



Instagram is More Than Pretty Photos

The do's, the don'ts and brands to follow for inspiration

Do this on Instagram:

No need to post right away:

Take photos without posting them right away. You can also utilize this trick to double filter your photos should your newsroom allow for photo filtering.

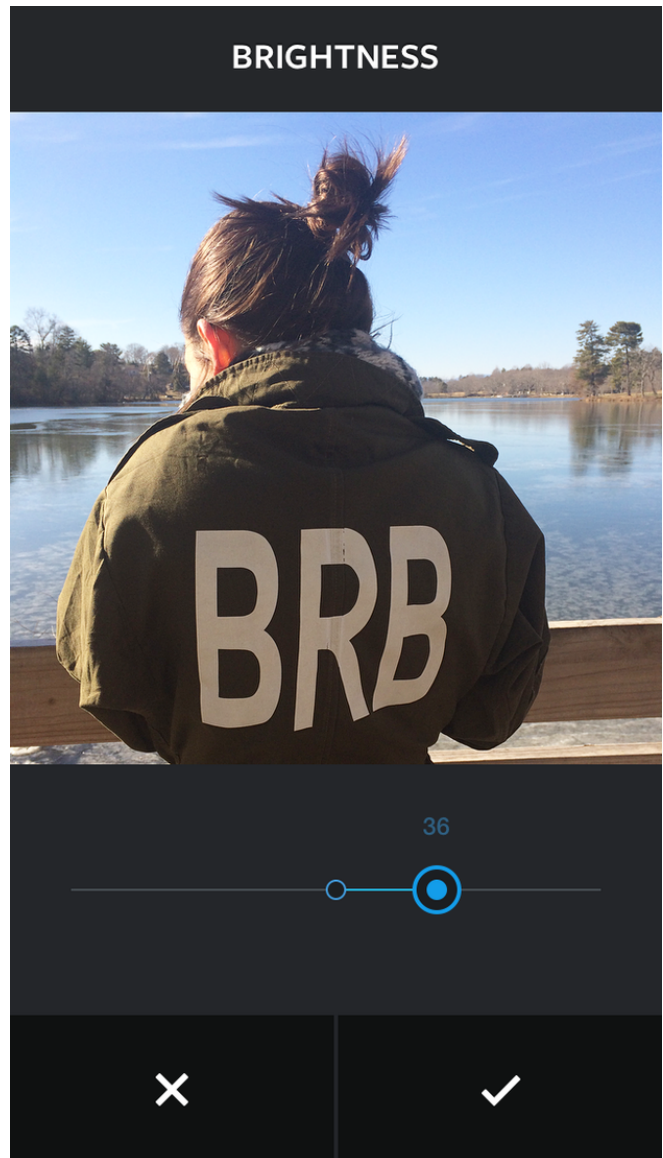


Find out the best times for posting with Iconosquare:

Iconosquare uses optimization tools to analyze your engagement. Sign up to monitor your average number of likes, the exact time of day you should be posting, follower growth and more.



No filter? No problem: Not all newsrooms will want to use a filter. You can adjust the photo brightness before (or without) playing with filters. It's the easiest way to improve the photo without drastically changing it. Some bloggers solely rely on the brightness and saturation tools for editing their Instagram posts.



Explore text on images when appropriate: There are a number of free apps to make adding text on top of an image super easy to do (including Textgram, Over or Fontcandy). Just be mindful about overwhelming the image with the text (unless that's the point).

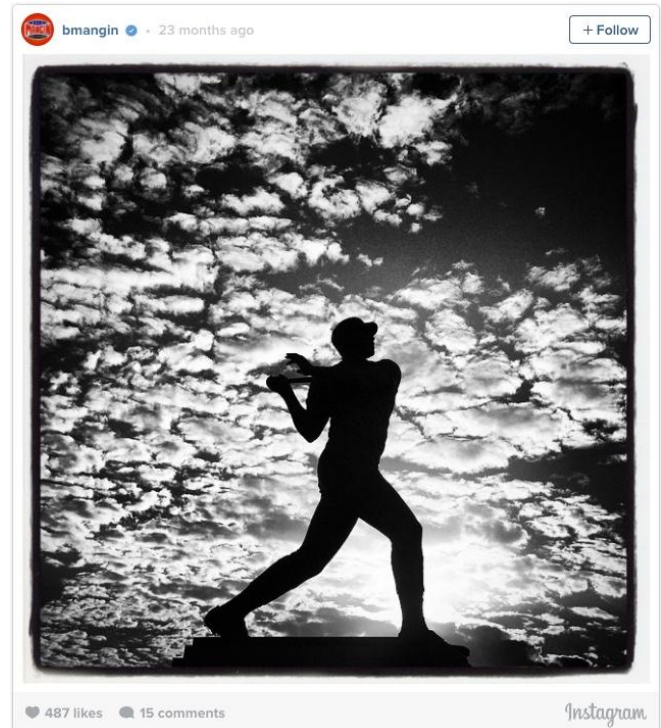


Welcome a guest Instagrammer:

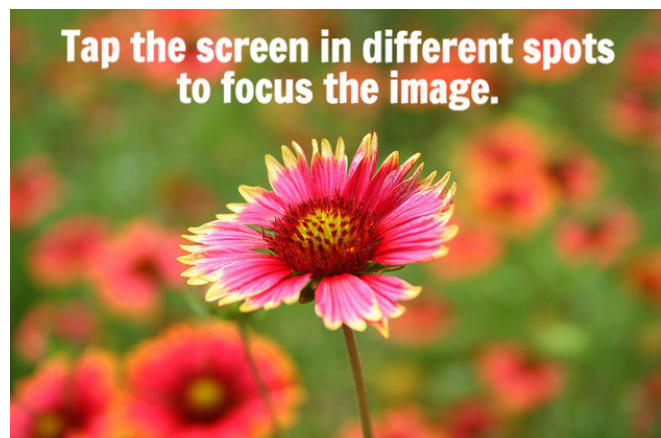
There are lots of “Instagram celebrities” on the platform, meaning Instagram users who have a massive following. These people have influence. In a matter of minutes, a photo that they post can get thousands of likes and hundreds of comments. Consider teaming up with an Instagram celeb and have them take over your account for a day or during a major event. This is one way to introduce your Instagram celeb’s large following to your brand. The clothing brand Juicy Couture did this when they had popular blogger Kelly Framel of The Glamourai take over their Instagram account to post behind-the-scenes photos of a photo shoot for their upcoming campaign. Fellow fashion blogger Chriselle Lim of The Chriselle Factor also took over Nordstrom’s Instagram account.



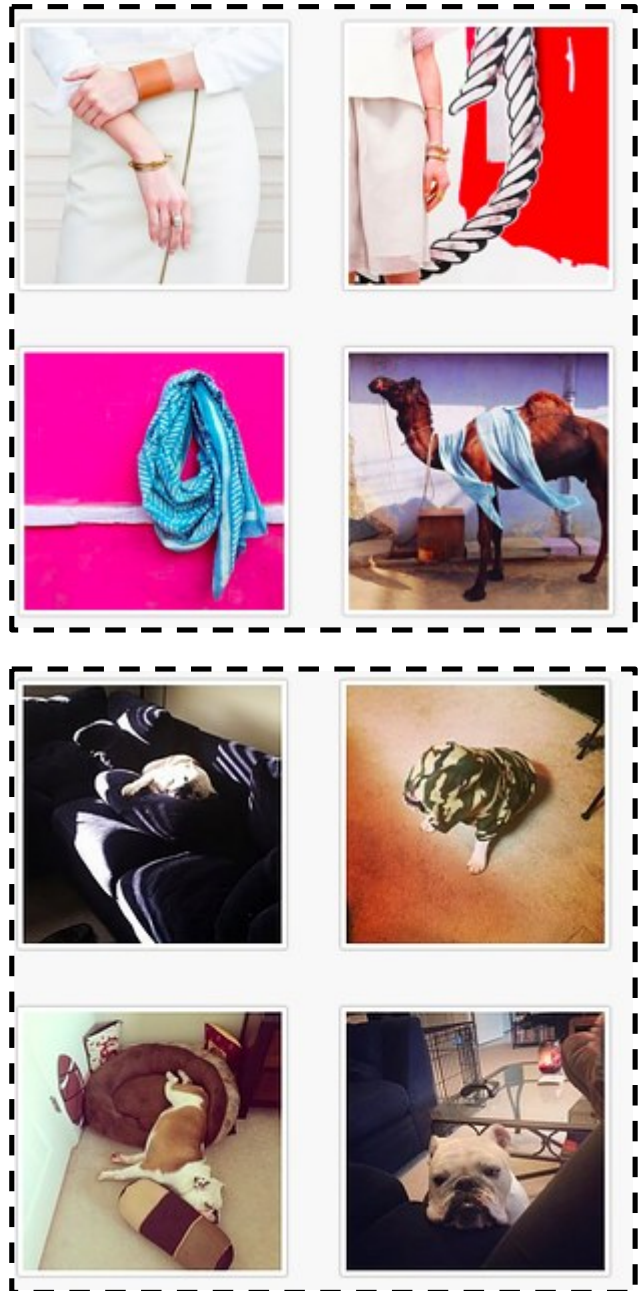
Black and white as a backup: If the lighting can't easily be fixed, try black and white. Sports Illustrated photographer Brad Mangin suggests converting a picture to black and white in low-light situations.



Make sure the image is really sharp: Play around with tapping in different places to see what looks best. It will also adjust the lighting.



Be consistent in what and how you're posting: Especially if you're looking to gain more followers, people like being able to gauge what your page is about pretty quickly. Treat your Instagram like a curated collection of your brand.



Quick tip for foodie 'grams:

Stand on a chair to take the photo. You can fit more of those amazing brunch plates in the shot and rest assured your photos won't come out looking less than appetizing.



11 to 14 hashtags really is more engaging: When it comes to an optimal number of hashtags per post, posts with 11 or more hashtags receive nearly 80% interaction, compared with just 22% when using 10 and 41% when using two (Instagram limits the number of hashtags allowed per post to 30). This infographic came from QuickSprout data.

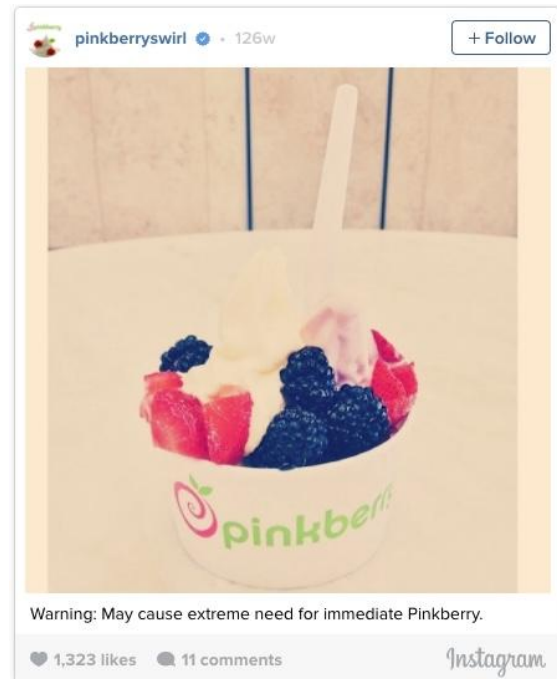


Don't do this on Instagram:

Just because it's a photo doesn't mean it'll work: Fireball Whisky was gambling on its audience being too distracted by these lovely "Fireballers" to notice the graininess of this photo, but it's a losing bet. Dim lighting, red eyes, and a busy background make this a poor choice for the brand on Instagram.



Choose your filter wisely: When it comes to 'gramming food, color and texture are tantamount. Pinkberry's choice of filter has washed out the yogurt, making it indistinguishable from the background. Another no-no: applying the filter after running the photo through the app known as Whitagram. The borders on either side should be white to draw the eye and frame the yogurt.



Be aware of the overall

composition: The three points of focus in this photo—the moon, the trail of balloons and the popsicle—are too close together, creating an unbalanced composition.

Elements of visual interest should be arranged so that the eye has space to travel, according to the Rule of Thirds.



Avoid using the flash: Always take photos in natural lighting. Domino's demonstrates what happens when flash is introduced: the toppings in the foreground are thrown into harsh relief, while the last third of the pizza remains unfocused in the shadows. Can't get natural lighting? Try using the flashlight on your phone as a constant light source, rather than a burst of light from your flash.



Be aware when taking food photos: Believe it or not, homemaker and foodie extraordinaire Martha Stewart has an Achilles' heel—and its food photography. In this example, we see the food from an unflattering angle, and again, poor lighting has sunk most of the detail into shadow.



Brands doing it right on Instagram:

(Follow them for inspiration; they are in no particular order, of course)

- **Cengiz Yar Jr.** (@cengizyar)
- **Quest Nutrition** (@questnutrition)
- **BuzzFeed News** (@buzzfeednews)
- **Taco Bell** (@tacobell)
- **GoPro** (@gopro)
- **Anderson Cooper** (@andersoncooper)
- **Nike** (@nike)
- **Dictionary.com** (@dictionarycom)
- **BBC Newsbeat** (@bbcnewsbeat)
- **BarkBox** (@barkbox)
- **Ben & Jerry's** (@benandjerrys)
- **Time's Finding Home** (@findinghome)
- **General Electric** (@generalelectric)
- **Newsday in Long Island** (@newsday)
- **WeWork** (@wework)
- **National Geographic** (@natgeo)
- **Zevia** (@zevia)
- **Strut** (@strutbymic)
- **Organic Authority** (@organicauthority)
- **Lorna Jane** (@lornajaneactive)
- **Refinery29** (@refinery29)
- **SportsCenter** (@sportscenter)
- **NowThis** (@nowthisnews)
- **No Your City** (@noyourcity)
- **Coca-Cola Argentina** (@cocacolaar)
- **Shore Projects** (@shore_projects)
- **Staples** (@staples)
- **CNN** (@CNN)
- **Saturday Night Live** (@nbcsonl)
- **HomeGoods** (@homegoods)
- **Shake Shack** (@shakeshack)
- **Manchester Evening News** (@manchestereveningnews)
- **Oreo** (@oreo)
- **Starbucks** (@starbucks)
- **Nike** (@nike)
- **New York Times** (@nytimes)
- **Frank Body** (@frank_bod)
- **bareMinerals** (@bareminerals)
- **The Honest Company** (@honest)
- **NBC News** (@nbcnews)
- **Vogue** (@voguemagazine)
- **FedEx** (@fedex)
- **Bustle** (@bustle)
- **AirBnb** (@airbnb)
- **Sharpie** (@sharpie)
- **BMW** (@bmw)
- **Reveal** (@revealnews)