

The Ultimate Beginner's Guide To Instagram

By Jenn Herman

Copyright © 2014 by Jenn Herman

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

What Is Instagram?



Instagram is a photo and video sharing social media site. It was designed for mobile use with the intention that users would take photos on their mobile devices then upload the images “instantly” through the Instagram app.

Like most social media sites, the intention is to connect users with friends, family, colleagues, and other users with similar interests.

The platform is primarily visually based with the emphasis on large, creative images. Instagram also offers a variety of filters for both photos and videos that allow users to edit and enhance their posts for maximum appeal.

Instagram was purchased by Facebook in 2012, catapulting it to the forefront of social media popularity. While it succeeded on its own prior to the Facebook acquisition, Facebook has provided resources and abilities to expand the site.

Almost exactly one year after the Facebook deal, Instagram reached the milestone 150 million monthly active users. This is such an important milestone is that Instagram reached this number faster than Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, and LinkedIn! The only site that has achieved this milestone faster than Instagram is Google+. The popularity of the site continues to grow and it continues to amass more new users every day.

When the site first launched, the primary demographic was younger users in the 14-25 demographic. Unfortunately, many people think this is still the case. However, with over 150 million monthly active users, I promise you the demographics have expanded greatly!

Instagram is popular with a variety of age groups and countless industries and businesses. With more than 60% of the users outside of the US, the global demographic of Instagram continues to grow.

Whether for personal use or for business marketing purposes Instagram is becoming a leader in social media activity!

Instagram Terminology

As with most social media sites, there are some terms that you will need to know in order to really grasp Instagram. To make it easy for you, here's a quick list of some of the lingo you'll want to know.

You should also be aware that people who use Instagram love to put "insta" in front of everything. You'll see "instagood" or "instasuccess" and other similar terms frequently.

App – Abbreviation for "application". It is a software application downloaded to a mobile device that provides access to the Instagram site.

Feed – The collection of current posts shared by those you follow. This is designated by the house icon on the bottom navigation panel.

Filter – The editing feature which can be applied to your post to enhance features and colors.

Followers – The people that follow an Instagram user.

Following – The people that an Instagram user follows.

Frame – Certain filters for photos can be further enhanced by adding a border (a frame) to the image.

Gallery – The collection of a user's Instagram posts.

Hashtag – The # symbol placed in front of key words. Hashtags should be key words or phrases relevant to the description of the Instagram post. Hashtags are searchable on Instagram.

Home – The Home screen is the list of activity of all the users you follow. Also referred to as the feed.

Instagramers – Instagram users. A collective term used to refer to people who use Instagram.

Instameet – A gathering or meeting of local Instagramers to take Instagram photos.

Instavideo – Often used to describe the Instagram video feature.

Latergram - Something you post on Instagram at a "later" time.

Like – The measure of appreciation of a post is documented in the number of "likes" it receives. A "like" is represented by a heart on Instagram. You can like a post by double-tapping the image or tapping the heart below the caption.

Post – Any visual content uploaded to an Instagram profile. Posts can consist of photos or videos.

Profile – This is your account information on Instagram. Your profile consists of your name, username, profile photo, and your photo gallery

Username – The name a person uses on Instagram to define their profile address. This may be any configuration and does not have to relate to their actual name.

How to Get and Set Up Instagram

1. Get the App

Instagram is a mobile device app. You can't sign up on your computer (though you can access your account after it's active). Head over to the App Store, Google Play, or Marketplace and download the Instagram app. Don't worry, it's free.

2. Register Your Account

Once you open the app after downloading, you'll be prompted to Register or Sign In. If this is your first time, you'll need to Register. Select this option and fill in your username and enter a password. When you type in your username, the icon will turn green or red. If it turns green, you are good to go. If it turns red, someone else is using that username and you'll need to choose something else.

***Tip for Success:** Use a consistent username! Use something that your friends, family, audience, customers, and fans will recognize. I recommend using the same name you use for your Twitter handle. Instagram doesn't make it very easy to search for people so using a name that your audience recognizes, increases your chances of having them follow you. Avoid using weird or jumbled variations of your name – these will make you hard to find.

For your profile photo, click on the "Photo" box to upload a photo. You can choose to import a photo from Facebook, take a photo, or import a photo from your phone library. I recommend you use the same profile photo that you use on other sites. Again, you want to make it easy for people to find you and recognize you. People love consistency!

Fill in your profile info including your name, email, and phone number (the phone number is optional). You can fill these in manually or you can choose to auto-fill this information based on your Facebook profile.

***Tip for Success:** If you are using Instagram for your business profile, I recommend filling in this information manually. If you choose to auto-fill from Facebook, it will enter your personal information which may confuse your audience if they recognize you by a company name. Use your real name or your business name (however you would like to be recognized). This is the name that will appear beneath your username in the bio and searches, etc.

Once you've filled in these fields, click Register.

3. Find Friends

Instagram is going to try to help you find friends already using Instagram. You will be prompted to find your Facebook friends that are already registered. You can also choose to skip this step. But, if you want to do this, go ahead and click on the Facebook friends button. Before you can proceed, a pop-up will come up asking you if you want to share your likes on Facebook. Choose "yes" at your own risk! By saying yes, every photo you like and every photo you post on Instagram will show up in your Facebook

feed. If you're an active Instagramer you might annoy your Facebook friends with all your activity. You can choose "no" at this step and still select Facebook friends to connect with.

All of your Facebook friends on Instagram will appear with "Follow" buttons next to their names. Go through the list and click "follow" on anyone you would like to. If a user has their profile set to "Private" you can only "request" to follow them. The user has to actually approve your follow before their posts will appear in your feed. Click "Next" when you've finished.

Instagram will then offer you the option to find friends from your device contacts. In order to do this, you'll need to give Instagram authorization to send your address book information to their servers (using a secure connection). Depending on your confidence and interest in privacy, you can choose to allow this, or you can skip this step.

And since you haven't likely found enough people to connect with just yet, Instagram is now going to suggest users for you to follow. You can scroll through this list and follow any of these people you would like.

***Tip for Success:** Following suggested users has pros and cons. Following these highly active accounts will provide you with great examples of what works well on Instagram and give you ideas of what types of photos and hashtags to use. However, chances are that these users will not follow you back nor will they genuinely interact with you. Depending on your strategy for Instagram, these users may or may not benefit you. Just so you know, I did choose to follow some of these accounts when I started (for educational purposes) but then I later unfollowed them and chose to focus my feed and attention on more relevant connections.

4. Edit Your Profile

Now that you're registered, you need to fill in your profile info and set up your profile settings. Click on the right-most icon along the bottom of your screen (it looks like a business card or contact card). Your profile will show you how many posts (photos and videos) you have shared, the number of followers you have, and the number of people you are following. Just beneath these stats is an arrow to Edit Your Profile. Click this field to complete your profile information.

This is the only place on Instagram where you enter a clickable URL. If you are using Instagram for business, fill in your business website URL. Otherwise, you can enter your Facebook page URL or other social media site link. Or you can leave it blank.

Enter a short bio describing you or your business. Try to keep this information consistent with what you use on other sites. You have 150 characters to tell the world who you are, so make it good!

***Tip for Success:** Much like other sites, include some personality in your bio. Don't make it too stuffy or boring. Tell them who you are, what you do, and what makes you "you".

You also have the ability to make your posts private on this screen. You'll see a little box (currently NOT checked) which means your posts are public. If you are using Instagram for personal use and want to keep your photos private, check the box to ensure privacy. However, if you are using Instagram for

business or open networking, I highly recommend you leave this unchecked! Just like on Twitter, if you are using this for business or marketing, you will alienate and discourage followers if you lock your photos to private.

Make sure you click “Save” after making all of your edits.

5. Set Your Sharing Settings

Instagram allows you to share your posts to other social media sites. If you chose not to connect with Facebook during the select friends section, you may still be connected to Facebook but this is only for sharing simplicity. By connecting your other social media accounts, you can manually choose to share post uploads to any combination of these other sites without needing to re-enter login credentials each time.

To connect your other social media sites to Instagram, click on the 3 little dots in the upper right of your screen (on your profile screen) then click “Sharing Settings”. You’ll notice that Facebook is checked. If you click on the Facebook option (should have an arrow to open another page), another page will open. If you chose to not share likes from the friends stage, you’ll notice that the “Likes” box is unchecked. If you do want to share all your post liking activity to Facebook, check this box.

You can link other accounts including Twitter, Foursquare and Flickr. To link the accounts, check the box and fill in your login credentials for the respective site.

If you want to unlink any accounts, uncheck the account name. You’ll receive a pop-up to confirm that you want to unlink these accounts.

6. Take Some Photos (and Videos)!

Instagram photos are all square. All posts will be cropped to fit within this square format. In the feed, images are set to 612 x 612 pixels. However, Instagram will accept a max resolution of 2048 x2048 (depending on your device).

You have two options for taking photos.

First, if you want to take photos directly in Instagram, click on the large camera icon in the center of the bottom tool bar. Then make sure that you have the blue camera icon selected – this is to take photos. Or you can click on the video icon to the right to take videos. The advantage to taking photos directly from Instagram is that your field of view is set to the square size allowed for Instagram photos. This ensures that you keep your objects of focus within the field of the photo.

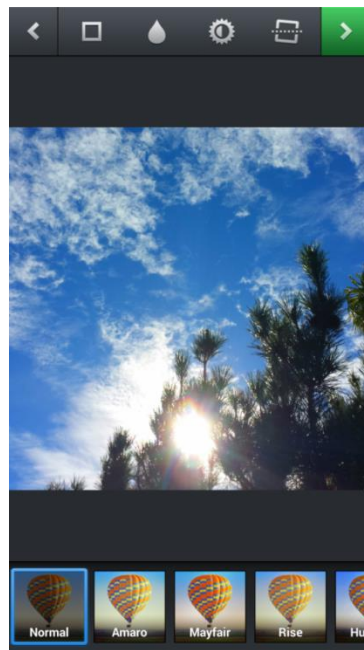
Second, you can take photos using your regular camera function. After you have taken the photo, you can simply share it to Instagram. The advantage to taking photos from your camera is that you have more editability within your camera features. Remember, however, that your Instagram photo will be cropped to a square and you won’t retain everything in your original photo frame.

How to Share Great Instagram Photos

The whole point of Instagram is photos. You can write descriptions and use hashtags to support your photos, but your photo is the real purpose. Therefore, it's important to create great photos in your stream. What I love about Instagram is that it gives you most of the tools you need to create stunning images every single time!

Taking a photo on your smartphone (or other mobile device) is pretty easy. Most smartphones and tablets now offer multiple camera functions and settings that allow more professional looking images. And if you're savvy, you're probably pretty good at utilizing these additional camera settings. Most of the time you can get a pretty decent photo using your camera alone. But Instagram adds some fun tricks and filters to enhance your photo into something amazing.

When you import the photo into Instagram, you will get a screen much like this one. This is from my Android device iPhones look a little different but the tools and icons are very similar.



For you beginners, I will quickly explain what each of these tools are across the top.

- The < arrow takes you back out of Instagram and returns you to your original photo.
- The square is your picture frame button. When it's a simple square, your picture frame is off, when it's a decorative square, the picture frame is on. Simply touching this icon toggles the feature on and off.
- The teardrop is the tilt-shift function but essentially it alters your depth of field. I commonly refer to it as the blur tool. Clicking on this opens up a little pull down menu with a round icon, a line icon, and an X icon. I will get into the specifics of this function a little bit later.

- The sun is the contrast function. Tapping this will bump up the contrast of your image and tapping it again will return your image to its original composition. I'll talk more about the advantage of this tool in a little bit.
- The tilted square with the dotted line is your rotate feature. If your photo uploaded sideways or upside down, use this feature to rotate the image to the correct orientation. Or if you want to add creative flare by tilting your image slightly, you can alter it at small degree intervals.
- The green > arrow is the "upload" button that actually posts your edited photo to Instagram. From here you'll add your description, locations, etc. to the photo. On an iPhone, the green arrow is not present – instead, you'll have a green check mark at the bottom of the screen.

The options along the bottom are your filters that you can use to enhance your photos. You can scroll back and forth through these and tapping on one will add the selected filter to the image. Just click on a new filter to change the effect. If you're an amazing photographer with awesome skills, you can always leave your filter option as "normal" and no filter effects will be added to your photo.

The important thing to remember about Instagram is that the photos that get the most likes and interaction are the ones with the most vivid colors. Yes, a great black and white shot can be amazing. Yes, the right filter can remove years of wrinkles and sun damage from a selfie. But in general, editing your photos for optimum color resolution will create the best photos by Instagram standards.

How to Start Editing Your Images

There are a variety of people out there with tips on how to edit your images, but here's how I always start editing my photos.

Contrast

First, check your contrast. Clicking on this icon will show you your range of color options. Most of the time, I have the contrast feature enabled on my photos. There are plenty of exceptions, but I love how this tool brings out the depth of the colors and brightens those features that were originally in shadow. Be aware that if you have a photo with a lot of sky or other "smooth" surfaces in the image, adding the contrast function can create a lot of "noise" in the image. This is when your image will look grainy. Sometimes this is even an enhancing effect, other times it's just not so great. Decide what works for your photo and go from there. Remember, this setting isn't permanent. You can always change it again throughout the editing process.

Blur / Depth of Field

Next, I think about the blur feature. I love doing this on a lot of photos (through the camera or the tool on Instagram). This feature allows you to essentially put one area or object in focus while blurring out the surrounding area. This is traditionally achieved through depth of field on a "real" camera. But this little tool allows you to create this same effect easily.

The “round” blur tool creates a round area of focus. It will automatically put the area of focus at the center of your image. Once added, you can actually move the area around just by tapping the screen and dragging your finger around. You’ll see a white haze over the area that will be blurred. You can make the area of focus larger or smaller by “pinching” the area (much like you would to enlarge/zoom in on a photo or webpage).

The “line” blur tool creates the same effect as the round tool, except in a linear format. This effect can also be edited by pinching and dragging the area of focus. You can even tilt the area of focus to appear on an angle rather than horizontally.

The “X” removes this blur function from your photo.

While this tool is fun to use and can significantly boost your photo from amateur to pro in about 2 seconds, be wary of overuse. Many photos are better off without it and it can look out of place on anything that isn’t a close up shot.

Using Filters

Once I’ve decided on my contrast and depth of field, I start playing with the different filters available. Depending on the overall look you are going for, certain filters will work better than others.

If you want to enhance color and create bright, vivid images, I recommend using the following filters:

- Mayfair
- Hudson
- X-Pro
- Lo-Fi
- Hefe

If you want to create an illuminated center and darker edges (vignette style), try these filters:

- Amaro
- Rise
- X-Pro
- Earlybird
- Sutro
- Hefe
- Kelvin

If you want to create a vintage or antique look, these filters work best:

- Rise
- Earlybird
- Toaster
- 1977
- Kelvin

If you want to “pretty” up a selfie and improve skin tone, some of these are my favorites:

- Valencia
- Amaro
- Rise
- Hudson
- Sierra

For adding blue tones to your images these are the best filters:

- Amaro
- Mayfair
- Hudson
- X-Pro
- Lo-Fi

Or for adding, orange/yellow tones to your images use these filters:

- Rise
- Earlybird
- Sutro
- Toaster
- Hefe
- Nashville
- 1977
- Kelvin

Frames

The last and final thing I do with my photos is adding the border or picture frame. Honestly, a lot of the time, I leave them off because they don't suit "my" style. But if it works for you or your brand, then keep them on the photos. Just be aware that each filter is set with a specific type of frame setting.

The best part about Instagram is that you can keep playing with the different tools and features and mixing and matching them until you find what works for you. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and we all perceive color differently.

For example, here is a photo I took at Downtown Disney in Anaheim. The original photo is pretty good by itself. But by combining features that reflect my style, I made it even more awesome!



If you look at my photo stream (you can find me at [jennherman31](#)) you'll see how my photos have evolved since I joined Instagram. I played with different settings (while I learned how to use them) until I found my groove. It took some time to get it all down and it used to take me forever to edit a photo. Now, I've gotten comfortable with the settings and I know what I like so I can process an upload much faster.

So, go grab your mobile device, go take some photos, and start playing with these techniques! Your style may evolve over time and that's ok. Life is always a moving target!

How to Share Great Instagram Videos

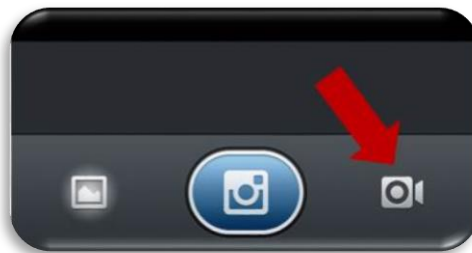
Instagram introduced video features in 2013 and while they aren't as popular as photos, they are gaining steam. If you're already connecting with people via Instagram photos, you can reach out to them even more through videos!

One of the best features of Instagram videos is that they play directly in your feed. You don't have to click anything, you don't have to leave the page, you don't have to do anything except watch.

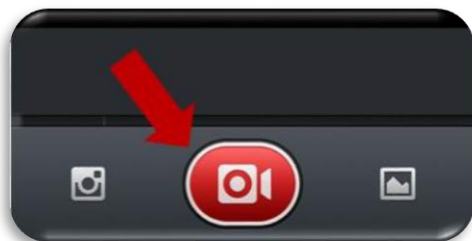
Videos are distinguished in the feed with a little video camera icon in the top right corner. If you stop scrolling to pause on the post, the video will start playing within a second. You can pause the video at any time by clicking on the video. You'll notice a pause symbol appear in the upper right corner. To resume watching the video, click on the pause icon. After the video has finished playing, it will stop and return to the original cover frame image – it doesn't loop. If you'd like to watch it again, just click anywhere on the video image.

Taking Videos

You can film your video directly from the Instagram app by clicking on the Camera icon on the bottom tool bar. Then choose the video icon on the right side to switch to video mode.

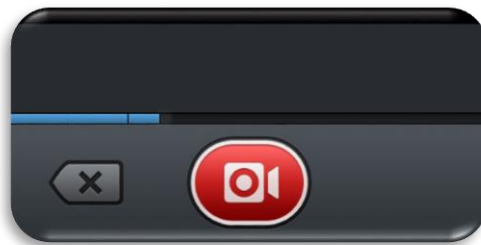


Press and hold the large video camera icon to record video. You must hold down the button to continue recording. You can start and stop by pressing and releasing the button until you've finished filming your desired video.

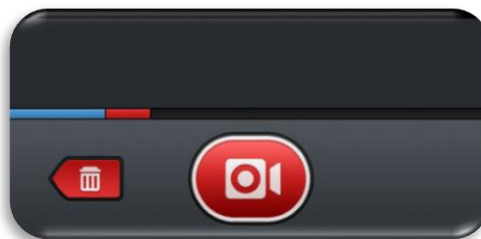


***Tip for Success:** I recommend using a tripod or support system for your mobile device whenever filming doesn't require movement. This will keep the device steady and produce more professional quality videos. This is especially important for stop-motion video.

As you record video, you'll notice the little blue bar extend across the base of your screen. If you record one straight video, the bar will be continuous. However, if you start and stop the video, you'll see a break between frames.



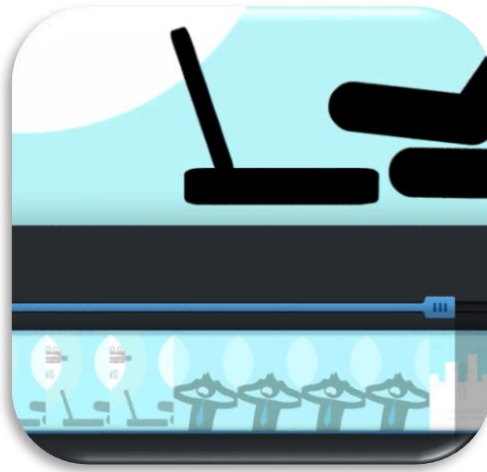
Instagram also makes it easy to delete previous frames. If you don't like the last take, click on the arrow on the left with the "X". It will turn red along with the last recorded section. Click on the (now red) arrow to delete the section and you can re-record.



You can record up to 15 seconds of video to be shared on Instagram. You'd be surprised how much you can pack into 15 seconds! And it's more than twice what you can do on Vine.

One of the advantages that Instagram video provides is their exclusive Cinema feature. This feature stabilizes your video so that if you're on the move while filming, the video appears smoother and more cinematic, and less choppy YouTube video-esque.

If you have other video files that you've recorded previously and want to share to Instagram, you can do that too! Locate the original video file on your mobile device and share it to Instagram. Once you've imported the file, you can trim the video to the desired length and clip sections you don't need.



Dragging the timer along the bottom allows you to change the overall length of the video from 1 to 15 seconds.

***Tip for Success:** As with images, Instagram videos are based on the square screen orientation. If your video is in portrait mode with a traditional rectangle screen, you will lose a portion of your frame size when uploading to Instagram. You can select which frame area you would like by dragging the video to the ideal orientation.

Once you've finished recording your video, use the upload button to proceed to editing, just like you would for photo uploads.

If you record a video through the Instagram app and don't finish the upload process, you cannot re-upload the video at a later time.

In general, the entire process of editing and uploading a video is identical to the process for photos. You have 13 unique filters to choose from to add another level of professionalism to your videos.

***Tip for Success:** If you've been using Instagram photos for a while, you likely already have a "style" established. Whether you favor black and white or vivid colors, or whether you go for sharp, modern effects or vintage effects, choose consistent filters on your videos to maintain your esthetic style.

After choosing your filter, you can choose your ideal cover frame too. Let's face it, not every frame of your video will optimally reveal the true value of the video to your followers. Use the slider to drag the box left and right until you find the perfect frame to represent your video. This is the image that will appear in the Instagram feed that your followers will see.

***Tip for Success:** Don't automatically settle for the first frame as the cover photo. Think about the purpose of the video and what you're trying to convey. Choose a frame that is artistic, clearly defined, and represents the overall message of the video.

Now that you've chosen your cover frame, you can proceed to the caption and upload screen. Include descriptive captions, choose a location if you'd like, and choose any other sites to share the video to. Now that you're done, complete the upload and process and enjoy the video!

Popular Types of Videos

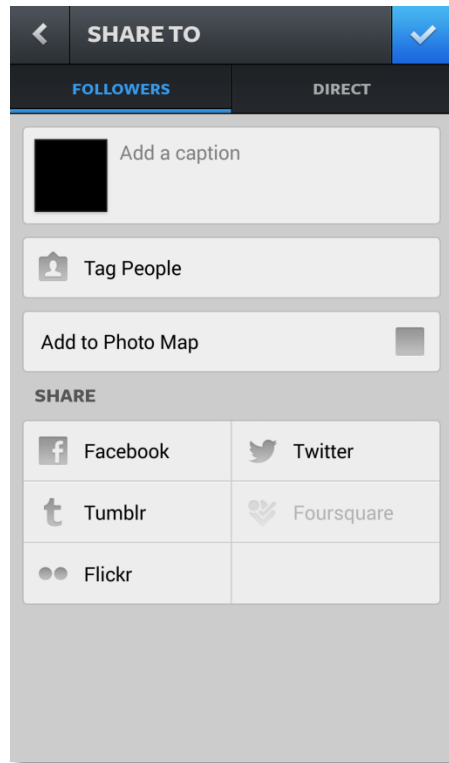
There are a variety of videos that get shared to Instagram daily. Some of the videos that perform the best include:

- Stop-motion videos. Think Claymation type videos or videos compiled from still images.
- Talent videos. If you're a singer or a poet, a make-up artist or a stylist, a snowboarder or a kite-surfer, use Instagram videos to display your talent and skill.
- How-to videos. If you have tips and advice on how to do something well, share it in a video. This works especially well for businesses.
- Personal messages. Want to wish people a happy holiday or make a big announcement? Say it in an Instagram video!
- Time-lapse videos. Is snow falling at a record pace? Is the sunset the most amazing one you've seen? Are your kids getting cuter every month? Mix in creative time-lapse videos to really showcase your interests.

You have the tools at your fingertips to make your videos professional and entertaining. And all of this without the need for high priced equipment or photographers! (Sorry to those professional videographers out there).

Uploading Posts to Instagram

Now that you have that perfect photo or video, it's time to share it with the world! Approve your post to proceed to the upload page. The page will look something like this:



I cover the captions, tagging, photo map, and sharing sections of the upload process in the next few sections of this book.

The green or blue check mark is your confirmation to upload the post to Instagram. Once you click this, your post will upload to your gallery and appear in the home feed. Again, the iPhone screen will have the check mark at the bottom of the screen.

Using Captions on Instagram

When posting to Instagram, it's important that you are using descriptions! Do you know how many times I see a beautiful photo but there's no description attached to it. Sure I can see it's a lovely sunset, or flower, or abstract image of skyscrapers. But where was the photo taken? Why did it inspire the photographer? Was there a special meaning behind the image? Is the photographer in their hometown or on travel? You get my point.

Use your captions to describe the purpose of the post or the key message you're trying to convey. Captions can be serious, humorous, inspirational, simple, long, or short. They should reflect you as much as the images do, so don't be afraid to show your personality. You'll be surprised how much the engagement on your photos goes up when you include a description.

***Tip for Success:** There is no restriction to how many characters you can use in the captions. In theory, you could make your captions as long as you'd like. However, people are not Instagram to read your dissertation. I recommend keeping your captions between 100 and 300 characters.

Captions are tied to the post image and no matter how many subsequent comments arise your original caption will remain in view. Once you have 9 or more additional comments on a post, the most current 5 comments will show and all previous comments will be hidden. There will be a "view all 9 comments" (or whatever number of comments there are) directly beneath your caption. Viewers can click on this to view all comments in a new page.

Captions should always include relevant hashtags. These hashtags are extremely beneficial to the reach of your posts. For more information how best to use hashtags, keep reading and check out the chapter devoted to hashtags.

To add a caption to your post, type in your content in the field that says "Add a caption."

Commenting on Photos

One of the reasons that Instagram is so popular is quite simply because it's so easy to use. It's almost lazy! You upload a photo. Done. You double tap to like someone's photo. Done. It's just this simple. You can "like" tens of photos in a matter of seconds. How many other social media sites offer that much convenience?

For our largely rushed, multi-tasking society, Instagram is a social media user's dream!

And to be honest, I fell into this same trap. I scrolled through my feed double-tapping image after image. But then, as my number of followers grew, I noticed people were *commenting* on my photos. I wasn't expecting this. But it was awesome! The new level of excitement that came from "talking" to someone about a photo took my obsession with Instagram to a whole new level!

If anyone has ever complimented one of your photos or engaged in a conversation with you, you probably have some idea of what I'm talking about.

If you consistently like someone's photos, they'll probably notice you and learn to recognize your name in their notifications. But what else do they know about you? Taking the time to comment on their photos and tell them what you like about the image, or why it struck a chord with you, brings an actual human dimension to your avatar. And this is where the connections are really formed.

To leave a comment on a post, click on the little comment bubble beneath the post and previous comments. This will open up a comment box where you can type in your message. Click "send" when you're done to upload your comment.

If you want to stand out from the crowd, generate real engagement on your photos, create relationships with others, and get more followers, then start commenting! It's really that simple.

Editing/Deleting Captions and Comments

Sometimes, after you hit send, you realize you made a typo or that you forgot to include something.

Unfortunately, you can't actually *edit* a comment once it's been posted. But you can delete it and rewrite/repost the comment.

When you click on one of **your** posts in Instagram, it opens up the photo and all of the comments in a new screen. If you scroll to the bottom of the comments, there's the little comment button. Click on the button to open the comments page in another screen.

To delete a comment on an iOS device, click on the comment button beneath the post to open the comments. Swipe your finger to the right across the post you would like to delete to reveal a trash can icon. Click the trash can icon and confirm the delete.

On Android devices, you'll notice in the top right corner, there is a little pencil icon. Click on that to open up the comments editor.



Now you'll see all of the comments with little red x's next to them. Click on the "x" next to the comment you want to delete. The "x" will change to a "—" and a red "Delete" button will appear on the right. Click on the red "Delete" button to remove the comment entirely.

Now you can go back to the comment screen, type your new comment and hit send to repost.

***Tip for Success:** If there are any comments after your original caption, and you delete the original caption, your new comment will now drop down the list so that it is no longer the first one attached to the image. Now when people look at your image, your description won't be there for them to see unless they scroll through the comments. Therefore, I don't recommend deleting your original comment after others have already started to leave comments.

As you can see from the image above, you can delete any comments on your own posts. If someone leaves an inappropriate comment or shares a comment that you do not want represented on your images, you can feel free to delete those comments. However, as with any other social media site, I always advise this with caution. Don't delete negative or critical comments – engage in a discussion about the issue in a professional manner. And if you are going to delete a post, always advise the user that you are doing so and tell them why. You can mention them in a comment (use the @name of the user) and indicate that their comments are inappropriate and will be removed.

If you made a typo or want to delete a comment on **another user's** post, you can delete your comments. Follow the same process as above to get into the comment editor. You'll see little hexagons with exclamation marks on the comments that you can't edit but your comment will have the little red "x" as mentioned above. You can delete and rewrite/repost your comment as needed.

Even though you can't specifically edit comments on Instagram, you can delete comments for whatever reason and rewrite them. It's not a perfect system but it's better than no editing function, and does provide you with some additional control over the comments on your photos.

Using Hashtags on Instagram

Instagram is all about sharing photos and getting people to see your photos. One of the best ways to do this is to use hashtags on your photos to increase their visibility in searches.

If you're not a big fan of hashtags, I get that. I'm honestly not a big fan of them either. But Instagram is a site that rewards users heavily for the constructive use of hashtags.

If you want people to find your photos, every photo and every description should include at least a couple hashtags.

Hashtags are how people find your photos. Your current followers will see your posts but if you want to gain more followers, you need to appeal to more people. And the quickest, easiest way to do this is to throw in a couple hashtags that will appear in searches.

Obviously, some hashtags are more common than others. Tagging #sunset will probably get more views than tagging #funeral. I'm not going to go into an extensive list here of what the most common hashtags are on Instagram. You can do a quick Google search and find multiple sites that give you those lists. But you should be aware of what some of these popular words are and think about how you can incorporate them into your photos.

There are some hashtags which Instagram determines aren't searchable (for example #Instagram or #iPhone will not produce search results because they are just too popular to filter).

One of the best things about hashtags is that any hashtag that appears in any comment on your post will bring up your post in searches. If you forget to use a certain hashtag or want to add one after you've uploaded, just add it in a subsequent comment on your post.

Use Relevant Keyword Hashtags

If your photo description includes some popular keywords throw a # in front of those words. Incorporate the hashtag into your regular description. You can also add a few more hashtags after the description that relate to the content of your photo.

For example, you may write something like this: Walking around the #park today, we spotted these #beautiful #flowers everywhere! #spring #bloom #tulips

If you're at an event or location that is designated by a hashtag (something like #smmw13), then add this to your posts so that event coordinators and other attendees can find your photos.

Don't Use Too Many Hashtags

You can see from the example I just gave you, that I listed 6 hashtags. I recommend using 5-7 per photo. There may be certain photos where you can easily justify using 10 hashtags, but you should not be using 20 or more hashtags per image. This is cumbersome, distracting, and what many feel is annoying.

Don't Hijack Hashtags

One of my greatest pet peeves on Instagram is people who tag photos with completely irrelevant hashtags. I'm talking about people who take a photo of their lunch and then include 20 popular tags just to gain views. They'll include tags like: #sun, #love, #fashion, #fun, #sky, #cute, #OneDirection, etc. Tell me how your sandwich represents any of these descriptions.

Leave these popular tags for related photos. If you want people looking for sunsets to find you – then take photos of sunsets!

Hijacking can also be extended to trending topics. If there's something current in the news or media, don't use these tags just to rank on the searches. Unless your photo is related to the latest hurricane, don't tag the hurricane name in your photos.

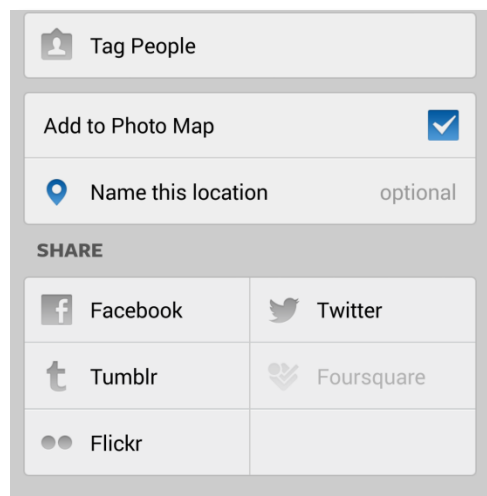
These tactics may get you more views up front but most people won't actually like or comment on your photo. And they most likely will not follow you.

Using Location Features on Instagram

Instagram allows you to geo-tag your posts when you upload. One of the great reasons to do this is to create a photo map of all the places you visit. If you love to travel, you will want to take advantage of this feature! If you want to relive a previous vacation, you can easily scroll through those posts that are tagged in your vacation location.

How to Geo-Tag a Post

During the upload process, you can choose to add your post to your photo map. By default, the location option is always turned off for your post uploads. Click on the box to activate the geo-tag.



***Tip for Success:** If you are uploading multiple images in a small interval of time, once you've activated the photo map locations, Instagram will continue to add the location to your subsequent uploads. This can make it easy to continuously add images to your photo map. However, if you do not want additional photos to be tagged with the location, you will have to uncheck the "Add to Photo Map" box. Once unchecked, it will remain unchecked until you reselect it again.

If you do not name the location, Instagram will assign a location based on your geographic location.

If you would like to specify your location, which I recommend, click on the "Name this location" button. A list of recognized locations will appear for you to choose from. Click on the relevant location to add it to your post.

If the location is not available on the list, you can use the search field to type in your location. You will be provided with two options: to "add" your location or to "search" for your location. If you are creating your own location (home, work, or another quirky name for a location), choose "add" to create your location. Otherwise, you can search for locations based on the name in your search query to find local places that match that name.

Once you've selected your location, proceed with the upload process as normal.

***Tip for Success:** You cannot edit or add a geo-tag after a post has been uploaded. If you want to add a location, make sure you do so during the upload process and at the location you wish to have tagged.

Viewing Geo-Tagged Posts

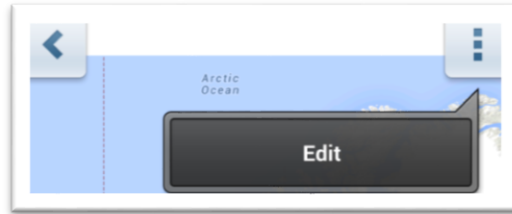
Every time you add a location to your posts, Instagram places that post on a map specific to your profile. To view your photos click on the location tab from your profile screen. If you would like to see other users' photo map, click on this same tab on their profile screen. If the tab is light gray, the user does not have any geo-tagged photos in their gallery.



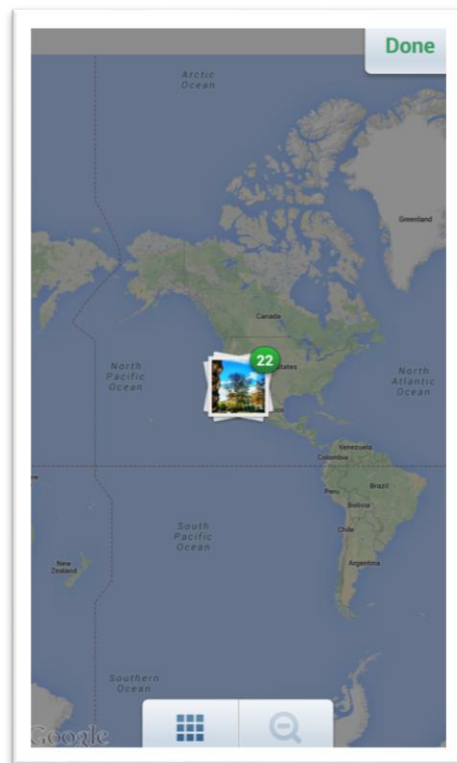
When you open up the photo map, you'll see a global positioning of where the photos are located. To see photos in any of the locations, tap that set of images and the map will zoom in. You can continue to zoom in to a relatively local level.



Sometimes you might notice that you have photos on your photo map that you would rather not have on the map – but that you still want in your gallery. To remove photos from your map, click on the triple dot icon in the top right corner of the map. This will open up an “Edit” button. Click on this to choose images to edit.



You can click on a cluster of images or you can click on the thumbnail icon at the bottom of the screen to open up all of the images.



All images will be selected with a check mark. UNCHECK any images you want to remove from the photo map. You will be asked to confirm that you want to remove X number of images from the photo map (X will equal the number of images you unchecked). Confirm your removal and you're done!

The image(s) will no longer appear on your photo map but will remain in your full gallery on your profile.

Remember that you cannot edit a geo-tag location after a post has been uploaded. If you delete a post from the photo map, you cannot re-add it or change it to another location.

Additional Post Options

Beyond all of the things we've just looked at, there are still other options for your Instagram posts. Here is a quick summary of those options to help you maximize your presence on Instagram.

Deleting Posts

If you change your mind after the fact and want to delete a post from your gallery, select that post by clicking on it. You'll notice a triple dot button at the bottom of the page. Click on this to open another menu of options.

Select "Delete" and then chose "Delete" again to confirm the deletion. Once deleted, all tags and comments will also be deleted.

Tagging Photos

You can actually tag other users in your photos. During the upload process, when you're on the page to add a caption and add your image to the photo map, there is an option to tag people. Click on the "Tag People" field and when the photo opens up, click on the face or location of the photo you would like to tag. Start typing the person's name and a list of matching users will appear. Select the appropriate person. You can continue to add people until complete. If you want to add someone not in your list of followers, you need to know their Instagram handle. You can type in the name and click on the magnifying glass to search for them and then add them.

If you want to tag people after you've already uploaded a post, click on the triple dot button at the bottom of the page and select "Tag People". Follow the same instructions above to proceed with tags.

Make sure that you only tag people actually in the photo. Don't spam others by tagging them in photos which have nothing to do with them.

If you have been tagged in any photos, you can view these from your profile page by clicking on the tab with the tag/person icon. Likewise, if you want to see all the images in which another user is tagged, you can click on this same tab on their profile.

If an image has been tagged with people, you will notice a small black tag icon in the bottom left corner of the post in your feed. Clicking on the post image once (not twice to like it) will populate all the names of those tagged in the post. Clicking the post image once more will hide the tagged names.



Sharing Photos to Other Sites

When you take amazing Instagram posts, you probably want to share them to other sites like Facebook or Twitter. As I mentioned previously, if you want to share ALL of your posts to these other sites, you can set this in your profile by going to your Profile Options and selecting Sharing Settings. Check the box for any site you want to automatically send all uploads to.

If you don't want to share ALL uploads automatically, you can selectively choose which ones to share during the upload process. When you're on the page to add captions before upload, tap on the site name you would like to share the post to (you have to have these sites connected or you'll be prompted to connect them).

All of the sharing icons are grayed out if you haven't selected to automatically share posts to those sites. You can choose to share to any of these sites by tapping on them at this point. If you've connected your other accounts, the icon will change color. If you haven't yet connected your account, you will have to enter your login credentials to gain access for sharing.

You can also share posts after you've uploaded them by clicking on the triple dot button at the bottom of the post screen and selecting "Share". Click on the site(s) to share to and follow the prompts to complete the share.

Be aware of post styles on other sites. If you use a lot of hashtags in your Instagram post, those hashtags will also appear on the other site's post. Also, if your caption is longer than the post length for the other sites, your comments will be cut off upon sharing to the other site.

How to Use Instagram Direct

In late 2013, Instagram introduced a new feature: Instagram Direct. One thing that Instagram lacked was the ability to maintain a private conversation with any one person or small group on Instagram. Now, with the introduction of Instagram Direct, we can have conversations on a more private level.

You will notice the little inbox icon in the top right corner of your home screen – this is the only place to access the inbox. Notifications will appear here when you receive new messages.

You can send direct messages to one person or a group of up to 15 people. You cannot send text only messages. You must initiate a direct message via a photo or video post. Comments can continue on the post as text based conversation after the message is initiated.

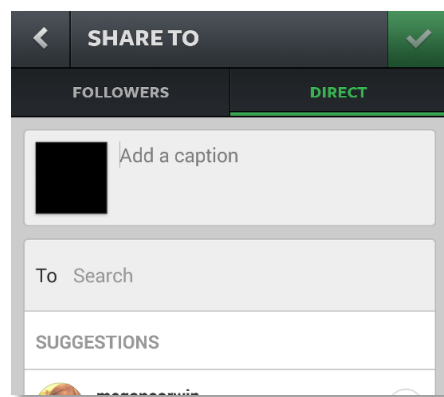
When you are in your inbox, you can see the messages in which you've participated. Any message with your name is a message that you initiated. If the message has someone else's name, they initiated the message.

There are two ways to generate a new message: through the inbox directly or through the regular upload process.

When you're in the Instagram Direct inbox, you can click on the + symbol to generate a new message. Take a new photo or video or upload one from your gallery. Edit your post with filters as you normally would.

If you don't use the Instagram Direct inbox, you can upload a photo or video from the in-app camera or your gallery. Edit your post with filters as you normally would.

You'll notice that when you get to the caption stage, there are two tabs at the top of your screen: One for Followers and one for Direct. If you are going to send a post via Instagram Direct, you'll want to make sure that the Direct tab is highlighted. If you decided you didn't want to send this post privately, just click on the Followers tab and the post will proceed as a normal post upload.



Add a caption and select the people to send the message to. Instagram will suggest users or you can begin typing a name in the search bar. When the name of the person appears in the list, click on their

name and a green check mark will appear in their circle. Their image will also appear in the “To” field. You can select up to 15 people. Once complete, click the check mark in the top corner or “Send to (#)” button.

If you want to respond to an original conversation with another photo or video, you cannot add these to the conversation stream. You would have to start another message with your photo or video. This is one thing that I expect Instagram to improve upon and update in the future.

When viewing messages, the person who started the message will appear on the left. Everyone who was sent the message will have their image appear in the “To” field. Anyone who has not seen the message will remain faded. Anyone who has viewed the message will appear with a green check mark. And anyone who has viewed and commented on the message will appear with a blue chat icon.



Comments will appear beneath the post and profile pics of those in the conversation. Any comments left on the post are visible to everyone invited to the message. But only those in the message can view the comments and the post.

Technically, anyone can send you a direct message. Or, you can send a message to anyone.

If you want to send a message to someone you don't follow, you need to know their username and type that into the search field. Their username and profile photo will appear and you can add them to the list of recipients.

However, if someone sends a message to someone they do not follow, the recipient will receive a message that this person is trying to send them a message. The sender's name and profile photo will appear with the option to approve or decline the message. If you accept to receive this message from this sender, they will be able to send you messages again without your approval.

This is a good method for Instagram to control spam and messages from unknown users. However, be careful who you accept messages from. You don't see a preview of the post prior to accepting and if you allow them in once, you automatically allow them in again. You can choose to block this user, however, if their messages become unwelcome in the future.

You can delete messages you have sent or delete certain comments from the thread of the conversation on a message you started. Clicking on the triple dot button or edit button will open a pop-up menu with options. Likewise, you can delete comments you made on another person's message or hide their post using this menu.

So, for those instances where you would like to have a conversation in a more private environment, Instagram Direct allows you to manage direct messages.

How to Interact on Instagram

Now that you are familiar with how to use Instagram to share your own photos and videos, I think it's also important to talk about how to interact with others on this platform. As with any social media site, there are certain expectations and standard practices for engaging on the site.

When you scroll through your feed, you can see all the recent posts shared by those you follow. Instagram is a very active site (much like Twitter) with updates posting regularly. Your feed will constantly be updating with new posts.

Liking Posts

Be active on Instagram. Like more posts and you'll get more likes in return. To "like" a post, you can click on the heart icon beneath the post or you can simply double tap the image. You will see a watermark heart appear (and quickly disappear) on the post image and the heart icon beneath the post will turn red when you've successfully liked a post.

If you would like to remove your "like" simply click on the red heart icon and the heart will return to gray.

Every time you like someone's post, they will receive a notification that you have liked their image and your name will appear in the list of people on the post who have liked it. A post will display the names of the first 10 likes on a photo. Once an eleventh like has been received, the post will show the actual number of likes, rather than the names. If you would like to see the names of everyone who has liked a post, simply click on the blue number of likes and a new page will open with a complete list.

Commenting

Similar to liking posts, the more often you comment on someone's post, the more often you will receive comments. Comments are also the best way to cultivate real relationships with other users. Comments are expected to be appropriate and related to the post. Do not spam others' posts and ask them to check out your gallery or follow you. Engage in real conversation.

To leave a comment on someone's post, click on the little comic-style comment bubble next to the heart button. Type in your comment and click "send".

Responding to Others

If people comment on your posts, please respond back! Conversations go two ways! Be prepared to answer questions, or just respond with a thank you when someone compliments your post.

In order to ensure that the other user sees your response use an @ mention in your comment. At any place in your comment, include their username with the @ symbol in front (I would be @jennherman31). This way they will receive a notification that you have mentioned them and they can see your response.

Search

The search function is one feature that I think Instagram really needs to improve upon. In the search page (the magnifying glass from your profile page) has two tabs – one for users and one for tags.

If you are looking for a specific user or person, click on the Users tab. You need to know the exact spelling of their name (as they registered it on Instagram) or the exact name of their username. Searching for “keywords” doesn’t really work. Instead Instagram will look for that word in the person’s name or username, not their bio or description.

You can search via tags (hashtags) to find all posts tagged with a specific hashtag. If, for example, you wanted to find people who had an interest in the same hobby as you, you could search for hashtags related to that hobby. However, your results will be all posts with that hashtag. If it’s a popular hashtag, you’ll find a lot of posts – and not necessarily a good distribution of users with a similar interest.

Explore

The navigation star on your bottom navigation menu is the Explore button. This page shows you the current, trending posts on Instagram. There are strict criteria to get on this page (including having at least 1000 followers and accumulating at least 20% of your fan count likes within the first couple hours of posting). If you want to see what’s popular right now, check out the explore page!

News

The News page is the comment bubble with the heart in your bottom navigation menu. This page has two tabs: Following and You. When you open this page, it will always default to the You tab. This is your list of notifications. You will see who has liked your posts or left you comments. You will also see if someone new has followed you. I always recommend checking out their profile and seeing if you’re interested in following them back.

The other tab, the Following tab, is a list of activity for those users you follow. You can see what posts they’re liking or who they’ve started to follow. If you are looking to grow your fan base, this is a good place to hang out! You can find a lot of new people to follow by following the actions of those who you follow.

Check Your Notifications Regularly

Because Instagram is a mobile application primarily, you do not get email (or other) notifications of interactions on your posts. The only notification you will receive is a little Instagram icon on your phone. My Android notification looks like this:



When you see this notification icon, I recommend you access your Instagram account and check for new notifications. It may be a new follower, or someone commenting on your post. See who is engaging with you and in what way. Then you can respond accordingly.

I also recommend you do this frequently because, as far as I know, Instagram only shows you your last 80 notifications. So, if you have a highly engaged audience, you don't want to miss out on opportunities to respond.

Instagram Etiquette

Being a “social” media site, there are of course some etiquettes to consider on Instagram.

Following People

If you start following someone on Instagram, don’t just follow them and like their latest photo. Go through their gallery and like other posts. Comment on at least one of their photos. You can even mention that this post inspired you to follow them. Reaching out to them like this will establish a strong connection from the start and they will often follow you back as a result. Keep the relationship growing by continuing to like and comment on additional posts in the future.

It is also not acceptable to follow a bunch of other people in order to get them to follow you and then turn around and unfollow them. This is not how you grow an audience! Follow people who actually interest you not just to build likes.

Sharing Photos

As the popularity of Instagram increases, I’m finding more and more accounts taking the “easy” road to sharing images. Instagram is all about sharing your *own* images! The purpose of Instagram is to share images *instantly* - right when you take them on your phone. Hence the “insta” in the name!

I understand that we might not always share them instantly. In fact, I often recommend waiting and spacing out your posts. And I know many photographers who use their DSLR cameras to take photos then format them for Instagram upload after the fact. I am totally ok with both of these practices.

However, I am not ok with Instagramers using other people’s images, or images they found on Google.

Instagram images should be a reflection of *you*! Using other people’s images is *not* a reflection of *you*.

Many of us get in the habit of sharing inspirational quotes or seasonal images that we find in searches. It’s extremely common on Facebook and some of the other sites. I get it, it’s easier than creating our own. And sometimes, we find something that just resonates really well and we want to share it.

But Instagram isn’t really about this behavior. If you want to share an inspirational quote, put it on your own image! Take a few extra minutes to find a good photo from your gallery, add text for the quote, and then upload the formatted image to your Instagram account. There are a variety of apps you can download that add text to images.

You should also know that a lot of Instagramers are extremely vigilant with their copyrights. They will call you out if they find you using one of their images without attribution or credit. Trust me when I tell you this is not the impression you want to make on Instagram!

You should also consider the frequency with which you share posts on Instagram. No one wants to go through their feed and see 25 photos from you, one right after the other. Space out your images to ensure that other users' photos fill the space between yours. Not only will this keep your photos active throughout the day(s), it will also increase your engagement on each photo. If you share 10 photos in a row, by the second or third one, people stop liking and commenting. However, if you space them out and keep them fresh, you're more likely to continue getting likes on comments in higher proportions on each post.

Also, share only the best photos with your audience. Just because you have 3 different angles of that birthday cake doesn't mean you have to share them all. Choose the best one and share that *one*.

Get Results on Instagram

Now that you know how to use Instagram, you need to get out there and get results! Here are some quick tips to help you increase your interaction and results.

- Share more posts – people don't want to follow lazy accounts. Post regularly!
- Share better posts – if all your posts are blurry or poorly formatted, people aren't going to engage as much.
- Use filters – different filters create different emotions in viewers. Use these to your advantage
- Use hashtags – get your posts seen!
- Grow your audience – more people following you means more people liking your posts.
- Be more active!
- Spend more time on Instagram!

So there you go! You're all set to get active on Instagram and start seeing results!