

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a camera. The person is wearing a white shirt. The camera is black and has a lens cap on. The background is blurred. A semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing white text.

How To Build a Following on Instagram As a Photographer

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So You're a Photographer?

Taking beautiful photographs and capturing memories is something millions of people embark on doing every day.

If you've ever seen some of the magnificent photographs that professionals take of nature, architecture, or even food, is it any wonder why people become inspired to take some of the same type of photographs themselves?

Learning photography is an art that is very peculiar about your surroundings. You need the right type of light, the perfect view filled with your muse -your inspiration- enough colour, and not too much shadow.

And of course, as you develop your skill as a photographer, you'd certainly enjoy people raving about your images.

This guide is designed to help you navigate the monstrous social platform, Instagram, and aid you in discovering how to be seen and how to build your own unique style.

So sit back, get your pen and paper out and follow along as we go over some of the fundamental tips and suggestions into creating a strong audience for your photographs using Instagram.

Content Is King

The Internet may be relatively new, but content is not. It's been the basis of how brands communicate with consumers for ever. In the realm of social media, content acts as the fuel of any platform; Delivering value to those that seek it from those that create it.

Now we all know that your content has to be great in order to be seen, but it also has to be relevant. The Instagram algorithm has become extremely sophisticated over the past couple years and it groups accounts based on niche. This is influenced by many different factors; the hashtags you use, who you engage with, and what types of posts you like and/or comment on frequently.

Being a Photographer is an art that is based on what you capture with your perspective. Not only is your art a reflection of yourself, but it's also something that is meant to bring viewers into your world. Never put out anything that you don't completely love. You fans will love you for that.

Being Consistent

A person wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and dark jeans is holding a Canon camera lens. The lens is black with a red ring and the word 'CANON' is visible on it. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

One of the most important aspect of building an Instagram (after creating great content), is being consistent and posting often. the IG algorithm hates inconsistency, such as long hiatuses in between posting.

You really have to be proactive in how you plan and execute your posting method and it always helps to have a load of photos that you can schedule to go up on your account.

As you gain a consistent flow in your content you'll begin to see some growth, with the main advantage being that there is more of your posts out there gaining traction from the Instagram community

Image Quality

Of course, the quality of your image is the next deciding factor in your growth. It's imperative that you have high quality images for all your content. Instagram actually has a mechanism by which it can detect the quality of your image.

As the platform condenses your image (for reasons pertaining to their servers), the original quality will be affected. Don't worry, as this is something they've done on purpose. Just make sure your image is hi-res and you don't have to worry about anything else.

Another key aspect to give attention to is image cropping. You may notice that Instagram posts are cropped to a perfect square and this seems to be the most ideal size of photos, so try and stick to that. You can press the expand button (bottom left when you are posting) to make sure the entire image is shown and it will automatically be fitted in the square. The measurements for Instagram posts are 1080 by 1080px. Don't be afraid to include borders in your images, that's fine as well. Just be sure to make the image that resolution.

For mobile photo editing there are tons of options. You can try an app called [Polarr](#), which is free, but has paid premium options. Use it to edit anything imaginable, from lighting, cropping, exposure, saturation, and many other options.

Aesthetic Theme

When you look around Instagram and view different photographers' account feeds, what do you see? You'll most likely notice most of them have an extremely distinctive theme and aesthetic that speaks to their style.

Something that makes them stand out among the plenty of other photographers on Instagram.

This is something you need to develop, both with your editing style and posting method. Decide on what suits you and stick with it until it becomes cohesive. If you use filters (either from IG or from another app), use one or just a few that are similar in taste. If you use borders on your images, use them constantly and make it a theme for your account.

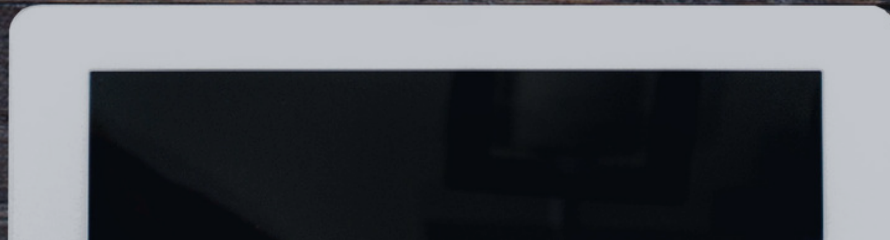
It's perfectly fine to have different themes. However, remember that Instagram is a visual platform, that means you need to align your feed in a way that falls easy on the eyes and is interesting to look at.

If you want to use multiple themes (for example, landscape photos and then urban photos), post them in 3's (have each theme cohesively aligned as one theme per line). This gives your feed some different looks, but formatted in a nice looking way.

Develop your voice and create your own visual style. There are apps that can help you in designing your feed before hand so that you can envision how you'd want your feed to look like. One is [UNUM](#) (iOS and Android app store).

Hashtags and Collaborations

Understanding the key elements that influence your account's reach and utilizing partnerships to help yourself get ahead.



A person is seen from behind, holding a smartphone up to take a picture of a landscape. The person has dark hair and is wearing a dark top. The background is a blurred natural setting with rocks and foliage. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day or shade.

What Hashtags Should You Use?

Hashtags are an integral part of using social media, especially on Instagram.

If you want your content to be seen then you should definitely be using as many as possible. As of now the limit is 30 per post, but it's recommended you don't exceed 26-27. Make sure that they're in the body of the caption as well. Many people do this by putting a "." on 4-5 line breaks to keep it clean.

Another thing to mention is that although Hashtags are good, not all are created equal. Do some research on relevant hashtags to make sure the overall nature of the content in them is what you are going for. Look at accounts that inspire you and see which ones they use. Then take some time to research them and find similar ones.

Alternating your hashtags is also very important, as you don't want to jeopardize the chances of being shadowbanned; when Instagram blocks your content from being seen with hashtags because you've used the same ones over and over.



Reaching Out to Models for Collaborations

What's a Photographer to do if you don't have anyone to take photos of! Mind you, I'm not saying you have to shoot portraits if it's not your thing. Landscape and Urban photography do very well on Instagram, but to give yourself an edge, you should try mixing it up and implementing the same aesthetic feel into different shooting styles.

You can do this through collaborating. Basically you want both parties to benefit from doing this collab as this allows you to get a finish set of photos without spending any extra money. The photographer gets free photos that you can add to your instagram/portfolio and the model gets free photos that they can use in the same regard! A win-win situation for everyone. Just a note, it's better to approach upcoming models rather than established ones, as they're more likely to agree on unpaid collaborations.

Take some time to look up locally buzzing models in your area by using the location search option and reach out to them. Ask them to collab and that you won't charge for the shoot. They'll probably be interested and then you'll have the chance to shoot some photos.

Reaching Out To Feature Pages

In the Photography niche there are tons of big pages that consistently feature other photographers, both big and small. This is their theme and they are always looking for really great shots to share.

In order to be found by these pages you have to be seen. Most pages have their own hashtags that they use to curate content from and there's a small chance that you may be featured by using these tags often. This is an unpaid feature (or commonly referred to simply as a feature) because you're not paying them directly to be featured. However, there is a lot of competition with this method, as these hashtags are added to often. Make it a habit anyway to use feature account hashtags often and you can even try tagging the accounts in your post directly as well.

Another way of getting featured by big pages is to utilize something called a Paid shoutout.

Often times you'll see in a page's bio they'll have something like "for business inquiries DM or Email". They may have their email in their bio or an email attached to the account (if it's setup as a business page). They may take business inquiries through email only or through DM.

Reach out to them and ask them what their rates are and for what types of posts. It could be a temporary post (which is when the post is removed after a certain amount of time), or a story shoutout is often times a great option as well.

Prices will vary, but generally you'll end up spending around \$30-\$50 (USD) for a good shoutout per account. Analyze the account using SocialBlade to confirm that it has a steady, built following. You can also use INK361 to analyze the accounts engagement rate.

Instagram DM Groups

+

Pods

Creating and joining
Instagram groups are an
integral part of growth
hacking.

Instagram DM Groups

This is another sort of collaboration, but instead this takes place on IG directly.

An Instagram DM group is a closed-knit group of avid grammars that aim to Like & Comment on all members most recent posts as they appear. Getting this type of engagement soon after you post is a great thing because the IG algorithm takes it into account and expands your content's reach.

Start by messaging very active accounts and asking if they are in any DM groups and if they have any space in them. If not you can attempt to create your own.

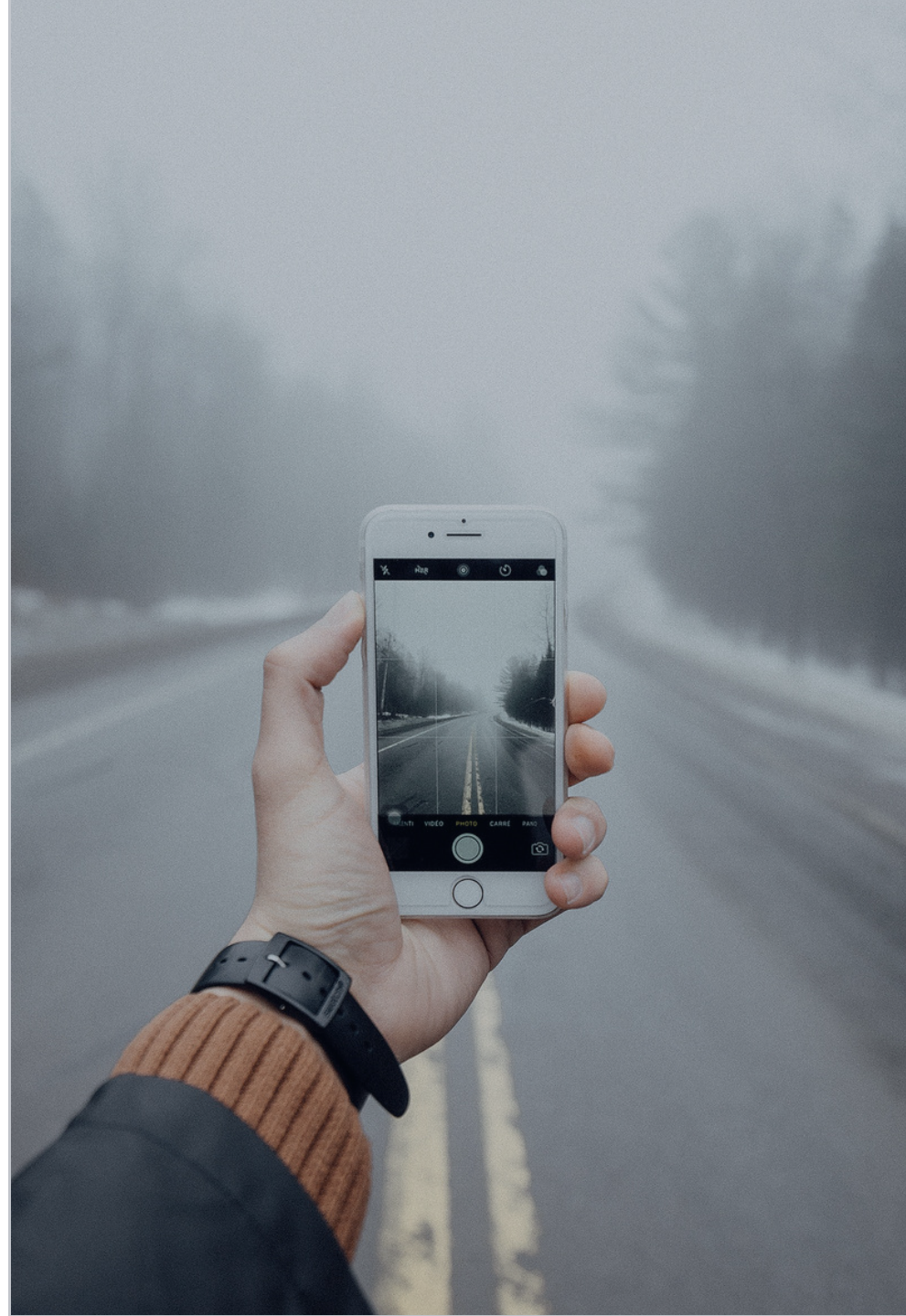
To attempt to create your own IG DM groups, try messaging active accounts this;

"Hey [name], I really love your feed, your work is amazing.

Would you like to create a DM group to help each other grow? I'm messaging other talented people and I think we could all help each other.

Let me know if you're interested!"

If done diligently, you can create a group and get everyone engaging on your posts! Of course you have to lend back the favour. Make sure to recruit talented photographers, models, or socialites that have great content AND that post very often and consistently. The worst thing about a DM group is one that is not active and rarely ever checks out your posts.



Instagram Pods

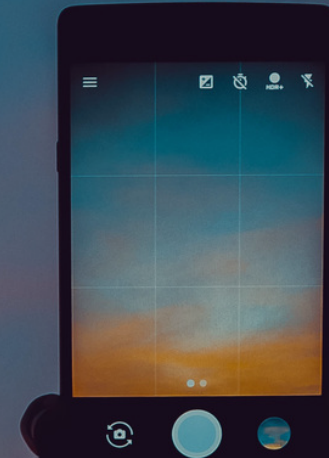
Instagram Pods have been around for quite some time, maybe a couple of years, and they are an interesting phenomenon in the IG growth world.

A more aggressive form of a DM group, Pods are larger groups that work together to game the algorithm. Usually hosted on another app like Slack, Kik, or Telegram, they're designed so that members post around the same time (usually referred to as "Rounds" and engage with each other's posts in waves. This tremendously helps your account grow and with enough effort and consistency can even trigger a snowball effect.

Although they sound heaven-sent, they are in fact difficult to find, with niche specific groups being even harder. There are free and paid groups, but it all depends on where you look.

An example of a Instagram Pod is one called, [FOCUS](#). It's made especially for the Photography niche and caters to many types of photography such as Travel, Landscape, Urban, and Portrait.

If you look hard enough you can find other groups on Facebook groups, Reddit chats, or Telegram chats as well.



Summary

So what you've learned about today is the basis of keeping an Instagram account active enough to be seen and implementing techniques to grow it.

- Make sure your content is super high quality, cropped well, and has a cohesive aesthetic. If you plan on making a theme keep it similar and coherent.
- Post often and avoid long hiatuses (3x a day is recommended, but try at least 1 post per day).
- Reach out and collaborate with models and socialites that have the type of look & feel you're aiming for. This will help you with creating a lot of content and having a lot to post.
- Research relevant hashtags and use different bunches of them for your posts to get a little more exposure (rec. 25-28). Be sure not to overuse the same ones as to avoid a shadowban.
- Reach out to big photography pages by using their hashtags and/or contacting them for paid shoutouts.
- Message people that have great content to inquire about DM groups or make a plan to create your own. As many as you can!
- Find Instagram Pods (or commonly called 'engagement groups' to give your account another big boost. Google them or check Telegram groups.
- Keep up your photography and keep taking amazing photos!

Bonus

Do's and Dont's

Key practices to keep your accounts
in good status and also contribute to the photography
community

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