

GUIDE

The Essential Instagram Marketing Guide

In this guide, we'll cover all the bases to guide you to successfully integrating Instagram into your brand's marketing efforts.

Since its launch in 2010, Instagram has exploded in both popularity and reach, rapidly evolving from a personal photo-sharing app to the go-to platform for businesses of all shapes and sizes.

And, while it's still chock-full of the meticulously filtered selfies and snapshots that spurred its initial rise to fame, Instagram has become one of the most powerful online mediums for companies to increase engagement, promote products, and drive sales.

By using our site you agree to our [use of cookies](#) — [I Agree](#)

[BOOK A MEETING](#)

the following stats:

- Instagram has over 1.32 billion monthly active accounts
- 90% of accounts follow at least one business

- 70% of shoppers turn to Instagram for their next purchase

Any marketer will agree that those numbers are far too big to ignore. So, the question is not if, but **how** to effectively leverage Instagram to its full potential. In this guide, we'll cover all the bases to guide you toward successfully integrating Instagram into your brand's marketing efforts.

Setting up your Instagram business account

Skip this section

If you don't already have an Instagram account for your brand, below is a quick walk-through to get you up and running. There are two Instagram account types: personal accounts and business accounts.

Setting up a business account will allow your brand to reap the benefits of:

- Creating shoppable posts that allow your audience to purchase products directly
- Adding links to your Instagram stories
- Accessing real-time data on how your promoted posts and stories are performing
- Learning more about your followers and how they engage with your content
- Displaying information about your business such as location, contact details, and hours of operation.

How to create an Instagram business account

Step 1: Download the Instagram App from the App Store for iOS, the Google Play Store for Android, or the Windows Store for Windows.

Step 2: Select 'Sign Up' and enter your preferred email address (or log in with Facebook if you'd like to connect your Facebook account).

Step 3: Fill out your username, password, and profile info (more on this below). Then hit 'Done.'

Step 4: Tap your profile icon, then find 'Settings' in the navigation on the top right corner.

Step 5: Select 'Switch to Business Account.'

Optimizing your Instagram business account profile

Your profile is prime real estate and, as such, it's crucial to make a strong impression. The three key elements to your profile are:

1) Account name: Choose a clear name that represents your brand and aligns with the best practices for naming your Instagram account.

2) Profile picture: Use your brand's logo or a memorable image that's associated with your brand. Ensure the image is high-resolution and will fit into a circle cropping.

3) Bio: This is a short summary that introduces your business and tells your brand's story. Write a compelling bio and be sure to add a touch of personality. Also, encourage your audience to visit your website by including a link (optionally, a shortened trackable URL). It's also a great place to promote your branded hashtags to strengthen your brand identity (more on this later).

Creating scroll-stopping content

Instagram is an extremely visual platform — which means that the quality and aesthetic of your content are essential. When creating content, you should strive to establish a unique and consistent brand persona that will attract users and differentiate your business.

Developing a brand persona starts with defining your brand's personality and values. Is your brand quirky, bold, playful, minimalist, sophisticated, fun, etc?

Whatever you decide, ensure that theme is maintained throughout your pictures, videos, captions, and hashtags. This will help your brand stand out from the crowd in a recognizable way.

With your brand persona in place, it's time to explore the different types of content you can create on Instagram — and how to make the most of each.

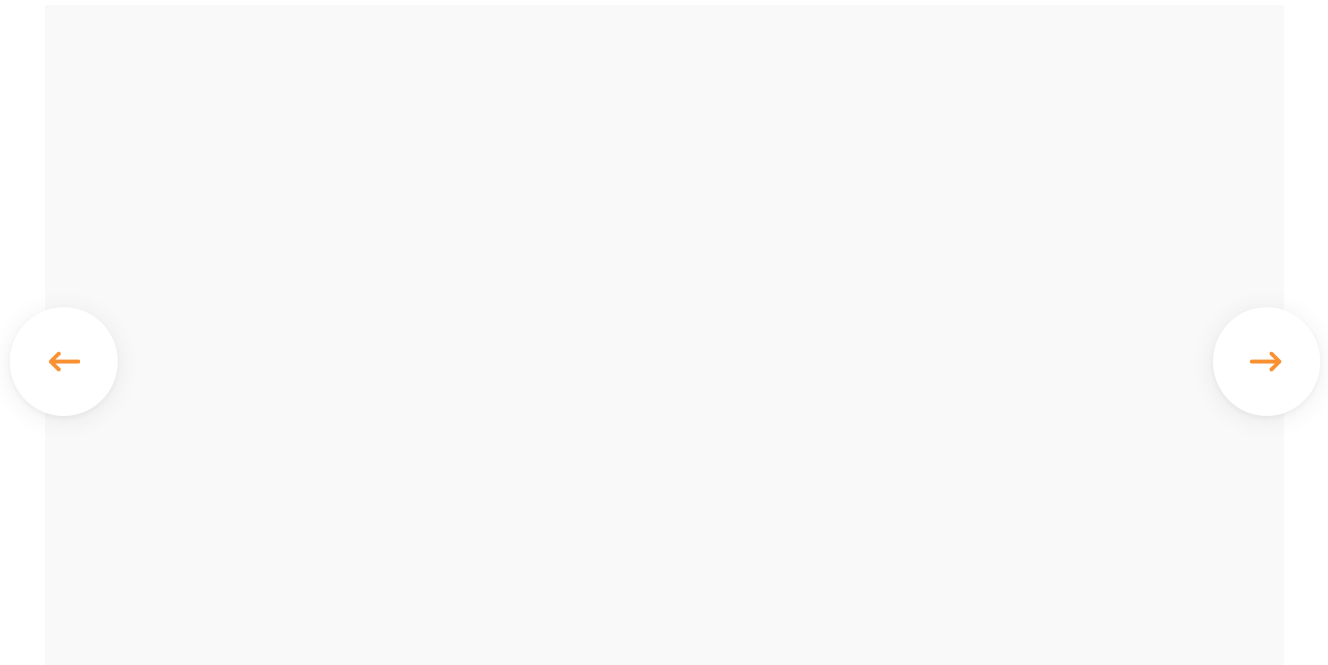
Images

Instagram's roots are as a photo-sharing app, and images are still an important form of content within the platform. So, you'll need to showcase your brand with a wide variety of photos to keep your audience engaged.

Try to avoid posting too many product images and promotional content, as this can grow repetitive and disengage your followers. Instead, mix things up with pictures that illustrate different aspects of your brand (and humanize it).

Here are some ideas to try out:

- **Behind-the-scenes** photos that reveal an inside view of your brand. Show your employees, business processes, and company culture.
- Educational photos that provide tips on how to use your products. (For example, if your brand sells handbags, you could post photos of how to pair them with different outfits).
- Inspirational photos that include motivational quotes. Use messaging is relevant to your target audience and adheres to your brand guidelines.
- Humorous photos that are shared simply for the purpose of entertaining your followers (rather than selling to them).

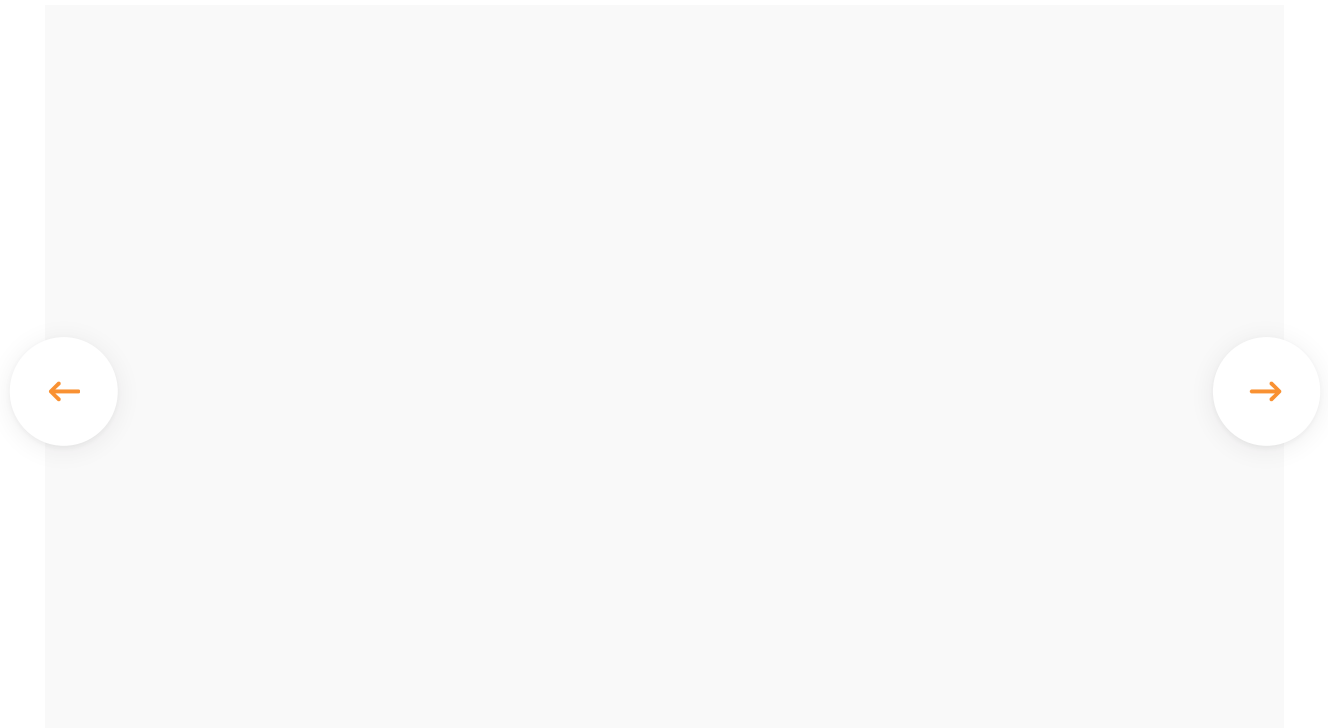


How to snap attention-grabbing photos

You don't have to be a professional photographer to create stellar images for Instagram. In fact, many users favor more authentic looking, 'raw' photos (as opposed to glossy perfection and high production value).

Here are some tips for taking "Instagrammable" photos with nothing more than a mobile phone:

- Take advantage of natural light by framing photos near a window or outside after sunrise/before sunset.
- Use negative space to draw the focus to the subject of your photo. Pictures with minimalist backgrounds don't contain any distractions and it makes the object really stand out.
- Photograph one subject at a time. Do your best to avoid overcrowded scenes and cluttered backgrounds.
- Experiment with different angles to create interesting perspectives.
- Look for interesting patterns and symmetry to create eye-catching compositions.



Adding filters

One of Instagram's original appeals is its collection of easy-to-use, built-in filters that can instantly transform a photo from 'meh' to magical. When you upload a photo, you'll be automatically prompted to add a filter, which can then be adjusted by tapping the filter a second time.

Pro tip: In addition to preset filters, you can also experiment with Instagram's photo editing tool (simply toggle from 'filter' to 'edit' when uploading a photo). Try adjusting the brightness, contrast, saturation, and other editing options to enhance your photo. However, do so in moderation, as an over-edited photo can look fake. Instead, make minor tweaks to accentuate what's already great about the pic.

Video

The preference for video content, especially among Millennials and Gen Z, grows every year. And Instagram has responded accordingly with a wide array of different video options and formats to engage your audience, including:

Instagram Stories

Stories are up to 60-second ephemeral videos that disappear after 24 hours (appearing in a queue at the top of your followers' feeds). They're a great way to share:

- Giveaways, shoutouts, and contests
- Polls and quizzes
- New launches
- Story Ads that can be shown to users who don't follow your brand

Instagram Highlights

When you choose to save an Instagram Story, it becomes a highlight that's featured at the top of your account profile. Since Highlights remain on your profile, you can use them to share:

- Tips, FAQs, and quick tutorials
- Product collections
- 'Evergreen' branded content

Instagram Live

As the name suggests, these are live videos that appear on your Instagram Stories. Live video is an excellent way to drive engagement — and it allows you to interact with your followers in real-time using the chat feature. Use Live for presentations or exciting reveals like new product drops.

Reels

Reels is Instagram's video feature that allows you to create videos between 15 and 90 seconds long and add sound, AR filters, and other effects. The great thing about Reels is that they can be viewed by users who don't follow your brand (in the 'Explore' or 'Reels' section). So, use Reels to create entertaining videos that will attract new followers.

HOW TO LEVERAGE INSTAGRAM REELS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Grab the attention of your audience with Reels and win new customers.

[READ THE BLOG](#)

Captions

Even the most eye-popping images/videos still need a caption to add context and drive

engagement.

Here are some guidelines to consider when writing your captions:

- Speak in your brand's voice to create unique captions that set you apart. Study your audience to learn how they talk in order to tailor your messaging in a way that resonates with them. You can also use emojis to brighten up your captions and draw attention (but don't go overboard).
- Put extra emphasis on the first three lines with the goal of encouraging users to click 'more' and read the entire caption. You can use curiosity hooks/cliffhangers or get straight to the point — but, in general, always use messaging that reflects your brand's tone and values.
- Include a call to action. Invite users to share their thoughts in the comments or encourage them to check out links to your website, a blog post, or a product page.

USEFUL TIPS AND PRACTICES FOR WRITING INSTAGRAM CAPTIONS

Improve your Instagram Captions with this useful guide.

[READ THE BLOG](#)

Hashtags

Hashtags (an iconic feature of Instagram) are keywords or phrases that are preceded by the # sign to categorize content. Using hashtags can boost your post's visibility by positioning it in front of users who are browsing that topic.

You can add hashtags to your posts simply by typing them in either the caption or the comments. While you can use up to 30 hashtags, you should generally keep it to a maximum of 10 to avoid "hashtag stuffing."

When brainstorming which hashtags to use, keep these two types in mind:

1. Niche hashtags that are related to your industry. For example, if you own a pet shop, you could use hashtags like #puppy #puppylove #puppylife #puppygram.
2. Branded hashtags. You can come up with a specific hashtag for your brand or for a certain campaign. Encourage your followers to use your branded hashtags when sharing your content or participating in your contests.

User-generated content

Wouldn't it be great if your happy customers generated awesome content for you? Well, good news...they can, and often will — especially if you use branded hashtags. What is user-generated content?

What is user-generated content?

User-generated content (UGC) is any content that's created by your followers/fans/customers that features your brand. It could be a photo of them wearing your product, a video of them using your product, or simply a mention of how much they love your product/service. The best UGC will both feature your brand in the photo/video and also call out your brand in the caption/tags.

To take full advantage of UGC, you can repost content from your followers that features your brand in a positive light. The benefits of this are twofold, increasing engagement while simultaneously establishing social proof. To do this, you'll need to use a reposting app, as reposting is not a native feature within Instagram. Furthermore, it's important to obtain permission from the user before reposting their content.



Instagram Advertising

While Instagram is a fantastic platform for cultivating organic exposure and engagement, it's also one of the best places on the web to utilize paid ads to promote your brand and products. There are two ways to run Instagram ads: either by boosting your posts within the app or configuring ads in [Facebook Ads Manager](#).

When setting up your ad, you'll have a wide assortment of different formats to choose from, including:

- **Story ads:** appearing like normal stories above the feed (users take action by swiping up).
- **Photo ads:** image-based ads within the feed (automatically include a call-to-action button).
- **Video ads:** videos up to a minute long that appear within the feed.
- **Carousel ads:** a series of videos or images that users can swipe through. (Great for sharing multiple products or showing different features/angles of a product).
- **Shopping ads:** shoppable posts that allow users to make direct purchases.
- **Explore ads:** a placement option that runs ads within the Explore tab (in addition to the primary feed).
- **Collection ads:** a series of images or videos; designed to enhance user

experience (discovering/browsing/purchasing) from a mobile device.

EASY AD MANAGEMENT WITH BRANDWATCH

Optimize ads, save time with automated features, collaborate with teams across markets, and much more.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Optimizing your Instagram ads

Maximizing the effectiveness of your ad campaigns is both an art and a science.

Here are four fundamental principles to guide your advertising initiatives:

1. Define a clear goal. Is your goal to increase awareness? Drive sales? Or perhaps build your email list? Having a clear goal sets the foundation for building out your ad.
2. Consider your audience and tailor your ads to their wants and needs. Think about the solution that your product/service offers and emphasize how it will improve the customer's life.
3. Engage with your ads by responding to any questions users ask in the comments. Doing so bolsters engagement and can also provide valuable feedback to help you refine your messaging.
4. Experiment. The best way to discover what works (and what doesn't) is to experiment with different formats, messaging, etc., and track the results to create an ongoing process of improvement.

5 TIPS TO RUN UNSTOPPABLE INSTAGRAM ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

How to win likes and influence people on Instagram.

[READ THE BLOG](#)

Influencer marketing

Another way to promote your brand on Instagram is by partnering/collaborating with prominent individuals who have a large follower base (aka influencers). Doing so can introduce your brand to a new audience segment and increase your reach.

You can find influencers on Instagram by searching for your industry hashtags and looking for accounts that have ample engagement and a high follower count. Or, alternatively, you can use influencer search tools.

MANAGE ALL YOUR INFLUENCER MARKETING IN ONE PLACE

Discover influencers, handle relationships, and manage campaigns with Brandwatch Influence.

[LEARN MORE](#)

How to choose an influencer

When searching for viable influencer candidates, use the following criteria to narrow down your search:

- **Reach:** Influencers with high follower counts have the largest reach (and can consequently generate the most exposure).
- **Engagement:** Observe the number of likes, comments, and shares that an

influencer's posts receive to determine how engaged their following is. [Micro-Influencers](#) can have a higher engagement rate than macro-influencers or celebrity endorsements.

- **Brand alignment:** Strive for cohesion and consistency by assessing how closely the tone/content of the influencer aligns with your brand's values/image.

Types of promos you can run with an influencer

You can collaborate with an Instagram influencer via:

- **Brand mentions:** The influencer mentions your brand in their posts and encourages their followers to check out/follow your account.
- **Product reviews:** The influencer reviews your product(s), which generates interest and drives product sales.
- **Joint giveaways:** The influencer promotes your giveaways and contests, which leads their followers to engage with your brand.

8 SHINING EXAMPLES OF INFLUENCER MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Looking for inspiration? These brands are on top of their influencer marketing strategy.

[READ THE BLOG](#)

Measuring success

With an Instagram business account, you'll have access to Instagram Insights, which will provide you with a detailed set of [metrics to track your performance](#) and gain a deeper understanding of your account's engagement.

Social media analytics is a deep topic — so much so that we could put together an entirely separate guide on measuring your social media performance. For more on how

to quantify your brand's performance on Instagram, check out our free guide on [How to Measure your Social Media ROI.](#)

MEASURE YOUR SOCIAL PERFORMANCE IN REAL-TIME

Monitor your social channels in one place with real-time metrics and easy, time-saving reporting.

[LEARN MORE](#)

The top 10 takeaways

1. With over 1.32 billion users and high levels of brand engagement, Instagram is a leading marketing platform.
2. Brands can capitalize on a wide array of features by creating an Instagram business account.
3. Instagram is a visual platform that requires high-quality images and video content.
4. Use Instagram's numerous video formats (eg Stories, Reels, etc) to reach and engage with your audience in different ways.
5. Use compelling captions and hashtags to enhance your posts.
6. Branded hashtags can help you leverage user-generated content.
7. Instagram ads are a powerful promotional medium that can be used to accomplish a variety of business goals.
8. Collaborate with prominent Instagram influencers to expand your reach and tap into new audiences.
9. Leverage Instagram Insights to track your performance, learn, and improve.
10. Further reading: [**How to Measure Your Social Media ROI**](#)

Looking for a solution that ticks all the boxes?

Brandwatch provides everything you need to discover, attract, and engage customers on social, across teams and regions.

BOOK A MEETING