HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT

Quick Guide
Written by Rhiannon D'Averc

Instagram is one of the most powerful platforms in the world for photographers. It allows us to connect with new audiences, reach clients and sponsors, and also gain inspiration from others.

But there are millions of Instagram accounts, and all of them are competing for attention. Along with the rise in smartphone photography, there are more and more people who claim to be photographers, or influencers, all with smartly shot images gracing their profiles.

So, how can you stand out, grow your following, and develop your account into something that could even get you hired? This guide will explore the steps to success.

Here is what we will cover:

· How to set up your account for success

· Selecting images for your profile

· Posting regularly and the Instagram algorithm

· Interacting and increasing engagement

Recommended Reading: If you'd like to improve your composition skills for better images, grab a copy of Photzy's best-selling premium guide: Advanced Composition.

This would be a great profile image!

HOW TO SET UP YOUR ACCOUNT FOR SUCCESS

First, let's talk about setting up your account.

There are three main areas we need to focus on:

- Your account name or handle

- Your profile image

- Your bio (the area of text underneath your username but above the rest of your profile)

There is also a fourth area that you can add to your profile by switching to a business account. This is a good step to take if you want to make a living as a photographer. Doing so will unlock another feature:

- Your profile contact buttons

We'll begin with your account name, which should be indicative of who you are and what you do. Anything complex is likely to be forgettable. Something simple and easy to remember – such as your name – is best.

You can also add a word like "photo" or "studio" to make it clear what you do; for example, "bensmithphoto" might be a better name for Ben Smith, because it will differentiate him from other Ben Smiths (which is essential when it comes to tagging). If that name is taken, you'll want to think of something unique rather than adding a forgettable number.

Next, your profile image. It's best if this image is actually of yourself, because Instagram is a social network. People want to know who you really are!

This doesn't mean it can't be artistic, however. Be creative. Include a camera in the shot so people get the picture: who you are and what you do.

Now to your bio. You're trying to attract both clients and followers, so provide the relevant information. This may include the following:

· Your name, if it is not included in your handle

· Your location

· What kind of photography you do

· Any other relevant facts

Let's set up an example. Our imaginary photographer, Ben Smith, does weddings and is one of the most sought-after wedding photographers in New York. He's so popular that he even gets to travel for work. Here's how his bio should read:

"@bensmithphotonyc

Capturing weddings and engagements in NYC

21-30 July: RI / 13-26 August: Miami

Website below for bookings"

All of the relevant information is there, and it tells us precisely what to expect from his profile, as well as even advertising his next vacancies. It's a good idea to add some emojis, too: a camera, a plane to indicate Ben's travel, and maybe a US flag to signify his location. Emojis add fun to the bio and are universal, meaning non-English speakers will still understand everything.

Finally, the contact buttons. You should definitely add your portfolio site as your website link, but you can also add contact options such as an email address and phone number. These will allow clients to get in touch.

◇ **Key Lesson:** When a new follower comes to your profile, they should understand everything they need to from that first look. Giving relevant information will also increase your bookings.

We'd expect to see this on Ben's profile.

These images clearly belong to the same collection.

SELECTING IMAGES FOR YOUR PROFILE

What you post on your profile should be a matter of careful thought. There are two places to post images and videos on Instagram: on your feed and in your Stories.

Most users approach Stories as a place for more informal content, as they disappear after 24 hours and are less permanent. Your feed should stay pristine: a carefully curated collection of your best shots. No one needs to see thirty images from the same photoshoot, or a picture of your lunch (unless you're a food photographer).

Keep your feed for your best stuff and stick to Stories for anything else.

Imagine your feed like a gallery – each shot should stand strong alone and fit with the others around it.

Creating an aesthetic for your feed is a great way to keep yourself in line when it comes to quality, as well as attracting more followers. A strong aesthetic will help people who enjoy your shots find you more easily and could become a signature for your photographic work.

The aesthetic doesn't have to be complex. It might be that you always post in black and white; or always use bold colors; or always have a dreamy, pastel edit. Some photographers post only close-up portraits, whereas others always work with creative makeup artists for an artistic touch, and yet others will use oversized props (think Tim Walker).

Whatever your signature is, you don't have to stay tied to it forever; you're allowed to change your aesthetic. Just know that if you have built up a lot of followers due to that aesthetic, they may choose to leave!

◇ **Key Lesson:** Your feed should function as a portfolio, albeit a bigger one than your actual portfolio. Select only the best shots, keep it to just a few photos, and maintain a strong aesthetic to gain attention. Stories can be a more informal place for your followers to get to know you.

A regular posting schedule will work in your favor.

POSTING REGULARLY AND THE INSTAGRAM ALGORITHM

The Instagram algorithm can be controversial, largely because it often changes. Many users feel that their posts are hidden or that their followers do not see them enough.

The key is that the more someone interacts with your images, the more likely your images are to come up in their feed.

To encourage this, you should post on a regular schedule, such as once a day or at least once every few days. You should also try to get people to engage with your work. Putting up your best possible shots should work for getting likes, but including interesting information or even questions in your captions will help you to gain comments.

In order to get your images seen outside of the home feed, you can use hashtags. You're allowed to use up to 30 of them, but less is usually more. Find some key hashtags that relate to your work, and which are not so busy that your image will immediately disappear under new posts, for the sweet spot that might get you more exposure.

Above all, keep posting. Your followers will drop away if you do not update your account, and when you do eventually post, fewer people will see it.

◇ **Key Lesson:** Keep to a regular schedule of great content with engaging captions and the right hashtags to see more growth and interaction.

Everything comes together here to make this a professional fashion shot.

INTERACTING AND INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

I mentioned previously that you can encourage engagement in your caption, but you can also get engagement by giving it. Simply put, if you follow other users, like and comment on their posts, and take part in your community, you will be noticed more often.

There are small communities all over Instagram. Look for groups of a specific genre (such as wedding photography, for our fictional Ben) and you will start seeing the same photographers posting, commenting on one another's posts, following one another, and so on. Once you are part of that community, you can get the same kinds of responses.

Just be careful not to engage in prohibited behavior. Harassment or spam, liking lots of posts in a short time, making lots of similar comments, and so on, can all result in a ban. You can even be 'shadowbanned,' with your images removed from feeds and hashtags even though you haven't been warned about it.

Being genuine, really engaging with your community, and concentrating on content is the best way forward.

◈ **Key Lesson:** Don't just post and run. Stick around and engage with other Instagram users if you want their attention in return.

👤 **Recommended Reading:** If you'd like to improve your composition skills for better images, grab a copy of Photzy's best-selling premium guide: Advanced Composition.

Photography by Rhiannon D'Averc

CONCLUSION

Developing your Instagram account requires the following:

- Clear information about who you are in your bio, handle, and profile image

- Links for potential clients

- Good-quality posts with strong captions and hashtags

- A consistent posting schedule and theme or aesthetic

- Engagement with your niche community

⚡ Self-Check Quiz:

1) What words could you add to your username to attract the right audience?

2) What is an example of an aesthetic?

3) Your bio should contain your name, niche, and _____.

4) What kind of content can go into your stories?

5) Where should you post a personal shot that isn't up to the standard of your usual portfolio?

6) How can you encourage comments?

7) What is a shadowban?

8) What should you do when you see a post from another photographer that you admire?

Learning Assignment:

Search within your niche and find the best photographer in your genre on Instagram. Some people have millions of followers! What are they doing to encourage engagement? What do they post? How do users find them? Use this information to inform the way you use your Instagram account.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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