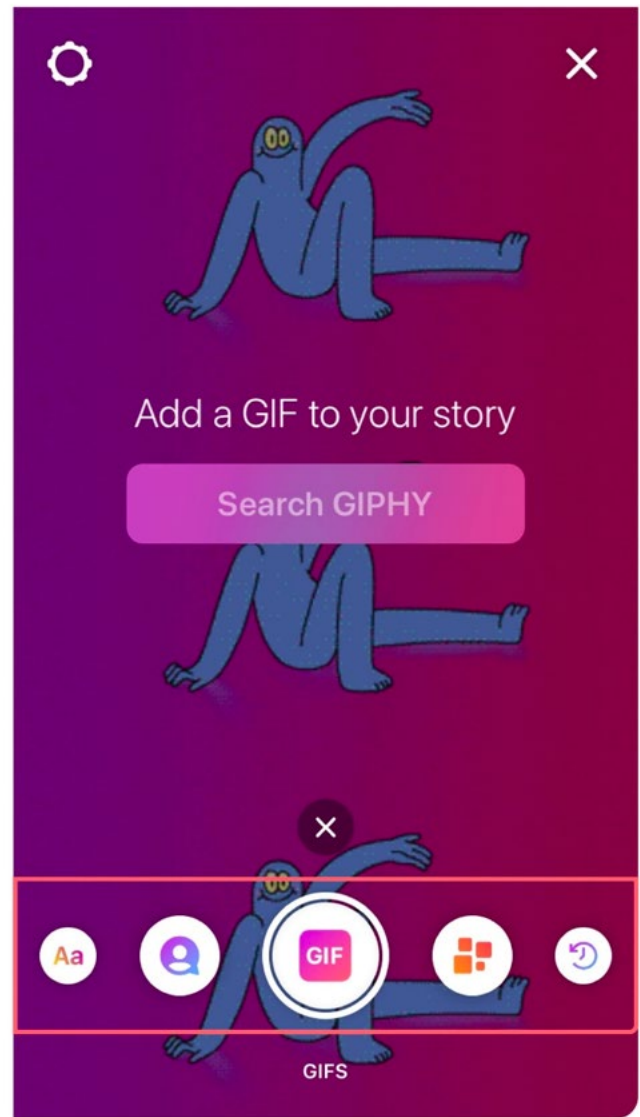
Live

If you'd like to share a message in real-time with your followers, going live is the best way to do so. When you go [live on Instagram](#), viewers will be able to send comments and "like" your live video for the duration you are live. Live videos can be up to one-hour in length.

Create

Create gives you the ability to share posts that aren't photos or videos. Within Instagram's create tab, you'll see many different options:

- Text
- Shoutouts
- GIFS
- Templates
- On this day
- Poll
- Plans
- Questions
- Donations
- Countdown
- Quiz



There are many different options to choose from in the "create" tab.

Normal

Normal is the default option when creating Instagram Stories. This tab lets you take photos and videos which you can then add text, GIFS, and other decorative elements to afterward.

Boomerang

A boomerang is an entertaining GIF that loops back and forth. You can create a boomerang within Instagram Stories by filming yourself (or something else) moving.

Layout

If you want to showcase several different photos in a collage-type layout, you can use Instagram's layout feature.

Superzoom

Superzoom is a video effect that hyper-zooms in on your subject while adding fun music and effects.

Hands-free

If you don't want to hold the film button for a video, you can use the hands-free feature to record yourself.

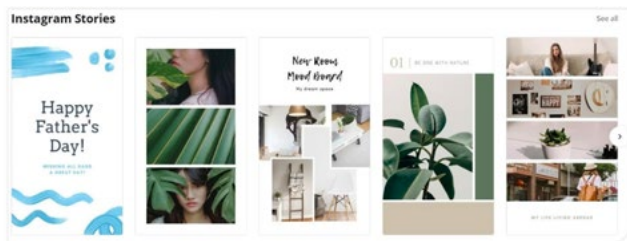
How to create on-brand Instagram Stories

While you can create Instagram Stories right in the app, you can also design ones that suit your brand by using other apps and software.

The added benefit to designing Instagram Stories on your own is the ability to create cohesive stories that perfectly reflect your brand and messaging.

And you don't need to be a graphic designer or have any formal training to create your own engaging stories!

[Canva](#) is a desktop application that can also be downloaded to your phone to create Instagram Stories. There are lots of templates to choose from, which means you just need to upload your own imagery and change the text to suit your needs.



Canva has ready-made templates you can use to create eye-catching stories. [Image via Canva.](#)

Other apps for creating Instagram Stories include:

- Over ([iOS](#), [Android](#))
- StoryArt ([iOS](#), [Android](#))
- Adobe Spark ([iOS](#), [Android](#))

If you choose to make your own Instagram Stories, keep in mind that the [size of an Instagram Story](#) is 1080px by 1920px, or an aspect ratio of 9:16. Using the right Instagram Story size will make it easier to upload your content directly to your stories.

Creating videos for your Instagram Stories

You might be wondering how long Instagram Stories can be as a video.

Instagram Story segments have a limit of fifteen seconds. Fortunately, it's incredibly easy to cut and splice up longer videos, so you can add longer videos if need be.

When uploading videos that are longer than fifteen seconds, Instagram will automatically create segments so you don't need to do any additional work.



Instagram automatically turns your videos into fifteen-second segments. [Image via Dana Nicole Designs' Instagram Story.](#)

You can easily delete segments of your video by double-tapping the rectangle along the bottom and clicking the trash can icon.



Delete segments of your video by double tapping and clicking on the trash can. [Image via Dana Nicole Designs' Instagram Story.](#)

If you need to manually cut your videos, you can use the app [CutStory](#) to cut your videos down to specific segment-lengths.

Instagram Story features

The ability to sell, connect and engage with your audience is right at your fingertips in Instagram Stories.

Here are the current features available for businesses and creators.

Music

Through Instagram's music library, you can add almost any song to your story by adding the "music" sticker. When you add music, you will be given the choice to crop the song so you can select which part you'd like to play for your story.

You also have the choice to play just the music, or to play the music and have the lyrics show.



The song you choose will play for the duration of your story and be shown at the top. [Image via Orlando Bungalower's's Instagram Story.](#)

Poll

Polls are a fast and simple way to get your audiences' [opinion](#). To use the poll, ask a question and provide two answers for your viewers to click on.

As answers start rolling in, you'll see who voted for which answer. Polls can be useful to determine what your audience prefers so you can create products and services that cater directly to their needs and wants.



Polls show the percentage of votes for each answer. [Image via Nasa's Instagram Story.](#)

Questions

The “questions” sticker on Instagram gives your viewers the chance to directly ask questions without needing to email or DM you. Adding a question to your stories will give you a glimpse into the mind of your followers and understand what it is they want to know from you and your business.

If certain questions pop up frequently, you can add them to your Instagram Story Highlights as an FAQ section so future followers can get information quickly and easily.



Starbucks uses the answers from their question above to create video content showing how to order each item. [Image via Starbucks' Instagram Story.](#)

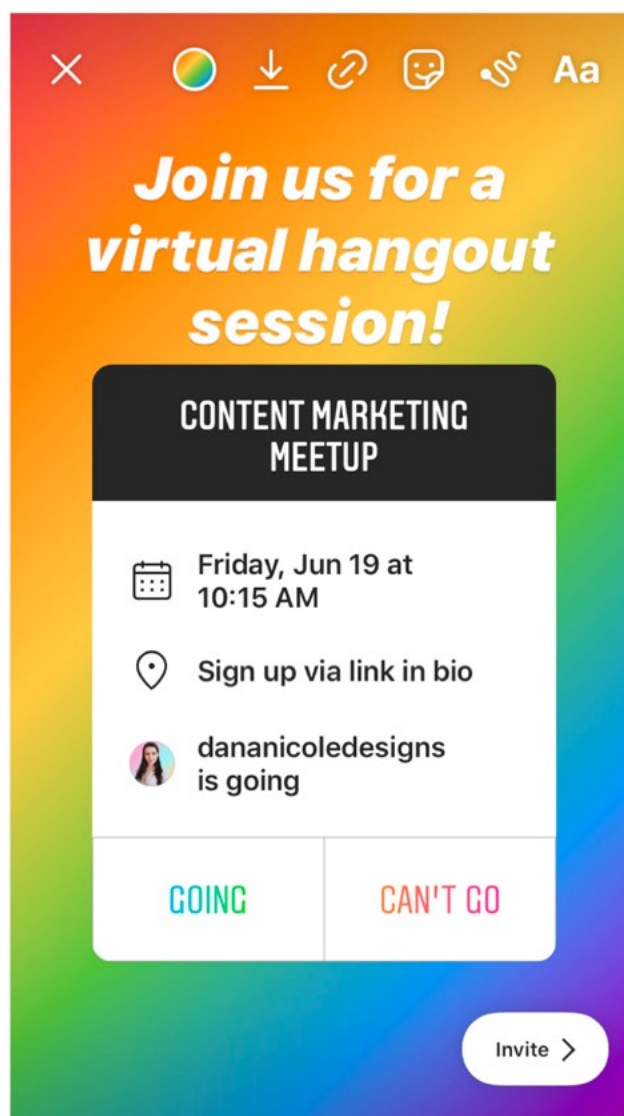
Plan

Planning with Instagram Stories is seamless and incredibly easy, especially if you are hosting a smaller workshop.

Here's how it works: first, you need to set up a plan by including a date and a brief description. After that, you'll need to invite each person who you'd like to join the event.

Those who RSVP, “yes”, will be automatically added into a group DM where you can be able to connect with attendees.

Plans don't get posted to your Instagram Story and instead get sent directly to those you invite.

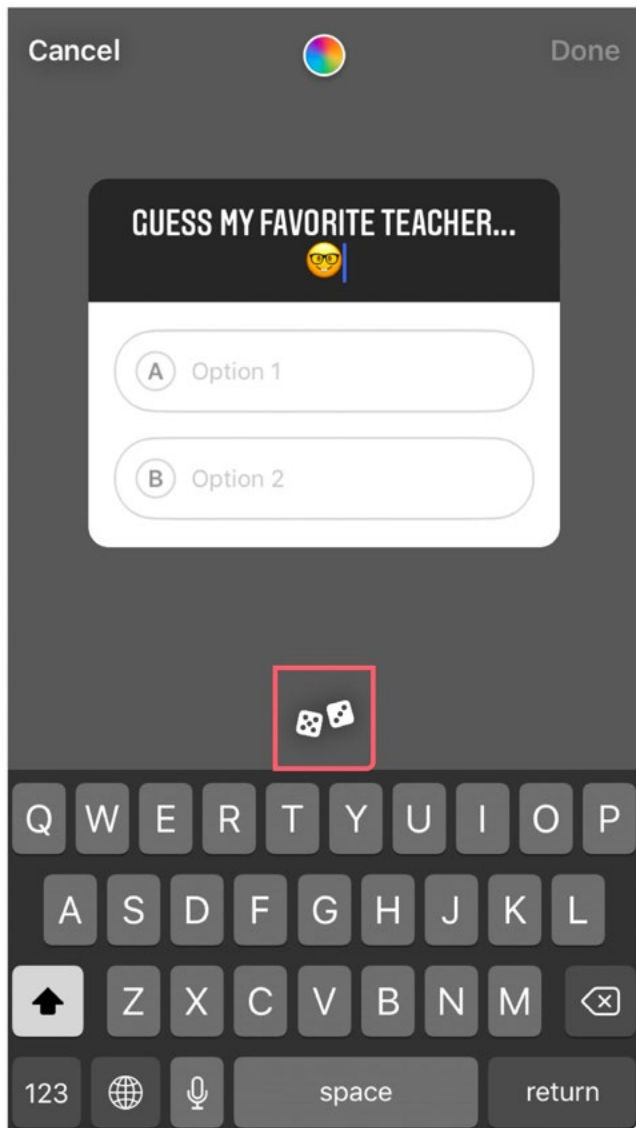


You can create and organize events directly from your Instagram Stories.

Quiz

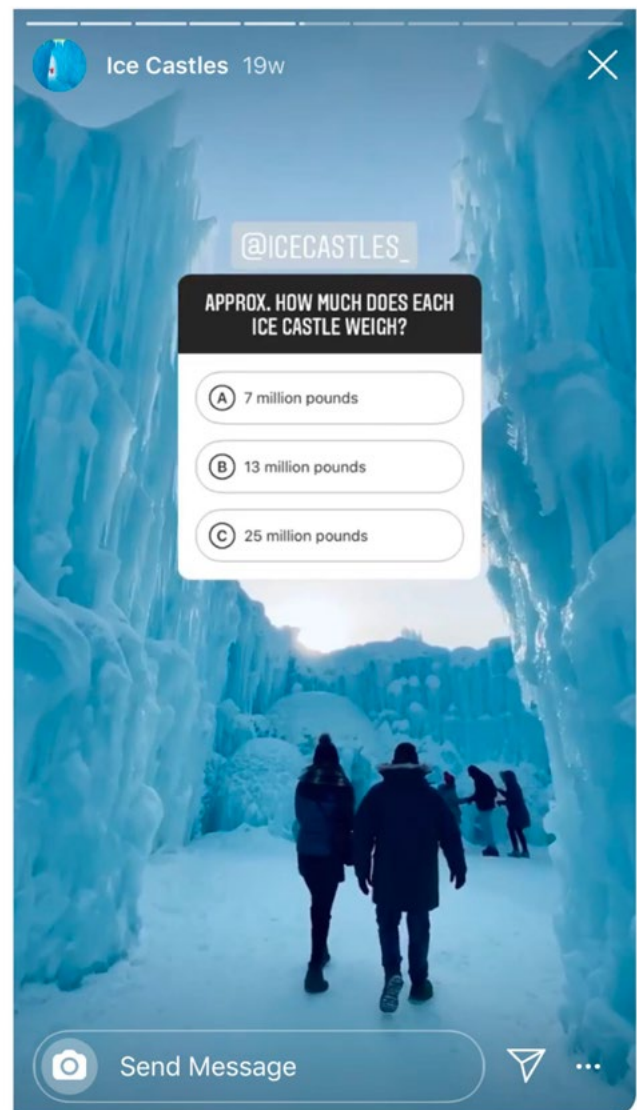
You can use the “quiz” sticker to see what gaps in knowledge your audience has by asking multiple-choice questions.

You can create your own quiz or you can click on the dice to automatically generate a question.



Clicking the dice will automatically generate a quiz question for you..

When your viewers cast their answer, they'll automatically be shown whether they are correct or incorrect. You can also view the answers in real-time.

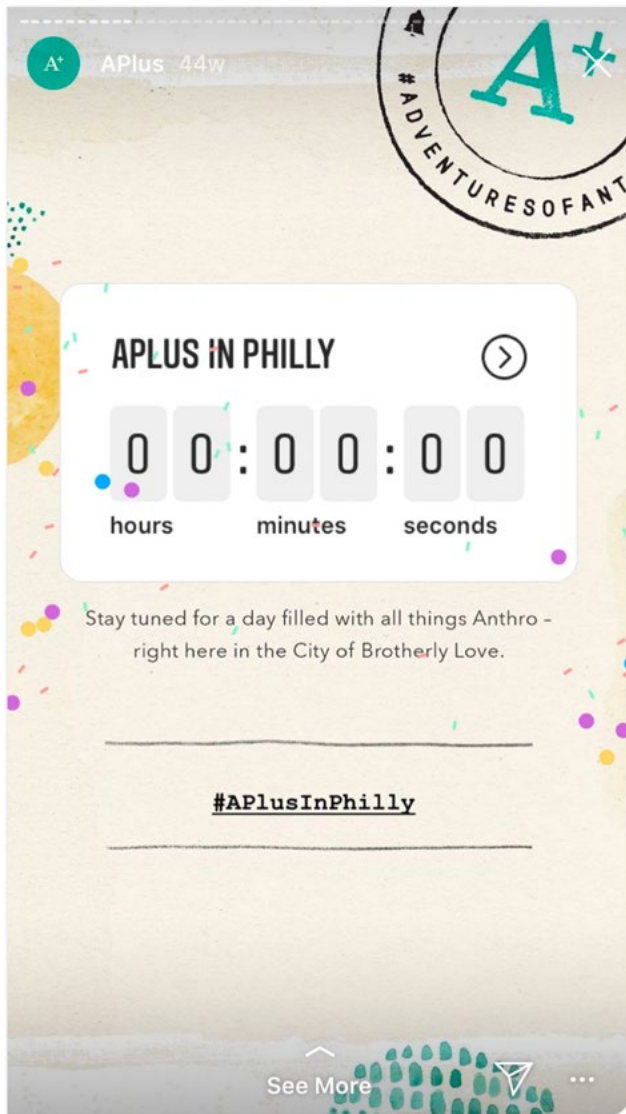


You can create your own quiz specific to your products or services. [Image via Travel Alberta's Instagram Story.](#)

Countdown

The next time you have an important event scheduled, try adding the countdown sticker.

Using the countdown sticker helps you promote and generate interest in an upcoming event by allowing your viewers to sign up for notification reminders when your event is about to start.



Anthropologie used a countdown for their event “Aplus in Philly.” When your countdown is over, it will stay on your stories but will reflect zeros across the hours, minutes and seconds. [Image via Anthropologie’s Instagram Story.](#)

Emoji Slider

The emoji slider captures answers on a sliding scale, which can be useful for many different situations.

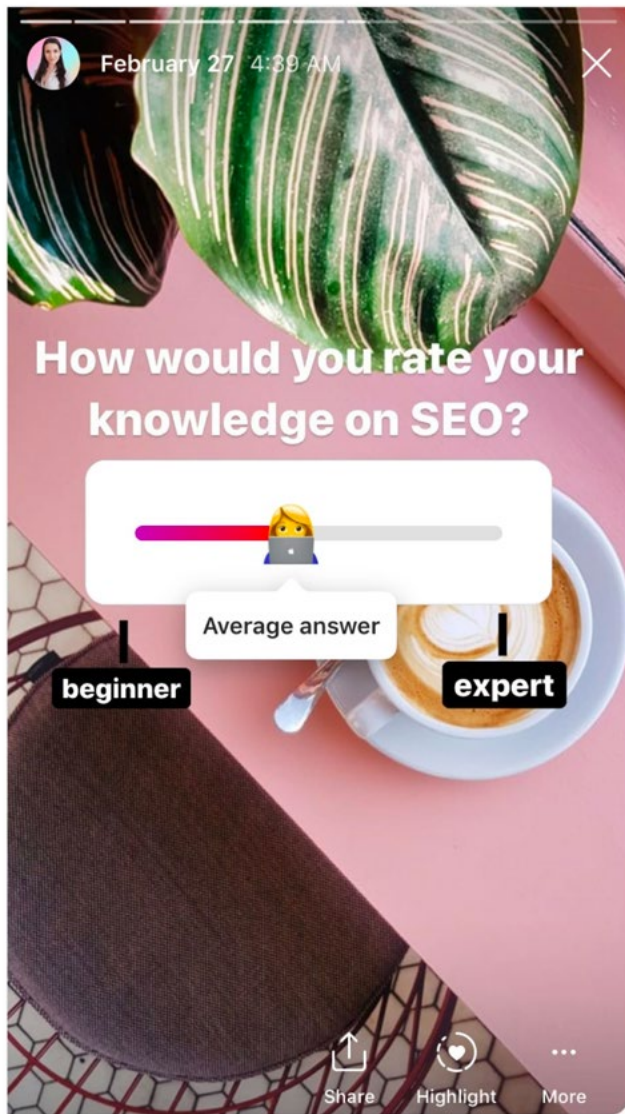
Because the emoji slider isn’t just a “yes/no” deal (you can use the poll sticker for that), you can get a precise understanding of your audience through the slider.

A popular way to use the emoji slider is to ask your audience how they feel about something.



Sliders can be used to gauge your audience’s interest. [Image via H&M Kids’ Instagram Story.](#)

You can also get creative and use the slider for different purposes. For example, ask your audience to rate their level of understanding for a particular topic. This will help you understand what types of content to create going forward.



You can use the slider for lots of creative purposes. [Image via Dana Nicole Designs' Instagram Story.](#)

Location, mention and/or hashtag

Adding different tags to your stories can help you increase your reach. By tagging locations and hashtags, your story can potentially land on the explore page for those particular tags.

Instagram Stories currently allow a maximum of 10 [hashtags](#) per story.



Tagging locations, users and using hashtags can help increase your Instagram Story's reach. [Image via Tamara Soules' Instagram Story.](#)

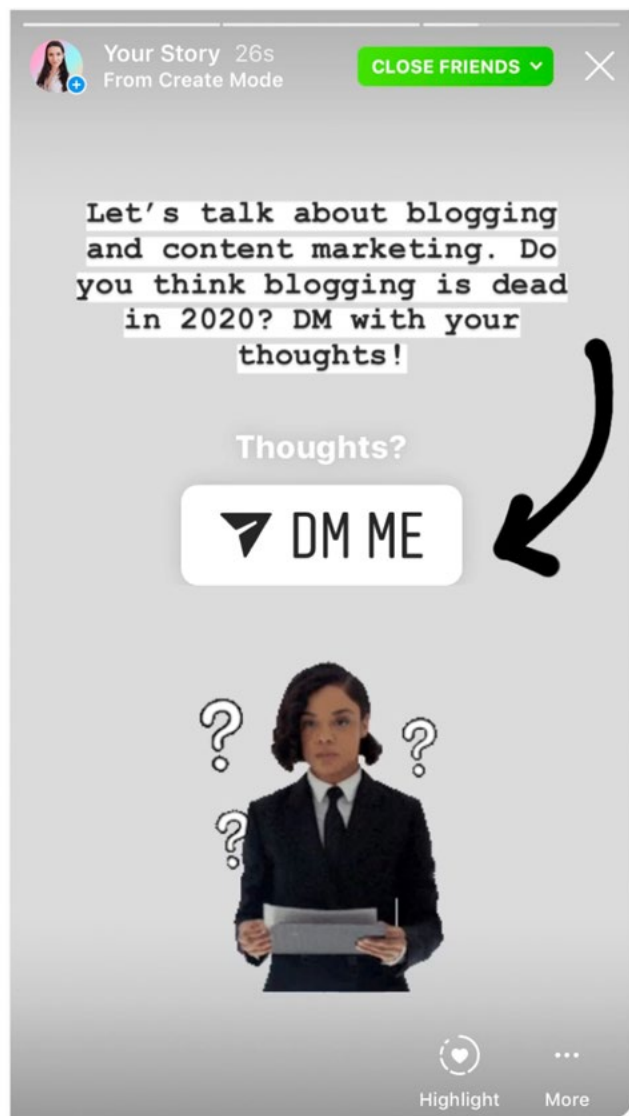
And when you tag another person in your stories, they are notified and will be given the option to share your story to their own story, which can help you reach a wider audience.

DM me

The DM sticker will prompt your story viewers to send you a direct message.

Even though Instagram already has a place for viewers to reply to your story and land in your DMs, you might have replies turned off. If you want to encourage a one-on-one

conversation with your audience, the DM sticker is the perfect way to do so.



Encourage your audience to send you a DM with the DM sticker. [Image via Dana Nicole Designs' Instagram Story.](#)

Challenge

When you set up a challenge, you'll be able to search through a variety of current Instagram challenges (or you can create your own).

From a business perspective, creating your own branded challenge hashtag is a fun way to get followers to interact with your business in order to build a relationship.

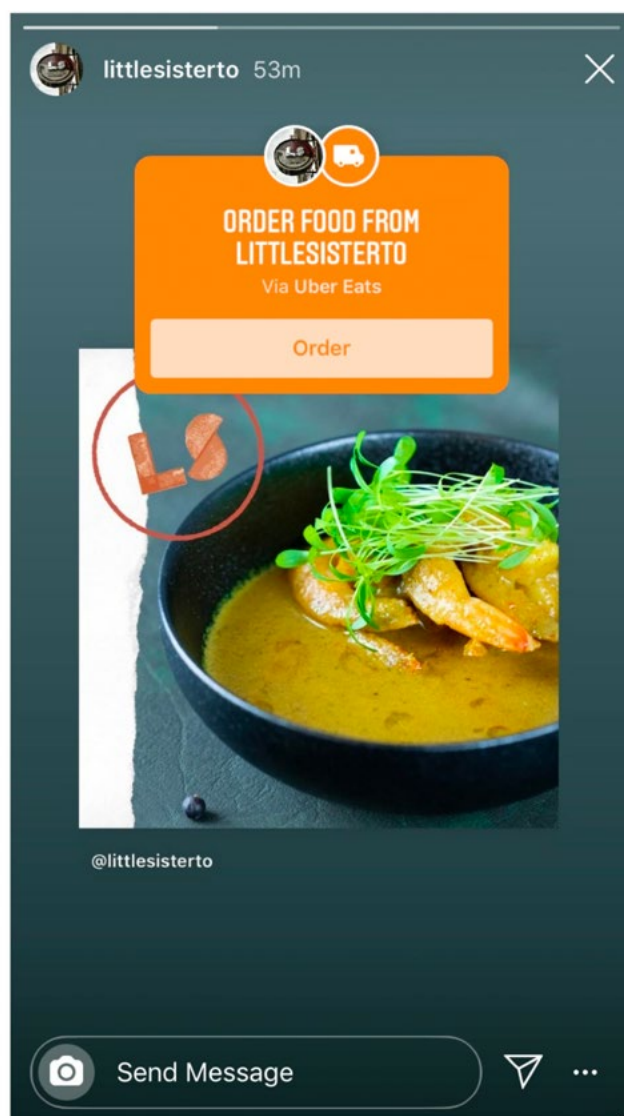
Search for different challenges and tag people to participate with you.

Food orders

Restaurants can increase food orders by using this sticker on their stories. To use the food orders sticker, you will need to partner with:

- DoorDash
- SkipTheDishes
- Uber Eats

After partnering and signing up with one of the delivery services above, you will be able to add a food order sticker to your Instagram Story, allowing your followers to easily order delivery without needing to leave the app.

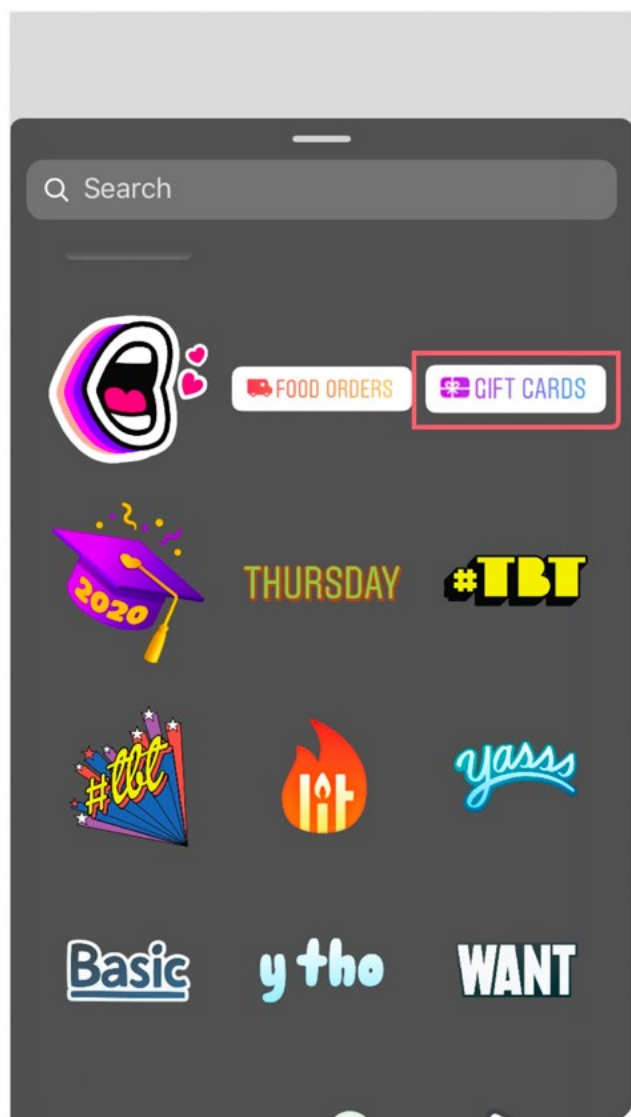


Order food directly within Instagram Stories. [Image via Little Sister's Instagram Story.](#)

Gift cards

Sixty-five percent of gift card recipients spend roughly [38% more than the value of their gift card](#). Gift cards are a fantastic way to increase your profits.

Using the gift card sticker on Instagram does [require some set up](#) before it can be used, but after you've got it up and running, your followers will have the ability to purchase gift cards to your business via your Instagram stories.

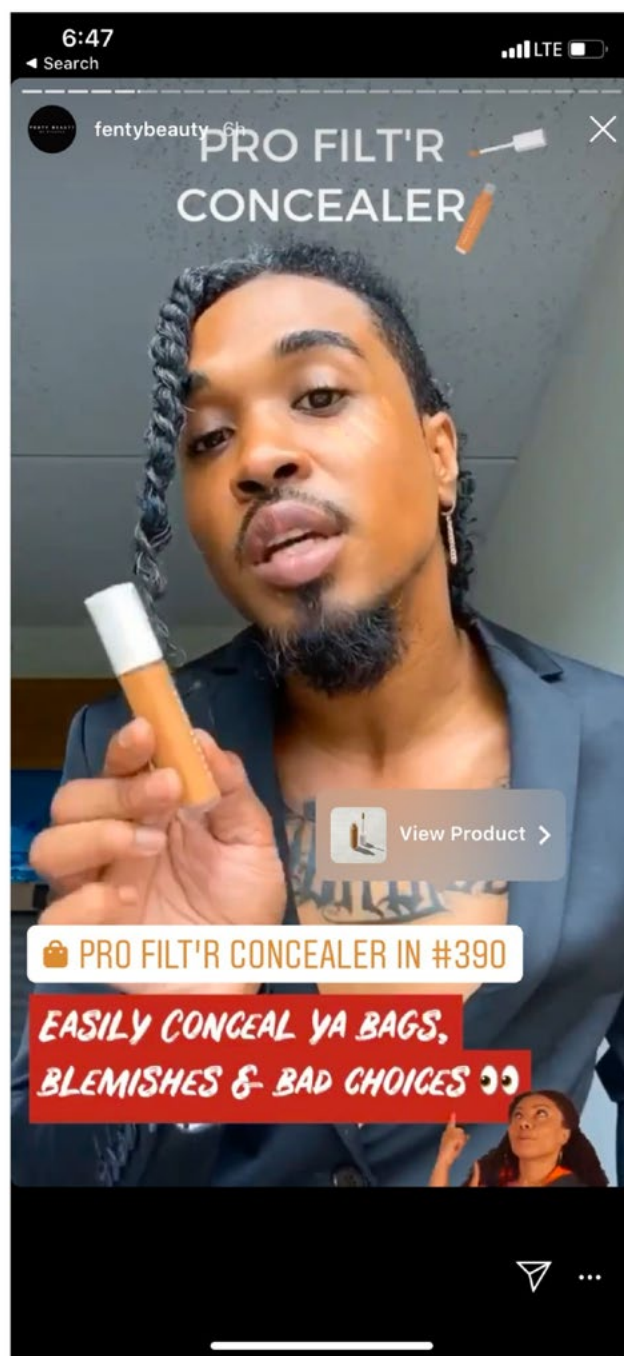


Select "gift cards" above to get set up to sell gift cards through your Instagram Stories.

Shoppable stickers

In a study conducted by Facebook, [80% of respondents](#) say they use Instagram to make purchase-related decisions.

When clicked, shoppable stickers will direct the user directly to the product's page where they will be able to get more information and ultimately, make a purchase. All without needing to exit out of the Instagram app.



Customers can shop directly through your Instagram Stories.
[Image via Fenty Beauty's Instagram Story.](#)

Swipe up

Currently, the only place you can include a clickable link on Instagram is within your Instagram bio.

To combat this, Instagram added the swipe up feature on Instagram Stories so those with 10,000 followers or more can add links and drive traffic back to a landing page of their choice.



Users with over ten-thousand followers can use the swipe up feature to directly take viewers to a landing page of their choice. [Image via Yes Supply's Instagram Story.](#)

Even though the swipe up feature is only available to accounts with over 10,000 followers, there are still many more Instagram Story features you can use to increase sales, conversions and build relationships with your audience.

Sharing your Instagram Stories

Instagram Stories can be shared in three different ways:

- Everyone
- Your close friends list
- Directly to specific users

Everyone

If you want all of your followers to see your story, all you need to click is "Your Story" in the bottom left corner.

This method will share your story with anyone who comes across your account, including those who follow you or those who stop by your profile.

The only accounts who won't be able to see your story will be those you have blocked or those you have restricted from seeing your stories within your privacy settings.

Your close friends

If you have stories you only wish to share with a select group of people, add them to your "close friends" list on Instagram.

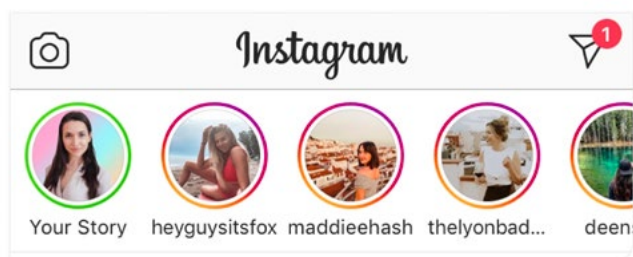


To access your close friends, click on the hamburger menu and select “Close Friends” from the menu.

Click on the “+” sign to upload your first story. [Image via Dana Nicole Designs’ Instagram.](#)

You can add or remove users whenever you’d like. Sharing your stories to your close friends means that nobody will see your stories other than those users. Your close friends list is private and nobody will be notified whether you add or remove them.

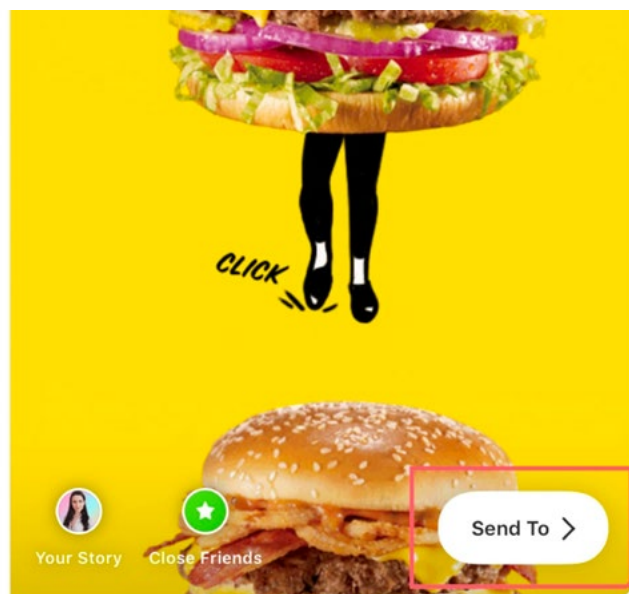
When you add a story for your close friends, your ring will turn green:



A green ring indicates Instagram Stories for close friends.

Directly to specific users

Sending a story directly to a specific person will land your Instagram Story in their direct messages. They can view your story a maximum of two times and you will be notified if they choose to replay your story by watching it twice.



Clicking “Send To” will send your stories to specific users without posting to your story feed.

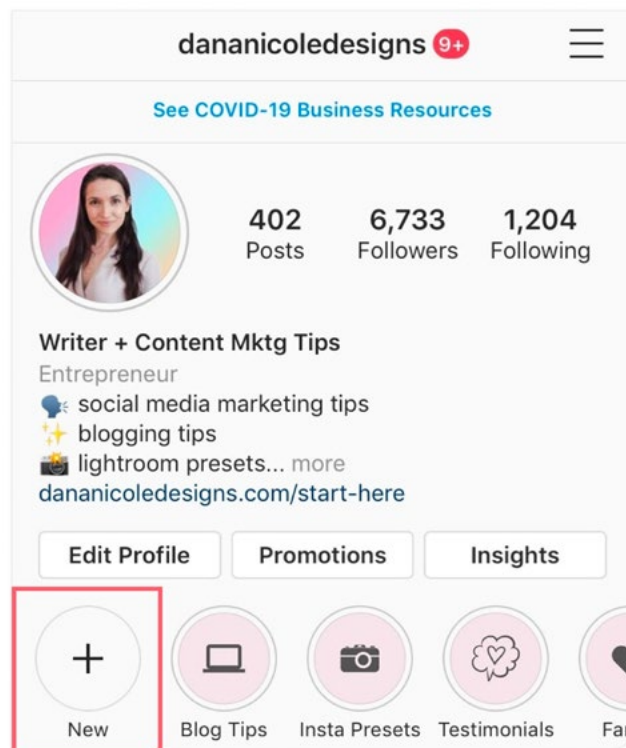
How to create Instagram Story Highlights

Even though you can easily create Instagram Story content, that doesn't necessarily mean you don't want to keep it for longer than 24 hours.

Instagram Story Highlights give you the ability to keep selected stories for an indefinite amount of time. If you have product information, testimonials, reviews, FAQs or other pertinent information, keep them highlighted by permanently adding them to your highlights.

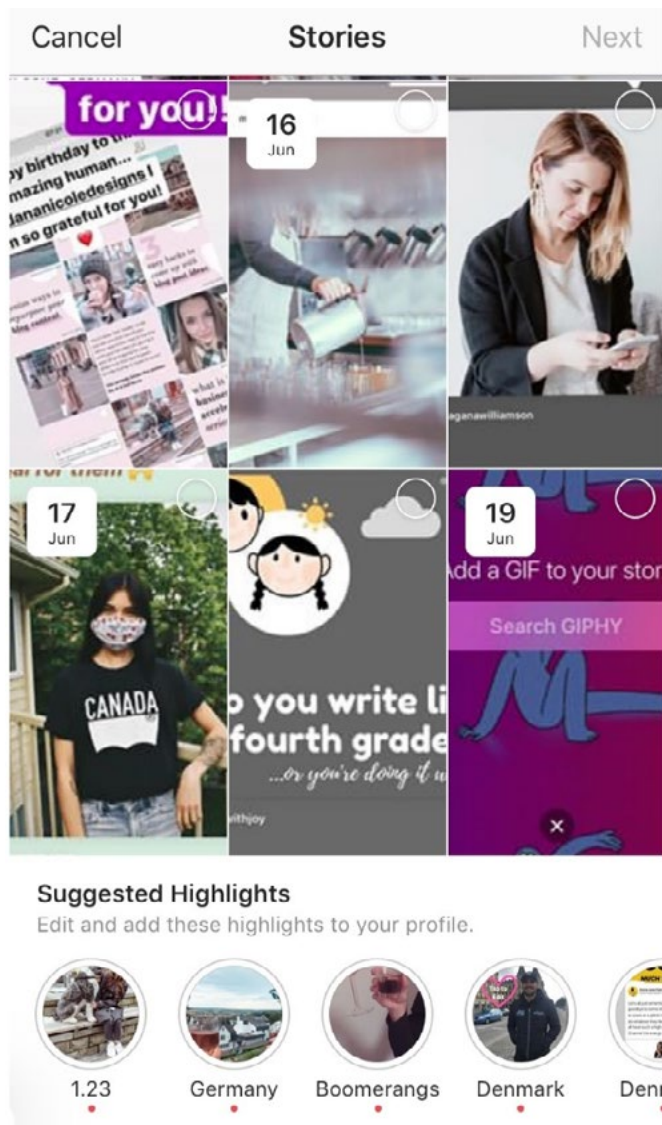
Adding content to your Instagram Story Highlights

On your profile, tap the circled “+”.



Click on the “+” circle to start adding new Instagram Story Highlights. [Image via Dana Nicole Designs’ Instagram.](#)

Here you'll find all your past and present Instagram Stories to add to a highlight. Instagram also automatically generates highlights for you, but I recommend creating your own so you can be selective with which content is displayed.



You can pick any stories from your archive to add to your highlight.

At this time, you'll need to go through your stories and select which ones you'd like to appear in your highlights.

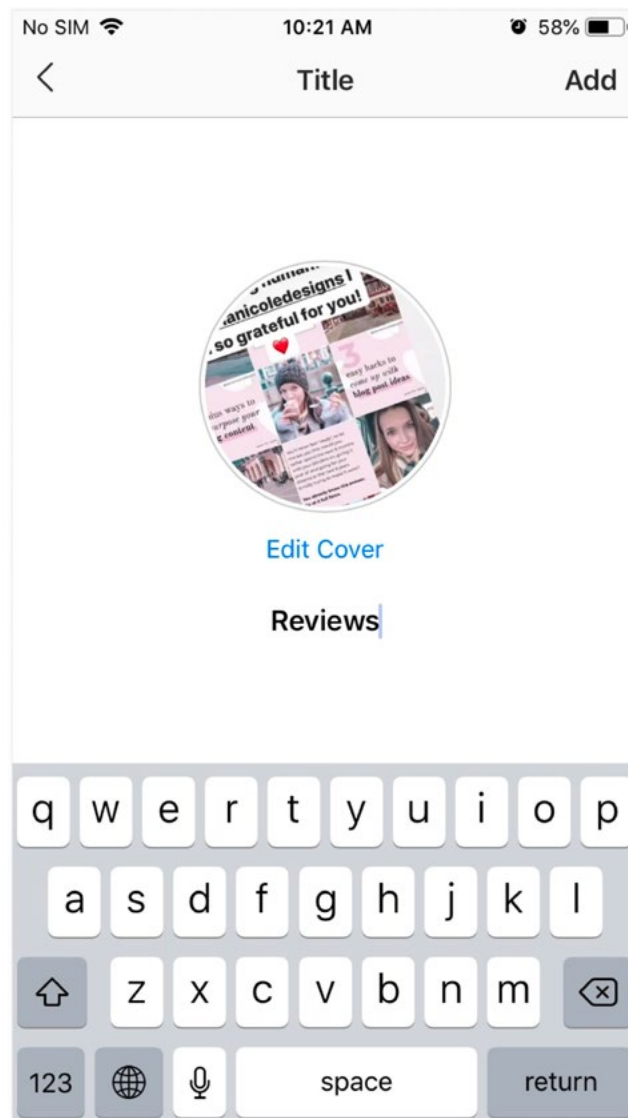
Here are some quick tips for selecting content:

- **Choose stories that make sense to be together.** For example, if you are a food blogger, you might want to group your highlights based on different types of

recipes. For example, "Breakfast", "Lunch", and "Dinner" would be better than creating one general "Recipes" highlight.

- **Choose your best stories.** Your followers aren't going to sit and tap through hundreds of your stories, so choose ones that really highlight your brand.

After you've chosen your stories, click "Next". Now it's time to name your highlight. Your title can be fifteen characters long.



Make your highlight title concise and descriptive.

Next, you can add a cover highlight which is the image that will be displayed on your Instagram profile.

You can either use one of the stories in your highlight reel as a cover or upload your own by clicking on the image icon:



Upload a new highlight cover from your camera roll by clicking the image icon.

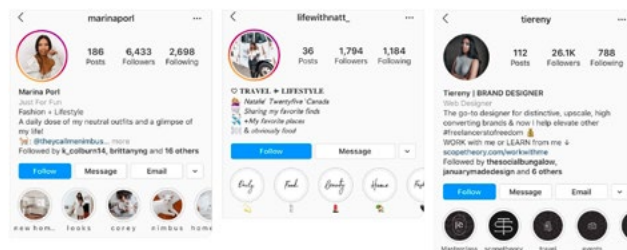
After naming and adding content to your highlight, you can click “Add” to add them to your Instagram profile.

Creating covers for your Instagram Highlights

Creating your own custom Instagram Highlight covers is simple. You can design them on any platform of your choice, including right in Instagram Stories.

I like to use [Canva](#) because you have the ability to choose from many different font choices and icons.

When creating your covers, keep in mind how small they are. If you want to use words on your cover, choose a font that is thicker and easy to read. When using icons, make them big enough to see.



Examples of highlight covers include words, photos and symbols. Images via (from left to right) [@lifewithnatt_](#), [@marinaportl](#) and [@tiereny](#).

How to use Instagram Story Insights

After you've experimented with different Instagram Story features, your last step is to use your Instagram Story Insights to understand what's working and what you can improve.

Using your Instagram Story Insights helps you figure out the [best time to post to your Instagram Stories](#), what content your audience likes to see more of, and what content fails to deliver results.

Instagram Story Insights can be accessed for only 14 days after you've posted your story, so you will want to make sure you schedule time every two weeks to analyze your results.

Your [Instagram Insights](#) can be accessed in two different ways.

First, click on the hamburger icon found on your profile.



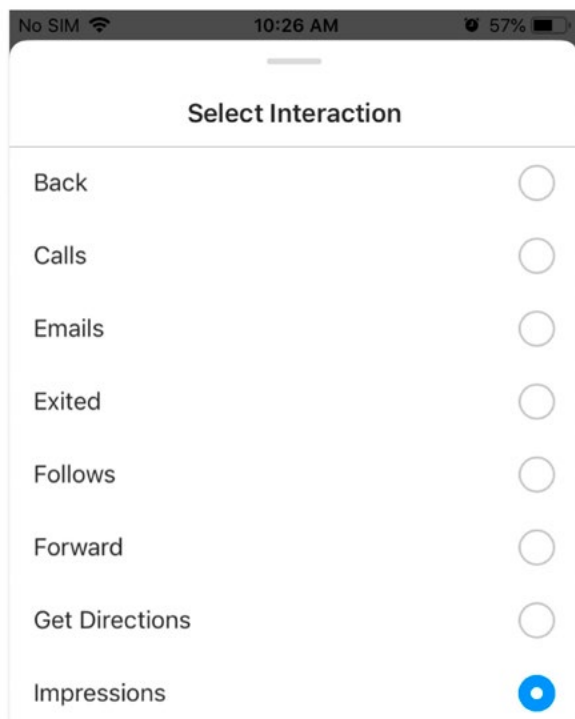
Click on the hamburger menu to access your close friends list. [Image via Dana Nicole Designs' Instagram.](#)

From there, click on "Insights" and under "Stories" click on "See All".

Here you're going to find all the data for your stories over the last 14 days.

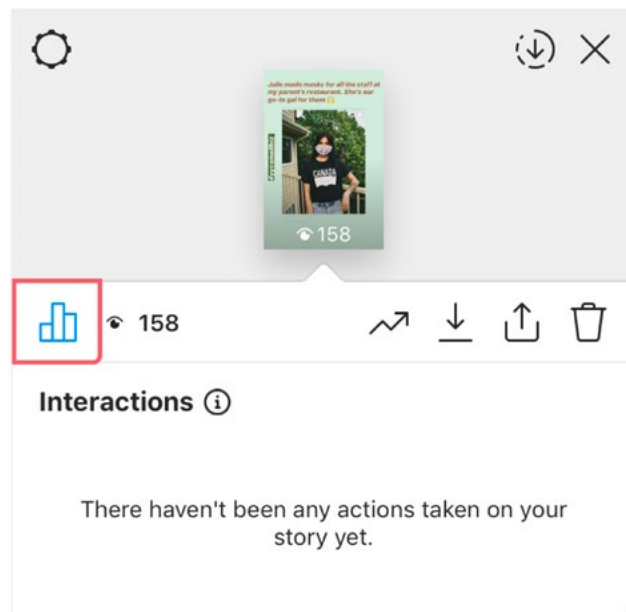
You can adjust the timeframe by tapping on "14 days" and selecting the time you'd like to view your insights for.

If you tap the dropdown menu beside "14 days" you'll be able to choose different metrics:



There are many different metrics you can view for your Instagram Stories.

You can also view insights for your current Instagram story by swiping up and clicking on the bar graph icon in the screen that follows.



You can view insights on individual story posts.

There's a ton of meaningful data within your Insights, so let's unpack what each one means:

- **Back:** the number of times a user went back to rewatch your story.
- **Texts, Emails, Get Directions and Calls:** the number of people who either clicked "Call", "Get Directions", "Text" or "Email" on your profile as a result of your story.
- **Exited:** the number of people who left Instagram Stories altogether after watching your story.
- **Followers:** the number of people who followed you as a result of your Instagram Story.
- **Forward:** the number of people who tapped through your stories and didn't finish watching before moving onto the next story in your queue.
- **Impressions:** the number of views your story received. Impressions are not unique, meaning if someone views your story seven times it will count as seven impressions.
- **Link clicks:** the number of times someone "swiped up" on your Instagram Story link. This feature is only available to accounts with over 10,000 followers.

- **Replies:** the number of times someone replied directly to your story.
- **Shares:** the number of shares your story received.
- **Website Clicks:** the number of clicks generated from your Instagram Stories for the link in your bio.
- **Reach:** the number of people your story reached. Reach is unique. For example, if your Instagram Story has a reach of 100 but has two-hundred impressions, it could indicate your Instagram Story was interesting enough for people to go back and watch it a second time.
- **Next Story:** the number of people who skipped the remainder of your Instagram Stories to view the next account in the queue.

Instagram Story tips

At this point, we've gone over everything you need to start a strong Instagram Stories marketing strategy.

These next two tips will help ensure the content you are creating is reaching as many people as possible.

1. Add text

Think back to when you tap through your Instagram Story feed. Do you always watch videos with the sound on or is your sound occasionally turned off?

Personally, I watch Instagram Stories with the sound off and if you do too, you aren't alone; [30% of Instagram Stories are watched with the sound off](#). Additionally, users who are hearing impaired may not be able to hear the sound on your videos.

So what's the solution?

Adding text or closed-captions to your videos will help those with the sound off as well as those who are hearing impaired so they can still receive the message from your stories.

Certain apps, such as [Clipomatic](#) will automatically add closed-captions to your videos so you can upload them to your stories without worrying about users who are unable to hear your message.

2. Monitor completion rate

The completion rate is the number of people who watch all of your Instagram Stories. According to Buffer, the [average completion rate is 75%](#).

You can easily calculate the completion rate by dividing the number of people who watched your last Instagram Story segment with the number who watched your first Instagram Story segment multiplied by 100.



Using Instagram Stories to grow your brand

Instagram Stories might seem like a small component to your social media marketing strategy, but they deserve the same amount of strategy you put toward your regular Instagram posts.

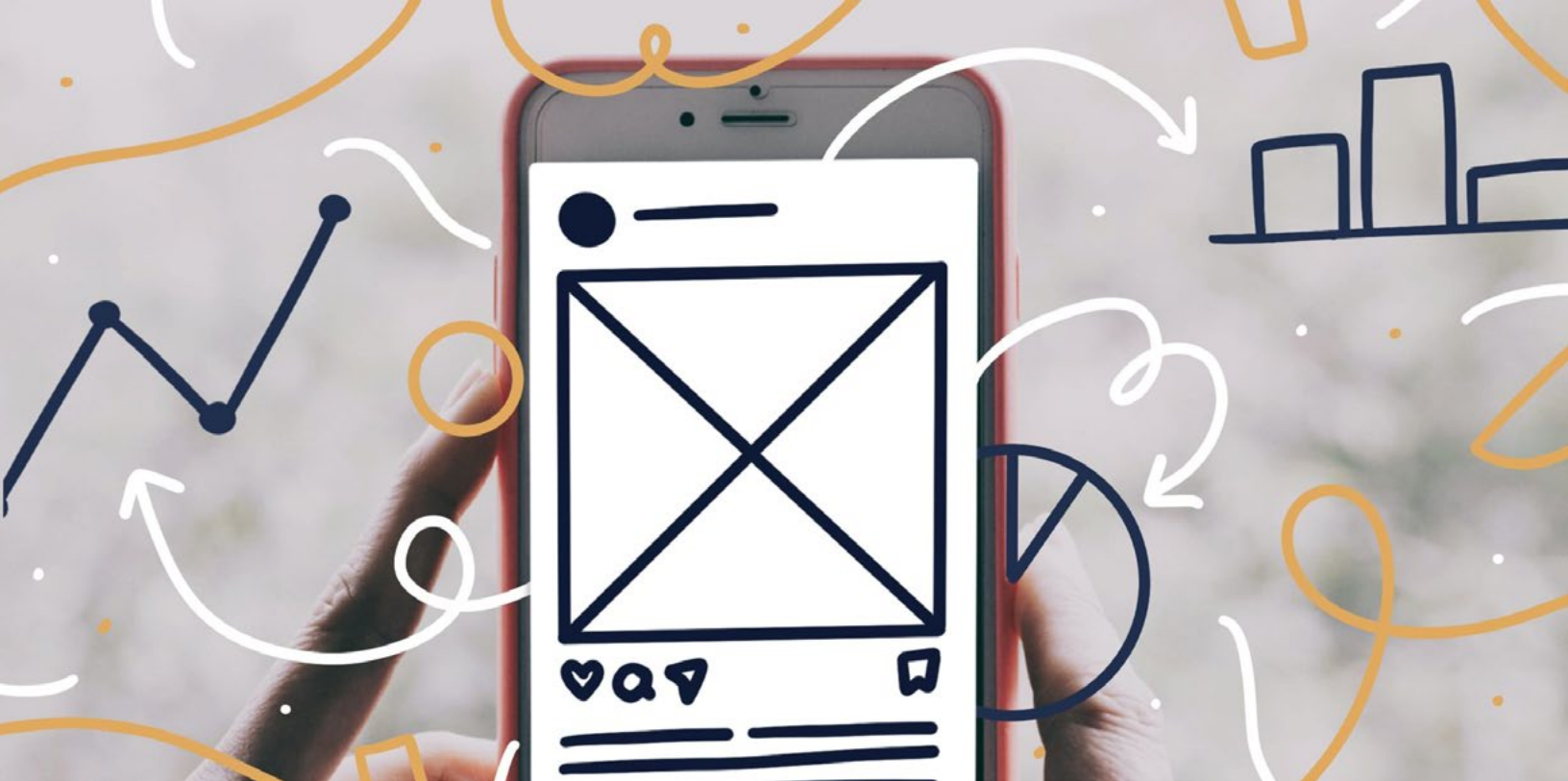
With the above tips, you'll be armed with the knowledge to make engaging stories that amplify your brand, increase sales, and connect deeply with your audience.

Don't forget to add important stories to your highlights and analyze your insights to ensure you're on the right path!

Turn your Instagram followers into loyal fans

And as your Instagram following continues to grow, it's important to make sure you can continue to connect with them outside of social media. Email marketing is the best way to turn your casual Instagram followers into fans that support you and your work. With [ConvertKit's Free plan](#) you can sign up today and start growing your email list and connecting with your audience.

Dana Nicole



Instagram metrics: How to use Instagram Insights to grow your audience fast

Ever wonder how some creators grow their Instagram audience so much faster than you?

Are they evading the Instagram algorithm using sneaky, underground tactics? Or did they venture deep into the Peruvian jungle with Indiana Jones to uncover mysterious Instagram insights?

Well, I'm sorry to burst your bubble, but [success on Instagram isn't all that mysterious](#). And it doesn't involve sneaky underground tactics or bushwhacking through the rainforest.

The actual reason some online creators grow their audiences quickly? They have a strong handle on their Instagram metrics. Understanding the numbers behind your Instagram can help you grow your audience, build an engaged community, and drive more traffic (and sales) to your website.

If you're new to Instagram Insights, though, all those numbers and metrics can feel a little overwhelming. What's the difference between reach and impressions, anyway? And how do you turn your Instagram metrics into actual content decisions?

To help you out, I've collected everything you need to know about your Instagram metrics. I'll go over how to get Instagram Insights hooked up to your account, an overview of all your metrics for all different post types, and a few ways you can use your newfound insights to connect better with your Instagram audience.

Bust out your safari helmet and let's get exploring.

What is Instagram Insights?

Let's start with the basics: What exactly is Instagram Insights, and why is it so important?

Instagram Insights is an analytics tool that exists within the Instagram app. With Instagram Insights, you can learn all about your followers, how your content is performing, and measure your audience engagement level. You can also learn when your audience is online, how they interact with your posts, and which posts are the most popular.

Why is it important to track your Instagram metrics?

The best way for me to explain just how helpful Instagram Insights are is to use an example.

Let's say you're running a parenting blog, like Nina Garcia over at [Sleeping Should Be Easy](#):



Tracking your Instagram metrics can help you grow your audience. [Image via Sleeping Should Be Easy](#)

With a blog like this, I'm guessing you'll be posting a few different types of content on Instagram:

- Inspirational quotes for new parents
- Lifestyle photos of your own life with kids
- Photos sent in by readers
- Product photos and brief reviews

So how do you know which content is working the best for your business? That's where Instagram tracking swoops in and saves the day. From your Instagram Insights, you might uncover a few different nuggets of information:

- **Quotes earn more likes and comments than other post types, but they might not see as many shares.** So you opt to keep posting quotes, but without links since fewer people are visiting your site from those types

of posts. Instead, you include a call-to-action asking people to share and comment on the post.

- **Posts with a specific hashtag attract more saves than the rest of your photos,** so you double down and start including variations of that hashtag with all your recent posts.
- **Your audience is most active on weeknights after 7:00 pm** (when the kids are in bed), so you schedule more of your Instagram posts for those times to ensure more of your followers see them.

Instagram metrics enable you to scope out how your content is performing and how your audience is engaging with it so you can make adjustments. Think of Instagram Insights as your guide through the jungle, helping you create more of the content your audience wants to see so you can grow your following faster.

Now that we understand the importance of Instagram Insights let's look at how to access them.

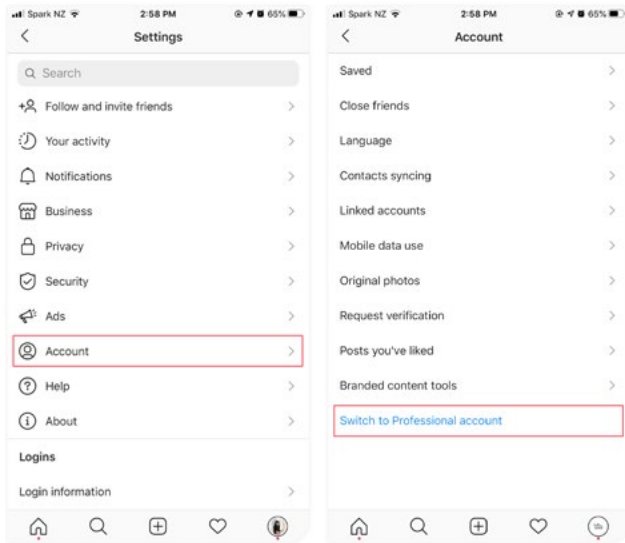
How to set up your Instagram Professional Account

To view your Instagram Insights, you first need to convert your personal Instagram account to an [Instagram Professional account](#).

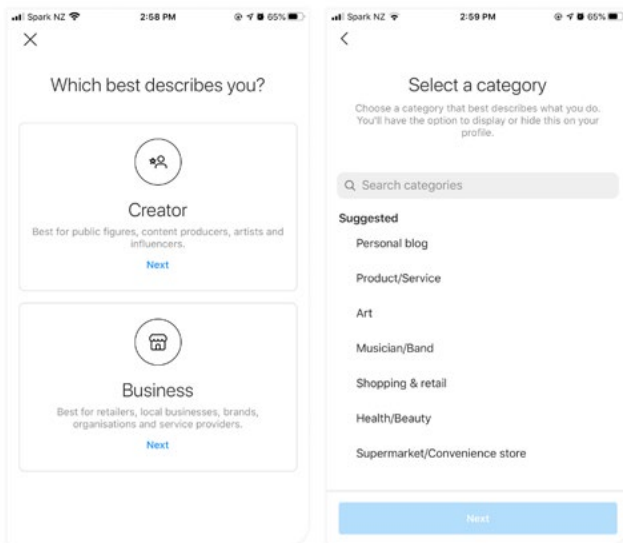
If that sounds intimidating, hear me out: Instagram Professional accounts let you list other important details on your profile, like a category label for your business or location and contact details. You also need a professional account if you want to try [running Instagram ads](#). To put it simply: if you're running an online business, there's no reason not to have an Instagram Professional account.

If you already have a personal Instagram account, you can convert it to a Professional account with just a few clicks:

- First, log in to your existing Instagram account on your phone.
- Once you're logged in, open your profile page, then tap the hamburger menu in the top right corner, then tap on Settings.
- Tap on Account, then tap on the blue text at the bottom labeled **Switch to Professional Account**.



Next, choose the option that describes you and your work—either Business or Creator—and select a category that best describes your business.

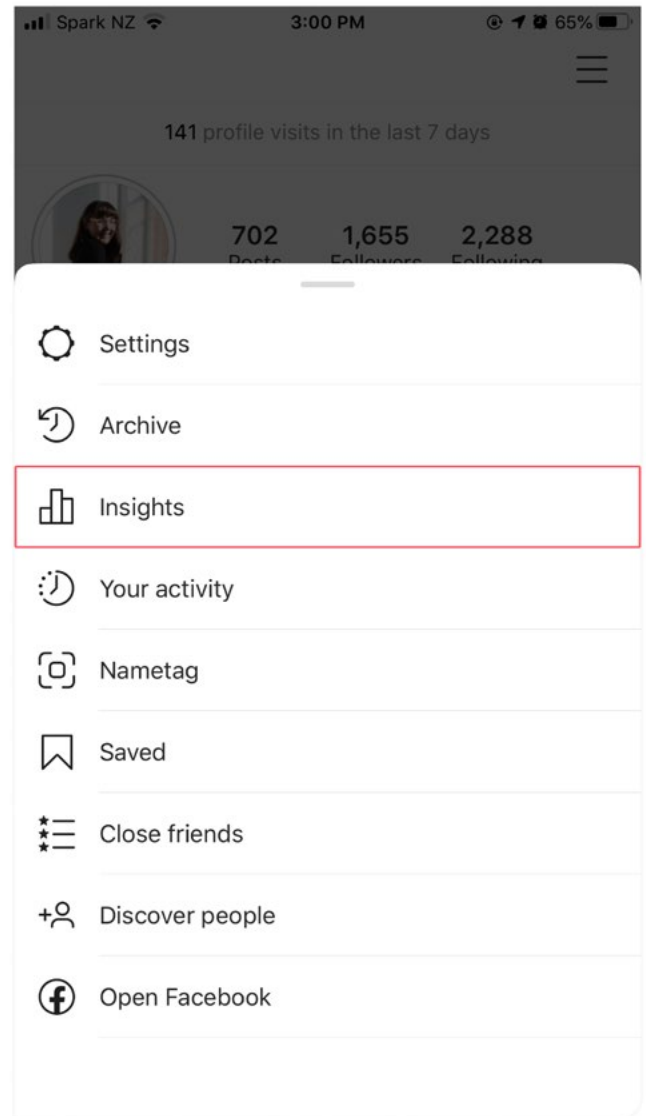


If you also use Facebook for your business, you'll also want to connect your Instagram profile to your Facebook Business page. Most social media automation tools will only let you post to your profile once you've verified it by connecting to a Facebook page, so it's worth taking a few seconds to do this step now.

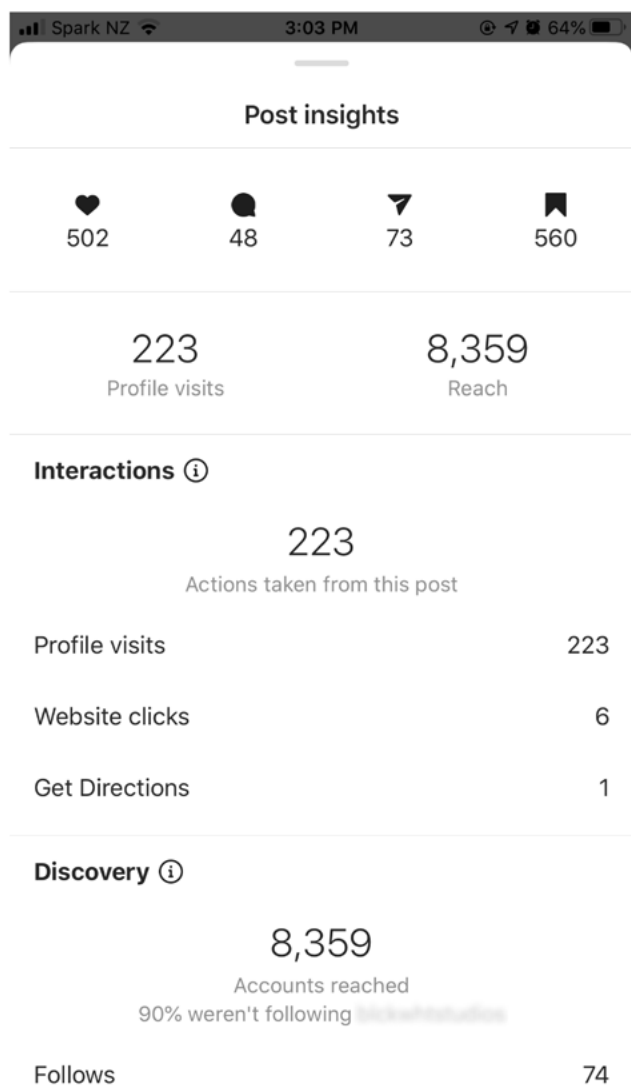
How to access Instagram Insights for your account

Now that you have an Instagram Professional account, here's how to get Instagram analytics in your account:

- Go to your profile.
- Tap the hamburger menu.
- Tap Insights.



You can also access metrics for individual posts by tapping on the View Insights button below each post:



Within your Instagram Insights dashboard, you'll see three tabs: **Content**, **Activity**, and **Audience**.

- The Content tab allows you to see how your posts, Stories, and ads are performing.
- In the Activity tab, you can track your content's weekly Interactions, Reach, and Impressions.
- The Audience tab gives vital insights on your audience, including follower growth.

If you don't see any metrics straight away, don't be alarmed. Instagram only shows metrics for feed posts you've shared since converting your account to a Professional account.

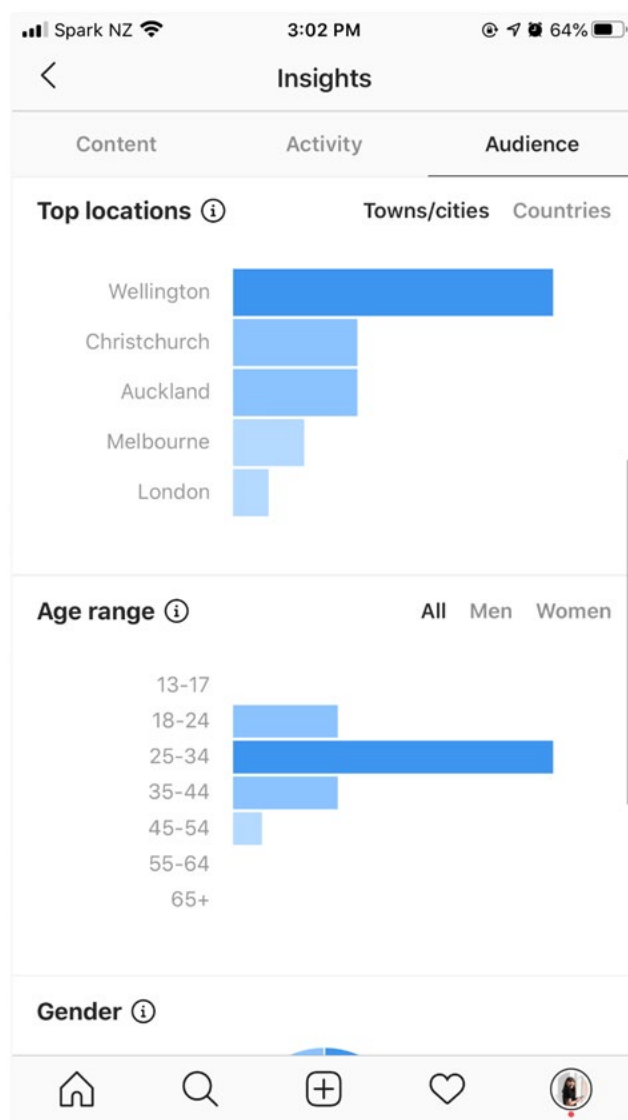
For any new posts you create, Instagram will keep a backlog of the most important metrics for up to two years. That way, you can always go back and access data for past posts.

Let's take a quick look at the overall metrics for your account within each tab, and then we'll dive into the metrics for individual posts.

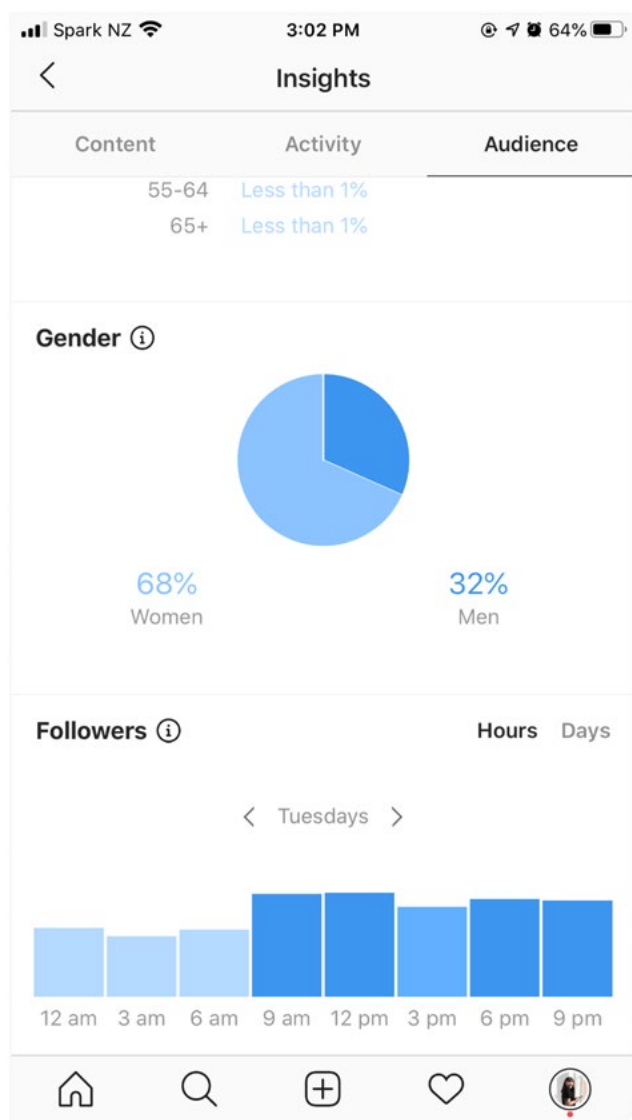
Get to know your audience with Instagram Insights' Audience tab

Before you can optimize your content, it's important to know who you're trying to reach. Luckily, Instagram Insights' Audience tab makes accessing this information simple.

The Audience tab shows information about your followers and how your audience is growing. You can gather insights into your audience demographics, like their age ranges, gender, top locations, and when they're most active on Instagram.



At the bottom, you'll also find a chart showing what times of the day your followers are online:



Knowing all this information about your audience helps you create content that targets the right audience at the right time. These metrics make it easy to share content when your audience is most active on the platform (because you know they're active), rather than when they're half asleep or focused on something else.

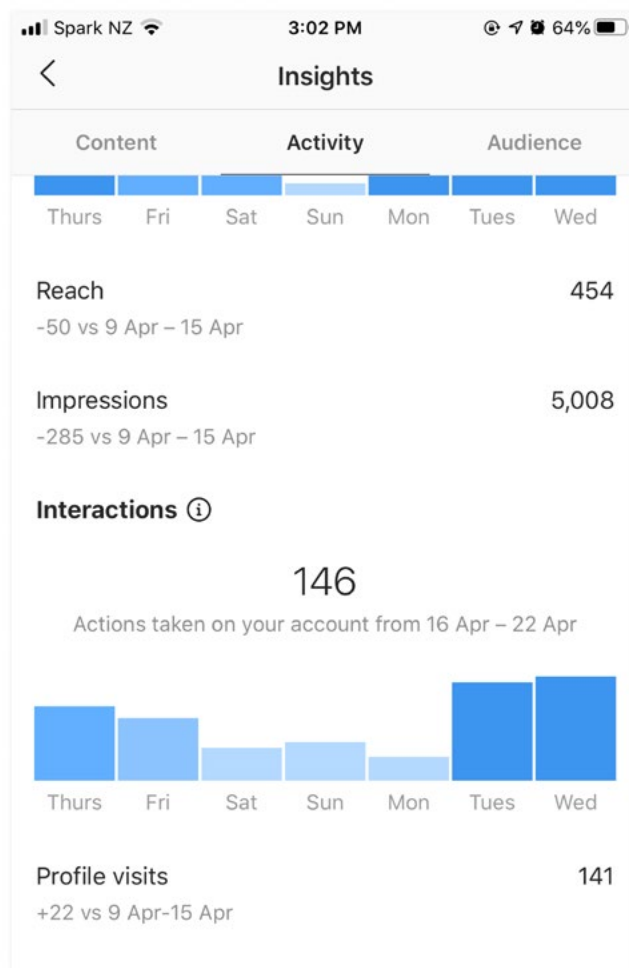
Let's say most of your followers are online in the evenings. You could use a social media scheduling tool to pre-schedule most of your posts to publish when your audience is online—and most likely to view and engage with your posts.

Also, the Audience metrics help you make sure you're creating content for your entire audience. Think back to our parenting blog example from earlier. If you see that although your primary audience is new moms, but 20% of your audience is male, you could dedicate a handful of posts to supporting the men in your audience.

Track engagement with Instagram Insights' Activity tab

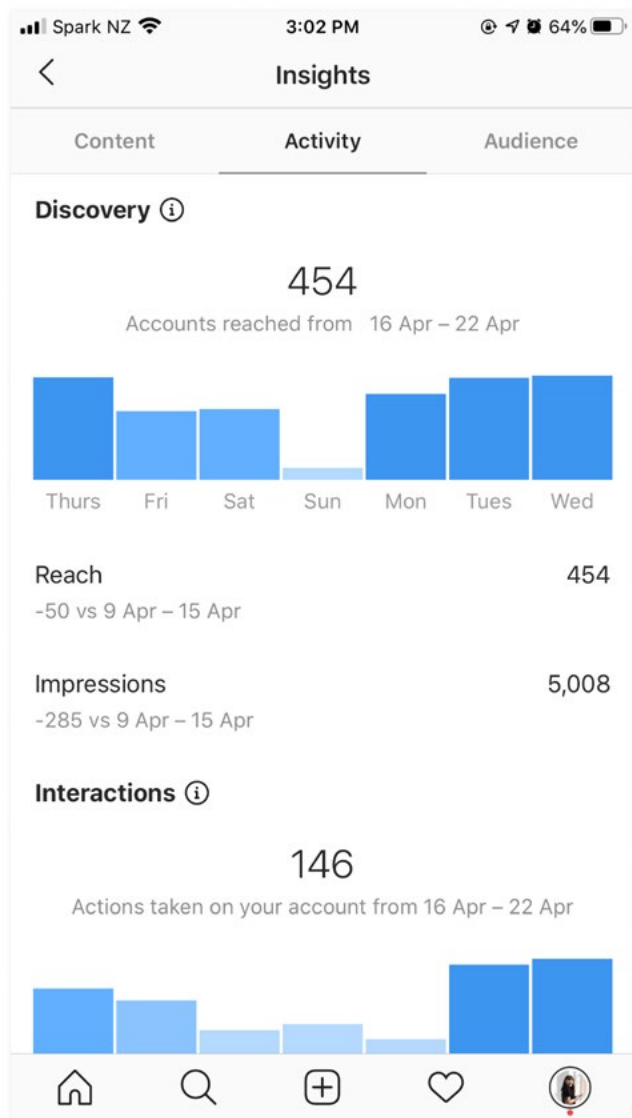
The Activity tab includes two different sections: Interactions and Discovery.

The Interactions subsection shows how many times visitors have interacted with your content in different ways over the last seven days. Interactions include things like the number of likes, the number of comments, profile visits, and website clicks. The Interactions section also lists how much your interactions have grown (or shrunk) compared to the previous week.



The Discovery tab shows you how your account is performing overall across the past seven days. This tab shows two different metrics:

- **Reach:** the number of unique accounts who have viewed your posts)
- **Impressions:** the number of times users have viewed your posts, including repeat viewings.



A quick note: the Activity tab only shows the past seven days of data. To see a longer period, you can view more data in the Content tab.

Both the Interactions and Discovery metrics reveal how engaging your content is, and can help you decipher why certain content receives more engagement than others.

Maintaining a steady stream of quality content means you should see both Reach and Impressions growing every week.

For example, if you posted a product review video on a Tuesday and your Interactions tab shows many website clicks on that day, you can assume the product post drove the increase in clicks. You can verify your assumptions by looking at the individual post metrics, which I'll talk more about in just a bit.

Optimize your feed with Instagram Insights' Content tab

The Content tab shows metrics for all the content you've posted over the past two years. The Content tab breaks down three subsections, showing detailed metrics for feed posts, Stories, and ads (or [paid posts](#)).



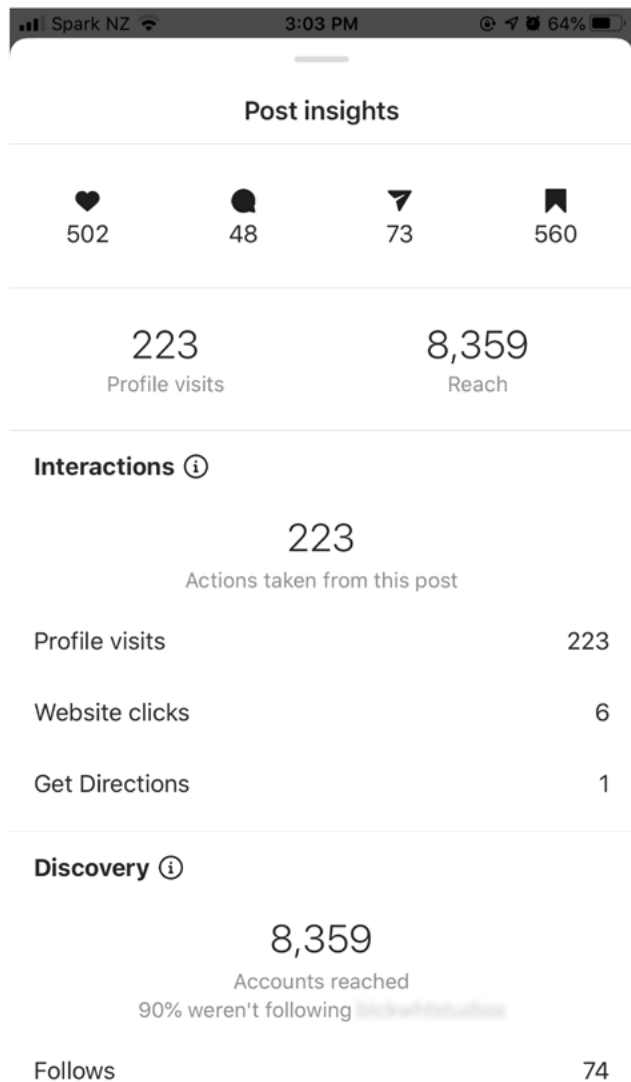
Photos and videos ordered by when they were posted.

[Create Story](#)

Tap See All to view your feed posts on one screen. From there, you can sort and filter feed posts by time frame, post type, and metric type to find the posts you're looking for.

Want to find out more information about a single post? You can view in-depth metrics for any of your posts right from within the Content tab by tapping on the post you want to view individual metrics for, then tapping View Insights.

Pro tip: You can also view individual post metrics by tapping View Insights from the post via your feed.



For each post, you can see:

- The total number of interactions (i.e., likes, comments, and shares)

- The number of accounts reached (and the percentage of those accounts who don't follow you)
- The number of people who visited your profile or followed you from that post
- How many impressions came from different sources (either from a user's home screen, your profile, or your hashtags)

Knowing which posts are helping you reach a wider audience, and how those users came across your posts, can help you [optimize your Instagram strategy](#).

Say you used a new hashtag on a post, and that post saw a significant increase in the number of users finding your posts through hashtags. You can make sure you use those hashtags for future posts to maximize your discoverability.

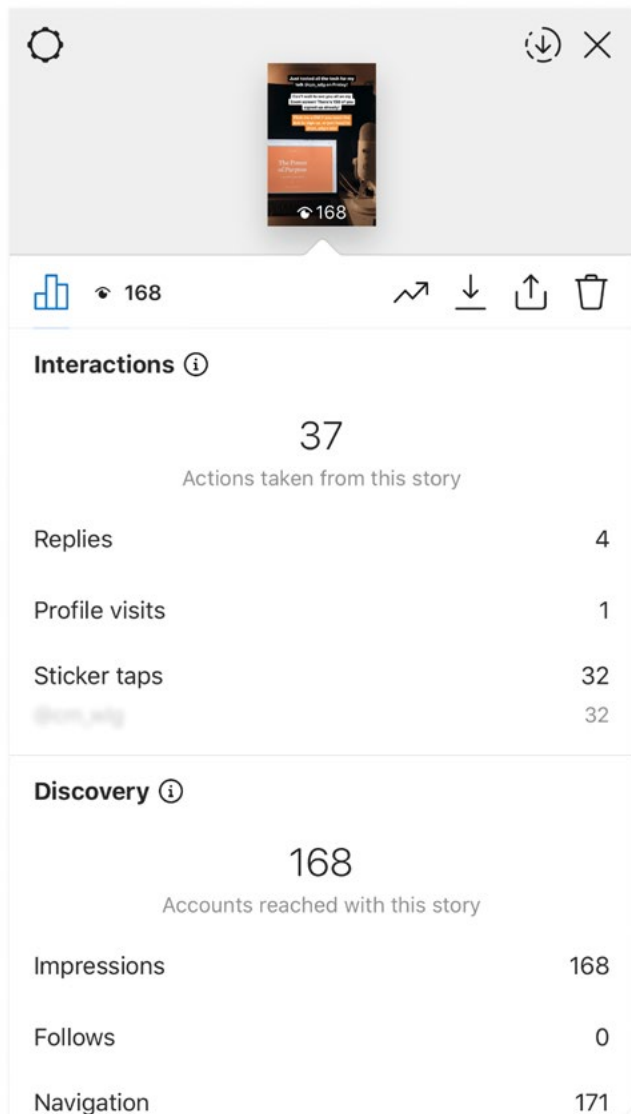
On the flip side, if a post receives a lower engagement rate than usual, you can use these metrics to diagnose what went wrong. [Maybe your call-to-action wasn't strong enough](#). [Perhaps your video was too long](#). Or maybe you posted at the wrong time of day.

Each of these factors can reduce the potential reach of your posts, so it's worth understanding what went wrong and how you can avoid it happening again.

Exploring metrics for Instagram Stories

[Instagram Stories](#) are a brilliant way to grow your audience and business online. With [500 million people](#) using Stories every day (yeah, you read that right) and [62% of people](#) saying they've become more interested in a brand or product after seeing it in Stories, they're a great way to grow your audience (and business) fast.

You'll find metrics for your Stories under the Content tab. Under Stories, tap See All to see all your Stories. You can also sort your Stories as you can with feed posts, but can only view back up to 14 days.



What's most interesting about Stories compared to regular feed posts is that you can sort by a wide range of various metrics:

- **Sort by type of content:** With this metric, you can see how distinct content types stack up against one another in terms of impressions or reach.
- **Sort by interactions:** This metric helps you see how users are engaging with your Stories—how many times they move forward or backward, skip to the next Story, or replay a Story.

You can use this info to improve your content strategy—for example, if you see your video Stories performing better than your static image Stories, it's best to focus on video content.

What's most interesting about Stories, though, is that you can see which content performs best based on how users interact with the content.

Say you saw an uptick in Back taps on one of your posts—it's safe to say that users were very interested in your content. But if you saw many Forward taps, users likely weren't too interested in that content, or that it was too long.

Track how your Stories are performing over time, and you'll soon discover what works best for your audience.

So now, you're set up with an Instagram Business account, and you know how to find the metrics you need to make informed decisions around your content. But how do you use those metrics to improve your strategy?

Using Instagram metrics to improve your strategy

I hate to break it to you, but there's no silver bullet strategy for growing an audience on Instagram. The metrics you use to measure success vary depending on whether you're trying to reach more people, engage your viewers, or drive more sales.

Once you understand the right metrics to follow, though, you'll be able to make more informed decisions around your Instagram content, and reach your business goals.

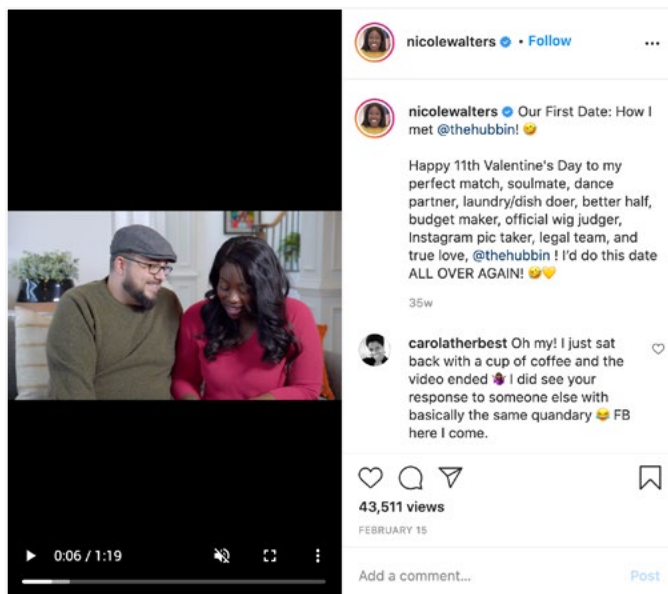
Growing your audience? Focus on reach

Ever since Instagram implemented an algorithm designed to customize users' based on what they engage with, [creating content that encourages user engagement has been a top priority for creators](#). The more interest you get on a post, the more people Instagram will show it to.

If you're trying to reach new people, be sure to prioritize posts that see a higher reach than others. You can find this info in the Content tab, or in the individual post insights. Try to create content that reaches a large percentage of users who don't already follow you. That way, you'll have a greater chance of gaining more followers.

This video post from business and financial coach [Nicole Walters](#) is a perfect example. Instead of being about

business, she posts personal videos about her life and family—and it turns out these posts are some of the most viewed and shared posts on her feed.



Don't be afraid to get personal in your Instagram posts. [Image via Nicole Walters](#)

Try using hashtags to expand your reach beyond your immediate network. Also, don't forget to include a strong call-to-action to share your posts or follow your account.

Building a community? Focus on engagement

If you're building a community of devoted followers, you want to reach your most engaged audience members rather than just the highest number of viewers. An engaged audience is [far more likely to purchase products](#), give valuable feedback, and share your brand with their own audience.

Stick to content that targets a high number of engagements, like shares, likes, saves, and comments—all which you can find in the Activity tab within your Instagram Insights page. Including a strong call-to-action encouraging users to leave a comment on your post is always an excellent practice in this case.

Take this post from lifestyle blogger, Chelsea Scott of [The Millennial Miss](#):



Use Instagram captions to encourage engagement. [Image via The Millennial Miss](#)

Simple calls-to-action like this one encourage not only comments but open up the possibility of others who don't follow her account to see the post (and follow her as a result).

Selling a product or service? Focus on off-site clicks

If you're selling a product, [using your Instagram audience as a feeder for your email list](#) is a superb way to transition to another digital marketing channel. To do this, optimize your content for user engagement (as per your metric insights) and encourages link clicks.

Check out this post from mindset and business coach Melyssa Griffin. She writes post captions with a single goal: to drive readers to her [Bold Abundance Mastermind](#) program.



Use Instagram to drive traffic to your website or landing page.

[Image via Melyssa Griffin](#)

Always be sure to include an interesting call-to-action at the end of your post, so users click through to your website, [sign up for your email list](#), or [download a lead magnet](#). If you include links in your description or comments, [be sure to include UTM parameters](#), so you know where those visitors came from.

Grow your audience with Instagram Insights

So there you have it: your map to uncovering the hidden treasures within Instagram Insights. Understanding the numbers behind your Instagram can help you grow your audience, build an engaged community, and drive more traffic (and sales) to your website.

One last thought: metrics can be super handy for growing your audience, but don't let the numbers smother your creativity. Producing great content should always be at the core of your Instagram strategy—but your metrics will always be there to help guide your next move.

Speaking of next moves, did you know you could put your Instagram photos right onto your [landing page](#)? Grab a free ConvertKit account and start growing your audience with landing pages today!

 *Kieran Tie*



ConvertKit

Start building a strong connection with your audience - for free

ConvertKit's Free plan gives you all the features
you need to own the relationship with your audience
from the beginning.

[Create a ConvertKit Free account](#)