

## Instagram What to know



- Instagram is a free social media app that lets users share photos and videos with friends (“followers”) from a mobile device using a profile (a “handle”) unique to them. It’s a relatively safe, fun way for people of all ages to connect with friends, be entertained, advocate for what they believe in, stay up to date on current events and express themselves. And a recent wave of body confidence handles is a healthy addition.
- “Hashtags” are often used to identify digital content on a specific topic (i.e. #bodyconfidence).
- Users can “like” and comment on others’ photos and videos, and “tag” other users to identify someone in their posts. In an effort to quell the comparison game, Instagram recently stopped publicly displaying the number of likes generated by posts. This means that the exact number of likes given to photos or videos is now only known to the user who posted them.
- Photos and videos can be heavily edited with filters, and the direct messaging feature often replaces texting.
- Instagram terms specify that users should be at least 13 years old but there is no verification of age at account set up.
- Having a public Instagram account means that anyone can follow a user. Having a private account means that a user has to approve requests to follow them. Private accounts prevent a user’s photos and videos from being seen by people who haven’t been approved by them as followers.
- Photos and videos are posted as public by default unless privacy settings are adjusted.
- Instagram has a procedure for reporting bullying, harassment or other discrimination. It automatically identifies a comment or caption in a post that could potentially be harmful or discriminatory and notifies the user before it’s posted to give them a chance to re-think what they are writing.
- Users can decide who is allowed to message them and comment on their posts. They can also “mute” or “block” a follower if they don’t wish to interact with them but are hesitant to unfollow them.
- Posts can be simultaneously shared on Facebook, Twitter and other social media apps with a press of a button. If a user deletes a post on Instagram it remains on the other apps it was shared with.





## *Instagram* *What to know*



- A green status dot shows followers that a user is active in the app (which could show followers that they're active but not answering their messages) but this feature can be turned off in settings.
- Notifications let users know when new activity has occurred in their feed (i.e. someone liked or commented on one of their posts, sent them a direct message, or tagged them in one of their posts). These can be adjusted or turned off in settings.
- Instagram Stories are short videos that disappear from a user's feed 24 hours after posting.
- Newer Instagram features include IGTV, where users can subscribe to other people's video collections called channels, kind of like YouTube. And, as of 2020, users can use the Reels feature to create TikTok-like short videos to music.
- Users are exposed to sponsored posts, ads and product placement and can make purchases directly from links on users' bio page.
- The Your Activity feature allows users to know how much time they've spent using the app and set a time limit for usage.
- Although Instagram is a relatively safe space for young people to interact, parents worry about their kids being exposed to sexual content, that their photos or videos can attract the attention of predators, and that how they represent themselves on the app can have negative consequences in their future. They also worry that mean comments, competition for likes and follows and comparing themselves to others can damage their self-esteem. All of these concerns are valid, but can be managed with open communication and family agreements.





## *Instagram* *What to do*



- Take time to get familiar with Instagram.
- Acknowledge the good stuff about it to your preteen. This will build trust and set the stage for open communication.
- Keep conversations short, express concerns in a light-hearted tone.
- Explain that there's no privacy online and that it's your job to keep them safe. So, you'll need to know their passwords and have access to their account when needed.
- Create some agreements together around expectations for responsible use of Instagram (including how much time they'll spend on it and keeping their account private) and consequences for when they aren't met.
- Talk about importance of taking regular breaks from social media, that it's just an extension of more important real-life friendships and interactions.
- Encourage your preteen to turn off or limit notifications on Instagram to minimize interruptions to their offline life.
- Prioritize in-person interactions and make time for them.
- Be a good role model by managing your own screen time in a healthy way (yikes!).
- Encourage your preteen to do the same by using the Activity Dashboard feature.





## Instagram What to do



- Set up your preteen for success on Instagram (or any social media app):
  - Encourage them to curate their feed carefully. Only follow people who make them laugh, lift them up. Mute or unfollow those who don't.
  - Teach them the THINK rule. Is what they're posting True, Honest, Interesting, Necessary and Kind.
  - Encourage your preteen to be authentic in their posts and inspire others to do the same. How can they be a positive influence on other people's feeds?
- Talk about how to deal with receiving a negative comment. If it's true, reflect on it and thank the person for bringing it to their attention. If it's not true, forgive them and move on.
- Talk about how what they post can impact another person.
- Talk about what to do if they're being bullied or harassed (un-tag themselves from a photo, mute, block, unfollow and/or report the user).
- Remind your preteen of the importance of protecting their privacy (i.e. having a private account, not sharing passwords, changing them often, and using two-factor authentication).
- Remind your preteen that they can un-tag themselves from photos shared of them and share photos and videos with only a select group of their followers using Instagram Direct. They can also delete their posts.
- Remember that it's not difficult for a young person (even under the age of 13) to set up an Instagram account. Rather than trying to "ban" your preteen (and, in doing so, increase the chances they'll do it secretly), work with them to allow them to be on it *and* stay safe.
- Most importantly, let your preteen know that they can come to you for support around anything that happens on social media. They wouldn't be in trouble because you want to be a safe and trusted adult in their life.



# Instagram

## What to say



### smart things to say:

- “Instagram looks pretty fun. What do you like most about it?”
- “Can you help me understand the difference between Stories and Reels?”
- “I saw your story from when you were at Playland the other day and I thought it was hilarious!”
- “I didn’t know your friend Rumi got a puppy... those photos they posted were so adorable!”
- “Before you post a photo of someone, remember to get their consent!”
- “I want social media to be a fun experience for you. I don’t mind you being on Instagram if we have an agreement on how that will look.”
- “What agreements do you think are most important? How do you see this working?”
- “How much time on Instagram each day/week do you think is reasonable for someone your age?”
- “The last thing I want to do is micromanage what you’re doing on Instagram and I don’t plan to because I trust that you’ll be respectful of our agreements.”
- “I know Instagram is really important to you and your friends and that you try not to be on it too much.”
- “Do you think people your age feel pressure to post provocative selfies on Instagram?”

### smart things to not say:

- ✗ “I think you’re addicted to social media.”
- ✗ “Don’t you think that selfie you posted was a bit much?”
- ✗ “Do you even remember how to socialize in person anymore?”
- ✗ “Do you really need to share every moment of your day with your followers?”
- ✗ “You’d never post anything like that, would you?”
- ✗ “I bet you couldn’t even go one day without Instagram.”

