



INSTAGRAM MASTERY

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Quick Start Guide to Instagram

Grow An Audience, Build a Brand, Launch Your Website, Services & Products

Introduction

Welcome to The Digital Upstart Quick Start Guide to Instagram. This is a beginner's crash course for anyone who wants to set up their business on this social media network for the first time.

It might be that you have set up your Instagram account but found that you've not built a following. Or that you have a personal account and want to know how to set up a separate account to promote your business and services.

Whatever the reason, we can show you the quickest, easiest way to set up, share great images and begin building a following from scratch.

We've stripped it right back to the essentials you need to know. Follow these steps and by the end of the month you'll notice:

- Increased awareness of your brand, services and products
- More traffic to your website
- New friends and profitable contacts
- A fan-base into which you can launch new products

So let's get started.

The Lowdown: Important Facts You Need to Know

Instagram is a highly popular tool for building a brand and launching an online business. Instagram has over 500 million active monthly users worldwide, sharing an average of 95 million photos and videos every day.

This photo and video sharing platform has a very high level of engagement. By this I mean that followers “like” and comment on posts rather than simply consuming photos and not acting upon it.

In research by Forrester in 2014, it was found that Instagram generated a “per-follower engagement rate” of 4.21%. In layman’s terms, it means that Instagram generates 58 times more engagement than Facebook, and 120 times more than Twitter.

More recent statistics from Instagram Advertiser show that, 50% of users follow at least one business and 75% of Instagram users take action after looking at an Instagram advertising post, such as clicking through to the website.

One of its strengths as a visual platform is that it transcends borders and language barriers, making it globally popular. It’s more accessible to all manner of people because it doesn’t require writing skills or clever turns of phrase.

Instagram has a younger audience than Facebook or Twitter, with 39% of its UK users aged 16-24. There tends to be slightly more female users than male. However, that still leaves a large proportion of users in your target age bracket.

It is particularly good for the following:

- ❑ You are setting up (or already run) an offline or online business selling physical products (homeware, art, crafts, toys, collectables,

furniture, food, drink, confectionary, clothing, electronics, musical instruments)

- ☐ You're involved in an information publishing niche that has a strong visual element, for instance – outdoor pursuits (hiking, cycling, camping, sailing, long distance running), photography, travel, cookery, DIY, crafting, animal training and gardening.
- ☐ You're a creative who makes their own product – eg, illustration, design, painting, photography, upcycling, crafts, fashion, cakes, bread, beer.
- ☐ You're a writer, reviewer or journalist whose subject matter lends itself well to photographs – for instance, travel, landscape, architecture, animals, sports, food and drink, fashion, design.

These are not essential, but you will be ideally suited to Instagram if you:

- ☐ Enjoy taking photos
- ☐ Own a smart phone or tablet (Instagram comes as an app)
- ☐ Find writing boring or difficult
- ☐ Have a younger target audience (under 40)

It's important to note – Instagram is not all about taking professional-level photography or being 'arty'. Depending on your business niche and the kind of prospects you're aiming at, you can use Instagram to:

- ☐ Document journeys, events and activities in real time
- ☐ Take 'work in progress' photos of products being made or developed
- ☐ Communicate the personality of your business – if your business is not supposed to be slick and polished, neither do your photos need to be.

However, simply going onto Instagram and sharing any old photos, any old time, is not going to help you build and launch a business from scratch. To do this, you need to use Instagram strategically, as we'll show you in this report.

Okay, so let's get started.

Setting up...

First things first, sign up for an Instagram account. Go to <https://instagram.com/> or go to the 'App Store' on your tablet or smart phone to download the app.

Next, choose a name. If you have another social media account, for instance Twitter, then try and match them up as closely as possible.

Add a profile photo (ideally your business logo or a photo that represents your business, such as a product, or a good quality professional-looking profile shot of yourself).

If you have to your website, enter that, but if you don't that's not a problem yet. You can add it later.

If you have other social networks accounts, let your followers know they can now follow you on Instagram.

TIP: Before you start gathering followers I recommend you add 6 good quality photos that give an impression of you, your subject matter or your brand "at a glance". You won't get followers if you have no images – even if you do, they'll be unqualified followers who just want you to follow them back for the sake of numbers. It's likely they'll later unfollow you.

Now you're ready to start sharing photos and videos.

Your 11 Step Instagram strategy

To make Instagram work you need to get as many qualified followers as possible (that is, the sort of people who would enjoy your website, services and product) and also engage with them – in other words, get them to be excited and ready for your website launch and products.

There are 10 steps to achieve this.

1. Frequency

To build up a business on Instagram, you need a high frequency strategy. That means posting at least one picture every day. But I would recommend 3 if you can do it.

To begin with, post your picture at different times of day or night to ensure variety and that you get the attention of users who might have different social media hours to you.

Record the times when you get great results (lots of likes, comments and follows) and those when you don't. Not these down in your Evernote and keep a log. You can then send out the most important photos (for instance a new product or website launch) at the most effective times.

If you don't want to have to be on your phone at various times of day, use [Schedugram](#) to schedule your Instagram posts.

2. The RITE photos

Your photos should follow the RITE formula. They should be:

- ☐ **Relevant** – the photos should relate to your business's subject matter and to the interests of your ideal prospects. What is it they like and dislike? This is more important than your own taste. For instance, if you're a vintage model train blogger, you might post

pictures of trains, scenery, modelling kits, tools and paints. But you wouldn't post random pictures of your cat. However, if your cat was sitting on your train scenery in an amusing way, that might be relevant. Or if you regularly mentioned your cat in your blog then that would be relevant, as it would be something that's intrinsic to your content and part of your brand.

- ❑ **Interesting** – you need to keep your audience engaged. So try to post photos that are interesting in some way – it could be something rare, something funny, something unusual, something taken from a strange angle, or something your competition isn't doing. Some of your images should include faces. Instagram photos that feature faces get 38% more likes than those without.
- ❑ **Timely** – as much as possible, keep it topical. A photo you took last week won't have the impact of one you took that day. If you're launching a product, post a photo of it that day, not weeks later. Post photos that relate to special holidays like Christmas, Easter, Bank Holidays... or that relate to the weather or sporting events.
- ❑ **Engaging** - your followers need to feel that they're in the thick of the action and playing a part in your business. You want them to comment and like your photos. So give them sneak previews, exclusive news, ask them what they think.

When it comes to sharing images, 80% of your Instagram content should enlighten, enrich, entertain and engage your audience, while only 20% or less should be self-promotional.

4. Use The Right Filters

On Instagram you can use filters to give your photo added drama or impact. First, this helps them stand out on people's feeds so that they notice you. Second, it can help you establish your brand, giving all your photos a similar unifying hue or atmosphere.

The 10 current most popular filters on Instagram (according to [Populagram](#)) are:

- Normal (No Filter)
- Valencia
- Earlybird
- X-Pro II
- Amaro
- Rise
- Hudson
- Lo-fi
- Hefe
- Sierra

I'd recommend you start with normal (no filter). But if you do use filters try to stick to two or three that best define your personality, business type or brand.

For instance, if you sold – or blogged about – kids' toys, you might choose X-PROII because it gives photos an overexposed brightness.

If your business niche is all about kite surfing, you might choose 'earlybird' because it gives a nice early morning glow look that suits outdoor pursuits.

Don't use filters if you're not sure of WHY you're using it. If in doubt, leave the filter off.

5. **Hashtags**

Adding a Hashtag to photos makes it more easy for people to find you. It's a great way of qualifying your audience, as you'll be attracting people based on specific keywords and search terms relevant to your subject matter.

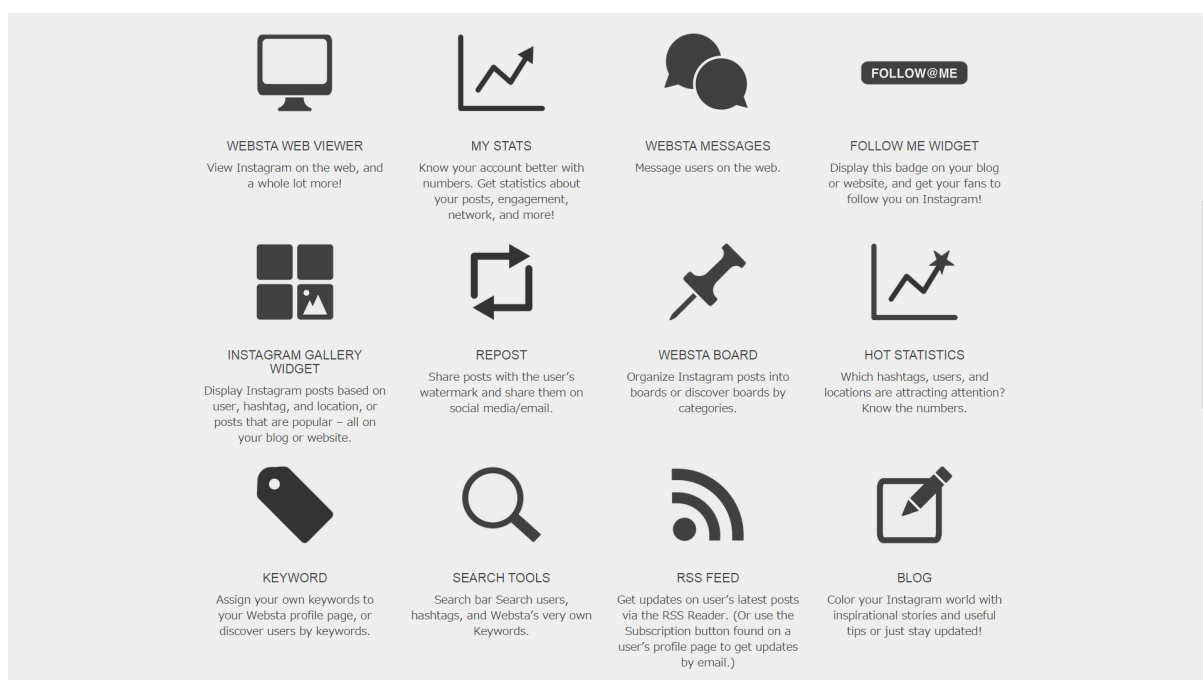
Don't be afraid to use lots of hashtags beneath a photo. You're allowed up to 30 hashtags per post. It might look strange at first but it's common in Instagram, and it works as a big filter helping you get the right people to see your post.

These are some of the most popular general hashtags:

- #love
- #instagood
- #me
- #follow
- #tbt
- #like
- #photooftheday
- #followme
- #tagsforlikes
- #happy
- #beautiful
- #picoftheday
- #instadaily
- #fun
- #smile

But these won't find you qualified viewers. Instead, think of relevant tags that fit your photo and also your business subject matter. If it's not immediately obvious what hashtag to use, then try Webstagram <http://websta.me/?lang=en> - this is a research application for Instagram users. It helps you find relevant, related and popular hashtags.

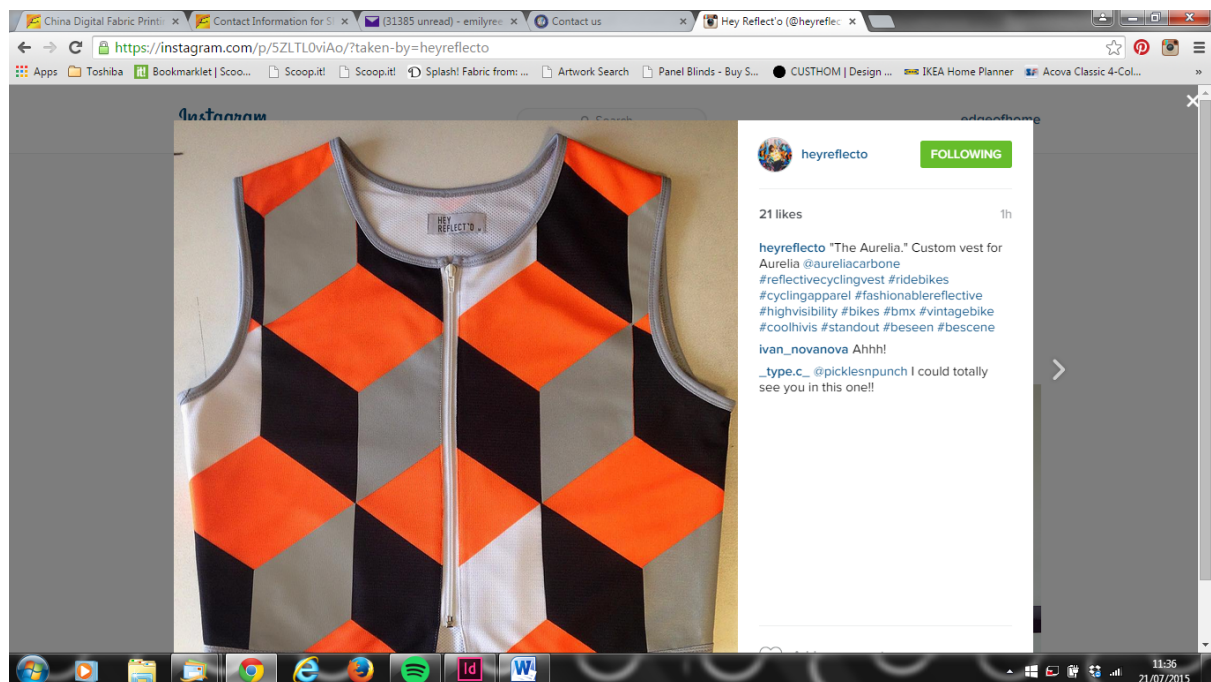
It's easy to use – simply sign up and login with your Instagram account and you'll get the following features:



TIP: Store the top hashtags on your Evernote, so you can retrieve them easily. It also allows you to track changes to hashtag

If you don't wish to add lots of hashtags beneath your photos, then you can always add them to the comments. These will be picked up by people looking for those hashtags. It also means you can go back to old photos later and add hashtags to give them a boost.

Here is an example from a company who make high-visibility vests. By adding #BMX and #ridebikes they're able to reach their target customer.



6. Follow People

You won't get any significant following of your own until you start following others. To get started, you should track down and follow the Instagram accounts of:

- Your competitors
(and your competitors' followers)
- Magazines, journals and news sites
(and followers of those magazines, journals and news sites)
- Experts in the subject matter - authors, top photographers, journalists, business owners
(and followers of those experts)

- Enthusiasts and super fans

TIP: If you're struggling, try a tool called [Populagram](#) to find popular hashtags and people.

Following people gets them to notice you. Many will follow you because of it. If they don't, then carry on following them, but try the next step.

7. Liking and Commenting

After following people, your next most powerful advertising weapon is liking and commenting on their posts. Everyone loves to be noticed and appreciated. When you do this, they'll notice you and engage with you.

Don't stop doing this when someone follows you, because this is your chance to start building friendships and lasting connections.

8. Mention other people

Mention someone using @ in your post caption – this can allow you to get noticed by key players in your field. Just make sure it's the sort of person who has followers that you're targeting.

For instance you could caption a post "Psychedelic Wallpaper inspired by @MrsBrilliant." When you post that photo, "@MrsBrilliant will be notified. You might find they follow you back or reciprocate. According to SproutSocial, Instagram posts with someone mentioned get 56% more engagement.

9. Steal Your Competitor's Audience

When you see the feed of a competing business, look at the people who are liking and commenting on their pictures and videos. These are your target prospects, so dive in and make contact by following them, liking their photos and commenting on their photos. Be nice to them and you'll lure them to your account.

You can also see their entire list of followers by clicking on 'followers' when you're on their feed (look just above their bio). Don't blanket follow

every one of them – be selective. You're looking for like-minded people in your subject area.

10. Follow Back

When someone follows you, follow them back. This is more likely to lock them into a relationship with you and stop them unfollowing you.

Remember, this is just to get you started. Later on you can always take a step back and unfollow people who don't have an interesting enough feed of photos.

TIP: Only do the above if their feed is relevant to yours – there's no point in having someone as a follower if they're not likely to buy from you eventually.

11. Analytics

You should keep track of what's working and what's not. This way you can keep improving and targeting your photos. I recommend a tool called [IconoSquare](#) which brings you all the analytics about your account that you could need.

For instance, you can find out the best times to upload images to your feed and when you will get more likes, depending on your followers. This is affected by things like where they are in the world, and whether they are typically working during the day or not. For example designer/makers/crafters tend to check their feed during the day.

CASE STUDY

Example of an Real Life Instagram Business Launch

By Digital Upstart Contributor Emily Rees

Emily Rees is a designer, marketer and website-builder who regularly contributes to Digital Upstart. This is how she set up her business on Instagram.

I decided that before I'd even got my website together, I needed to build up a list of prospects and test out some of the images I'd be putting on to the website. The idea was that when I launched the site, I'd have instant traffic and advertising, and some amount of brand awareness.

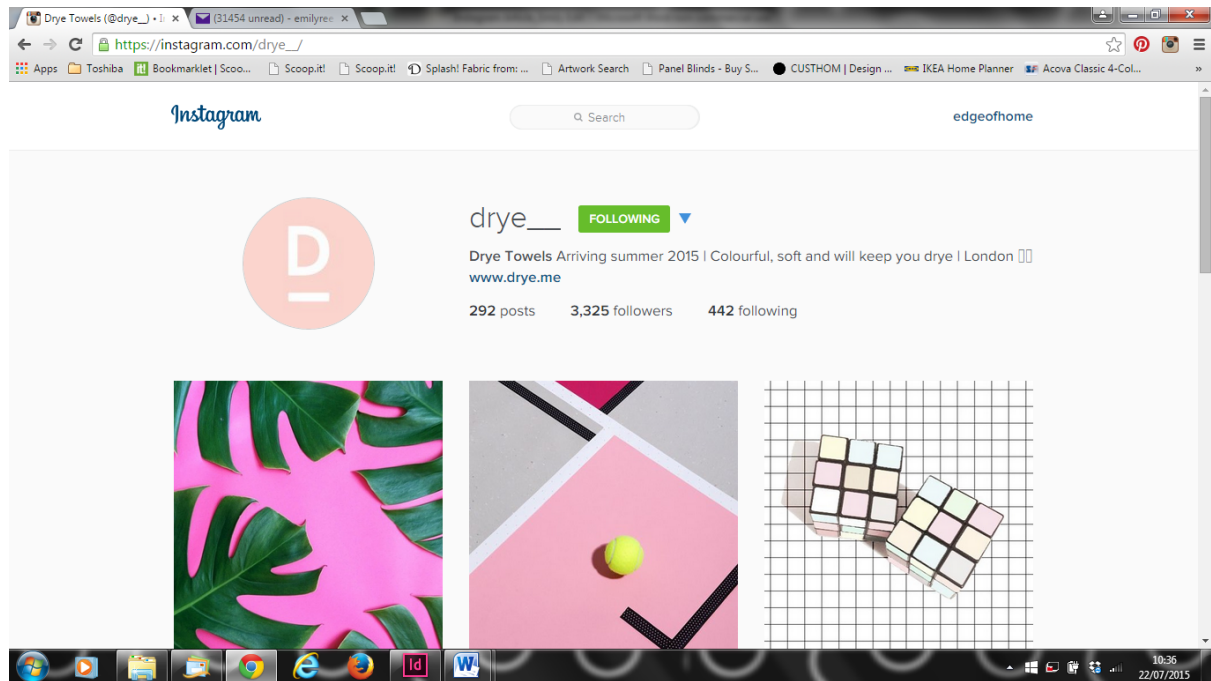
First, I got myself an Instagram account. If you already have an Instagram account with a few followers on it, there is no problem in changing this to your 'business account' (simply delete all the irrelevant photos of your dogs/kids/holidays!)

I tried hard to give my feed a unifying theme and not to post pictures of me drinking cocktails or cutesy shots of my children onto my feed. At the beginning I uploaded some artwork and patterns I had made on my computer, as I didn't have any products yet and I am not a particularly good photographer. I did this every day.

This can be very time consuming, but you can avoid this by 're-gramming' other people's photos. That basically means sharing other people's work – which is great as long as it's close to your brand, ethos, style and personality. You can then start to mix this in with your own photos and things you find on Pinterest (that's another useful image source: www.pinterest.com)

An example of where this is done really well is a company called 'Drye' who have just launched their towel label. For 4 months leading up to the launch they ran their Instagram feed, carefully choosing pictures that represented the look and feel of their brand. They were then able to launch their brand to over 3000 followers.

Here's a shot of their Instagram page (this is how it looks on the internet, but remember Instagram is an app for tablets and smart phones):



The primary thing that I learnt when I was just starting out was to MAKE FRIENDS.

It's really vital to have 'friends' that will like and comment on your images to make you look popular and encourage others to follow you.

I 'like' a LOT of photos. It's a great way of showing people that you're there, that you're similar in your tastes, and then getting them to like you.

At the beginning I had maybe 10 'friends' – people who I didn't know but would like all my photos and I would like theirs. We would comment on each other's pictures and sometime they would even 'regram' my images.

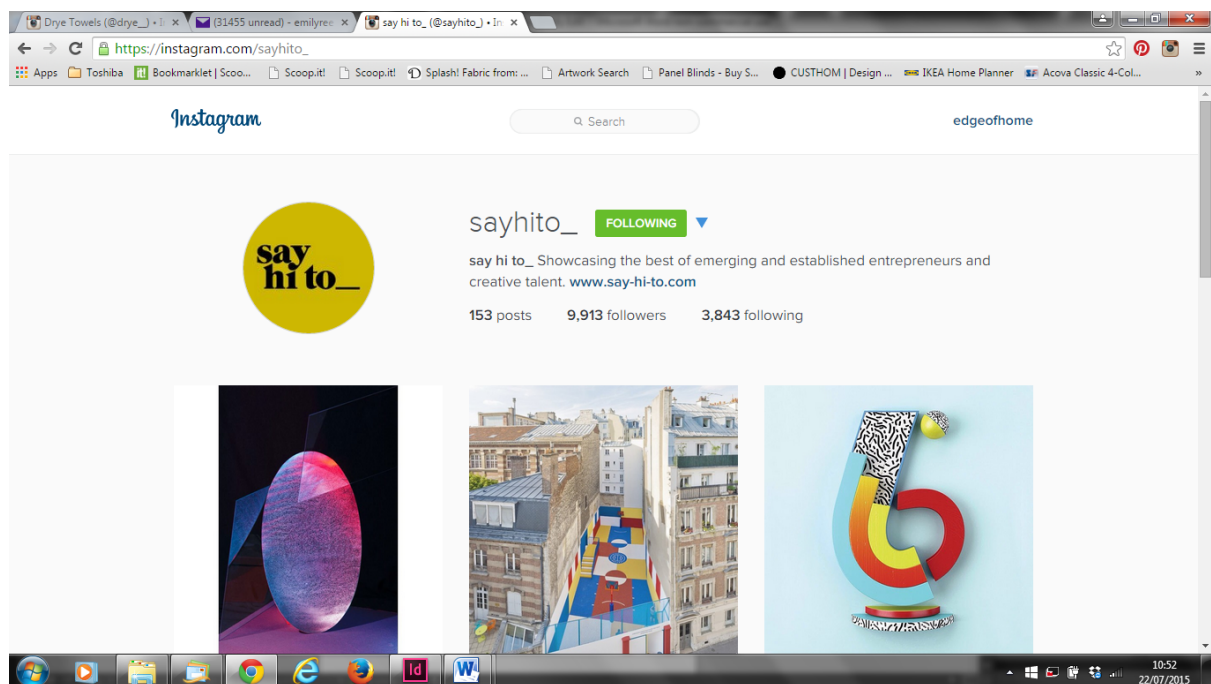
This is a great way to get new followers because the regramer should 'tag' you in the image so potential followers can find you.

Getting content...

Finding new and fresh content is the hardest part – if you are not a very good photographer and you want to share photos of your products (for instance food, drink, clothes, designs, fashion, crafts) then I recommend hiring a photographer – perhaps a photography student who can maybe take 50 photos in a day for you.

You could pay as low as £100 for a student, and up to £600 for a professional photographer. But remember you can also curate found images very easily.

Here is a feed that has gained almost 10,000 followers by compiling (also known as ‘curating’ their own list of emerging designers. It has been so successful that designers now submit images to them for use on their feed. In other words, the content comes to them!



Results...

The results of my pre-launch campaign was that I instantly had traffic over 500 people in my first month – that's almost purely from Instagram as I didn't have a significant presence on Twitter or Facebook until after I launched.

What's more through Instagram I was contacted by five stockists, several magazines who wishes to feature my work, as well as designers and collaborators who I will be working with in the future.

So the key is not to think of it as a direct sales tool, but a way of getting you and your brand known. It's a free way of telling the world you've arrived and that you mean business.