

Basic User Guide – Instagram (Android)

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Introduction

Instagram is a social media application available for iOS and Android. The primary function of Instagram is to enable users to share photos and videos with their social network. Users can share media in form of permanent Posts, or in the form of temporary posts called Stories, which remain accessible to a user's followers for up to 24 hours. Users can subscribe to other users by "Following" them, and, conversely, can also be followed by other users. Accounts available for users to follow are mostly comprised of friends and relatives, but can also include celebrities, sports teams, politicians, and variably themed accounts that share a wide variety of media, such as internet memes, news, comedy, photography, and many others. As a social media application, Instagram features a rich messaging component, where users can communicate with each other, send Posts and Stories, and create group chats with several other users.

Interface

Instagram's interface consists primarily of five sections, or tabs: The Home or main feed, the Explore Page, the New Post section, the Reels section, and the Profile section. These sections can be accessed from the main bar that runs across the bottom of the interface.

From the Home tab, users can access their main feed of Posts and Stories, notifications (by tapping the heart icon in the top right corner, to the left of the messenger icon), direct messaging (by tapping the messenger icon in the top right corner), and

Posts

Posts are the main vehicle by which users can share media on Instagram. Users can share up to 10 photos and/or videos per post. Each post can have a caption of up to 2200 characters, or no caption at all. Commonly, users will include "hashtags" in their caption or comments. Hashtags are user-generated terms, preceded by the "#" symbol, that allow Posts to be cross-referenced by topic or theme. A user's followers can react favourably to their post by "Liking" the post, an action completed by tapping the photo twice in quick succession (known as "double tapping") or by tapping the heart icon on the lower left of the post. Provided that comments have been enabled by the poster (this is the default setting), other users can leave comments on the post. If a user's account is public, any other Instagram user can view, like, and/or comment on their post. Posts appear in the Instagram's main feed and can be scrolled through vertically.

Posts can be saved by selecting the bookmark symbol on the lower right of the Post. Reels can be saved by selecting the 3-dot icon on the lower right of the Reel, followed by tapping “Save”.

If, for example, a user posts a photo of themselves with friends or family who are also Instagram users, they can “tag” these users in their post when they initially share it. This inserts a link to the tagged users’ accounts in the photos/videos in which they appear.

Posts can be personalized by users with filters. Filters are image-altering effects that can be applied to photos posted on Instagram. There are 25 preset filters available on Instagram, but users can customize certain individual effects themselves such as saturation, brightness, and hue, allowing for innumerable possibilities. In addition to filters, users can add music to their posts from Instagram Music.

Posts can be deleted permanently by users or archived. When a post is archived, it remains available to be viewed by the user on their profile, but not publicly to their followers or any other users. A user can choose to reinstate or unarchive an archived post at any time.

To begin creating a new Post, tap the icon in the middle of the bar the bottom of the screen while on the main feed. Users can then create either a regular Post, a Story, a Reel, or begin broadcasting live via Instagram Live. Media can be selected either from the user’s own device or created directly via the Instagram app itself.

Stories

The second method by which users can share content on Instagram is via Stories. Unlike posts, Stories are temporary, only remaining available to view for up to 24 hours. Like Posts, Stories can be “Liked” by other users, and are only available to be viewed by the user’s followers. Stories are typically used to share day-to-day activities, music that the user is currently listening to, and sharing the Posts/Stories of other accounts. Stories can be embellished with music, mentioning other users, small animations and emojis, and other text features such as the location at which the content was created. Like Posts, Stories can also be archived by the user. Instagram Stories are displayed horizontally at the top of the main feed. While Stories do become unavailable to other users by default after 24 hours, users can elect to save Stories on their profile for continual display. Users can begin creating a Story by either tapping the icon in the middle of the bar at the bottom of the main feed, or by tapping the circular photo in the top left corner of the main feed (which is the user’s profile photo) where it reads “New Story”.

Direct Messaging

Instagram allows users to send messages to other users. Messages can be sent privately between two users, or in the context of a group chat that is comprised of several users. Text messages can be sent, but Posts and Stories can also be shared between users via direct messaging. If a Post or Story is shared by a private account, only followers of that account will be able to view the story, even when sent via direct messaging. Like actual Instagram posts, Posts sent via direct messaging can be liked and replied to, as can plain text messages. Users can select any emoji as a reaction to a message. Direct messaging also features video and voice chats between users and within group chats.

Direct messages can be found by tapping the messenger icon in the top right corner of the main feed, or, alternatively, by swiping to the left from anywhere on the main feed. Messages can also be sent to other Instagram accounts by tapping the “Message” button below the account’s followers/following lists. If the account is not followed by the user, the message will instead be sent as a message request, which must first be accepted by the account before communication can be established.

Explore

Instagram features a wide assortment of popular content for users to view in the Explore page. Posts, Stories and Reels that are currently popular among other users are displayed in a grid pattern spanned by 3 posts across. Users can influence what they see in their Explore page by selecting Posts and indicating whether that Post is something they are interested in seeing. Instagram then uses a special algorithm to then display Posts to the user that align with what they are interested in seeing. Content featured in the Explore page is also influenced by what the user interacts with inadvertently through viewing and “liking”. Posts interacted with by other users that the user follows can also be featured in the Explore page.

To navigate to the Explore page, tap the magnifying glass icon, second from the left on the bar at the bottom of the main feed.

Profile

A user’s profile is displayed to their followers and any other users. If the user’s account is private, only their followers can view their posts and access their followers and who they follow. The profile consists of a user’s profile picture, the list of users that follow the user and are followed by the user, and any saved Stories. The user’s posts are then displayed in a grid pattern directly on their profile. Photos that the user has been tagged in by other Instagram users can be viewed by tapping the profile icon to the left of the grid icon on the profile page. This tab can also be accessed by swiping left on the grid section itself.

From the profile page, users can access their saved Posts, archived Posts/Stories and Settings. Users can also access tools to edit their profile, their Favourites list, and their Close Friends list.

To edit your Close Friends list, tap

The Favourites list is a list of Instagram accounts that is specified by the user. Posts from these accounts are given priority when shown in the user's feed, meaning that Posts from Favourites will be shown first.

The Close Friends list is a list of Instagram accounts, also specified by the user. Users can share Posts and Stories only viewable by accounts on their Close Friends list.

Reels

Reels are another form of video media available on Instagram. Similar to the format of videos found on TikTok. While regular videos on Instagram can be up to 60 minutes in duration, the running time of Reels must not exceed 90 seconds. This allows for more concise, easier-to-digest videos, and, as such, Reels are often used in marketing to convey messages quickly.

The Reels shown to users on their feed are selected by Instagram's algorithm based on other Instagram content recently consumed or interacted with by the user.

Reels can be created in a similar manner to

Instagram Live

Instagram gives users the ability to stream content live via Instagram Live. If a user's account is private, only their followers can join the stream. Using the "Rooms" feature, users can conduct a broadcast with up to 4 other users. Viewers of the broadcast can comment and send emojis as reactions. Users can add a title, make comments of their own, as well as "Pinning" specific comments by tapping them and selecting "Pin". The comment then persistently remains on the screen for other users to see. Like Stories, Instagram Live videos can be saved on a user's profile by tapping "Share" after ending the broadcast.

