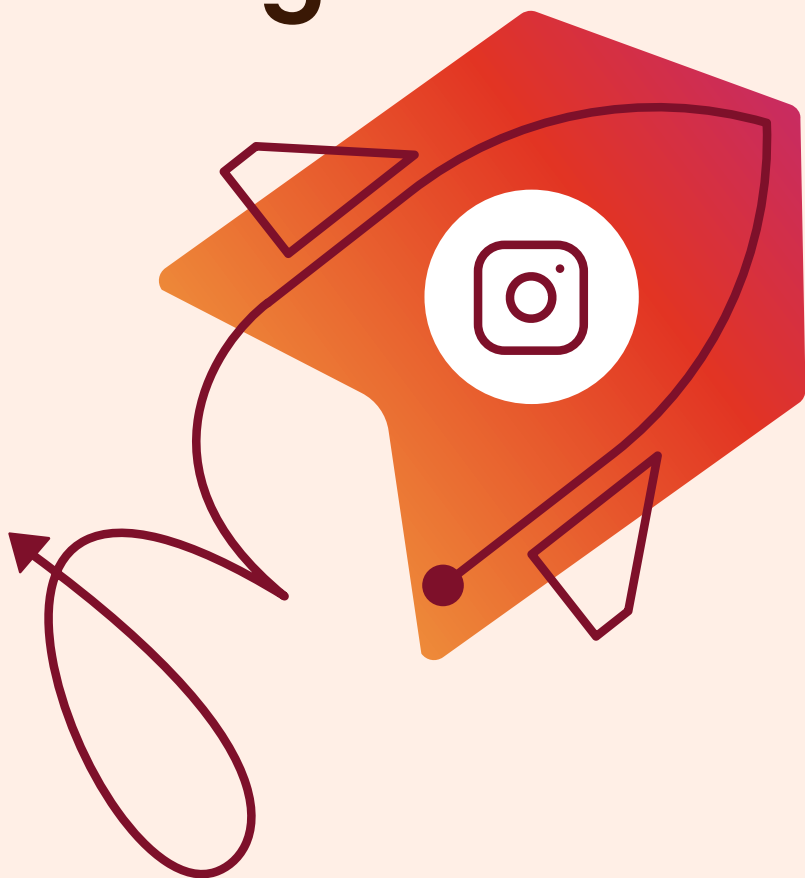


eBook

# How to Grow Your Instagram Following



ManyChat

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# Introduction

When Instagram [launched in 2010](#) as an image-sharing platform, its popularity blew up almost overnight. Amassing 25,000 users in a single day, there was no question that Instagram would be the next big thing in social media. Today, over a decade later, Instagram is one of the most-used social media platforms globally.

Instagram has more than [1 billion](#) monthly active users, so it's no surprise that more than [200 million](#) businesses use the platform to reach potential customers. [Statista](#) projects that more than 900 million users worldwide will log on to Instagram each month in 2021. By 2023, experts predict that nearly 1 billion users will log on to the platform every day.

So, whether you're brand new to Instagram or you're trying to beat your competition, try one or all of the following Instagram hacks. This eBook is a resourceful guide to help you set your profile up for success.

# What is Instagram & Why Should You Use it?

When Instagram launched — like many social media platforms — it was a fun place to post photos and keep in touch with old friends. But today, it's a veritable powerhouse that's become a critical channel for boosting eCommerce sales and brand awareness.

According to the Pew Research Center, [71% of American adults](#) between 18–29 use Instagram. A [Global Web Index](#) report revealed that 27% of internet users discover new products via social media advertising, and another 23% find brands through comments or recommendations on social media.

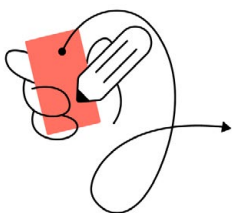
If your business is not on social media (Instagram especially), you're missing out. Instagram can support your eCommerce business in several ways, from increasing your reach to bringing in sales. Let's review the steps you can take to make the most out of Instagram to achieve your business goals. But first, let's check the facts:

## Instagram fast facts

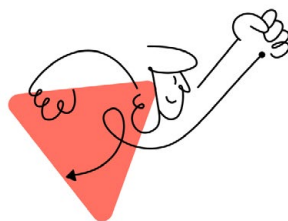
- Instagram launched in 2010 as an app for sharing real-time moments via still photo posts with captions and hashtags.
- Today, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms globally, with more than [1 billion active users](#) each month.
- More than [200 million businesses](#) use Instagram to connect with potential and current customers.
- Experts predict Instagram will have more than [1.2 billion users by 2023](#).

- As many as **81% of users use Instagram** to research products and make a purchase decision.
- Instagram is responsible for **70% of Facebook's total growth**. Without Instagram, Facebook would be growing an estimated 8% year-over-year. With Instagram, it's growing 20% annually.

## Instagram action items



**Write down why your business wants to use Instagram as a marketing tool**



**If you have initial goals for using Instagram, document those as well**

## Instagram action items

1. Write down why your business wants to use Instagram as a marketing tool.
2. If you have initial goals for using Instagram, document those as well.



# Getting started with Instagram

To put your best foot forward on Instagram, start by ensuring you have an Instagram business account, not a personal or creator account. Having a business account declares your Instagram presence as a company and provides you with additional features to help with lead generation. And, having a business account allows you to use Instagram DM Automation by ManyChat.

Making the switch from a personal or creator account will give you access to Instagram analytics and insights that show you demographic information about your Instagram followers. Using this data, you'll be able to tailor your social media content and even publish it at optimal times (more on this later).

## How to set up an Instagram business account from scratch

To create a business account on Instagram, you first need a personal account (which we'll later convert.) Here's how to do that:

1. Get the mobile app by downloading the Instagram app for Android, IOS, or Windows.
2. Open the app and tap sign-up. Enter your email address and password.
3. If you're planning on granting access to multiple team members, or you want to connect your Instagram account to your Facebook Page, make sure to sign up with an admin email address. Alternatively, just sign up with your Facebook account details to streamline the process.

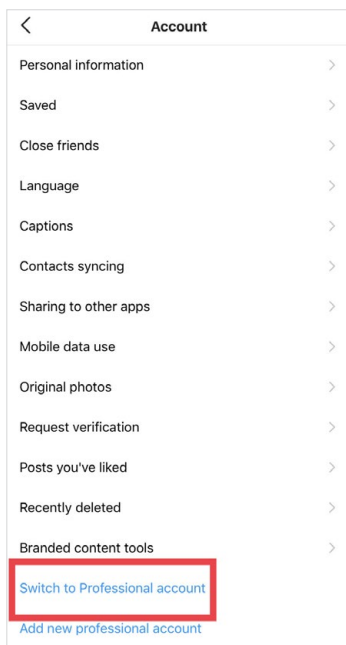
4. Tap "Next" to finish setting up your new Instagram account.

## How to convert a personal account into a business account

All business accounts are made by converting a personal Instagram account into a professional one. So, sign in to your personal account and follow these steps to convert it:

1. Tap the three lines in the top right corner of your Instagram account.
2. Open Settings and select "Account."
3. Click "switch to Professional account."

(Note: If you didn't initially connect your Instagram account to your Facebook account, you'll be given the option to do so here. Linking your Instagram and Facebook accounts will provide you with more options for building personalized ad campaigns, along with other customization tools.)



4. Select your business category and include your business contact information.
5. Hit "done" to create your Instagram business account.



## Picking Your Instagram Handle

Finding the perfect Instagram username (that is if it's still available) can be tricky!

It might sound simple but choosing the right username (AKA handle) sets the tone for your brand identity. Your handle provides the easiest way for people to look up your brand on Instagram. So, if it's hard to spell, difficult to remember, or not associated with your brand name, chances are people will have a difficult time searching for your handle.

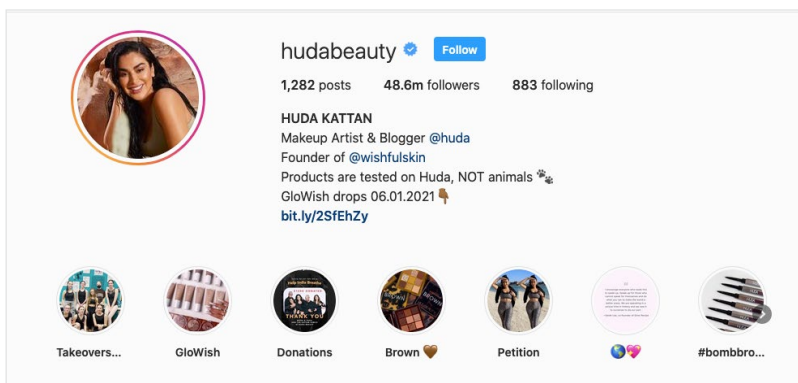
A few tips:

- Keep it simple
- Keep it memorable
- Use the same handle across all social channels
- Make it easy to spell

## Instagram profile best practices

It may seem like a no-brainer, but it does pay to optimize your Instagram bio and profile. Most [people viewing Business Profiles](#) on Instagram don't follow those businesses (yet), and your profile could be the first thing they see. It has a surprisingly outsize influence over whether or not they should follow you.

Think of your Instagram bio as your elevator pitch. Make sure it clearly articulates your unique value proposition, as Huda Kattan's does below:



Source: [Instagram](#)

## **Include targeted keywords**

You can add some targeted keywords to Instagrams' Name Field instead of your username. The more searchable, unbranded information you can add to your profile, the better! If you have other brands in your portfolio, you want to call out or include a branded hashtag (they'll show up as links!).

## **Use your bio link strategically**

Unless you have more than 10k Instagram followers, the only link you'll be able to include in Instagram is in your bio — so make it count! It makes sense to link back to your business website, but make sure to choose an appropriate page.

The link in the bio is right underneath the business information. Take a look at ManyChat's profile:



The home page is always a viable option, but some businesses create a landing page specifically for IG that includes reasons to follow them or have a call to action to sign up for emails or SMS texts.

### **Tips for branding & messaging**

If you own a small business or are looking to build your personal brand, creating a social media marketing strategy is one of the best ways to reach your target audience, engage them, and generate more sales.

Instagram has proven itself to be popular and powerful with both consumers and brands. If you're new to the idea of using social media for business purposes, the thought alone can be overwhelming. Where do you even start? Don't worry. Let's take a look at some of the do's and don'ts of Instagram through research and examples, so you don't have to learn the hard way!

## Instagram Do's & Don'ts

### Do

- Treat it like sales tool
- Respond to messages instantly
- Plan & schedule your posts
- Run giveaways
- Engage with your followers
- Use Instagram stories
- Invest in ads

### Don't

- Overuse filters
- Buy followers or likes
- Use too many hashtags
- Share long links
- Mix your visuals
- Delete posts
- Follow & Unfollow

### Do: Treat IG like a sales tool

First and foremost, one of the essential points to consider is how you'll use Instagram. Instagram makes a great sales tool; in fact, [80%](#) of people surveyed by Facebook said Instagram helped them decide whether to buy a product or service.

Like a traditional sales funnel, you can build an [Instagram sales funnel](#) that takes people from start to finish through their customer journey. For example, you can try top-funnel brand awareness campaigns by working with influencers (big and small) like [Owlet](#) has done here with blogger [@candlewoodcottage](#):



Notice how @candlewoodcottage includes the call to action “head to my stories to hear more” at the end of the post. It’s an excellent example of how to nudge top-funnel customers towards a sale.

Read: [How to Build an Instagram Sales Funnel in 2021](#)

### **Do: Respond to messages instantly**

According to [Sprout Social's](#) 2020 Index: An estimated 40% of consumers expect brands to respond within one hour of contacting a company on social media, while 79% expect a response in 24 hours.

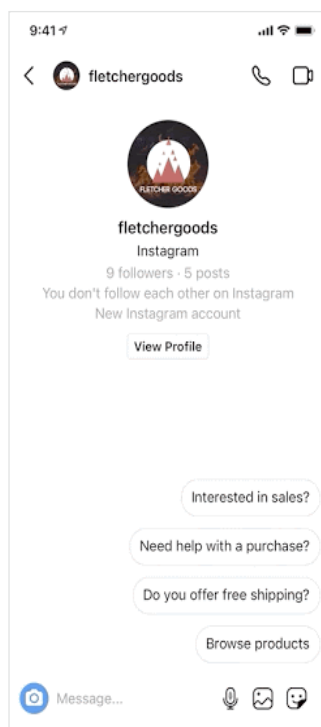
The longer you let DM's sit in your inbox, the longer your customers will have to wait to receive a reply. A drawn-out response time is a red flag for customers considering a purchase from your company. No one wants to be ignored.

However, automated replies — such as FAQ Quick Replies or starting a whole automated conversation flow with ManyChat — can significantly improve your [message response rate](#).

Check out how Fletcher Goods does it:

Using automation can help you significantly improve response times and give yourself a little breathing room to work on other parts of your business.

Read: [How to Improve Your Instagram Message Response Rate](#)



## **Do: Plan and schedule the posts on your Instagram Feed**

One of the most significant factors that will lead to success on any social media platform is consistency. Instagram is no different. When you plan and schedule your content, you'll enjoy several benefits, like:

- Ability to build a strong visual brand identity
- Consistent engagement with your followers (who know when to expect a post)
- Improved chance of the algorithm is [broadly pushing your posts](#)
- Time savings from batch scheduling posts for publishing

There are many post-scheduling tools out there that can help you with this task, including [Hootsuite](#).

Planning your content is also a handy way to ensure you don't miss any public holidays or brand anniversaries. Just try to be open to changing your post content if you need to address any relevant current affairs.

### **Do: Run giveaways**

Giveaways are a terrific way to boost engagement, gain new followers, and collect valuable personal information from Instagram users.

You can run a giveaway by incentivizing your audience to share your brand with their followers and their information with you in exchange for a chance of winning a relevant prize. For example, personal style brand [Roma by Rochi](#) ran a highly successful giveaway with the help of ManyChat automation:



Followers commented on this post with the word “SORTEO” (lottery). When triggered by this keyword, Roma by Rochi’s Messenger bot entered users into the giveaway — offering extra chances to win if people mentioned the brand in their Story. This strategy increased engagement by 741% and captured over 2.6K emails.

*Read: [How Roma by Rochi Saw a 741% Lift in Engagement Using Instagram Automation.](#)*

## **Do: Engage with your followers**

While we already talked about how responding quickly to DM’s is critical for providing top-notch customer service, it’s equally key to engage with your followers in public as well.

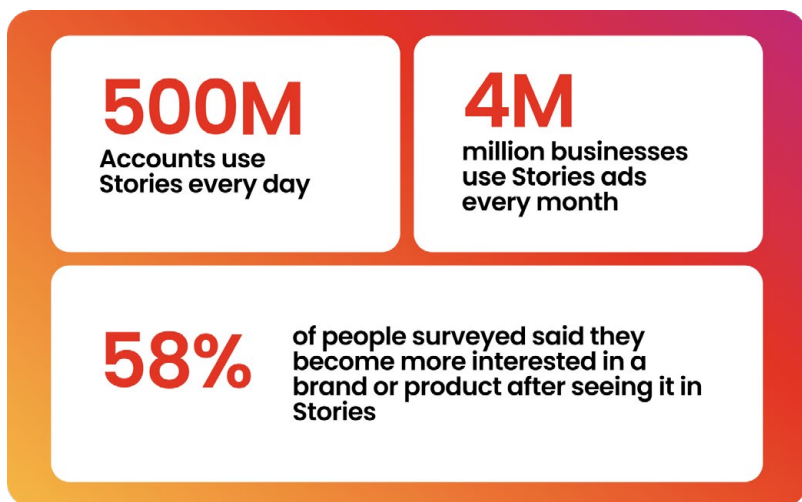
One way to keep an eye on your social mentions and industry conversations are by using a tool like [Brand Mentions](#) or [Sprout Social](#). Such solutions provide feeds of mentions and comments, and you can respond to them via an easy-to-use dashboard.

Take [Biffs](#), a UK-based vegan fast-food restaurant. When someone tags the restaurant in a post, Biffs always likes and comments on them:





Engaging with your followers regularly affords you the best chance of appearing on their Feeds. It can also help you build more meaningful relationships simply by showing your brand has real people behind it.



### Do: Use Instagram Stories

Instagram has a few staggering Story [stats](#) that do a pretty good job proving how important they are. For examples:

- 500 million accounts use Stories every day
- 4 million businesses use Stories ads every month
- 58% of people surveyed said they become more interested in a brand or product after seeing it in Stories

You can get followers to engage with your Story posts (or interact with theirs) by using ManyChat's Flow Builder to respond to Story mentions automatically. Frazer Brookes gained a 40% lift in engagement by leveraging this method.

Read: [How Frazer Brookes Saw a 40% Lift in Story Engagement Using Instagram Automation.](#)

## Do: Invest in Instagram ads

No matter how great your content might be, it can be challenging to reach your entire target audience for various reasons: time online, frequency of app use, audience size, etc. This is where investing in [Instagram ads](#) can help pick up the slack.

Many different kinds of ads (including [Story ads](#)) will align with your brand, goals, and target audience. Bear in mind, though, that no matter which ad type you choose, you'll need to create ads that will grab attention quickly.

For example, to get the word out about its Pride products during Pride month, [Bunny Style](#) ran video ads that immediately got to the point:

Running Instagram ads can help influence the [80%](#) of IG users we mentioned earlier who decide to buy products after seeing them on Instagram.

Read: [Instagram Ads Beginner's Guide \(2021\)](#)



## Don'ts

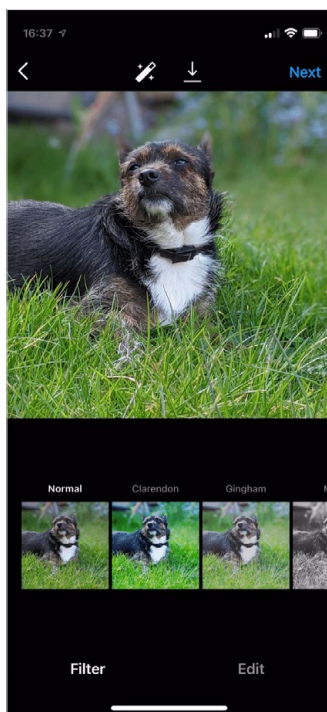
Now you know some of the best practices for success on Instagram. Next, we're going to look at some of the common pitfalls you (or your marketers) should avoid.

### Don't: Overuse photo pre-set filters

Simple photograph filters have been around on Instagram since its inception in 2010. In the app, you're able to take a photo and choose from a selection of pre-made filters or create a custom filter that can improve the overall appeal of your image.

However, you want to be careful that you're not either using filters on every single photo or using a filter at 100% opacity — doing so can make your images look overly surreal and inauthentic to your audience.

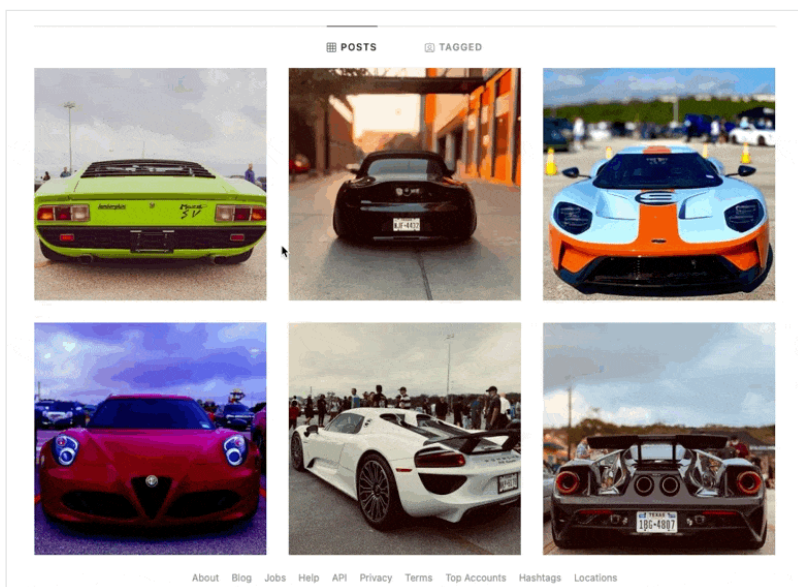
The Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) in the UK has even gone so far as to [ban "misleading filters"](#) on beauty ads in response to the #nofilters trend.



## Don't: Buy followers or likes

Another big no-no for doing business on Instagram is buying followers or likes.

For one, it's against the platform's policies; in 2020, Instagram [introduced](#) new ID verification measures to crack down on this behavior. If IG realizes you're buying likes and followers (and they can tell), you risk an account suspension.



In the image above, you can see this account has fewer than 10 likes on most of their posts, except one that has 55 likes (which indicates they probably bought 50 likes).

In addition to breaking Instagram's rules, you also risk turning genuine people off your brand. It's straightforward to tell if you've artificially boosted your follower count (a lack of engagement or spammy "bot" comments are a telltale sign).

### **Don't: Use too many hashtags**

One of the best ways to boost brand awareness and reach your target audience is to use hashtags, so your post or Story appears in more searches. Instagram lets you use up to 30 hashtags in a post and 10 in a Story.

However, maxing out your allotted space with popular hashtags in the hope of going viral isn't always a good idea. At best, it can slightly increase engagement; at worst, it will come across as spammy and annoy your audience.

Research shows that 11 hashtags are the optimal number to use in a post. Some of the best ways to optimize them are:

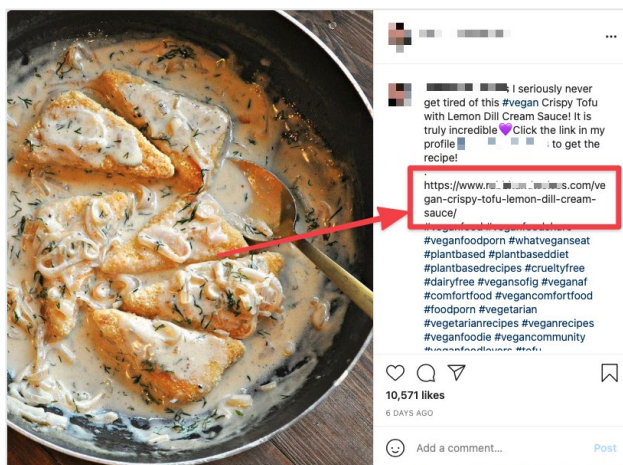
- Researching relevant hashtags in your niche, not just relying on platform-popular ones
- Following hashtags, you use to stay on top of what's working
- Creating your own branded or campaign-related hashtags

### **Don't: Share long links**

Another blunder a marketer or small business can make is including a long, awkward link, either in a post itself or in their Instagram bio.

While you're not as limited in character space as you are on Twitter (you can have up to 2,200 characters in an Instagram caption), long links are still unsightly and challenging for customers to act on since they aren't clickable in posts.

Take this post, for example:



One way you can eliminate long links is to either use a link shortener like [Bitly](#) or a catchall link provider like [Linktree](#) to share your most important links on one landing page. If you have over 10,000 followers, you can [add links to your Instagram Stories](#) using the "Swipe Up" feature.

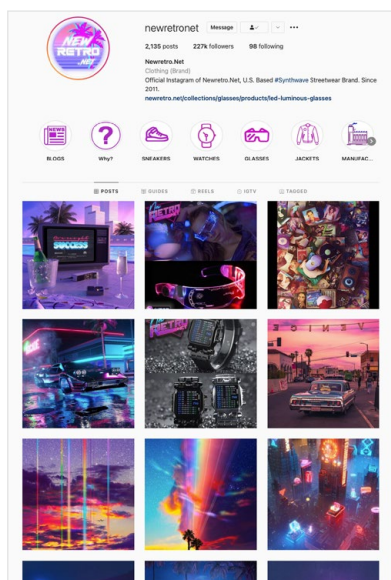
### **Don't: Mix your visuals**

This point is related to the "plan and schedule your posts" suggestion we mentioned earlier. Instagram users find significant value in attractive post aesthetics and curated "grids," an engaging, visually appealing Feed takes planning.

Of course, you shouldn't post the same content all the time, but you want to avoid mixing up your visuals in a way that confuses your brand message and identity. Consistent visuals let your followers (and potential followers) know what to expect from future posts.

**New Retro Net** does this well:

Customers know they can expect to see neon 80's-inspired "synth-wave" related content in every post.



### **Don't: Delete your Instagram posts**

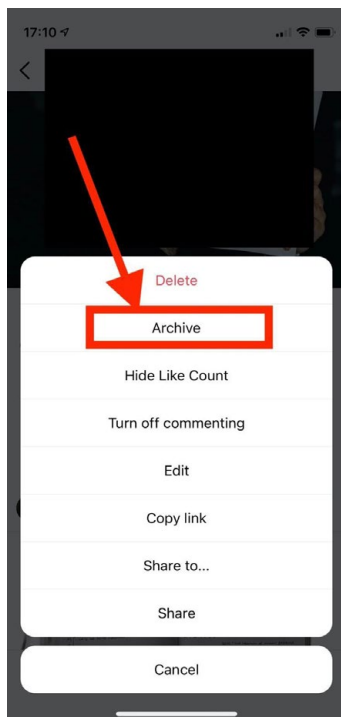
Sometimes you might feel that a particular post isn't performing as well as you'd hoped, and you consider deleting it forever or reposting at a different time. However, deleting posts is a bad idea for a few reasons.

First, the IG algorithm factors people's reactions to your posts to determine what to include in people's Feeds in the future. When content disappears, so does the opportunity to learn from any post-related behavior.

Second, you'll lose any insights you were able to gather in your analytics dashboard. All data is nearly always valuable in some way, even if it's just showing that your audience doesn't care for a particular type of content.

If you're adamant about preventing a post from appearing on your Instagram profile or customers' Feeds, a better option is to archive your post instead. This way, you get to keep all the data you've gathered — including the likes and comments — but the post itself will be hidden from the public.

You can find the option to archive a post by hitting the three dots in the corner to bring up the options and selecting Archive near the top of the list.



### **Don't: Play the unfollow game**

The last "don't" on this list is similar to the practice of buying followers: mass following and unfollowing. It's another tactic people use to artificially boost their follower count and appear more popular than they are.

The theory is that if you follow lots of people, at least some of them will follow you back. If they don't, you unfollow them. This becomes an ongoing cycle. Some will try this practice manually;




others will use black market automation (which is against Instagram's [terms of use](#)). Either way, it's a bad idea.


Instagram [caps the number of accounts you can follow at 7,500](#) and has spam control measures in place to help prevent this kind of behavior. Even so, according to [Statista](#), 28.4% of influencers with between 20K and 100K followers used this method in 2018.

While the point of this tactic is to "grow" your account, in actuality, the time would be better spent creating meaningful and engaging content that will genuinely attract followers and paying customers.

### Instagram action items



**Set up your Instagram business account, complete with a username that makes sense for your brand**



**Add your link in bio**

### Instagram action items:

- Set up your Instagram business account, complete with a username that makes sense for your brand.
- Add your link in bio.

# Creating a content strategy & a calendar

Once people log into Instagram, some of the [most popular activities](#) they partake in include watching other users' Instagram Stories, looking at posts from other users' feeds, watching a video, and posting a picture. These are all activities that eCommerce businesses can participate in and benefit from — if they know what they're doing.

Given IG's massive daily active user base, it's no wonder so many brands have already created Instagram profiles. Businesses that successfully leverage Instagram's promotional features drive traffic to their websites, increase lead generation, and convert more customers. But it takes a solid [Instagram marketing strategy](#) to grab consumers' attention on such a competitive social media platform and turn them into loyal customers. This post will help you work efficiently toward reaching your goals on Instagram.

## Define your goals

Before you kick off any Instagram marketing, you need to define your goals. What do you want to get out of building your brand on Instagram? While there's no specific path you have to take here, knowing why you want to use Instagram to build your brand will provide valuable guidance along the way and allow you to measure success.

Your marketing goals might include:

- Solidifying your brand identity
- Increasing brand awareness
- Growing your brand audience
- Increasing website traffic
- Growing community engagement
- Boosting lead generation and sales

Once you solidify your marketing goals, document them so you can refer to them as you craft a strategy, create content, and engage with Instagram users.

## Notes

# Know your audience

Here's a harsh truth: You can have the best social media marketing strategy on the planet, but it's not going to matter if your audience isn't active on social media. Take a look at where your target audience spends time online.

If they spend time on social media, find out which platform they use the most. If they're not on social media, are they reading email newsletters? Or are they visiting online marketplaces?

Once you have a better idea of their preferred platform, you can work on a winning strategy geared explicitly towards that channel. If they're not on Instagram, don't waste time posting and building your brand on there just because it's trendy. It's essential to have a brand presence wherever your audience spends their time.

If your audience is already using Instagram, then you can proceed with an associated strategy. Once you start publishing content, you'll be able to use data to dig a little deeper and figure out what your target audience spends the most time doing within the app to refine your tactics.

Consider the following questions:

- Do they prefer Instagram Feed posts or Stories?
- Do they engage with video content or photos?
- What time of day are they most active on the app?
- Do they purchase items they've discovered on Instagram?
- Are they motivated to click out of the app for additional content (like clicking the Instagram bio link)?

The answers to these questions — along with your goals for marketing on Instagram — will guide your content strategy. If videos on your Instagram feed get the most engagement, you should favor that type of content over posts with static photos.

## Notes



# Create a content calendar

Instead of planning a day's — or a week's — worth of content, plan for the entire month or even further out. Use planning and scheduling tools (such as MarketMuse, Asana, or Trello) to create a content calendar. This way, you'll always be on top of what's coming up, and you won't have to scramble to publish something last-minute. Make sure you're regularly publishing.

Having a content calendar also ensures your Instagram feed and your other marketing channels display consistent content. Perhaps you plan to post different types of content on various social profiles to encourage followers to engage with your brand on multiple channels. Or you could put a video on your Instagram feed but add behind-the-scenes photos into your Instagram Story. The possibilities are endless!



## Instagram Planner

# Content Planner

### Core topic posts

### Frequency

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### Lifestyle posts

### Frequency

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### Specific posts

### Frequency

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_





## Instagram Planner

# Content Calendar

Platform:

Month	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
January				
February				
March				
April				
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				



## Instagram Planner

# Repurpose Content Planner

### Current contents

Educational post

- 
- 
- 
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- 

Engagement post

- 
- 
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- 
- 

Podcast episodes

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

### Next steps



# Consider your grid layout

When it comes to social media marketing — especially on Instagram — individual posts aren't the only way to deliver great visual content.

The secret to a beautiful Instagram feed is a well-constructed grid layout. "Grid layouts" transform a collection of visually appealing delights into a professional Instagram marketing account.

This guide will help you understand the benefits of adhering to a grid layout, which types of layouts you should avoid, and show you seven different layout types with inspiring examples.

## Instagram feed layout benefits

Here's a neat analogy: Think of individual posts on your Instagram account as car parts and consider your feed layout as the fully functional vehicle. On their own, parts (posts) aren't nearly as useful as they are working to make the car (the brand) run smoothly. Plus, you need the car to get where you want to go.

Still unconvinced? Here are a few valuable benefits you'll get from following a grid layout:

- Leaves a good first impression. Brands and influencers can show they are organized by utilizing a consistent aesthetic theme over multiple posts. Not only that, but doing this also proves your commitment to your messaging. Authenticity and commitment can increase the likelihood that someone will follow you on their first visit.



- It helps potential followers learn what to expect. Instagram users can see from one glance at your grid what type of content you post. If you follow a consistent pattern, they can predict what kind of posts to expect from you in the future. When someone likes what you've already posted, they're more likely to follow you because they expect to see more of the same content that originally appealed to them.
- It offers an opportunity to uniformly express your brand. Sometimes when you're faced with unlimited choices for what kind of content to post, it can be easy to stray off-brand. Limiting your posts to a particular layout style can help you consistently express your brand.
- Allows you to stand out from your competitors. Even though it might seem like "grid layout ideas" are cookie-cutter templates or presets, you will only be able to use the ideas in conjunction with your particular brand colors, experiences, and assets. Unique versions of these layouts will enable you to stand apart from your competition.

Now that you're aware of the benefits of following a grid layout let's look at some ideas you can incorporate into your Instagram content. Be prepared for some eye-catching examples!



# Best 7 grid layout ideas

There are several grid layout styles brands, influencers, and bloggers can choose from. If you haven't created many Instagram posts yet, try experimenting with a few of these before settling on one that works for you.

Pro tip: No matter which one you choose, you'll want to be able to plan and preview your posts to ensure they appear in the correct order. For that, you can use an app like [Planoly](#) or the [Preview App](#) (available on iOS and Android).

## Checkerboard

One of the most utilized grid layouts is the checkerboard since it makes it easy to plan and schedule ahead. This basic design relies on alternating between two specific content types with two different solid colors as backgrounds with written content (like quotes) in the same font and color.

However, if you want to use many images, you can also choose to alternate between an image and solid color with writing or between a solid background and image background.

Each of these options will give your grid the "checkerboard" appearance. Here's an example from [Ogivia Social Media](#):



Ogivia has opted for a visually appealing headline alternating with standard images to achieve the checkerboard effect.



## Collage

This grid layout is very similar to the checkerboard style (it also relies on alternating between two post styles), except with this one, you're going to add borders. The "collage" effect is a result of switching between vertically and horizontally oriented images.

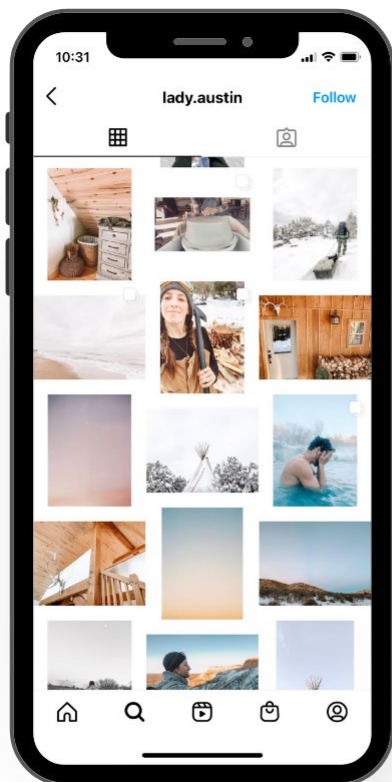
These days, Instagram's editing tools will give you the option to crop an image to a square or keep the whole image and add "padding." However, since you want posts to be consistent, you'll want to use a tool like [Canva](#) or [Adobe Photoshop](#) to help ensure



borders for each vertical and horizontal image are the same size every time.

Here's an example of a collage grid from [Lady Austen](#):

Lady Austen uses horizontal and vertically aligned images with white backgrounds to help her feed look like a scrapbook.



## Lines

Another layout design popular among brands and Instagrammers alike is the “lines” style. For this one, you’ll want your feed to exhibit the appearance of having either a vertical line with two specific content types or groups of horizontal lines with similar content types.

Vertical lines are a great option if you want to share text-based content in your feed, while horizontal lines are fantastic for product launches, panoramas, or other “grouped” content.

Here are examples of each style:



The first example is [Mint Content](#), which employs a vertical line theme using text-based images with light green backgrounds. The second example is [Wasted Mind Art](#), which hosts three images in horizontal lines from the same photoshoot.



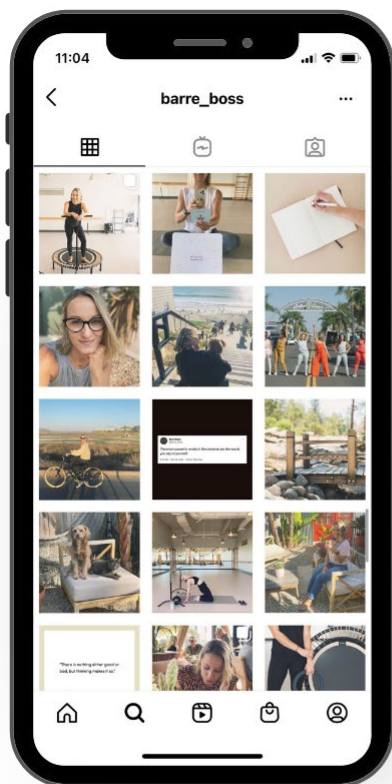
## Borders

Brands, photographers, or influencers that are minimalist by nature are more likely to use the border layout, but others can also benefit. To steal this style, simply place a border around your Instagram photos or text-based posts. Black or white borders are some of the best options, but if your brand uses bold color, go for that!

This grid layout's biggest benefit is that it's not difficult to plan or execute. You'll only need to ensure your borders are the same size for each post, and apps like Canva or [Instasize](#) can help you do that.

Here is an example of borders in action from [Barre Boss](#):

This style is slightly different from the collage look; each border is the same size and orientation for every post.

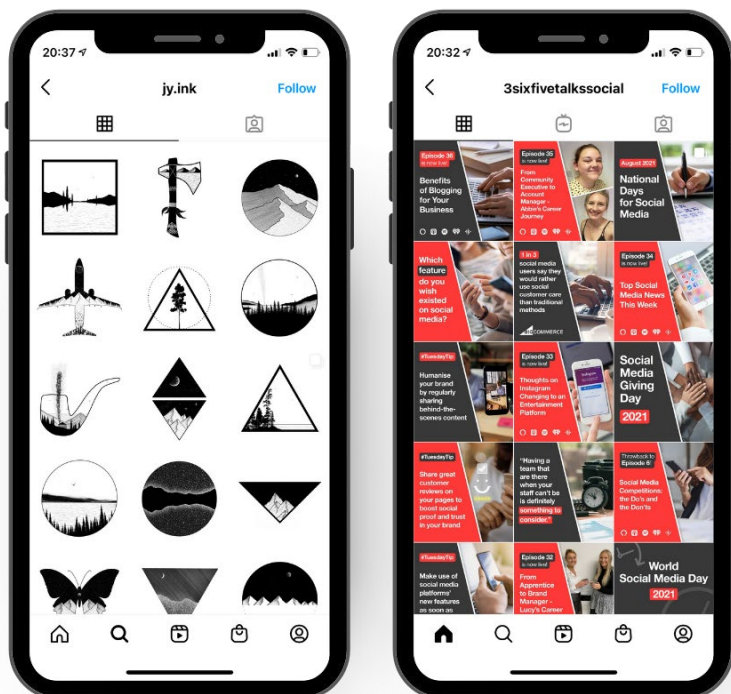


## Shapes

One uncommon (and therefore standout!) layout idea is to feature a specific shape or shapes in all of your posts. Of course, you'll want to make this as on-brand as possible, but apart from that, you can let your creativity run wild.

A straightforward way to create this grid is by using a border shape (like a circle or hexagon) for each post that displays your standard images inside them. Alternatively, you could take this in a more subtle design direction by using images that feature shapes in them.

Here are two examples of what this could look like:



The first example comes from [jy.innk](https://www.instagram.com/jy.innk). While the forms aren't all the same, the overall effect of featuring hard-lined shapes helps achieve the effect of a designed grid layout.

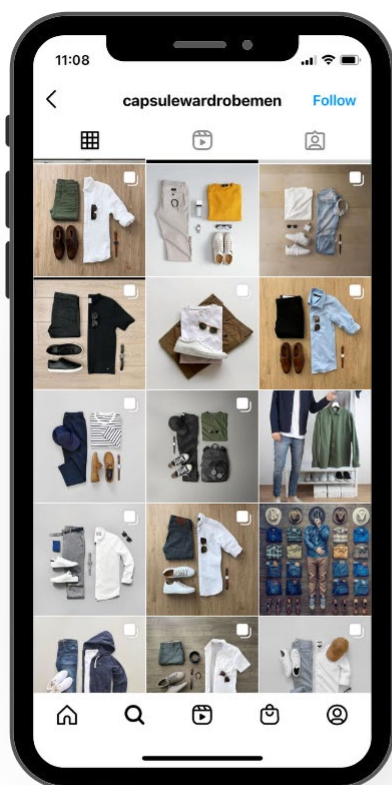
The second example is from [3sixfivetalkssocial](https://www.instagram.com/3sixfivetalkssocial), which has chosen a checkerboard theme while ensuring each post includes the same four-sided shape for its text background.

### The flatlay

This layout idea works best for brands selling products or influencers who work with a specific medium (e.g., artists and photographers). The “flatlay” is where you display top-down images of objects (typically on a white background). Though again, that’s just common — not a rule.

This grid is popular with clothing brands that use it to showcase outfit styles and “foodstagram” accounts showcasing meals or recipes.

Here is an example of what the flatlay theme looks like, courtesy of [capsulewardrobemen](https://www.instagram.com/capsulewardrobemen):

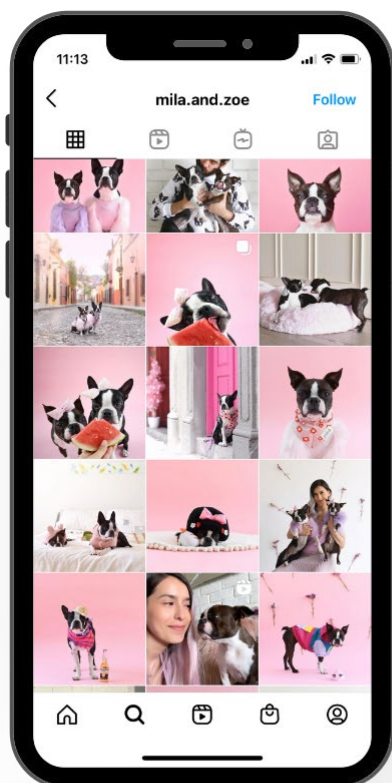


In this grid, while the backgrounds differ on many of the posts, the vast majority of them “flatlay” the clothes Capsule Wardrobe wants to showcase. This helps to establish the grid layout and profile’s theme.

### **Color scheme**

The last grid layout idea on this list is potentially the most important, for the most part. However, and you will likely want to combine it with another layout idea. For this one, you’ll consistently adopt a color palette comprised of one or more colors (though ideally no more than four) or tonal range throughout your images.

However, similar to the “shapes” layout above, this one can go in a bold or subtle direction. A striking choice would be to use a single color in the background in most, if not all, of your posts. On the other hand, the more demure direction could involve selecting the same accent color or the same tones (such as pastel or sepia tones) in each post.



[Mila and Zoe](#) provide an excellent example of combining more than one layout:

It has made use of a consistent soft pink color scheme with the checkerboard grid layout.

### **The 3 grid layouts to avoid**

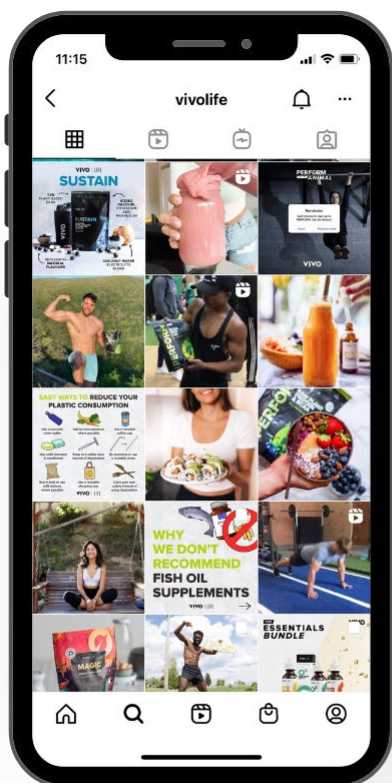
All the grid layouts we've looked at so far can help with your overall [Instagram marketing](#) strategy. However, not all grid layouts are appropriate for small business brands and influencers. Here are three layouts you should avoid for slightly different reasons.

#### **No layout at all**

Some brands, such as those in the health and fitness niche, can get away with not having a planned grid layout at all since their category offers a natural theme. For the most part, however, you should aim to deliver a consistent aesthetic across your Instagram profile.

Take [Vivoflife](#), for example:

Since its feed is all about vegan health and fitness, the posts naturally form a theme



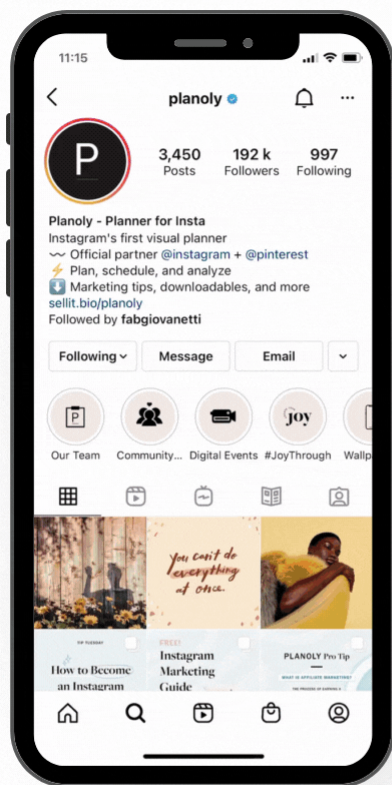
around these topics, but they haven't stuck to any specific grid layouts.

If the thought of having to stick to a specific layout idea either scares you or you don't want to put in the effort, just try posting images with the same editing styles (contrast level, hue saturation, tone shifts, etc.). You'll subtly achieve some level of consistency this way.

## Rainbow effect

With no layout at all, only a select few types of brands or influencers can potentially get away with the rainbow effect layout. For this grid, you would follow the horizontal lines grid pattern, but each line moving down would have a different color gradient until you achieve the rainbow effect, like [Planoly](#) below:

Brands and influencers should avoid this layout because while the overall effect can be pretty, it's inconsistent. Furthermore, it likely won't align with your brand color palette (unless your brand is related to LGBTQ+ pride or activism), part however and it can be difficult to execute.

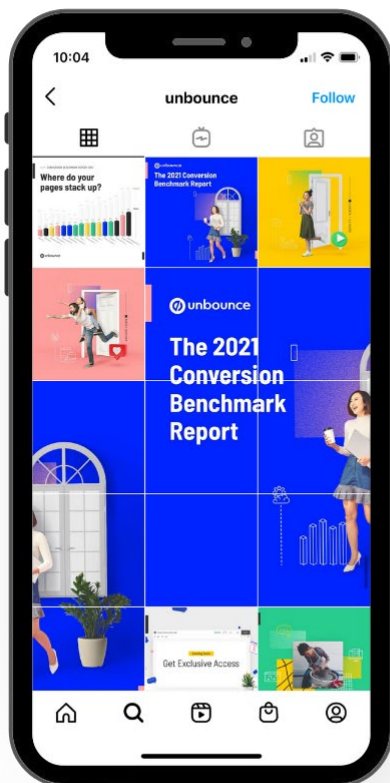




## The puzzle layout

The final layout to avoid is the puzzle grid (or puzzle feed). At first glance, it might seem like the perfect Instagram solution for social media marketers — having the whole grid as one giant canvas of a larger image (say, a product launch or campaign) sounds great! However, problems with this layout soon emerge.

Check out this example from [Unbounce](#):



Unbounce has used the puzzle layout to promote its benchmark report. Great in theory, but once you publish it, the puzzle gets broken up when you create new posts. Not only that, but each post has very little value — imagine seeing just a plain blue square on your feed. Not a great impression.

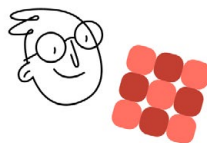
While the puzzle grid can seem impressive at first, it's difficult to get right, and the effect is only temporary. So do yourself a favor and avoid it!

## Instagram action items

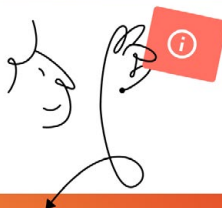
Revisit the goals you documented (if any) in section 1. Add additional goals—or refocus previous goals—you have after reading this section



Document any ideas for your Instagram grid layout



Do you have a prototype of your target audience? If so, does it need to be updated? If not, start writing down everything you know about your target audience. Note the areas you'll need to discover about your audience



### Instagram action items:

- Revisit the goals you documented (if any) in section 1. Add additional goals — or refocus previous goals — you have after reading this section.
- Do you have a prototype of your target audience? If so, does it need to be updated? If not, start writing down everything you know about your target audience. Note the areas you'll need to discover about your audience.
- Document any ideas for your Instagram grid layout.





# Understanding the Algorithm

If you're in marketing, you've likely heard the word "algorithm" uttered countless times. And while it sounds complicated, an algorithm is simply a set of rules. Often, algorithms come up when discussing how search engines rank web pages or how social media platforms decide which content to display. In either case, the conversation usually leads to how often these algorithms change.

Instagram is no stranger to an evolving algorithm, and with more than [800 million active users](#), many creators scramble to get their content in front of the right people on the app. But how? Let's look at how Instagram's algorithm works and the tactics to use for algorithmic success.

## Algorithm basics

Initially, Instagram would show users a chronological feed of photos published by people they were following. But in 2016, Instagram announced it would display content favored by its algorithm (Facebook announced its algorithm in 2007).

## Huh?

According to [Instagram](#), the app uses several algorithms to qualify content, but collectively, Instagram prefers new, timely posts that relate to a user's interests. Other considerations the Instagram algorithm looks at include accounts a user has interacted with, how often a user logs onto the app, how many accounts a user follows, and how long a user spends scrolling through content.

"How do you feed the algorithm nowadays?" asked Ash Melwani, the CMO of Ovbi, at ManyChat's [Instagram Summit](#) in July 2021.

"When you post, Instagram will show your posts to a subset of your followers. If they interact with that [post], if they engage with it, Instagram is scoring that. And if you're getting a good grade [or engagement] on that, [Instagram] will start showing it to more people; and then more people and more people have snowballed into that, increasing your reach and visibility."

Instagram updates its algorithm regularly, which changes the way creators, influencers, and brands publish content. These algorithm updates can be frustrating to those who want to succeed on the app.

### **So, how can you win at Instagram?**

Of course, each update has specific criteria you may have to adjust for, but here are some timeless ideas that will help you showcase your Instagram content, get more followers, and see more engagement.

- **Boost the quality of your photos.** Stick within your brand's guidelines, but don't be afraid to get creative with bold colors that catch the eye, exciting landscapes, and unique subjects. Be honest with yourself about resources here: Are you good at taking photos, or should you hire a professional? Will your smartphone camera do the job, or should you invest in a digital camera?

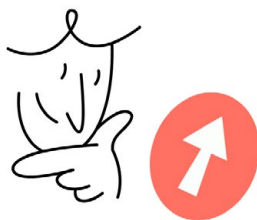
- **Consistently publish engaging Instagram Stories.** When you publish Instagram Stories consistently, your brand will always literally be at the top of someone's screen in the app. Use Stories to highlight content that encourages viewers to take action, such as visiting your blog or a specific product page.
- **Add more video.** Published videos in the Instagram app automatically play when a user comes across them in their feed — a smart way to grab someone's attention. Remember, your goal is to get someone to "stop the scroll" and engage with your content. And yes, watching a video counts as engagement.
- **Don't be afraid to go live.** Like Instagram Stories, Instagram Live is another way to light up your profile at the top of someone's Instagram feed. Going live also creates a sense of urgency for followers, and it's often exclusive or behind-the-scenes content.
- **Write interesting captions.** When users like, comment, and share your Instagram content, it counts as engagement and is essential to the algorithm. Mix up your captions, and don't be afraid to get creative.
- **Host contests and giveaways.** Hosting a contest or a giveaway can generate engagement for your Instagram account. ManyChat's Instagram DM Automation is also suitable for running messaging-powered campaigns, like giveaways, promotions, and contests.
- **Publish at the right time.** As long as you have an Instagram business account, you'll have access to Instagram analytics (called Insights on the app). The app's data will show you when



most of your followers are active on the app, which is the best time to publish content. Even if you don't get a flood of attention on your Instagram post, the algorithm will still note your efforts to post at the right time.

## Instagram action items

**Make any notes about the algorithm that may be particularly challenging for your brand so you can make a plan to tackle them**



### Instagram action items:

- Make any notes about the algorithm that may be particularly challenging for your brand so you can make a plan to tackle them.



## Notes

# Creating Content

Once you've prepped your Instagram strategy and content calendar, it's time to start creating the content you'll publish. There are different content pieces you can post, and they each have their benefits.

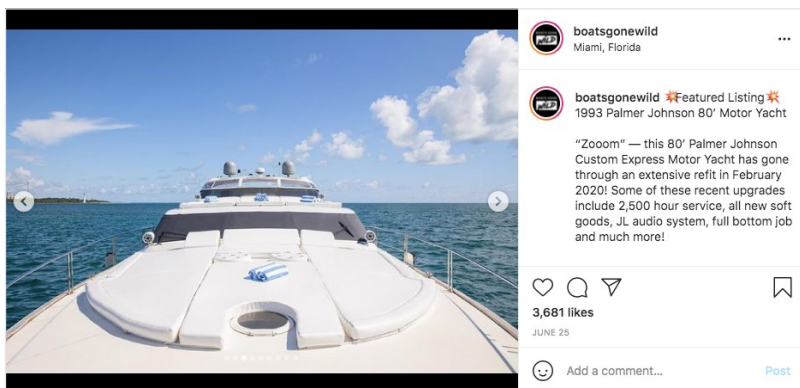
## Posts for your Instagram profile and followers' feeds

These posts will upload to your profile and will also show up in the home feed of those who follow your profile (provided the algorithm displays it for them).

**Single photo posts.** Publishing a single photo harkens back to the platform's roots, where it all began. Instagram initially only allowed its users to post perfectly square pictures that would show up on their profiles and feeds. You can get a little more creative nowadays with the size, but you need to ensure your image still fits in the requisite dimensions (ratios range from 16:9 to 4:5).

**Carousel posts.** Instagram's carousel post feature allows users to publish up to 10 photos simultaneously so users can scroll through the images like an album. Not only can you share more pictures — perfect for showing off all angles of a new product or a collection — this format also invites users to interact with your content.

Instagrammer [@boatsgonewild](#) frequently uses the carousel format to post several photos of its yachts and luxury boats for sale in a single post.



## How to create an Instagram carousel

To post a carousel, follow the usual steps you'd take when uploading a new post.

Tap the "multiple image" icon during the media upload stage and select the images or videos you want to feature in the carousel.

You can choose up to 10 images or videos in a carousel. Each selected image or video will be numbered to help you keep track of and organize slides. These numbers correspond to the order your media will appear in the carousel, so make sure you order them properly if it's important for your post.

**Video posts.** While photos are the most common content on the platform, profiles that feature creative videos enjoy higher Instagram engagement. Instagram automatically plays a video

when a user scrolls over it in their feed; they don't even have to click to view it.

In 2020, some brands saw **billions of interactions** with video content across all social media platforms. It pays to spend time crafting one that will catch a user's attention as they thumb through hundreds of posts!

**IGTV.** **IGTV** is an Instagram feature that enables brands and creators to publish videos up to 10 minutes long instead of limiting them to one minute (the maximum time allowed for in-feed videos). Users looking at IGTV content may notice its immersive nature; it takes over the entire phone screen. Users can like, comment, or share IGTV videos.

**Instagram Live.** **Instagram Live** is an in-app feature that allows you to broadcast from anywhere. You can choose to make your live stream public or private, and viewers can post comments and questions.

## Instagram Stories

One of the keys to Instagram's success has been its ability to continually introduce new features that quickly become immensely popular among users. The addition of Stories is one of the platform's greatest success stories... (no pun intended).

### What is Instagram Stories?

If you're relatively new to Instagram engagement or haven't used the platform since its early years, you may be a bit unfamiliar



with Stories. No need to rush to Google, though — we've got you covered.

[Instagram Stories](#) are time-sensitive posts that allow users to share brief compilations of photos and videos. Commonly used for marketing purposes on Instagram, they can be viewed for just 24 hours after they're posted, providing a great incentive for followers to view them before they disappear in a cloud of smoke, never to be seen again. OK, so maybe it's not that dramatic, but the allure of viewing a Story before it's gone for good is very real.

Introduced in 2016, the feature quickly skyrocketed in popularity and is now one of the most used features on social media for businesses, influencer marketing, and regular Instagram users alike. If you use Instagram for your business, Stories can be an incredibly valuable tool.

### **How Stories work: the basics**

Unlike regular photo or video posts, Stories do not appear in the regular gallery grid on Instagram profiles but are instead subtly indicated by a Fuschia-orange gradient — Instagram's signature color palette — outline on the poster's profile picture.

Among things that an Instagram Story can include are:

- An [Instagram poll](#).
- An Instagram sticker (i.e., a [countdown sticker](#)).
- A branded hashtag.
- An [emoji slider](#).

Stories posted by private accounts can only be viewed by the account's followers, but Stories posted by public accounts are viewable by anyone. Brands can respond to Stories via a direct message (DM) quick reply, giving accounts the invaluable opportunity to interact directly with their target audience. Additionally, Business and Creator accounts are able to promote Stories as ads, increasing visibility and engagement.

Stories have a maximum length of 15 seconds and can also include several exciting features, such as call-to-action (CTA) buttons to send users to specific link locations or social media pages. While Promoted Stories still disappear from the poster's account page once a day has passed, they can be set to run as ads for as long as you want them to, allowing them to exist beyond the 24-hour lifespan a Story has on a profile page. For a more detailed dive into Instagram Story Ads, check out [this complete beginner's guide](#).

### **Why use Instagram Stories?**

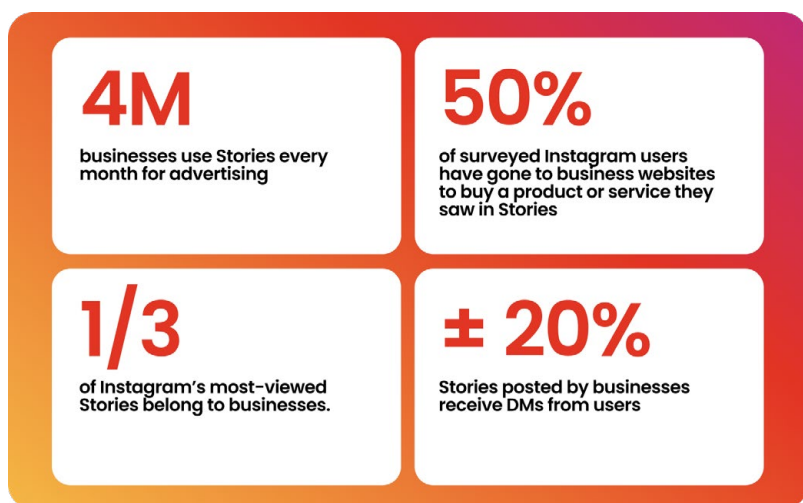
With the rise of ad-blocking software, those who wish to advertise online have had to grow more and more creative. Instagram Stories provide a perfect outlet for that creativity. We know that may seem hard to believe since Stories disappear after just 24 hours. So, why put effort into something that's just going to go away and be forgotten? It's a counterintuitive strategy, but it's also an undeniably effective one.

Major brands such as Converse, Taco Bell, Nordstrom, National Geographic, and more [have all used](#) Instagram Stories to market their brands and products. Whether you're a big business, a small

business, still working on building your brand, or just getting started with Instagram, Stories are an invaluable tool. But don't take our word for it — the statistics are convincing enough.

### Stories by the Numbers

According to [Instagram's own internal research](#), over 500 million users view Stories every single day; and 58% of users said they were more interested in a product or brand after seeing it featured in an Instagram Story. On average, [86% of Stories are watched all the way through](#) to the end, which is a feat itself, especially at a time when skipping ads on YouTube or fast-forwarding through them on TV has become almost second nature to most people.



Here are some other statistics that show the ever-growing value of Instagram Stories:

- [One-third](#) of Instagram's most-viewed Stories belong to businesses.

- Approximately 20% of Stories posted by businesses receive DMs from users.
- [Half](#) of surveyed Instagram users have gone to business websites to buy a product or service they saw in Stories.
- Four million businesses use Stories every month for advertising.

## **Engaging your audience through Stories**

The numbers don't lie: Instagram Stories are hugely popular among users. As effective as they are for advertising, they're also effective for keeping your audience engaged. Posting on social media is easy, but catching and, more importantly, keeping people's attention? That's more difficult. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind when creating content for Stories.

### **Keep things quick and concise**

In the age of social media, attention spans are just getting shorter and shorter. According to a [study conducted by Facebook](#), the top-performing Stories were the shorter ones. They also usually were straight to the point, introducing branding early on. Because Stories don't allow for very much time, it's important to take advantage of every second of screen time. It may seem like a hassle to analyze each second in your Stories, but with only 15 of them to grab your audience's attention, every second counts.

## **Instagram Reels**

Instagram is looking to invest more effort into becoming a hub of entertainment and commerce like other user-generated content-friendly platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat.

So, what does that mean for the app that was once the place for people to share personal photos online? What changes do marketers and small business owners need to acknowledge and strategize to accommodate?

One way Instagram has shifted more towards entertainment and video content is by introducing its Reels feature.

If you've seen Reels in the app, and you're not totally sure how they work or how you can turn them into an asset for your business marketing strategy, stick around — this guide is for you.

### **What are Instagram Reels?**

Instagram Reels are a video feature that showcases short-form video content (ranging from around 15-second videos to up to a minute). You can record and share them right from the app or upload videos from your camera roll.

They're designed to be a short, fun way to share original content with other Instagram users (who now number over [1 billion](#)).

Users can access Reels from the Explore page and through the dedicated Reels icon at the bottom of the screen on the app home. While scrolling, you'll experience a seamless transition from one video to the next via the Reels Feed.

Reels come with a host of editing tools you can use to overlay text, stickers, and AR effects (or filters), as well as add original audio or Instagram music library tracks to your video clips.

## Why use Instagram Reels?

You might be thinking to yourself, “Why should I bother with Reels? There are already Instagram Stories and IGTV; why use another new feature?”

Those are great questions! Reels have a few unique benefits compared to other app features and platforms. Here’s the scoop on all of them:

### More chances for discovery

Let’s address the not-so-secret elephant in the room. Reels are Instagram’s attempt at competing directly with TikTok. Despite TikTok’s popularity, Instagram’s **1 billion+** users beat TikTok’s 113.99 million combined (**iOS** and **Android**) monthly active users (MAU). More eyes equal more opportunities.

Since Reels are also one of Instagram’s newest features, it appears IG is allotting them a little more real estate in the app and algorithm. With their prime middle-icon position on the home screen and frequent appearance as one of the first posts you’ll see in the Explore tab, they are highly visible.

Also, unlike Stories — which are limited to 10 hashtags — Reels function just like a standard post. That means you can include up to 30 hashtags and apparently (personally tested by yours truly) 2,184 characters in your caption.

So, not only do you have the extra hashtag discovery opportunities, but, according to [Instagram](#):

“When you share Reels featuring certain songs, hashtags, or effects, your Reel may also appear on dedicated pages when someone clicks on that song, hashtag, or effect.”

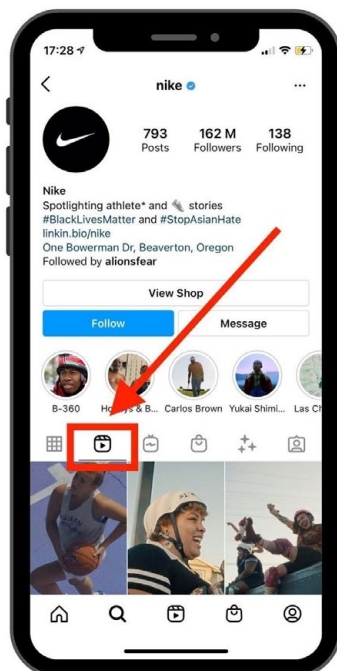
Instagram has made sure Reels are deeply integrated into the search and explore functions of the app to optimize discovery among the Instagram community.

### Reels stay on your profile

The other key difference between Stories and Reels is that Reels permanently remain on your profile in their own tab, whereas Stories only appear for 24 hours. If you navigate to an Instagram profile that has posted a Reel, it'll show up like so:

Having a permanent spot for your Reels videos is beneficial for a few reasons:

- New audiences can quickly look through your previous content and become better acquainted with your brand.
- You can justify putting even more effort into the quality of your content production since it won't be temporary (which also improves its value for your audience).
- Your Reels content will appear in other parts of the discovery system long after 24 hours have passed — including appearing in “top posts” of a hashtag.



- Reels come up in hashtag searches, enabling you to create higher-intent content targeting specific searches.

Of course, Stories are still a great place for hot-topic or spontaneous content, but if longevity is what you're after, then Reels are the way to go.

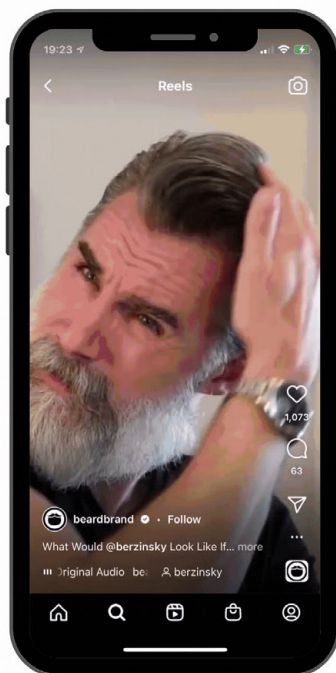
## Integration with Instagram shops

The last benefit we'll talk about here is the massive opportunity for eCommerce businesses. Reels are [integrated](#) with Instagram Shops. If you [set up an Instagram shop](#), you can add a link to the products featured in your Reels, as [Beardbrand](#) has done here:

This integration is a gamechanger for retail and eCommerce businesses that want to create shorter, permanent content TikTok video-style, but still want options to promote their products.

Having an integrated Instagram shop means your customers (or potential customers) will experience very little friction as they move from the brand awareness top-funnel phase to the bottom of the sales funnel.

Overall, the potential for more discovery opportunities — paired with permanent content linked






to your Instagram shop — will naturally garner more leads and engagement, and likely increase revenue.

Now that you know what Reels are and how they can benefit your social media marketing efforts, let's dive into how to create your first Reel.

## How to create an Instagram Reel

Creating an Instagram Reel is real simple (pun totally intended). There are five basic steps from start to finish, and this guide will illustrate the options for each stage.

- Set-up your Reel

First, find the  icon on the top of the screen (the "Create new" button). After that, your camera will open (at this point, you need to give Instagram permission to access your camera and microphone) and you'll have to scroll across to the "Reels" option at the bottom of the screen.

At this stage, you have a couple of options to choose from (which you can see on the left) in terms of setting up your new Reel:

- Music: This is where you can choose a track to accompany



your recording. You can use audio from your camera or original video audio (if you chose to upload it)

- **Timer:** Limit your Reel to 15, 30, or 60 seconds, and the countdown will appear as you record
- **Speed:** You can keep the original video speed, increase it by up to 5x, or slow it down by up to 0.5x
- **Effects:** There are a number of creative tools, like filters and AR effects, that you can scroll through to try
- **Touch up:** This option smoothes out skin tone and reduces general visual noise
- **Countdown:** Not to be confused with the timer option, the countdown can change the length of recording but also determines how long you want the camera to count down before recording starts

Once you've set up how you'd like the recording to happen, the next step is the actual recording! (Alternatively, you can also upload a pre-recorded video to Reels by swiping up and selecting it from your gallery. If you choose to upload, skip to step three.)

- **Record your Reel**

To record your Reel, all you have to do is either tap or hold down the record button 🎬 symbol at the bottom of the screen. Once you've finished recording, either tap the button again or let go of the button.

When you stop or pause recording, a new option called "Align" appears.



This option lets you superimpose a lower opacity image of your last frame to help you line up your camera to continue recording. Taking advantage of this feature is super important if you want seamless transitions.

### **Preview and edit**

Once you've finished your recording, hit the "Preview" button (iOS) or the 🔄 symbol (Android). This will take you to the editing screen, which includes tools you may be familiar with if you've previously used the Instagram Stories camera.

Editing options include the ability to add text, stickers, special effects, voiceover, and drawings. If you want, you can add an audio track here as well. Get creative and have fun with it!

### **Caption and share settings**

After you've finished editing your Reel, you can move on by hitting the "Share to" button, which will open up the window where you can add your caption and set up sharing options:

If for any reason, you don't want to share the Reel on your public account feed, you can toggle the setting "Also share to feed" to "off."



In the advanced settings, you can also add a label that states that the Reel contains a paid partnership, which is essential if you're working with influencers or other brands.

### **Share your Reel!**

Once you're happy with your Reel, all that's left to do is to hit the "Share" button, and your new Reel will be visible to the world!

If you want to improve your engagement with a Reel, try heading over to your Reel post and sharing it with your Instagram Story. That way, if people happen to miss your in-feed post or don't often explore Reels, they'll be able to find it in your Story (for 24 hours anyway).

Now you know the basic steps involved in building a Reel, let's move on to how to create successful Reels. This next section includes three tips for making Reels that will have a major impact.

### **Tips for creating successful Reels**

Of course, many variables influence your success on any platform or feature; Instagram Reels for business (or even personal) accounts are no exception. That said, a few common factors can help improve your performance no matter what industry or niche you're in.

#### **Grab users' attention right away**

This first tip may seem obvious, but you might be surprised just how quickly people will scroll past your Reel if they aren't either entertained or curious to see what happens next. (They literally

only spend a second or two on each post.)

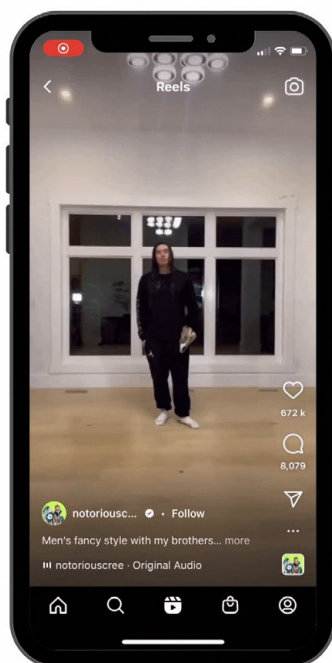
Let's go back to [Beardbrand's](#) Instagram account. Another one of their recent Reels illustrates a good example of how to capture users' attention:

The company uses a picture of Will Smith — whom many people know and admire — for immediate impact and discusses his facial hairstyle. Then the video presenter proceeds to talk empathetically about beard growth struggles.



On the other end of the spectrum, some entertaining yet educational content by James Jones ([@notoriouscree](#)) leverages a popular curiosity-building technique — using a “wait for it” text to keep people interested:

Each example, though unique, works to keep Instagram users engaged in the Reel and hopefully inspired or motivated to buy products featured in them.



When you create your Reels, take special pains to grab your audience's attention by either making use of creative editing or being relatable.

## **Have people DM you**

You've seen it before in Stories, Reels, and Lives: the creator tells you to DM them for more information. Creators used to have no other option but to respond to these requests manually, which is nearly impossible if you are a small team.

But no more! The Keyword Automation feature from ManyChat is a useful tool for generating better results from your Reels and automating your replies to DMs. All you have to do is set a keyword in ManyChat's Flow Builder and promote it on your Reels. Once someone messages your brand the pre-set keyword, it'll kick off a conversation in Instagram Messenger.

You can then:

- Qualify leads in your [Instagram sales funnel](#)
- Answer FAQ questions using automation
- Jump into a live chat
- Show off a product catalog

Sending people into conversations in Instagram Messenger helps build authentic connections with your followers, which can lead to more leads and higher sales in the long run.

## Respond to your audience

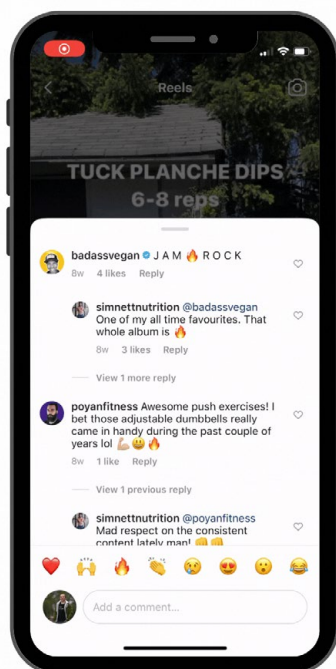
You probably already know how critical it is to take the time to respond to your audience (especially if you're a small business owner or entrepreneur). Furthermore, the point of social media is to be social, not just to broadcast one-way content.

One example of an entrepreneur who does a great job at replying to comments on his Reels is Derek Simnett from [@simnettnutrition](#):

Responding to your audience naturally increases your engagement since you're keeping the conversation going. In turn, this engagement signals to the algorithm that your Reel is worth boosting, resulting in a virtuous cycle.

This activity also proves to people that you care about them by acknowledging their comments or questions, which is more likely to inspire [customer loyalty](#).

Really, there's no downside to responding to conversing with users on Instagram, especially when you can rely on ManyChat Instagram Automation to do the heavy lifting.

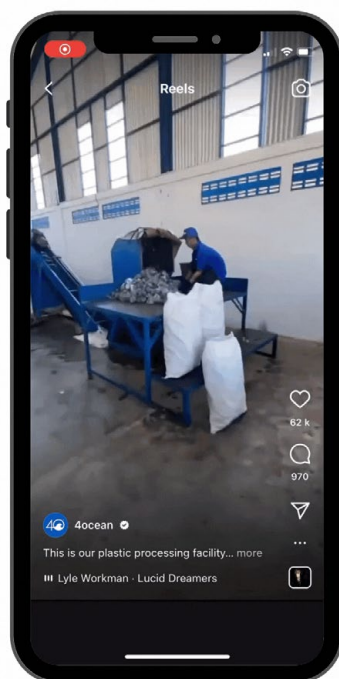


## Create videos with purpose

Though it might seem self-evident, from a business perspective, the point of creating content is to drive people to take positive action, e.g., buy a product, sign up for newsletters, attend a webinar, donate, etc. However, it's easier than you may think to fall into the trap of creating trendy content for the sake of it.

Beardbrand has been able to avoid this mistake by creating videos that feature their products while also entertaining users. Now let's look at a company with an environmental focus, [4ocean](#):

The above example is a behind-the-scenes style Reel that shows what the company does with ocean plastic they recover. They posted this Reel (and all of their others) with their mission in mind — to clean up plastic pollution from the ocean.



When you create your Reels, make sure they are on-brand, relevant to your audience, and fulfill a business purpose. You can ensure you're doing this by asking yourself the following question before you post:

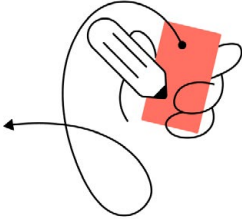
"Does this Reel serve to drive a core business goal, or is it just content for the sake of it?"



As mentioned earlier, the business goal doesn't have to be limited to sales, but it should be at least an action that could eventually lead to one.

Notes

## Instagram action items



**Document any content ideas that may have came about while reading this section**



**Brainstorm additional content ideas for future use**

### Instagram action items:

- Document any content ideas that may have came about while reading this section.
- Brainstorm additional content ideas for future use.



# Going from 0 → 10K Followers

To achieve business objectives, you need eyeballs on your Instagram account. IG followers are the perfect eyeballs to consume and share all the great content you put out. The more dedicated followers you have, the faster you'll be able to reach your business goals — and once you reach 10,000 followers, you'll get some sweet perks for your Instagram account! (More on that later.)

This section will reveal the top strategies for accumulating real followers who are genuinely interested in your brand — because they're the only ones that matter. Let's dive in!

## **Create content strategically**

Let's get one thing straight: Great content draws dedicated, engaged followers on Instagram. You may be able to generate some shares and likes every once in a while if you're posting unoriginal, humdrum photos or videos, but to acquire a massive IG following, you're going to need to up your content game. So what does that entail?

## **Embrace authenticity**

Savvy users can smell a fake from miles away. Once they get a whiff of something inauthentic, it becomes tough to convince them otherwise.

Don't try to emulate other brands; instead, build your voice representing your mission and demonstrating your passion for

your products. Then keep that voice consistent throughout all your marketing communication, including social media.

### **Post content that interests your target market**

You should already have a decent idea of your ideal customer and target market because you'll have included it as part of your business plan's market analysis (right?) Understanding what type of content appeals to your target market is critical for boosting your Instagram follower base.

Whether it's product sneak peeks, behind-the-scenes interviews, video/photo combos, or a million other options, identifying (hello, testing!) and consistently posting content that resonates with your followers will elicit more comments and shares, and likes. Try snooping on competitors' Instagram accounts to see what they're doing right (and wrong) and for inspiration for your content.

### **Leverage external trends and events**

You can start by incorporating holiday themes into your posts, then build up to grander campaigns that align with newsworthy events (see what's trending on Twitter) or jump on board with viral internet sensations.

Pro tip: If you decide to harness trending social media memes or other overnight frenzies, make sure that they:

- a) align with your brand and
- b) that the internet has not already moved onto some other new, shiny trend by the time you get your act together.

Nothing is sadder than a brand that's desperately trying to be trendy and ends up a #fail.

### **Include hashtags and mentions**

Hashtags help your post appear in searches and cluster with other content people may find interesting. Mentions (@ plus a username) will immediately draw the attention of the object of the mention and potentially encourage them to share your post. Both these tactics will help increase your posts' reach, potentially garnering more engagement (because you're posting amazing and valuable content, right?).

One caveat to consider regarding hashtags: don't overdo them! If you cram your post full of hashtags, it could appear spammy and inauthentic. Choose your hashtags carefully. They're the sprinkles on the sundae, not the ice cream.

### **Use geotags to connect with local followers**

Instagram geotags are a way for you to add location tags to your Instagram posts and other content. They appear as small text underneath usernames or hashtag names in feeds.

You can set geotags to a specific location — like a coffee shop — and a general location like New York. You can also set custom locations, which individual users might use to avoid disclosing an exact location. For example, "Iceland, Somewhere Cold" is one way to use geotags without sharing too much information.

You might be wondering why anyone would bother using geotags. Though hashtags and captions should be enough to find new customers on Instagram, geotagging has several benefits:

- **Discovery** – When posts are geotagged, users have the opportunity to discover them organically in search. They can also appear in top, recent, and location Stories.
- **Local engagement** – Many Instagram users have become accustomed to the idea of “checking in” to locations. If you own a brick-and-mortar business, that means you can literally put your business on the map as more users check into there.
- **User-generated content** – By setting up a geotag for your business, you can leverage user-generated content (UGC) in your social media marketing strategy and deepen relationships with your Instagram followers. (More on this later.)
- Now that you know what geotags are and why you should employ them, let’s take a look at how you can create them using our [step-by-step guide](#).

### **Encourage follower engagement**

The more engagement you can generate on your posts, the more likely the Instagram algorithm will be to pick it up and display it on users’ Feeds, increasing your reach. And greater reach will help you acquire more followers. It’s a beautiful self-perpetuating circle!

Try embracing content specifically designed for user interaction, like Instagram Stories. You can include all sorts of interactive elements in a Story, such as polling or question stickers, which encourage audience participation.

## **Polling stickers**

With a polling sticker, you can ask questions and share real-time results on how followers have voted. According to an Instagram study, polling stickers not only encourage users to interact with your posts, but they can also boost watch time for your videos. Win-win!

## **Questions stickers**

Questions stickers allow users to ask you questions by tapping the text box on the sticker. When you answer, you can either share their question and your response in a new Story or send them a message directly through Instagram.

## **Automated conversation starters and comment responses**

While Instagram Automation by ManyChat focuses on messaging, it also enables you to automate several other aspects of your marketing strategy for IG, like collecting emails or registering people for events. Here are some ways you can use it to boost your follower count:

Set up a Keyword Trigger function that will enter a user into a conversation straight from a Story when they send you a message consisting of a pre-determined keyword or phrase. Make sure you structure the conversation in a way that encourages them to follow you. For example, you could use it to share details about a contest for which users need to follow you or tag your brand in order to earn chances to win.

Use the Comments Growth Tool to automatically respond to and like people's comments on your IG profile. Fans get excited when brands show an interest in them, and this will encourage people to engage with your Instagram profile even more.

Ensure that anyone who mentions your brand (using the @ symbol and your username) gets an automated response with the Story Mentions Trigger.

If you're keen to try any of these features, sign up for the ManyChat Instagram Automation waitlist today.

### **Cross-promote your Instagram profile**

If you have a website, additional social media accounts, a newsletter, or send out other types of marketing communication, you'll want to include a prominent link to your IG profile in all of them. Otherwise, how are people supposed to know your Insta account exists?

This tactic doesn't just apply to Instagram. Cross-promote ALL your social media channels and your website wherever you can. If you're churning out top-quality content, you'll be able to supercharge your follower count and customer acquisition. Remember: the more you can keep your brand top-of-mind, the more likely someone will be to buy from you.

### **Post at optimal times for your brand**

While there is some debate about the universal [best times](#) to post on Instagram, you can do some experimenting to see what times



work best for your business. Say you are a nutrition consultant, and part of your social media content strategy is posting healthy recipes. It stands to reason you'd want to post-breakfast recipes in the morning, right? Maybe not.

Many people make breakfasts at night for the following day (hello, overnight oats!) to save time when they're rushing around the next morning. Or they make a bunch of frozen breakfasts over the weekend and just heat them up in the morning. The only way to find out when your followers will be most likely to see your posts pop up in their Feed is to experiment with different timing.

### **Test and experiment**

Set up a schedule of posts with similar content (you only want one variable in your "time of day" experiment or else it will muddy your results) and use [Instagram Insights](#) to get the results (likes, comments, shares, etc.). Track everything in a spreadsheet, then after a few weeks, conduct your analysis to see what times result in the most engagement.

You can repeat this process using different types of content to learn which ones elicit the most responses (again, only test one variable at a time, so keep your post times the same).

### **Schedule your posts far in advance**

Once you've established the best times to publish your IG content, schedule your posts far in advance using a tool like [Buffer](#) or [SocialPilot](#) (both of which also provide analytics on your posts).

## Collaborate with influencers and other brands

Partnering with other companies and influential people to increase brand awareness is a tried-and-true marketing strategy. Social media is the ideal platform to leverage this tactic.

Properly vetted influencers can add credibility to your brand and introduce your products or services to an eager new audience. Try some of these methods to make the most of the relationship:

- Have influencers talk up your products and post beautiful photos where users can see someone they admire enjoying them
- Co-host a contest where users have to follow your IG account to win
- Indulge in a takeover, in which a (trusted) influencer “takes over” your account and posts on your brand’s behalf.

Below is Chiara Ferragni’s profile; she’s one of Instagram’s top influencers with more than 23 million followers.



Source: [Instagram](#)

## **Bonding with other brands**

Other brands selling complementary products can become beneficial partners as well. If their target market aligns with yours, your products may appeal to their fans (and vice versa), opening up brand new markets for both parties.

It's key for both partners to feel like they are getting value out of the relationship to forge a successful business partnership. Whether you're architecting cross-promotional posts, contests, user-generated content, or other initiatives, make sure both parties understand what the other will bring to the collaboration.

## **Always include mentions and branded hashtags**

Regardless of how you end up joining forces with an external party, ensure that all your initiatives include consistent mentions (using your IG handle) of your company, your branded hashtags (if appropriate), and continually funnel users back to your Instagram profile. If users don't know where to find you on Instagram, it significantly decreases the value you'll get from a boost in brand awareness.

## **Why 10K is the magic number on Instagram**

It's pretty obvious why you'd want to boost your IG following. The more genuine fans you have, the more products you'll be able to share and sell to them. They might tag your brand in their posts, introducing friends and other users to your company. Or their engagement with your account might launch your posts into additional Feeds of people who never knew your brand existed.

But did you know that Instagram profiles with 10,000 followers also get access to another amazing benefit? Check this out.

Most IG profiles are only allowed a single link in their bio and Instagram prevents them from including links in their posts. Bummer, right? BUT, the platform offers Instagrammers with over 10,000 followers a sweet deal: you can use the Link Sticker in your Instagram Stories.

Although Instagram said it's considering [expanding access](#) to the Link Sticker in the future, at the time of this writing, it's still just for those with 10K (or more) followers or those with a verified check.

You can use the Link Sticker to send Story viewers to your website, your Instagram Shop, or any other location. While there are [ways you can take advantage of this feature](#) without the requisite 10k followers, really, it's in your best interest to grow your follower count to achieve your business goals.

Consistently working to increase your Instagram follower count is a solid step towards achieving your business objectives.

# Types of content to spruce engagement

We might seem like a broken record here, but engagement is key because it's one of the driving forces that improve your performance in the Instagram algorithm. And the good news is that there is more than one way to spruce up your engagement. Put your creative hat on and check out the options.

## Giveaways & Contests

According to [Tailwind](#), Instagram accounts that ran regular giveaways and contests grew 70% faster than those that didn't; and contests and giveaways on Instagram received 3.5 times as many "likes" and 64 more comments than an average post.

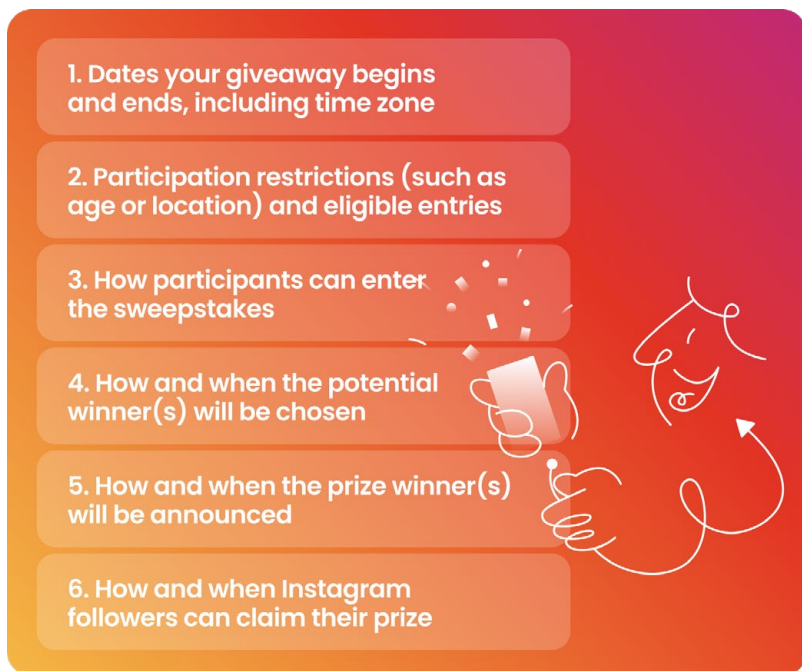
It goes without saying that you should always follow Instagram's rules when running a promotion, giveaway, or contest so your account doesn't get flagged for a policy violation.

However, Instagram's [Promotion Guidelines](#) are extensive, so let's go through them to make sure you've covered all your bases.

Next, you'll need to include all the details of your Instagram giveaway in your Instagram post caption. This includes:

- Dates your giveaway begins and ends, including time zone.
- Participation restrictions (such as age or location) and eligible entries.
- How participants can enter the sweepstake.

- How and when the potential winner(s) will be chosen.
- How and when the prize winner(s) will be announced.
- How and when Instagram followers can claim their prize.



Now that you have the essentials for your giveaway contest, here are six ways you can run a successful Instagram giveaway to draw in more leads. Using the smart [Instagram DM Automation by ManyChat](#) feature, capture user information, collect data on your audience's preferences, and more.



[See more ideas here.](#)

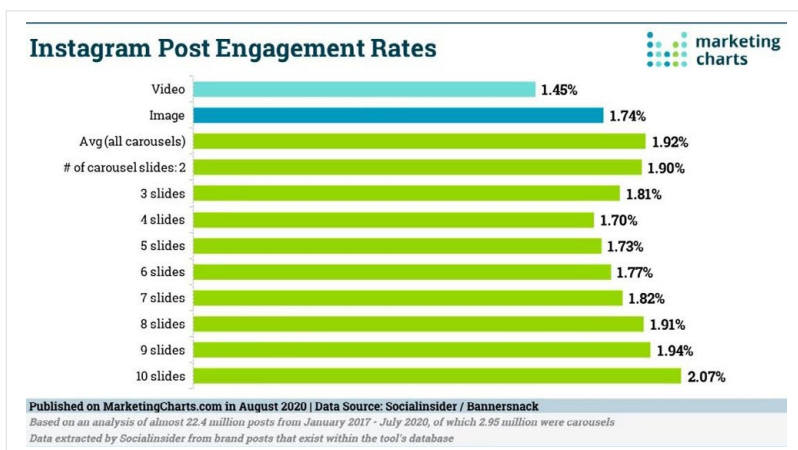


## Do Instagram carousels improve engagement?

The short answer is: Yes, Instagram carousels do increase engagement.

Research from Socialinsider shows that carousels achieve an **average engagement rate of 1.92%**, compared to 1.45% for standalone video posts and 1.74% for single images. What's even more interesting, though, is the spread of engagement across each post depending on how many images (slides) are in the carousel.

Carousels with 10 slides have the highest engagement rate, which may be surprising to some, especially considering users have more swipes to complete in order to see all the content. Yet despite their benefits, just **6% of carousels** take advantage of all 10 slides.



Interestingly, while Instagram refers to carousels as "multiple image posts," they can also combine images and videos. Research



found that carousels with a combination of both images and videos generate [higher engagement rates](#) (2.33%) than video-only (1.86%) or image-only carousels (1.80%).

## 10 Instagram carousels ideas to improve engagement

If you're not already using carousels, now's the time to start experimenting with them. Data shows that carousels account for [19% of all Instagram posts](#), compared to just 4% of posts in 2017. There's a big surge in the number of Instagram users posting this type of content — and for good reason.

So, how can you use carousels to drive engagement? Here are 10 clever and creative ways to use carousels.

### 1. Create an eye-catching first image

The first slide of your carousel is the most important. It's the first image a user sees in their feed, and could be the difference between them scrolling through your carousel and scrolling past it.

There is no "best practice" to create an eye-catching first image that will stop a user's scroll. Follow the brand guidelines you've already created for your business's Instagram account (i.e., colors, fonts, or image filters).

If you're running a themed Instagram account, it's worth noting that the first image of your carousel will be the one displayed on your profile. If

you're posting carousel images that don't fit within that theme, a smart workaround is to hide the less aesthetically pleasing content behind the eye-catching first image — like this one by [Three Ships Beauty](#):

## **2. Share before and after content**

Instagrammers LOVE transformations. So much so, that the hashtag #beforeandafter has been used on more than [22 million](#) Instagram posts.

Certain weekly trends revolve around this before-and-after concept. Take the hashtag #transformationtuesday, for example. Every Tuesday, Instagram users share their transformation posts – no matter the subject — using the same hashtag.

This type of post lends itself perfectly to carousels. To make it work, you need only two images in the carousel (though you can of course use more, if relevant). Simply share a photo of before your project, followed by the completed after pic. Here's an example from [Nooshins Hairgoals](#):

Before-and-after carousels can work for all types of businesses. Just use an example where your product or service has contributed to the change.

## **3. Showcase your products in detail**

Don't have before and after photos to share with your Instagram followers? Another way to use carousel posts to drive engagement on Instagram is by putting your own products or services at the forefront.

Some [81% of shoppers](#) use the Instagram app to research products or services before purchasing them. Help them through that journey with a carousel to:

- Tease a new product launch.
- Showcase a high-value product.
- Profile a product relevant to a trending topic.

Not only does this raise awareness of your product on Instagram, but it could also have a positive impact on your Instagram conversion rate. Half of the people have visited a website to make a purchase [after seeing it on Instagram](#).

Pro Tip: Capture more of the people who buy through Instagram by [creating your own Instagram Shop](#). That way, you can tag items from the store in your carousel, giving followers an easy way to purchase the product you're showcasing without having to search for it on your website.

#### **4. Share a list with your followers**

Listicles are one of the most popular types of content. In fact, [36% of readers](#) prefer list-based headlines over how-tos, tutorials, and question-based headlines. Implement this knowledge in your Instagram marketing strategy to create list-based carousels, and showcase one item on your list on each slide.

Stuck for ideas? Here are some examples of lists you can create carousels for:

- A checklist.
- A repurposed list from a recent or high-performing blog post.

- A shopping list.
- A to-do list.
- A top tips list related to your industry.
- A list of facts or stats.

We can see this in action in a [recent ManyChat Instagram post](#).

The company repurposed an infographic into a carousel to expand its reach and share the data with people who hadn't already visited the blog post:

## 5. Share a recipe, tutorial, or step-by-step process

A carousel is a great way to share a step-by-step type of content, such as a tutorial or a recipe.

To make it easy to understand and follow, have each step of the process on its own individual slide of the carousel. This keeps things clear and encourages users to swipe through the entire carousel to view the entire sequence.

Although recipes might not be relevant to your business, there's



almost certainly a process or tutorial you can share to engage your users. Here's a great carousel example from the graphic designer [Logobrew](#) which teaches people how to create isometric text in Adobe Illustrator:

## 6. Create a seamless photo

Not every carousel slide has to be its own unique image or video. In fact, seamless carousels are one image broken up into equal parts and shared in the carousel format. As the user swipes through the individual images, the carousel appears to be one large photograph.

This works especially well for:

- Panoramic shots.
- Wide-angle landscape images.
- Large images where you want to show the full image, but not lose the detail.

The great news is you don't need to be a design wiz to create a seamless carousel post. You just need some basic image editing software to divide your image into equal size squares. So, if your image is 4,000 pixels by 1,000 pixels, slice it into four 1,000px x 1000px squares.

Apps like [Pic Splitter](#) or [PanoSlice](#) split up your image for you. Or, you can turn any image into a seamless carousel for free [using Canva](#).

## 7. Share a roundup

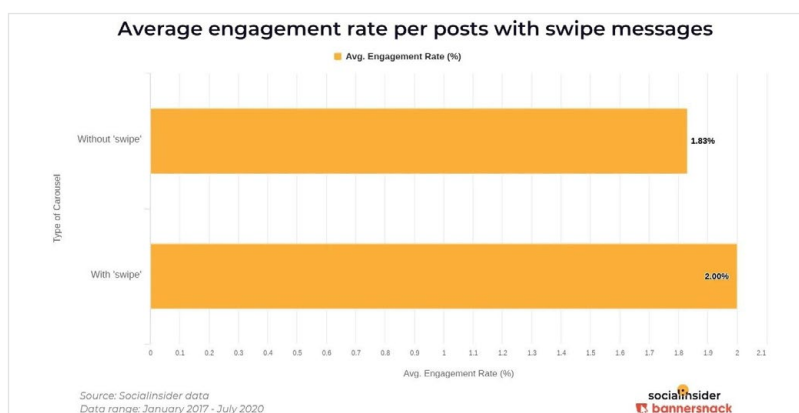
Do you have a collection of products, services, or app features you want to share on Instagram without taking up too much space on your page? Carousels are the perfect format for roundups.

For example, you could create a carousel roundup of:

- User-generated content, such as testimonials or five-star ratings.
- Quotes from thought leaders in your industry.
- Products for a particular task or purpose (like the best paintbrushes for wood).
- Images of influencers wearing, using, or testing your products.
- Products in your new collection.

## 8. Include a “swipe left” instruction in your caption

Though primarily a visual platform, you can’t underestimate the importance of a good caption to accompany your Instagram post. And when it comes to carousel posts, there’s a cheat code to driving even more data engagement on your post — explicitly asking your followers to “swipe left” through the carousel.



[Research](#) found that posts that include a “swipe left” message in the caption have an average engagement rate of 2%, compared to the 1.83% average for all posts.

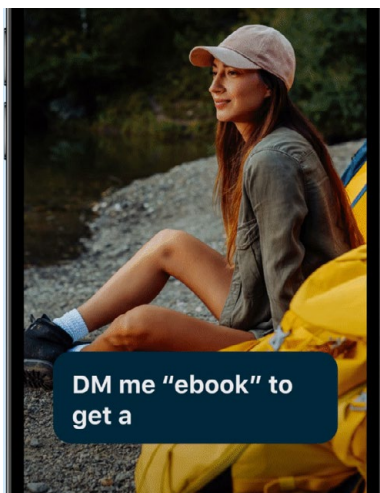
Keep this little hack to yourself, though. Less than 5% of Instagram posts actually ask users to swipe through the carousel. Take advantage while others aren't.

## 9. Add a CTA on the final slide

If you're using Instagram as a social media marketing platform, you'll no doubt be looking to improve business metrics like sales or leads.

Earlier, we mentioned that the final carousel slide has the highest engagement rate of all. To drive your users into action from your carousel posts, include a call to action (CTA) on the final slide that instructs them to do something.

Let's put that into practice and say you want to capture an Instagram follower's email address off the back of your carousel. In that case, make the last slide a CTA like, “Send us a DM saying ‘e-book’ to read it.”

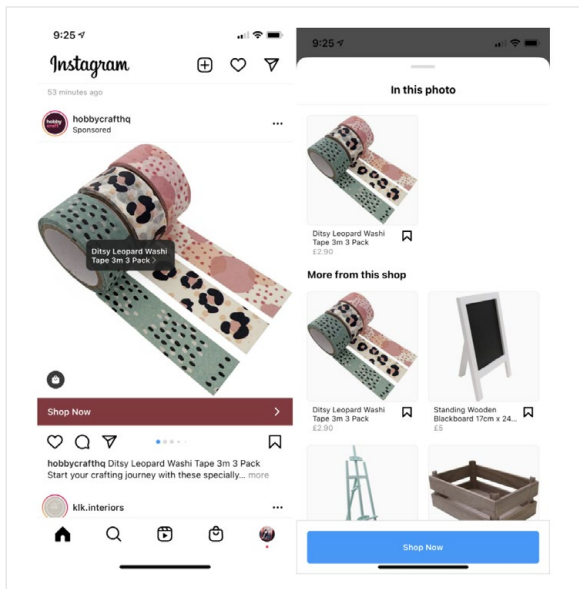


Use Instagram DM Automation by ManyChat to [configure a keyword trigger](#). Then, when someone DMs you with the keyword “eBook”, you can ask for their email address, sync that data with your email marketing platform, and give leads immediate access.

## 10. Experiment with carousel ads

Unfortunately, most social media platforms are turning towards the pay-to-play model. It’s why Instagram reach has been on a downward trend over the past few years since the platform has started incentivizing brands to pay to reach their own audience.

That’s not all bad news though. If you have a carousel that’s performing well organically and you want to give it an extra nudge, consider putting some advertising spend behind it.





Brands can use [Instagram ads](#) to share carousels. Not only will it expand your reach to non-followers, but you'll also be able to add a CTA on each slide of the carousel — like this example from Hobbycraft, which directs people to individual product pages on their eCommerce site:

You can't argue with the facts: Instagram carousel posts are loved by users and creators alike. If you're not already using them regularly, it's time to start doing so.

Carousels will help you [build deeper relationships with your Instagram followers](#) through engaging content, which in turn can lead to more sales and revenue from the platform. Use them to share before and after photos, product collections, or tutorials for your followers to copy.

### **Use Automation**

Using Instagram (IG) Automation by ManyChat, brands can supercharge their existing Instagram marketing efforts by replacing the manual effort in driving sales, answering FAQs, qualifying leads, and boosting engagement.

Put simply, users have seen response times improve by 99% because of IG Automation.

Best of all, Instagram Automation won't turn your IG account into a robot, either!

## Instagram action items

**Document any influencers and/or brands that would make good partnerships for your company**



Creating automated conversations in ManyChat's FlowBuilder means that you create hyper-personalized conversations that give your customers the power and freedom to solve their needs and engage with your brand.

### **Instagram action items:**

- Document any influencers and/or brands that would make good partnerships for your company.

Notes

# How to use Automation for growth

Invest a little time upfront to set up automation and reap the long-term benefits. Automation for your Instagram allows you to answer common questions, generate leads, reduce response time, and more. Whether it's automating a Story reply, DM, or comment on a post, you can personalize your conversation, engage with users, attract NEW users, and get time back to your day.

## Comments automation

One of our favorite features, the Comments Growth Tool (CGT) allows you to send automated messages and start conversations with customers who comment on Instagram posts.

Earlier this summer, the CGT for Instagram DM Automation was disallowed by Facebook. This meant that nobody across the chat marketing ecosystem could use this form of automation. Working tirelessly with the Facebook and Instagram teams, we've been able to bring this instrumental feature back.

If you aren't familiar with the CGT, it's a foundational feature and a tried-and-true method for starting conversations with customers. Here's an overview of how it works:

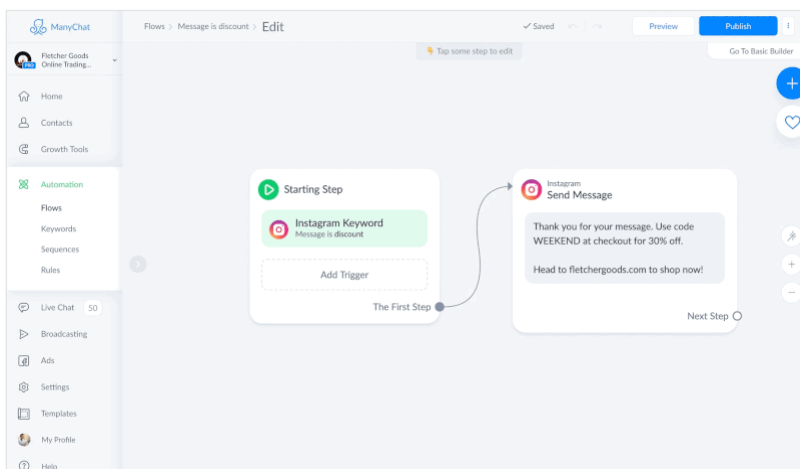
- When enabled, the CGT automatically sends pre-set messages to Instagram users who comment on a post
- You can set additional rules, like triggering specific messages to be sent when users comment on specific posts (or one general message if a user comments on any post)

- You can also choose to trigger messages based on specific words or phrases within comments. (The CGT works exclusively with comments and is separate from our [Keywords](#) feature, which automates responses to Direct Messages.)
- Similar to how the CGT works for Facebook Messenger, now you can trigger a message to automatically send a reply to a public comment under a post.

The CGT is a great way to automate giveaways, contests, and promotions.

Here are two ways to access the CGT from the ManyChat Dashboard:

- From the sidebar —> Growth Tools
- In Flow Builder —> Starting Step —> Add Trigger



## **Default Reply Workflow**

The Default Reply is one of the most simple, yet powerful features of ManyChat. Now you can change its settings inside Flow Builder, making it easier than ever to use.

The Default Reply is a message, or an entire automated Flow, which is sent to customers if they message you first. The only exception is when customers start conversations that have different automations set up, like Keywords or Conversation Starters.

For example, imagine you have the Default Reply enabled at the same time as a live Keyword. If a customer messages you and doesn't use the Keyword, their message will trigger the Default Reply. Conversely, a customer's message that does contain the Keyword will override the Default Reply and instead trigger your Keyword response.

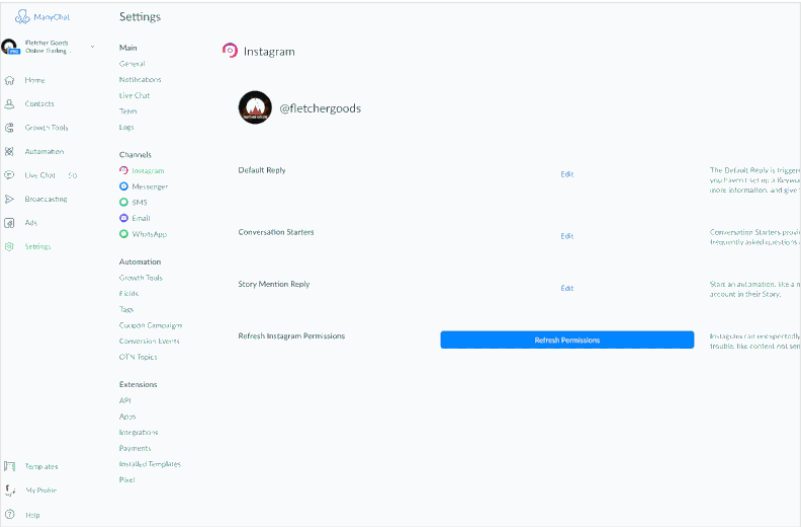
Because the Default Reply will reply to nearly all incoming messages, using it has benefits such as:

- Simply making sure that users who send messages always get a response
- Acting as a "troubleshooting" guide or "helper" if customers type something your chatbot doesn't understand
- Ensuring that customers get the help they need by including things like buttons or answers to FAQs

The Default Reply can be as simple or robust as you'd like and can help you achieve a variety of outcomes. Our personal recommendation is to personalize the Default Reply using Tags, Custom Fields, or Conditions.

You can also choose how often your Default Reply is triggered by using either the "Every time" or "Once per 24 hours" settings.

Consider what you want to achieve with your Default Reply. If you want your Default Reply to act as a "helper" when customers type something your bot doesn't understand, then choosing the "Every time" setting is probably your best bet. If you want to use the Default Reply as a sort of "away" message to tell customers when you'll be available again, you'd likely benefit most by setting it to "once per 24 hours." These two settings used to be located at the top bar of ManyChat, but they are now located inside the Starting Step block in Flow Builder. See the image below:



## **Suppress your Default Reply in Story Replies**

**Note:** This feature is only available for ManyChat Pro plans.

You can now set your Default Reply to ignore Story replies, only responding to Instagram DMs.

Stories are one of the most popular content formats on Instagram, and users can react to them in two different ways: either replying with text or sending one of Instagram's native quick replies, like the 🔥 or the 🍷 emojis.

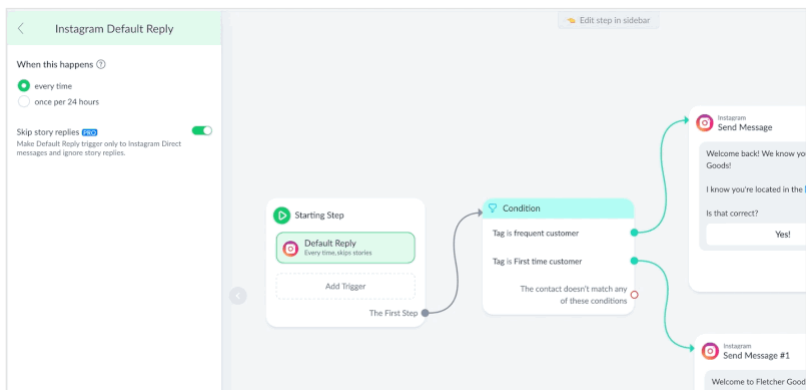
Previously, emoji quick replies would trigger the Default Reply, causing some potentially embarrassing or confusing chat experiences.

With this newly-released setting, you can avoid such scenarios by setting your Default Reply to only respond to DMs. When enabled, your Default Reply will ignore all Story replies (including text and emojis), and will only be triggered by customers who navigate directly to your DMs. Keywords, however, will still function normally, sending responses to users who trigger them in both Stories and DMs.

**Note:** "Story replies" refers simply to responses to your Stories by users. This is unrelated to Story Mentions Replies, a ManyChat feature that allows you to send a message every time your account is mentioned in a Story.



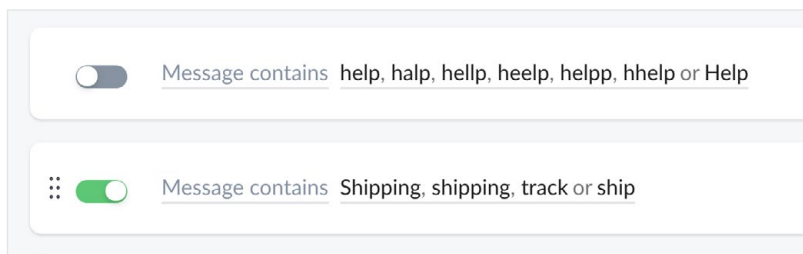
You can toggle this setting on or off in the new Default Reply settings menu, located inside the Starting Step. See the image below to find it:



## **Keyword Functionality**

Keywords for Instagram DM automations can now include phrases with commas.

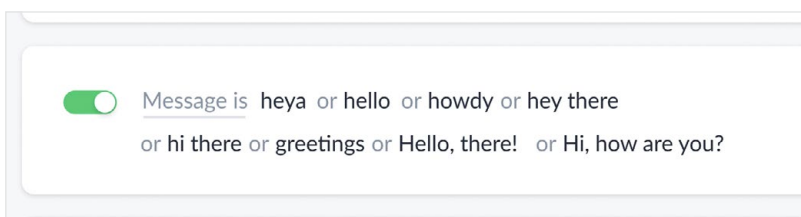
Keywords are one of the most popular ways for customers to start conversations with businesses, especially on Instagram. They're nearly infinitely customizable and simple to use. Prior to this update, the only way to include and manage Keywords in ManyChat was with commas separating each keyword, like the example below:



Unfortunately, this disallowed the use of Keyword phrases that had commas within the phrase — “I need help, please,” for example.

Our new and improved layout for Keywords allows the inclusion of commas within individual Keyword phrases. Keywords are now easier and more intuitive to use while allowing your chatbot to identify more complex keywords and phrases.

Here’s what our updated Keywords function looks like:



## What are keywords?

In ManyChat parlance, a “keyword” is a word or phrase that people use to message your brand through Instagram Messenger. These keywords and preset phrases will kick off conversations with your business that correspond to a specific [Instagram marketing](#) campaign.

Say a customer sees a promo in your Instagram Story with the call to action “DM us the word cupcake to get 25% off your next order.” When they enter the keyword CUPCAKE into Instagram Messenger, they’ll automatically receive their discount code without any human interaction.

"Using autoresponders in your keyword confirmation message is a fast and easy way to provide support and improve a customer's experience." — Trilce Jiron Garro, TBS Marketing

Keywords are a great way to automate conversations inside your bot and keep in touch with your contacts. Without keywords in place, your bot won't be able to understand when people ask it about things beyond the scope of the flows you've built.

You'll benefit most from using keywords on Instagram in two scenarios:

- When you expect people to use a specific word. For example, customers will likely use the word "help" somewhere in their message if they need support. The keyword trigger for "help" could launch a flow that connects them to a Messenger-based FAQ or live support agent.
- When your strategy relies on a particular word or phrase. Say you are giving away an eBook lead magnet. You can have people message you the word "eBook" which would launch a conversation that delivers the eBook to contacts immediately.

But what happens if you don't have any keywords set up in your Instagram Messenger experience that matches what people are messaging you? No sweat — you can set up a [Default Reply](#). A default reply is a response ManyChat sends to Instagram contacts when they message a word or phrase your bot does not recognize.

These messages usually route people back into an automated conversation or connect them with a live agent. The goal is to provide people the information they need quickly and easily.

## How to set up a keyword for Instagram Messenger

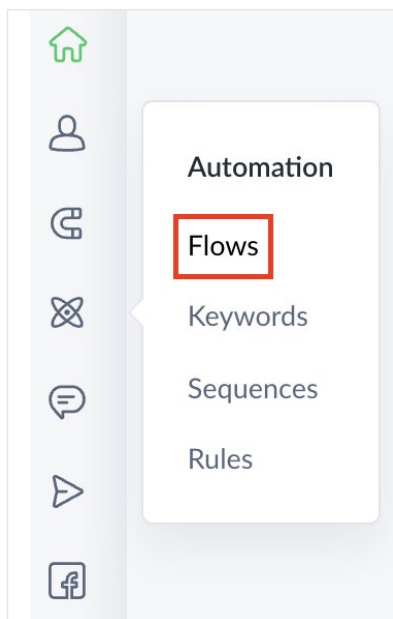
Setting up a keyword is simple. To start, you'll need two things:

1. A ManyChat Pro account
2. Approval for Instagram Automation

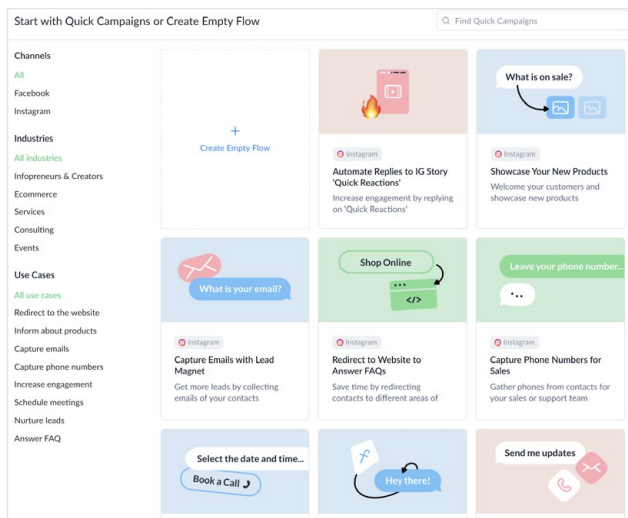
At the moment, Facebook only allows accounts with more than 1,000 followers to apply for Instagram Automation. [Start here to apply.](#)

### Step 1: Create a flow

Once you've got your account set up, head to your ManyChat dashboard and click Flows.



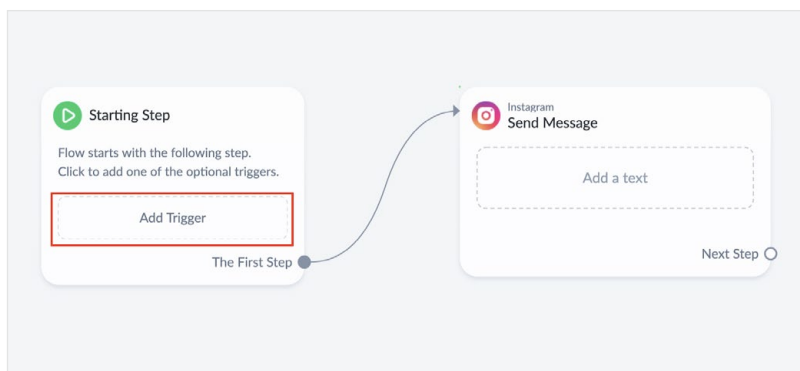
Then click + New Flow in the upper right corner, followed by Create Empty Flow.



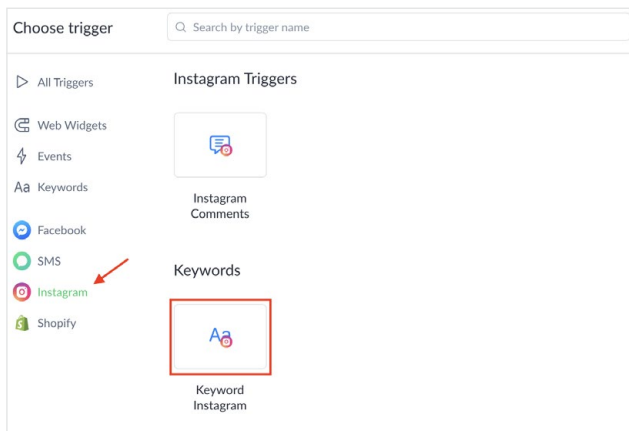
Name your flow, then hit Create. You'll land in Flow Builder, our visual drag-and-drop workflow builder.

## Step 2: Add keyword trigger

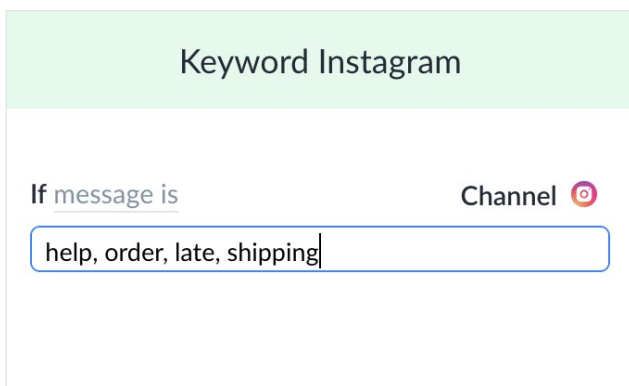
Click Add Trigger in the Starting Step block.



A “Choose trigger” menu will appear. Select Instagram on the left-hand menu. Then click the Keyword Instagram options under Keywords.



Add the keywords that’ll trigger a conversation with your business (see examples below).

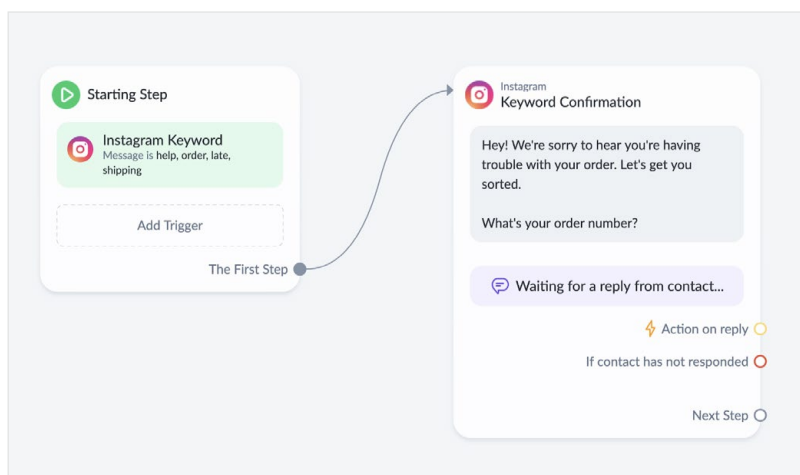


This module lets you add or delete keywords at any time. Choose keywords that are closely related to your campaign or common questions customers might message you about.

Click Create.

### Step 3: Create your keyword confirmation message

Once you set your keywords, you'll want to create a follow-up message to send to contacts. Your response will depend on the reason why someone messaged you. In the example below, we're looking to help someone with their order.



You can also use keywords for promotional reasons. Make sure to choose keywords relevant to your campaigns (like with the eBook example from earlier), and build follow-up flows that entertain and delight people.

## Where to use keywords on Instagram

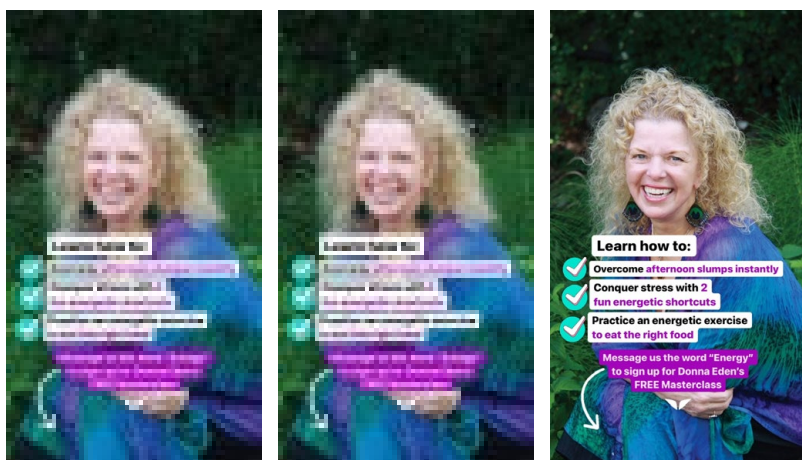
To get the most from keywords on Instagram, let's look at the best places to use them.

### Stories and Reels

Want to get tactical with your Instagram Stories and Reels? Ecommerce brands and influencers can use Keyword Automation to start conversations with their followers.

Edtech company Mindvalley has over 1.4 million followers on Instagram. It uses the platform to share inspirational quotes, provide tips for health and wellbeing, and advertise its free masterclasses.

In one campaign, the brand used Keyword Automation to promote the masterclass and register attendees. They posted a series of stories with the call to action "Message us the word 'energy'" to sign up.

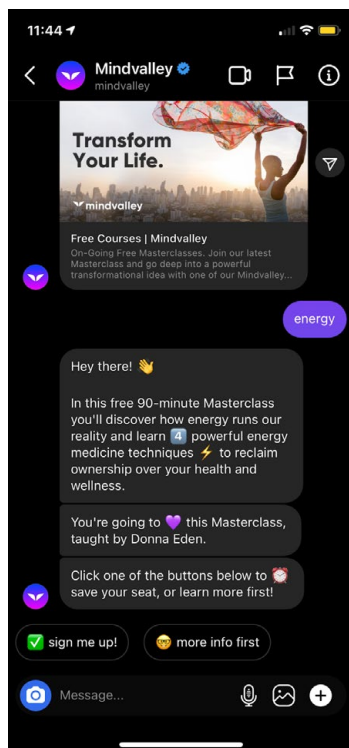




When someone messaged Mindvalley the keyword, it launched a conversation in Instagram Messenger that included the ability to sign up or get more information.

Leveraging keywords enabled the brand to increase its masterclass registrations by 522% and decrease response time by 99%.

Check out the campaign specifics by reading [How Mindvalley Achieved A 522% Increase in Masterclass Sign-Ups Using Instagram Automation](#).



## Lives

Keyword Automation is also a fast way to connect with viewers from live streams or Reels. Say you are doing live training and are giving away a free guide as a lead magnet. Towards the end of your live stream, you can tell viewers to message you a keyword in exchange for the guide.

## Link in your Instagram bio

Another place to use keywords is in your Instagram bio. Write a line with a call to action that directs people into your Messenger

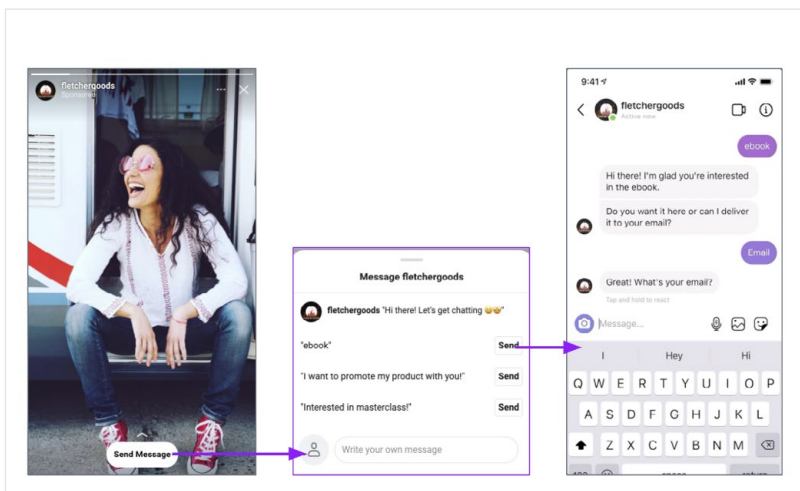
account. This helps capture traffic from people who may not have come across your Stories or ads.



## Ads

You can also use Keyword Automation when you run click-to-Messenger ads on Instagram. As the name implies, these ads allow people to start a conversation with you after they click the ad and allow you to choose the message that people can send to your brand from the ad.

The trick? You can create a keyword in ManyChat and use it in your responses. When someone sends the predefined keyword or phrase, it'll launch a specific flow in your Messenger experience.



Resources:

- [The Beginner's Guide to Instagram Ads](#)
- [Instagram Story Ads: A Complete Guide for Beginners](#)

Its clear keywords can improve how you engage with your followers on Instagram. With their help, you can provide quick responses and create better customer experiences with your brand — all via automation.

Story reply

### **Automate Keyword Triggers to start conversations**

It's easy to start a conversation with a potential client or customer if you tell them exactly how to do it. Encourage viewers to engage by providing a keyword in your Stories that can be messaged to you. With ManyChat's Keywords feature, you can promote the

use of a keyword in your Story and set up automation that occurs when users message you the magic word or phrase.

Keywords have nearly unlimited potential, allowing you to engage your audience in many different ways. Here are just a few ideas for engaging uses of keywords.

- Automate responses that give discount codes or coupons.
- Automate a flow to collect email addresses for newsletters and exclusive emails.
- Automate responses that send users to specific web pages.
- Enter users into giveaways and raffles.

And that's just off the top of our heads! Keywords can really get the ball rolling when it comes to user engagement. For more inspiration, check out some of our [integrations](#). If those aren't enough and you want to get even more creative, take a gander at the thousands of possible [Zapier integrations](#) for ManyChat.

## Be ready for live chat interactions

While automation can vastly improve your customer experience and retention rate, some things just require a human touch. If a user has an issue making a purchase or a question that they can't find an answer to anywhere else, having or not having a live support agent ready to step in can make or break an experience.

Luckily, ManyChat has just the thing to help. Using [Instagram DM Automation by ManyChat](#), you can set up as many live chat agents as you want who are ready and able to step in and chat one-on-one.

One of the best things about Instagram is that, like ManyChat, the brand is dedicated to improving the platform. We're sure Stories will continue to grow as a feature, allowing for more creative ways to use it.

Engaging with your audience isn't a one-time thing; maintaining that engagement is something you have to keep chipping away at, and building customer loyalty takes time. So keep on using Stories and finding new ways to engage, and we'll keep finding ways to help you.

### **Last Interaction and Last Seen Variables**

The [Last Interaction] and [Last Seen] variables are now available for use with Instagram DM automations.

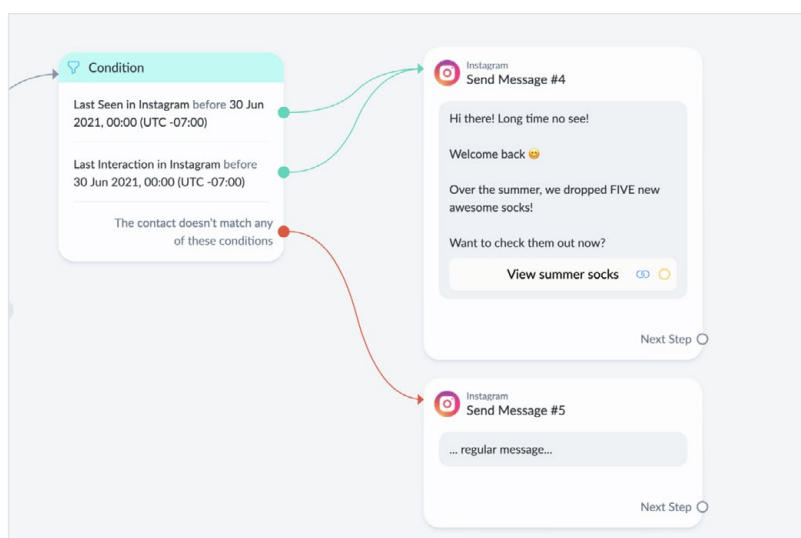
These features allow you to collect, store, and utilize information about:

- When a user last had a DM interaction with your account (via the [Last Interaction] variable)
- When a user last viewed a DM from or sent a DM to, your account (via the [Last Seen] variable)

Personalizing your chat automations is essential for creating the best possible interactions with your audience. These variables can help you avoid annoying certain followers by sending them the information they already have, while simultaneously allowing you to ensure that your audience never misses a crucial update or new product release.

For example, imagine your business is finally launching its flagship product after years of development. You've been using ManyChat to inform users about your product release for a few weeks now, but you know there are likely still people who aren't aware.

Using the [Last Interaction] and [Last Seen] variables, you can automate messages that only go to users who haven't seen or interacted with your DMs within a specific period of time. This allows you to identify who likely is and isn't aware of your product launch, and helps you ensure that automated messages are only sent to the right people.



## Menu of Suggested Quick Campaigns

Our Templates and Quick Campaigns have always been a hit with our users, especially those who are new to chat marketing and want a little extra guidance. That's why we wanted to make accessing them as easy as possible.

With the implementation of this update, pressing the “New Flow” button will now bring up a window with plenty of Quick Campaigns to choose from. All you have to do is choose one to install and then, voila! You’ll have a fully functional campaign just waiting for you to customize it.

For users who prefer starting with a blank slate, clicking the “X” in the corner of the Quick Campaign window will bring you to a new, empty Flow.

We’re continually adding more Quick Campaigns, so keep an eye out for them!

### **Quick reply buttons**

Buttons or Quick Replies do some of the heavy lifting.

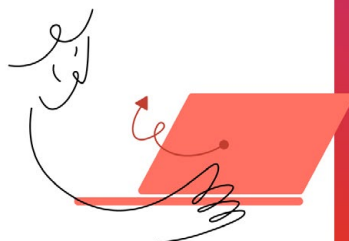
Humans love to skim, so make sure your button copy reinforces what your question is asking. For example, “Are you available for our open house on Saturday?” Your buttons could be: “Yes, I’m free,” and “No, I’m busy,” and “I’m not sure.”

The perk is that the user doesn’t have to type in questions or answers. So, they get the information they are looking for quicker.

## Instagram action items



**Sign up for a ManyChat Pro account**



**Follow the steps in this section to create your first workflow**

### Instagram action items:

- Sign up for a ManyChat Pro account.
- Follow the steps in this section to create your first workflow.



## Notes

# Conclusion

On Instagram — just as with other places online — content is king. But you invest hours publishing posts, publishing stories, shooting reels, doing lives, doing collabs, engaging in the comments, but how do you actually convert all of that attention into sales?

That's one of the biggest struggles: how to convert your followers into actual sales. Right now, the only options are to direct people to low-converting websites or hire expensive virtual assistants to follow up through DMS, right?

What if we could instantly reply to all incoming DMs with exactly the right message? What if we could follow up on every conversation at exactly the right time, without ever making a mistake? What if we could capture people's emails and phone numbers with 50 to 80% conversion rates when they message you? What if we could showcase your products and services right in the DMs? What if we could capture orders and bookings there? What if we could register people to webinars, and what if we could increase the number of likes, comments, and story mentions, and do all of this on complete autopilot?

This sounds too good to be true, correct? Enter Instagram DM Automation by ManyChat.

Instagram DM Automation allows you to automate direct messages on Instagram. Instagram DM Automation is a marketing strategy focused on automation of Instagram DM conversations

with the purpose of increasing conversion rates and customer satisfaction.

You're automating your DMS to achieve business results, increase conversion rates, or increase customer satisfaction by providing really fast response rates. And yes, it's 100% approved by Facebook and Instagram.

Just think about the power this gives you.

Getting somebody's attention is the hardest thing right now in the modern world. We're bombarded with notifications, news, and messaging of all sorts. The open rates on email are low and SMS is expensive.

We're making sure that no message just falls through the cracks. It's important that every message gets a reply because every message that your followers send you is a possibility, it's an opportunity to build that relationship, to show them the products and services, to guide them through that relationship funnel.

Now is the time to start.

## To-Do

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# About ManyChat

**ManyChat** is a global chatbot automation platform that combines the power of Instagram Messenger, Messenger by Facebook, SMS, and email to help almost 2 million businesses across 190 countries engage and support billions of their customers in real-time and at scale. ManyChat was founded in 2015 and is based in San Francisco with venture funding from Bessemer Venture Partners. Learn more at [www.manychat.com](http://www.manychat.com) or follow the company on [Facebook](#), [Messenger](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Twitter](#).

Want to learn how to use ManyChat with your Instagram? Take our [course](#)!

## Additional Space for Notes and More

Notes

## Notes

## Notes



## Notes

## Notes

## Notes

## Instagram Planner

# Repurpose Content Planner

### Current contents

Educational post

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Engagement post

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Podcast episodes

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### Next steps



## Instagram Planner

# Repurpose Content Planner

### Current contents

Educational post

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Engagement post

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Podcast episodes

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### Next steps



## To-Do

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