INSTAGRAM FOR BUSINESS
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

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Instagram for Business: Everything You Need to Know

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Instagram is a mobile photo-sharing app and social network. It was created in 2010, and in 2012, Facebook purchased it for $1 billion. According to Instagram, more than 500 million people use it daily, and it has more than 800 million monthly active users.

Instagram is photo– and video-centric. Users can edit and post images and short videos, record Instagram stories, and go live with video. Before using Instagram for your business, here is what you should know.

Instagram basics

Although it can be viewed on a desktop, Instagram is primarily a mobile app, so you need to download it before you can sign up for an account. Instagram is free in both the Apple App Store and the Google Play store.

To sign up, you can either connect your Instagram account to Facebook or enter your email.

You will want to convert your brand's Instagram profile to a business account to

receive access to analytics and insights. To do this, you'll need to connect the account with your business's Facebook page by following the in-app prompts from the Switch to Business Profile option under Settings.

Once your Instagram account is created, you can go to the Profile tab and tap the Edit Your Profile button to change your name, username and profile picture, or to add a website and a short biography. To change the app's settings, tap the gear button on the top right corner.

When you open the app, you'll be taken to the home page. Here, you'll see an endless stream of posts from the users you follow, sponsored posts based on your interests and your own posts, if you've added any.

Instagram terminology

- **Home button:** This takes you to your home page or your feed.

- **Search tab**: This tab helps you find interesting content and users to follow. Using the search bar, you can look for certain content, users or hashtags. If you don't tap a category (People, Tags or Places), the app defaults to Top, which shows the most popular results for that search term. You will also see a horizontally scrolling row of photos called Trending Tags and, below that, a feed of popular posts, called Explore Posts. These features are great ways to find other people and brands whose interests align with yours, and following users with similar content may even earn you some followers.

- **Add button**: With this button, you can add a new photo from your gallery, take a photo or shoot a short video.

- **Heart button**: On the activity page (heart tab), you'll see two tabs at the top of the page: Following and You. The You tab is the default; this is where you can see recent notifications showing who has followed you or liked your photos, comments other users have left on your photos or mentioned you in, and posts you've been tagged in. When you switch to the Following tab, you'll see recent activity from the users you're following – other photos they've liked or commented on and users they've followed.

- **Profile:** Your Profile tab is where you can see all your posts and story highlights, edit your profile and update your settings.

- **Geotagging:** Instagram allows you to add your location to your photos when you post them. Adding your location to photos displays that location above your photo in each post that has been geotagged. You can toggle your location on and off before posting an image.

Adding photos

To post a new photo, tap the add (camera) button on the bottom of your screen. This will open your phone's camera, and you can either take a new photo or record a short video, or select one from your camera roll.

Upon clicking Next, you'll be taken to a screen with multiple options, including Instagram's filters and an Edit button, which allows you to adjust the photo by changing the brightness, contrast, structure, warmth, saturation, color, fade, highlights and shadows. You can also add a vignette or tilt-shift the picture.

Once you've edited the photo to your liking, click Next. Then you can write a caption to describe the picture, add a location to geotag it, tag people and share it on other social media platforms. You also have the option to turn off comments, found at the bottom of the Advanced Settings page.

Before posting public photos, business owners should consider adding hashtags to their picture for optimal exposure. If you want to change or add something after you've published a post, tap the ellipses (…) button on that post and select Edit to update the caption or add a location or tags. You can also share the post on other social networks or delete the post if you're unhappy with it.

Now that you know how to create a profile and post photos, here are the different ways you can use Instagram to promote your business.

1. Use Instagram stories

Instagram Stories are photos and videos that disappear after 24 hours. At the top of the home page is a horizontal bar featuring photos of the people you follow and one for yourself. When you select the photo of yourself, it opens another screen with eight options to add to your story.

- **Normal:** With the normal option, you can take a regular, still photo.

- **Live:** This is for live videos.

- **Type:** Type is the only option that doesn't require a photo or video. Instead, you can choose from different background colors and fonts and type whatever is on your mind.

- **Boomerang:** This option creates a GIF.

- **Superzoom:** Superzoom allows you to zoom in during a video with dramatic sound effects.

- **Rewind:** Rewind lets you post a video to your story that's in reverse.

- **Hands-free:** Records a video without requiring you to hold down the record button.

- **Stop motion:** With this feature, you can take a long series of photos and Instagram turns the photos into a GIF.

With all options, you can draw, type and place stickers and polls on photos and videos. These features are very similar to those on Snapchat, so if you're familiar with that platform, it should make it much easier to navigate. Instagram stories are a great way to promote a new product, give a behind-the-scenes look at your business or show a new blog post.

With Stories Highlights, you can group stories together into highlights and feature the groups on your profile below your bio. Highlights stay on your profile until you remove them. To edit or remove a highlight, just tap and hold it. Instagram also automatically saves your stories when they expire and keeps them in the Stories Archive, which is accessible on your profile.

2. Use live videos

In addition to Instagram Stories, users can take and stream live video that disappears – sort of like a combination between Facebook Live and Snapchat. You can give customers a live look behind the scenes of interesting aspects of your business, show products or answer live questions through the comments.

Once the video ends, it lives on your Instagram stories where it stays for 24 hours. If you want video that remains on your Instagram feed, you can upload video you've taken or shoot video directly through the app to post. If you choose

to shoot or upload video, you can still add filters and change the cover. You also have the option of including sound.

3. Interact with other Instagram users

There are many ways to interact with other users on Instagram. For instance, you can tag other users in your photos or privately message people.

- **Liking:** Liking is a simple way to connect with other users. To like a photo, either double-tap the image or tap the heart button under the post.

- **Commenting:** Next to the Like button is a Comment button – just tap it, and the app will take you to the Comments page for that photo with a text box where you can enter what you want to say and hit Post when it's complete.

- **Mentioning:** As on Twitter, you can use the @ symbol to tag other users in your Instagram comments or post captions.

- **Tagging:** Instagram allows you to add tags before you post an image or video. To do so, tap the Tag People option before sharing your photo, and then tap where in the photo you'd like to add a tag. The app then prompts you to type in the person's name to search for his or her account. Once you've tagged other users in your photo and shared the image, other users can tap on the photo to see the people who are tagged.

- **Direct messaging:** To access Instagram Direct, go to the home page and tap the button in the top right corner. Here, you can send private instant messages, photos and videos to other users. To send a new direct message (DM), tap the + button in the top right corner, and select Send Photo or Video, or Send Message. Once you've sent the message, you and the recipients can message back and forth. Users who are not already following you will be asked whether they want to allow you to send them photos and videos before they can view your direct message

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4. Use hashtags

Using hashtags is a great way to help other users find your content on Instagram. Hashtags can include letters and numbers, but they can't contain any non-numerical characters. For example, #DaveAndBusters works as a hashtag, but #Dave&Busters does not.

Because users can both search for hashtags and click on hashtags they see in posts in the app, using relevant hashtags can be a highly effective tool for getting noticed. However, make sure you're using the right hashtags for your brand and don't go overboard.

Hashtags such as #nofilter (a photo that hasn't been heavily edited with filters), #selfie (a picture of yourself) and #tbt or #throwbackthursday (old photos) are all incredibly popular on Instagram, but they may not work for you or your brand. It's a good idea to look at other established brands or even personal users and bloggers in your industry for examples of what to do when it comes to hashtags.

Instagram allows a maximum of 30 hashtags in a post or comment, but using that many would be excessive. The fewer hashtags you can use to get quality responses, the better. Using a lot of popular hashtags might earn you a lot of likes from other users, but it probably won't increase your following all that much, and the interactions you get will likely not be from people who are interested in your brand but rather those who just saw and liked your image.

Once you understand hashtags, you can branch out and experiment to find which ones work best for your brand. It's also smart to create a custom hashtag for your business or even an event you're hosting. This way customers can use hashtags, and it'll be easy to find their posts as well.

5. Advertising on Instagram

Like other social channels, businesses have the option to advertise on Instagram. There are three formats for advertising:

- **Photo Ads:** These look like regular photo posts, but they have a Sponsored label above the photo. They also have a Learn More button in the bottom-right corner, under the photo.

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- **Video Ads:** Like the photo ads, these look like regular video posts, but with a Sponsored label on top.

- **Carousel Ads:** These ads look identical to photo ads but feature multiple photos that users can swipe through.

All three ad formats appear in users' home feeds. These ads support four objectives: video views, click-throughs to your website, mobile-app installations and mass awareness.

For more information about advertising on Instagram, go here.

6. Be creative

Not sure how you can use Instagram for your business? Try some of these cool strategies:

Show off your products or services. Take pictures of cool new products as you get them in, or share pictures of your most popular products. Or, if you run a service business, like a hair salon or a restaurant, take the time to take photos of your work.

Go behind the scenes. Take pictures and videos to show how your products or goods are made, especially if the process is unique or interesting, or something customers ask about often. This not only provides interesting content for your Instagram account, but it shows your customers and followers exactly what goes on in the background.

Include your employees. Make your brand's Instagram page more personal by including your employees in your posts. Share pictures of your team members hard at work or having fun at company outings.

Ask your customers to show off their photos. Put your Instagram handle and custom hashtags on your products or promotional materials to encourage customers to tag you when they share photos of your product, service or work. This way, other users who want to know where it came from can find you easily. Just make sure you're checking them out, liking them and commenting on them.

Post exclusive deals on your Instagram. Give back to your Instagram followers by offering them discounts for following you. Share an image with instructions on how to use the deal. For example, you can create a coupon code

users input when purchasing something on your website. Another option is you can ask users (when they're paying for a product or service in-person) to show that they follow you. This will make your followers feel special, and it's likely to get them telling their friends about your business, too.

Instagram tips and tricks

To get the most out of your Instagram account, keep these tips in mind:

Links don't work in Instagram captions. The only place you can share a working link that actually takes users to a website is in your profile. Links don't work in captions or photo comments, so if you're trying to direct people to a specific web page, you can change the default link in your bio to that particular page and note in the caption that the link is on your profile.

Make sure your posts relate to your brand. It can be tempting to share photos of food, fashion and animals because they're so popular on the platform, but if your business has nothing to do with those things, this could make your social marketing look disjointed and confuse your followers. However, if you can find a way to incorporate pictures like these while still making them relevant to your business, it could make your social marketing strategy more successful.

Run giveaways and promotions. Post an image advertising your giveaway, sale or contest, and ask users to repost that image with a specific, custom hashtag to enter. You can then search that hashtag to see who has reposted it and pick a winner. Promotions like this allow your customers and followers to market your brand for you by talking about your promotion on their personal pages, and it drives more people to visit your profile.

Respond to other users' comments. When people comment on your photos, reply to them. Interacting with customers and followers shows that you are paying attention and that you care about whether they see your photos and what they say. They'll be more likely to continue following you and interacting with your pictures if they feel like they matter.

Embed Instagram posts on your website. From the desktop version of Instagram, you can get an embed code to add specific images and videos to your company's website. This can show visitors that you're active on Instagram and help you gain more followers. Just select the photo you want to embed, click the ellipses button in the bottom right corner and select Embed. This pulls up a box

with the embed code and gives you the option of whether you want to display the caption. From there, copy and paste the code where you want it to go on your website.

Use Instagram influencers to promote your business. Influencers are people who have a large following on Instagram. You can pay influencers to market your products to their followers in a natural way. These sponsored posts typically are subtle and don't look like an ad. This is helpful because people typically hate advertisements.

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