

# Social Media Guide for Authors



## What's Instagram?

A photo-sharing application and service that lets you share photos and videos with a global community of more than 700 million users.

## Who's on Instagram?

- More than 700 million people as of April 2017, and the [majority of users are younger than 30](#).
- According to Pew Research Center, **32% of internet users** (28% of all U.S. adults) use Instagram.
  - Roughly six-in-ten online adults ages **18-29 (59%)** use Instagram, nearly double the share among 30- to 49-year-olds (33%).
  - **Female** internet users are more likely to use Instagram than men (38% vs. 26%).

- Roughly half (**51%**) of Instagram users access the platform on a **daily basis**, with **35%** saying they do so **several times a day** (Pew).
- **54%** of those who use Instagram **also use Pinterest** (Pew).
- If you're trying to reach women under the age of 30 as part of your reading audience, and you like making visual content, then consider using Instagram :).



[Pic by gratisography](#)

## When to post on Instagram

- CoSchedule reports that the best days to post on Instagram are **Mondays** and **Thursdays, 8-9 am** and **5 pm**. Most users engage with Instagram content more during **off-work hours** than during the workday, aside from peak times.
- [Instagram videos posted during off-hours](#) (9pm–8am EST) get nearly 50% greater average interactions than videos posted during the workday (TrackMaven).

# What to do on Instagram



<-- make collages about your passion for roller disco, including outfits and hair accessories

## Posting

- **Post consistently**, as long as you're posting **high-quality images**.
  - Err on the side of [fewer, high-quality image posts](#) that really stand out, versus posting more frequently and with lower-quality images (Sue Zimmerman).

If you're posting 3x/day on Instagram, but you're not posting high-quality images, cut back to once a day or a few times per week. 1-3x a day is fine.
  - The key is that if Instagram's **demographics** matches the audience you want to reach, **post as consistently as possible**, at least once a day if you can. Check the tools at the end of this guide, and in the [audience and management guide](#), to help you do that.
- [Use hashtags](#)—they're much more important on Instagram than other platforms.

- Using relevant hashtags will help get your content seen, and maybe get you more followers. TrackMaven finds that 11+ hashtags get more engagement.
- Instagram allows for up to **30 hashtags** per post, and **many users max that out** (Buffer). Look at authors who are doing great on Instagram to see what hashtags they're using. That said, it seems that using **10-12 hashtags is the sweet spot**.
- Create a **challenge** for your fans based on a popular hashtag.
- Participate in Instagram's [Weekend Hashtag Project](#).
- Use **hashtag stories** on Explore to help you find stories related to your interests.
- **Encourage and share user-generated content.**
  - User-generated content fosters loyalty and engagement, *and* gives you more content to post.
  - Think of something from your book that you can **ask your users to make** (like a drawing, a pic of an incredibly detailed diorama they made, or video of an **intricate scale model of your fictional world that they created on a six-foot table**). There's a lot you could do, but you have to ask!



- Run **contests**
  - Contests and giveaways engage your audience and build your fan base (like a Photo Challenge). Instagram's promotion rules have fewer limitations than Facebook—just **be sure to read what those rules are**.
- **Ask questions** to encourage comments on your posts.
  - **Like and comment** on photos that use the hashtags you use or are going to use. Instagram's **interactions to followers ratio** is 30 times greater than that of other major social networks ([TrackMaven](#)).
  - Use [tagging](#), and consider tagging your location if you're at an event.
- Grab attention with the **opening line in your caption**.
  - Buffer recommends micro-blogging: use your caption like a short-form blog post.
- CoSchedule's data shows that the **best Instagram messages** are image posts about 241 characters long (the longest for any platform), and have 11 hashtags, three emojis, and positive sentiment.
- Jay Baer says don't be afraid to write lengthy descriptions.

## Images and Video

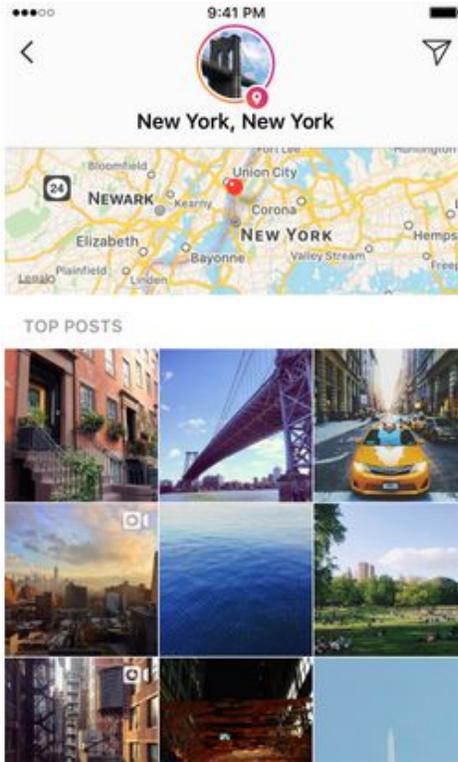
- The **best image size** for square images is 1,080 x 1,080, and the best size for vertical images is 1080px (w) x 1350px (h), according to Buffer. The width of your images should be between [320 and 1080 pixels](#).
- 65% of top-performing posts are products, so don't be afraid to post high-quality images of your books.
- Brand your images and use a **consistent look/filter** with your images. You can [move your favorite filters](#) to the top of your filters list. You can also use a logo or

signature.

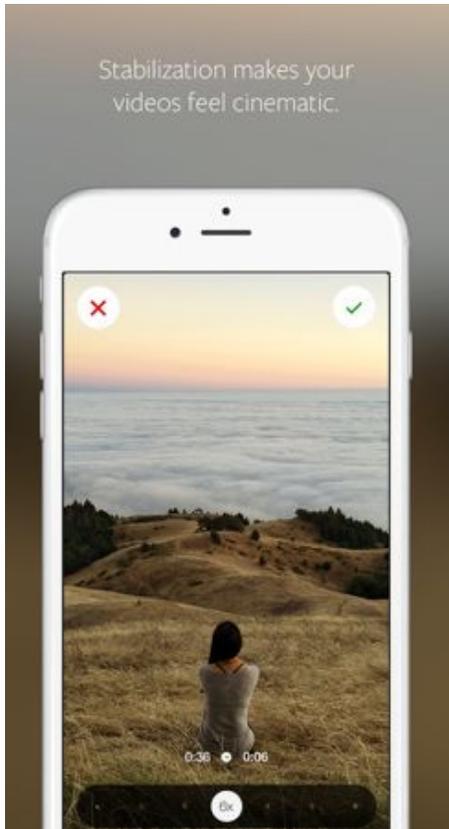
- Social Media Today says “it **looks amazing** if your account has a **similar color pallet.**”
- TrackMaven says that photos with the **Mayfair filter** see the most engagement on average.
- [Take a look at this short video from Shutterstock](#) that pays homage to the visual style of five present-day directing legends. Each of these directors (Anderson, Fincher, et al) would have a certain look to their Instagram photos. I’m not saying your pics have to be amazing—I just want to encourage you to think about your **overall visual style** on Instagram. It shouldn’t look like Flickr.
- What your Instagram filter [says about you](#) :)
- Spark Post auto-generates complementary [color palettes based on the background photo](#), which can also help find your brand colors.
- [Like Converse and Lorna Jane](#), **one tactic** is to always have **one of your books** in each image. You could do an image or video slideshow with multiple books in a series (and you can [tag individual photos](#)).
- Use **square videos** to optimize for mobile and Instagram, though they can also play in vertical or landscape mode (**unless** it’s a video with multiple clips). You can expand non-square videos.
- Create **Instagram Stories** with a series of pics and videos. There are more than [200 million users](#) of Stories as of April 2017. That’s more than Snapchat’s entire user base (HubSpot).
  - **Embed** your Stories on your **website** with Instagram’s [video embed feature](#).
  - [Reply to Stories with photos or video](#), and add a sticker of the Story you’re replying to.



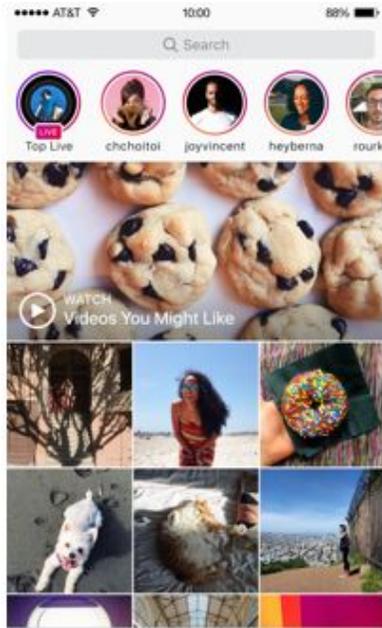
- **Selfie Stickers:** take a mini-selfie that you can attach to images and videos in other Stories.
- **Promote** sales, giveaways, events.
- Remember to **save** your Stories content on your camera or elsewhere if you want to repurpose it.
- Use [Instagram Location Stories](#) in Explore when you have an event or you're at a conference (or otherwise want to contribute to Stories on a location). If your Story is public and has a location sticker, it will appear in Location Stories. Here's [how to do Location and Hashtag Stories](#).



- On Instagram, there's a **time limit on video** of [60 seconds](#) (and you can't take or upload videos from a desktop).
  - [Here's how to post a video.](#)
- Create polished **time-lapse videos** with **Hyperlapse**, which features built-in stabilization technology that lets you create moving, handheld time lapses that result in a cinematic look, quality and feel (Instagram).



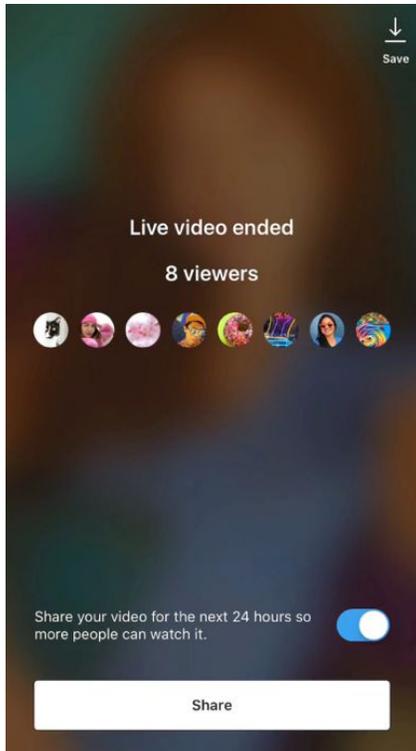
- Make [mini-videos](#) that move forward and backward with **Boomerang**, or videos that play in reverse with **Rewind**. I'll say again that I'm not seeing much video, and it's a great way to stand out.
- **Use ephemeral live video**, especially to give your followers a sneak peak of a new book. It isn't permanent, and the sense of urgency works great for [teasing something new](#).
  - At the end of the video, give them a **call to action** like pre-ordering your book or signing up for your email list. For more info, [see this article](#).



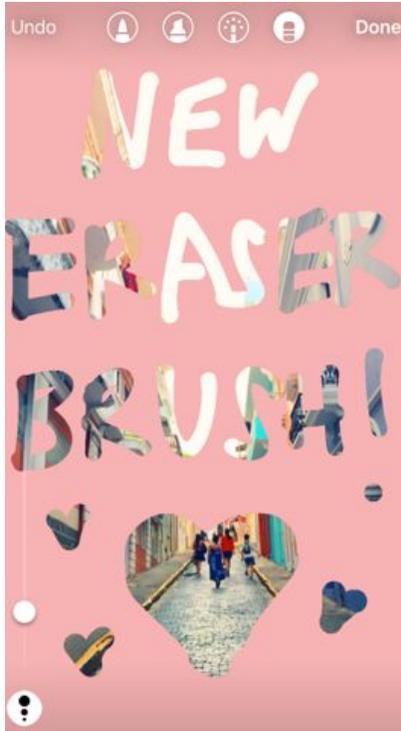
- **Save your live video for 24-hour replay** to get a longer view time.

[Social Media Examiner suggests](#) that you **pin a comment** at the beginning of your broadcast to tell people what you'll discuss in the video, and that you talk to people on the replay.

To **share a replay** of your live video, tap Share at the bottom of the screen after you've ended your live video. You can also tap the toggle and choose "Discard," and your live video will disappear from the app.



- Don't forget to **promote your live video** with [story](#) and regular posts, and on your **other platforms**. 95% of **Instagram** users also use **Facebook**, so if people like your live videos there, they'll probably be interested in your live video on Instagram as well.
- Use [Instagram Direct](#) to have visual conversations.
  - When you send video to your friends using Direct, you can post in landscape and portrait orientations (on iOS only as of July 2017), plus use and preview links.
  - You can respond on Direct with photos and video.
- Use **images with faces**. An analysis of [more than 1 million Instagram posts](#) by Georgia Tech and Yahoo Labs found that posts with human faces are 32% more likely to attract comments, and 38% more likely to collect likes.
- Play with Instagram [drawing tools](#) like the eraser brush to create compelling images.



- Do an **Instagram Takeover** swap with another author whose audience you want to reach.
  - You [take over their feed](#) for a day and generate more engagement on each other's accounts.
  - End the day with a call-to-action to follow your account.
- Do an **Instagram Stories Takeover**. In a regular Takeover, someone else does your regular posts for a limited time.
  - With a **Stories Takeover**, it's particularly time-limited, since Stories disappear after 24 hours.
  - With this tactic, you partner with an influencer (or author with a bigger but similar brand and fan base) to generate some buzz for your book launch. You could use Dropbox or Trello to have your partner share content. Peg Fitzpatrick wrote [everything you need to know in this article](#).
- Create a **photo and video collage with Layout**—you can include [up to 10 images and videos in one post](#), in a number of possible layouts. Click on the +, and then the

stacked square. Drag images to re-order, and in the caption for your first image, tell people to swipe for more.

- You can do this to show off multiple books, make a tutorial, show an event like a panel appearance or signing, give people a behind-the-scenes look at your writing process and workspace, and more.



- **Repurpose** Instagram pics into a **Facebook SlideShow**.

## Instagram tools

- In **Instagram analytics**, find out when your followers are most active and which posts are your best performers.
- [Aviary](#) is a mobile **photo editing** app that lets you apply unique creative effects.
- [Lumyer](#) is a free app for iOS and Android that lets you **animate certain elements of your image**.

- [Clips](#) is Apple's mobile photo and video editing app for **visual content creation**. You can record, edit, and upload visual content to platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook. Includes automatic subtitling, filters, emojis, and a widget to add music. Free, and only for iOS.
- SmugMug's [Camera Awesome](#) app is free for iOS and Android.
- The [Over](#) app is free for iOS and Android. It takes **photos** and adds different **fonts** and **overlays**.
- [Adobe Spark](#) makes Instagram-specific images, and **slideshows** (images and video).
- [Layout from Instagram](#) is free for iOS and Android. Create **multi-image collages**.
- [PicPlayPost](#) is free for iOS and Android, and lets you create **video collages** using a combination of photos, videos, GIFs, and sound.
- [Repost for Instagram](#) makes it easy to **#Repost** your favorite photos & videos on Instagram while giving credit to the original Instagrammer.
- [Afterlight](#) is an almost-free app for fast **photo editing**.
- [Superimpose](#) is an almost-free app that lets you take an **image** in the foreground, remove it from its background, and place it on another.
- [Word Swag](#) is a low-priced app for iOS that lets you **add your logo to photos**. (Try [Logomakr](#).)
- [Hootsuite](#) lets you **manage, schedule, and monitor** your Instagram activity. You can schedule a month's worth of posts in advance.

Post consistently with high-quality images, ask for user-generated content, try video and new Instagram features, and have fun!

### **Your CQ family**

