

8 things you need to know about Instagram

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Instagram is an incredibly popular free application that can be used to share photos and videos. People who use it, love it, but to people who do not use it, Instagram has a shroud of mystery. That's because, unlike many social networks, you can't just visit the site online and browse accounts as a non-user. You need to either have the application on your mobile phone (iOS, Android or Windows) or you need the direct link to a user's account.

It is time to lift the curtain on Instagram and tell you the 8 things you need to know:

1. Instant Camera + Telegram

Instagram's short history revolves mostly around its launch date in October of 2010 and its acquisition by Facebook in 2012. The simple application was designed to be able capture the feeling of the Polaroid in a digital and current way. You can take photos or videos (up to 15 seconds) and then post them to your account. The application also allows you to share easily to Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Flickr.

The social aspect is interaction with other users and their images. You can follow other accounts so you know when they have posted new photos. You can also 'like' photos and add comments to them.

2. Editing made easy

One of the big draws to Instagram is the ability to edit and live-filter your images. All Instagram photos are automatically cropped to 1:1 ratio (square) unlike the standard photo editors that use your device's rectangular photos. You then have options to apply any one of 19 filters that enhance

and colour your picture. Filters can make a photo look more sharp, retro or creepy. Part of the fun is the filter you chose. Or you can try them all.



3. Good Photography and Musicians are Tops

Popularity on accounts is measured by number of followers. There are two primary types of accounts: Brands and People. With a celebrity account, you could probably argue the brand and the person are the same but for the sake this post, we'll separate them.

The only brand to infiltrate top 10, and most popular across the board, is [Instagram](#). The network's own account has 60+ Million followers and pulls from the best of all the posted public photos. The next best brand is [National Geographic](#) at #20 with 8 million followers. Their account is filled with the iconic photographs they are know for.

The most popular personal account belongs to [Justin Bieber](#), with 22 million followers. Not a huge surprise considering he also holds top spot on Twitter. Between Instagram at #1 and NatGeo at #20, the other top accounts are all celebrities, mostly musicians. What do they post? Everyday life. Their breakfast, their new dress, their cat.

4. All you need is #love

Hashtags are prolific on Instgram because they allow you to easily search the billions of photos. Brands use them for contests and events. People use them to categorize their photos. The top hashtag is #love. The image could be anything from a new baby to a great meal, but it shows people are using the application to share things that make them happy. Another fun hashtag is #tbt (Throwback Thursday), where people post photos on Thursdays that are from the near or distant past.

5. Lucky number seven

With 200+ Million monthly active users and 100 Million users overall, Instagram is the 7th largest

social network. That said, it is the network teens engage with the most. Because of its simplicity, teens (and others) post countless photos in the hopes for 'likes' from other users.

6. Tired of all the publicity? Try Direct

The default for Instagram is to post directly to your public feed. Though you can have a private account, most people want a public account with privacy features. Instagram introduced **Direct**, a feature that will allow you to send your photos to up to 15 individual users, and no public post.

7. Rules and more rules

At its initial launch, the minimum age for Instagram was 12. Since the push for COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act) all the major networks have changed minimum age to 13.

Instagram's terms also state no violence and nudity. They do take action against users and accounts who violate this rule.

8. Staying Safe

Since Instagram is mostly for public consumption, here are a few tips to keep you safe while you enjoy using it:

- Be wary of geotagging your pictures. This puts a tag on your picture that indicates where it was taken. This tag is invisible to the eye but free software can pull it from embedded data. You may want to geotag vacation photos but likely not those taken in personal homes.
- You can create a private account that is only visible to permitted users. This allows you to share with family and friends and not be subjected to public risks. Remember: anything posted online should still be considered potentially public (could be redistributed by a friend) and permanent.
- Tagged photos can be hidden from profile or removed. If you find yourself tagged in something you don't want to be,
 1. Tap on the photo
 2. Tap your name
 3. Tap **More Options** > **Remove Me from Photo**

For those with an iPhone, Android or Windows phone, you can download Instagram free and give it a whirl!

For those without, you can still click the links above and check out the public photos as a gallery.

Enjoy the glimpses of art, and life, that Instagram has to offer.