

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO INSTAGRAM



HOW TO BRING 'YOUR STORY' TO LIFE ON INSTAGRAM

I have created this beginner's guide to Instagram to help you make Instagram part of your social media and digital marketing strategy.

SIGNING UP FOR INSTAGRAM

Instagram is primarily a mobile-only application. While there is a website interface for Desk and Laptops, it contains extremely limited functionality, in that although you can view your feed and update your profile, you can't post any content. When you launch the mobile app for the first time, it will take you through the account setup process.

I can show you a cheeky work-around to help you post from a PC or Laptop.

STEP 1: DOWNLOAD AND LAUNCH THE INSTAGRAM APP

Download the Instagram app by going to the App Store on Your Mobile Phone. Once it is installed, open it.

STEP 2: CONNECT THE APP TO FACEBOOK

Once the app is opened, click on the Sign-Up prompt. Enter your e-mail, and then connect your account to Facebook. This step will come in handy both for when you want to post directly to Facebook from Instagram, and for finding people to follow that you personally know.

STEP 3: SWITCH YOUR ACCOUNT TO BUSINESS

If you plan on using Instagram as a tool to market your business, then you're going to want to switch your account from Personal to Business. Doing so will let you view insights and statistics relating to your engagement, will keep your profile set to "public", as well as let you add a business address, phone number, and working hours.

To do so, open your Profile, click on the burger menu top right

At the bottom right side of the page find: Settings > Switch to Business Account.

STRATEGY

Instagram is a very visual medium, so you need to be creative in what you decide to share.

Content should be either engaging or valuable to your audience, aim to entertain, inspire and inform.

As with any social media platform, the more you interact and engage with your audience's posts, the more they'll interact and engage with yours. Consider staggering your best content over a few days to naturally build engagement and your brand's story. Use a specific style of photography and colours that emulate the qualities of you and your brand and ensure you reflect your style and tone of voice. You need to try and project your personality and values through all your posts and build a wall that reflects what you feel is important and relevant to your perfect target audience. This will attract a loyal likeminded audience, real fans.

Start with one to three posts a week, but you should experiment with your content and see what better engages your audience: if it's at a specific time of day or with a specific hashtag. It's important to remember that the current Instagram algorithm likes it when you keep your posting regular and that if you post only sparsely, you could see your engagement drop. Consistency is king.

Despite its status as a visual medium, Instagram is incredibly versatile in the kind of content that you can post. To help educate and inform or position yourself as a thought leader, post images of inspirational thoughts about your business or sector. If you're an interior designer, you could post a short video explaining what to look for when purchasing a new sofa.

Instagram may not be as robust in features as other social networks, but what it is capable of it does efficiently. It's the perfect way to reinvent the traditional business/customer relationship by having the personality and culture of your company on full display.

INSTAGRAM BASICS

After signing up for an account, the next step is to follow some other users and look at their photos. Just like Facebook, Instagram uses an algorithm to determine what content to show you and when, so don't panic if someone suddenly drops out of your timeline.

To see more of the accounts you care about, simply engage with their posts and, if you never want to miss someone's post, turn on notifications. **To do so**, click on a post of theirs, and then choose Turn on Post Notifications from the menu.

FIND PEOPLE TO FOLLOW

Because you've already connected your Instagram account to Facebook, you should be automatically prompted to individually follow people in your friends list.

However, if you want to search for users not in your personal contacts, click on the magnifying glass icon at the bottom of your screen and Instagram will show you some videos, Stories (we'll get into those in a minute), and photos by users they think you might like.

Other ways to find people to follow include searching for hashtags (#interiordesign or #practicalspaces if you're looking for specific content, for example).

ENGAGE

When you see a photo you like, you have many choices for how you can choose to engage.



Like: To like a post, either double tap the photo itself or touch the heart icon underneath the photo.



Comment: To leave a comment, tap the speech bubble underneath the photo, and type in your message.



Stories: To post a story, slide right, and click the plus button. These are available for 24 hours and are a quick and fun way to engage with your audience without worrying about posting at “optimal times”.



Highlights: Create permanent stories to stay at the top of your Instagram page, called “Highlights”, where your audience can quickly access the main points of any event you wish.



Direct messaging: When sending photos or videos over direct message, you can choose to have them “disappear”, after a selected time: View Once, Allow Replay, or Keep in Chat.



Saving posts: If you want to save the image to come back and look at later, click the bookmark icon. You can save images on your feed, or while looking through another user’s profile.



Explore: Check out the explore page to find content and accounts that suit your business. The explore page shows popular content which is curated to your interests. Getting your content on the Explore page will drive much more traffic!



IGTV: View and post video content with IGTV. This feature works a lot like the Explore page, where curated video content populates onto the page. IGTV also has its own separate app, but again, more on this later.

GETTING YOUR INSTAGRAM PROFILE RIGHT

Before you start posting, take some time to get your profile looking sleek and polished!

An Instagram profile consists of a display name, a profile picture, a 150-character description, Story Highlights (once again, we'll get to those in a minute), an e-mail option, and a link. Unless you're one of the few users with a verified account (which you probably won't have upon first signing up), this is the only link you can work with in Instagram.

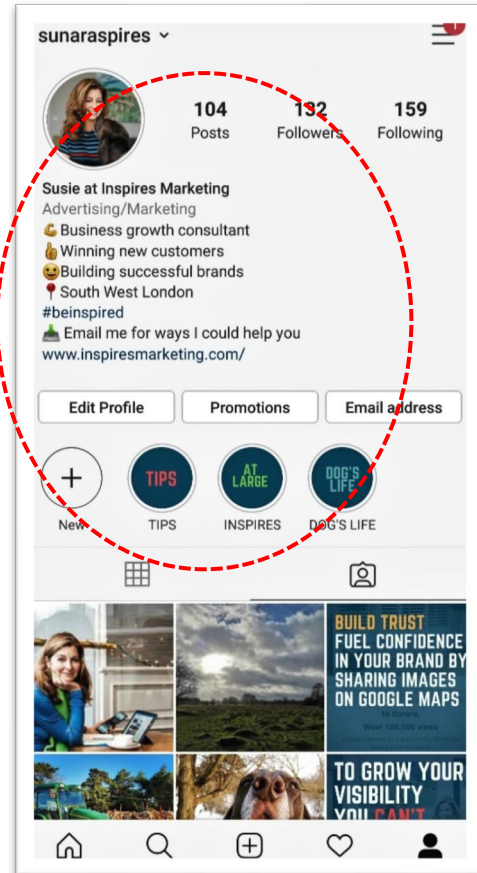
Arguably, the two most important parts of your profile will be your **description** and your **link**. Describe as succinctly as possible what your business does and include a call to action. This call to action can include signing up for your recent newsletter, checking out your blog, or joining your mailing list. Instagram also lets you put hashtags in your description, so put a relevant one in there if it fits and will help guide people to your profile naturally!

When choosing a link for your profile, choose something that will send users directly to your latest project (you can change this link as many times as you'd like.) You can use emoji's in your description if it helps your message and tone.

Additionally, if you have more than one business and, subsequently, Instagram profile, Instagram now let's you add clickable links to another profile in your bio!

If you're a blogger, I recommend always creating a post that draws attention to your latest article and refer people to your profile to find the link. Also, while using a shortened URL might seem appealing, we advise against it, as people are less likely to click on a link if there's no context to let them know

where the link will take them. That bit.ly link could be for anything without accompanying text. When you really would like multiple links, you can add a 'linktree' link in your bio and upload multiple options. Sign up at www.linktr.ee and follow their instructions.



POSTING YOUR INSTAGRAM PHOTOS

So now that your account is all set up and you've engaged with some other posts, it's time to get posting!

Select the plus icon in the bottom middle of the screen to start the process. The most recent photo from your camera roll will be selected, but you can scroll to choose another. If you want to take an in-the-moment shot (how we all used to use Instagram back in the day), click on the word Photo at the bottom of the pop up screen to change your selection from Gallery, 'Photo' for stills, and 'Video' for motion.

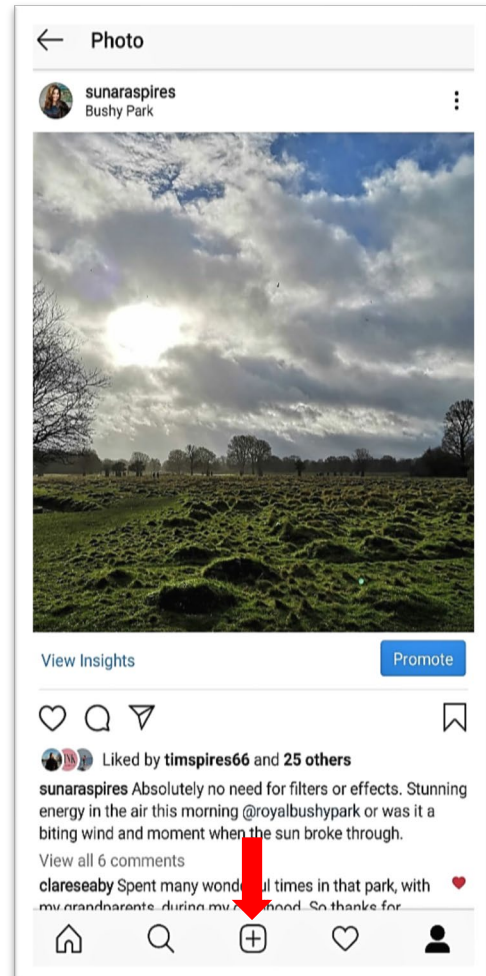
Tip: To stand out on someone's Instagram feed, ask yourself would I want to like this image on someone else's feed, before posting.

Tap the round button to take a photo or hold it down to take a video. You can then choose one of multiple Instagram filters to apply to your picture. There are plenty of free filters to use, and by choosing the same filter or style of filters for every photo you post, your posted content will become instantly recognizable to your audience, and your profile will look uniform.

You can also tap on Edit at the bottom of your screen to do more fine tuning, such as adjusting brightness, saturation, contrast, and more. Once you're happy with the look of your photo, tap on Next in the upper right corner of your screen.

Unless you're a celebrity, you'll want to include a caption with your photo. Share a thought about the photo and leave your audience with something that invites engagement, such as asking a question. Include hashtags but try not to go #overboard!

Tip: People love personal, authentic stories!

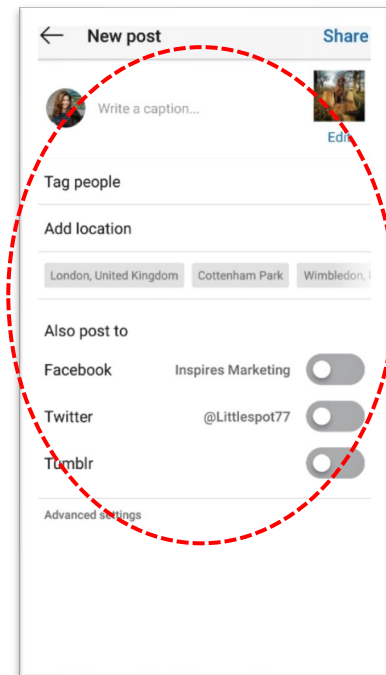


If other Instagram users appear in your photo, you can tag them. If you write @username in the caption, or 'tag' someone in a photo, they will be notified of the post and can engage with it. If you have a personal, private account, however, they will only get a notification if they're following you.

As part of this process, you should also geotag your photo by tapping on Add Location. If your location doesn't automatically pop up, you can search for it. Did you know that posts with a location attract 75% more engagement than posts without?

Additionally, if you've successfully hooked up your Facebook, Twitter, or Tumblr accounts, you can simultaneously share your photo to one of these platforms by swiping the appropriate toggle right so that it turns blue.

The moment of truth... tap that **Share** button!



POSTING YOUR FIRST INSTAGRAM STORY

Instagram Stories are photos and videos that show in a different feed and only last for 24 hours before disappearing into the ether.

To post a story on your timeline view:

- > From the home screen - Tap either on the camera in the upper left corner or your own profile picture underneath the camera if there's a + on it.

- > Tap on the white circle once to take a photo or hold down to take a video.

Additionally, if you look at the horizontal menu at the very bottom of your screen, you'll notice some additional features such as Live, Create, Normal, Boomerang, Layout, Superzoom, and Hands Free. Each of these options have distinct functions so play around before you post to see what works best for your needs! If you're into selfies, switch your camera around so you're using the front one, and then click on the fun icons to the right of the photo button, this will give you some fun filters to play with!



NOW START BUILDING YOUR STORY!

When you've created your background, you can add text or draw by using the two tools in the upper right corner: brush for drawing, Aa for text. If you wish to jazz up your post, click on the square smiley face "Sticker" icon, which will allow you to add stickers and GIF's. Add filters to your posts by swiping left on the photo itself; there are eleven to choose from!

When you're happy, click the right arrow in the white lozenge and tap Your Story to add it to your public story. You can also select just friends or individuals

Sneaky tip: you can add photos from your camera roll by swiping up while in camera mode. You'll see photos and videos that were created or saved within the last 24 hours.

If you wish to save any of your stories as Instagram "cornerstone content", and have them appear on your profile indefinitely, save your preferred story, go to your profile and click on Story Highlights, then press the + to add a new story! Go back to your post and select the highlights button at the bottom of the story, then choose which highlight you'd like to save to.

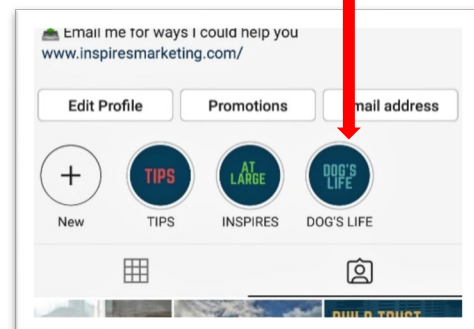
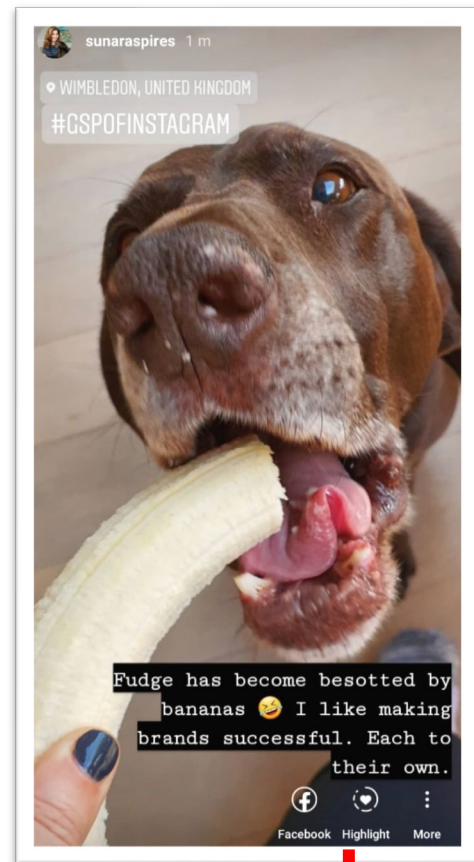
Bulk Posting: To add multiple pictures to your story at once, simply click the multi-image icon in the top right of the page when posting a story and choose what content to add.

See Who Has Viewed Your Content: Open on your story and swipe up on the screen to see which usernames have viewed your content.

INSTAGRAM LIVE

Following Facebook's lead, on Instagram you can broadcast live via Stories. Once a live video has ended, it is no longer visible in the app.

To start a live video, tap the camera in the top left of the screen, or swipe right from anywhere in your feed. Then, tap Live at the bottom of the screen, and again to Start Live Video.



From here, you can see how many viewers you have at the top of the screen as well as the comments at the bottom. To turn off comments, tap the three horizontal dots, and then select Turn Off Commenting. You can even choose to hide your live stories from specific viewers. To do so, follow: Gear Menu > Story Settings > Hide My Account. When you're done, tap End in the top right, and then tap again to confirm!

IGTV Instagram now has a video platform to play with. Much like the Explore feature, IGTV curates its content based on what's trending, and what your personal preferences are. You can create your own channel for others to follow, or you can follow other users. The videos can be up to 10 minutes for regular account users, or one hour for large accounts.



IGTV has its own separate app where you can watch videos. Trending videos will show up on the "popular" channel. To create your own IGTV video: Go to View Your Channel > plus button > Select video to post > add title and description > Share **Tip:** when adding a description, don't forget hashtags!

#HASHTAGS

An Instagram post with one or more hashtags receives 12.6% more engagement than posts without. Hashtags serve as a way for Instagram to organize its content, and for users to quickly find and link with things of interest. Having hashtags encourages your content to be found in the hands of users most interested in it, so make sure to only use hashtags that are relevant!

Different kinds of hashtags: While it's important to use hashtags, it's doubly important to use only those that are relevant. So as not to distract from your post and to start engagement place your hashtags on your post as a comment. Some classes of hashtags are:

1. Community hashtags: these are the most common and connect people with like-minded content such as: #marketing, #socialmedia, and #digital. I suggest using no more than 5 of these general description tags.
2. Branded hashtags: these can be custom hashtags which are specific to your own brand, allowing users to quickly identify any content relevant or made by you. It also strengthens brand image. These can be things like #inspiresmarketing, for instance.
3. Campaign hashtags: These hashtags are specific to campaigns, projects and events. They can help users quickly and easily find content relating to a certain campaign, instead of digging through a brand's profile. You could include up to 10 of this. Also look for hashtags that are little used, where you stand a chance of appearing in the top posts, try and find five of these.

Stuck on which hashtags to use? Do a little digging into your competitors, industry leaders, and followers. Look at which hashtags they tend to use and follow the trends. Just remember-trends don't last forever. It's always good practice to keep up to date on which hashtags are currently relevant in your industry!

TOOLS FOR MANAGEMENT

If doing all the editing, writing, and tagging in the moment seems too daunting a task, don't worry, there are tools to help!

Because of bots and security, Instagram is very restrictive with what it allows third party apps to do on the platform, and the rules are always shifting.

Tools that let you follow and unfollow from the app and monitor your followers have been barred. If you're going to use 3rd party tools, ensure that you stay aware of changes that could affect them.

Despite the restrictions, there are a couple of tools that will help you organize. For prepping and automating your content, I recommend HootSuite and Later.com. Another one of the reasons to switch to a business account is that you'll be allowed to set up automated posting through a trusted 3rd party tool.

INSTAGRAM ADS

Because of the Instagram and Facebook algorithms only a small percentage of your followers will see your organic posts, forecasts are currently around 3%.

Utilizing Instagram Ads for your business is an important part of any social media marketing strategy! With them, you'll be able to reach a well targeted audience to drive awareness to your brand, have potential customers learn more about your products or services, and help drive conversion.

Instagram allows business accounts to post photo ads, video ads (up to 60 seconds), carousel ads, and stories ads. The best part is you can post simultaneously with Facebook using Facebook Ads manager. This is a dark art but can be highly targeted with minimal wastage and grow your following quickly. To get Ads manager right and produce a good return on investment. A starting media budget would be around £300 per month and to create a successful lead magnet campaign you'd be looking at more like £1000. Have a chat with me if you'd like to know more?

I hope this beginner's guide to Instagram has been helpful. If you would like to take your digital marketing to the next level, please get in touch and follow me at <https://www.instagram.com/sunaraspires/>

