

SHADOWBAN / FREE BUSINESS GUIDE

THE 2026 INSTAGRAM GROWTH PLAYBOOK

The expanded beginner-to-business edition. Build the account correctly, create stronger posts, understand Insights, avoid common mistakes and turn attention into customers.

Expanded edition: detailed step-by-step explanations, examples at every stage, caption templates, content ideas, account health checks, commerce, Live, hashtags, analytics and a 30-day action plan.

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CONTENTS

01	Before you post: define the job of the account	3
02	Set up a professional account	4
03	Profile picture, name, bio & link	5
04	Build trust before chasing followers	6
05	Reels, carousels, Stories & static posts	7
06	How to make a Reel people watch	8
07	Captions: writing descriptions people read	9
08	Caption examples you can adapt	10
09	Hashtags, keywords & discoverability	11
10	When to post and how often	12
11	Insights for complete beginners	13
12	How to review a post properly	14
13	Account Status, violations & recommendation eligibility	15
14	Instagram Live	16
15	Selling products	17
16	Selling services	18
17	Content pillars & idea generation	19
18	Weekly content system	20
19	30-day growth plan	21
20	Beginner FAQ	22
21	Final checklist & official source notes	23

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE If you are completely new, read it in order. If you already post regularly, jump to Captions, Insights, Account Status and the 30-day plan. Instagram changes frequently, so feature names and menus can move.



Strong creative work helps a profile feel distinctive.



A consistent visual identity makes an account easier to remember.

01 BEFORE YOU POST: DEFINE THE JOB OF THE ACCOUNT

A common beginner mistake is creating an Instagram account and immediately asking, 'What should I post?' Start one step earlier. Decide what the account is meant to achieve. An account built to sell products should not behave exactly like a personal portfolio or an influencer account.

Do this in four steps

1

Choose one primary business objective

Pick the main outcome you want Instagram to create. This could be enquiries, product sales, bookings, portfolio exposure, newsletter sign-ups or audience growth. You can have secondary goals, but one primary goal makes decisions easier.

Example: A web studio might choose 'qualified enquiries for website projects' rather than the vague goal 'get more followers'.

2

Define the person you want to reach

Write down the type of person who should care: their job, problem, level of knowledge and what they are likely to want from you.

Example: 'UK small-business owners who know their website looks dated but do not know where to start.'

3

Define the value exchange

Ask: why would that person follow this account rather than simply visit the website once?

Example: A designer might offer weekly before/after breakdowns, practical website tips and examples of AI-assisted creative work.

4

Choose the action you want after attention

Decide what a good visitor does next: follow, save, visit a landing page, send a DM, request a quote or buy.

Example: If the goal is enquiries, the bio and captions should repeatedly make the route to enquiry obvious.

NOVICE RULE Followers are not the business objective. They are an audience. Decide what you want that audience to do.

02 SET UP A PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNT

Instagram professional accounts come in two broad types: Business and Creator. Both unlock professional tools such as the Professional Dashboard and Insights. Professional accounts are public, so do not switch an account that must remain private.

Business or Creator?

- Business: usually the most natural choice for a company selling products, services, appointments or local-business work.
- Creator: often better suited to an individual whose personality, content, partnerships or public profile is central.

How to switch - beginner version

1

Open your profile

Tap your profile picture, then open the menu in the top-right. Instagram changes menu wording periodically, so look for Settings, Account type or Professional tools rather than relying on one exact label.
Example: If you cannot find the setting, use Instagram's settings search and type 'professional'.

2

Choose the professional route

Select the option to switch to a professional account. Instagram will normally ask what best describes you.
Example: For a design studio, choose a business-related category rather than an unrelated category simply because it sounds fashionable.

3

Choose Business or Creator

Base the choice on the job of the account, not on which label sounds more prestigious.
Example: A freelance photographer whose face and content are the brand could reasonably choose Creator; a photography agency may choose Business.

4

Check contact information

Professional accounts may display contact options. Only publish an email address or phone number you are happy to make public.
Example: Use a business email such as hello@company.co.uk rather than a personal address if possible.

5

Open Professional Dashboard

This becomes your main control area for performance and professional tools.
Example: Get into the habit of opening it weekly rather than only checking likes.

OFFICIAL POINT Meta says professional accounts cannot be private. Switching can also change how your account connects to Facebook Pages and professional tools.

03 PROFILE PICTURE, NAME, BIO & LINK

Your profile is the page people see after a Reel, Story, recommendation or comment makes them curious. A beginner should treat it like a small landing page.

Build it in this order

1

Profile picture: make it recognisable when tiny

Instagram often displays your image at a very small size. A complex logo with thin text may be unreadable. Use a simple mark, strong contrast or a clear face.

Example: Bad: a full company logo containing six tiny words. Better: the recognisable symbol from the logo.

2

Name and username: make them easy to remember

Use the actual brand/person name. Avoid strings of numbers or awkward punctuation unless you genuinely need them.

Example: Better: @northstarstudio than @north_star_studio_2026_uk_official.

3

Bio first line: state the outcome

Tell visitors what you do in language a customer understands. Avoid vague corporate language.

Example: Weak: 'Innovative digital solutions'. Better: 'AI video + websites for brands'.

4

Bio second line: add proof or difference

Give a reason to believe or remember you: niche, location, experience, speciality or style.

Example: 'Automotive, luxury & social creative • UK'.

5

Bio final line: give a next action

Tell the visitor what the link is for.

Example: '↓ See our work & request a concept'.

6

Link: send people somewhere intentional

Do not automatically send everyone to a generic homepage. Use the page most likely to continue the journey.

Example: A Reel about website redesigns could send visitors to a focused website-services page.

Example bio

AI VIDEO + WEB FOR BRANDS

Cinematic commercials • social creative • websites

Built in the UK. Designed to make people stop.

↓ See the work / request a concept



A face can become a recognisable brand asset.



Strong colour can become a consistent visual signature.

04 BUILD TRUST BEFORE CHASING FOLLOWERS

A new visitor will often inspect several posts before following or buying. Give them enough evidence that the account is real, active and useful.

1

Pin your strongest introductory posts

Pinned posts can act like the top section of a website. Use them to explain who you are, show strong work and answer the obvious buyer question.

Example: Pin: 'What we do', a strong case study and a high-quality portfolio Reel.

2

Show proof, not only claims

Statements such as 'premium', 'best' and 'professional' are weak without evidence.

Example: Instead of 'we make amazing websites', show the old homepage, the new homepage and explain one decision.

3

Use Highlights deliberately

If Highlights are available and useful for your account, organise Stories into topics a buyer might genuinely browse.

Example: Possible Highlights: Work, Reviews, Process, FAQs, About.

4

Make the feed coherent, not identical

Consistency means recognisable taste and standards, not the same template forever.

Example: You can vary subjects while keeping similar typography, editing quality, colour discipline or tone.

5

Answer comments and DMs like a business

Fast, useful responses build trust. Avoid robotic replies to genuine questions.

Example: A useful answer to a technical question can itself become the next post idea.

TRUST SIGNAL People often decide whether to follow before they ever read your website. The feed is part portfolio, part proof, part personality.

05 REELS, CAROUSELS, STORIES & STATIC POSTS

Do not choose a format because it is fashionable. Choose it because it suits the idea.

FORMAT	USE IT WHEN...	EXAMPLE
Reel	Movement, process, personality or transformation matters	Show a redesign morphing from old to new
Carousel	The value is sequential, educational or reference-worthy	7 mistakes on your homepage'
Story	You want frequent, informal or interactive contact	Poll, question, behind-the-scenes update
Static post	One image is the entire point	Finished campaign artwork or announcement

1

Start with the idea

Ask what the viewer needs to see or understand.

Example: A transformation is naturally suited to video; a checklist is often easier as a carousel.

2

Choose the simplest format that works

Do not create a 20-second Reel to explain something one image can communicate instantly.

Example: A striking finished render may be stronger as a clean static post.

3

Add a reason to interact

A carousel can invite a save; a Story can use a poll; a Reel can ask a simple question.

Example: 'Which version would you choose - A or B?'

4

Repurpose intelligently

One idea can become several formats without copying the exact same asset.

Example: A case study can become a Reel, a 6-slide carousel and two Stories.



High-impact concepts work well as Reel hooks.



A single strong visual can still justify a static post.

06 HOW TO MAKE A REEL PEOPLE WATCH

A Reel is a sequence of attention decisions. Beginners often spend too long introducing the subject. Show something worth watching immediately.

1

0-2 seconds: hook

Open with the most visually interesting moment, the result, the problem or a statement that creates immediate curiosity.

Example: 'THIS CAR DOESN'T EXIST.' over the strongest opening frame.

2

2-5 seconds: prove there is a payoff

Give the viewer enough information to understand why the rest is worth watching.

Example: Show the impossible road starting to build beneath the car.

3

Middle: deliver one idea cleanly

Do not cram five unrelated concepts into one short Reel.

Example: If the Reel is about character consistency, keep every shot supporting that idea.

4

Use readable pacing

Fast does not mean incomprehensible. Give important frames enough time to register.

Example: A 0.2-second product shot may look energetic but fail to communicate the product.

5

End with a finish, not a collapse

Use a clean final frame, reveal, reaction, loop or CTA.

Example: Hold the completed product for one second rather than cutting away instantly.

Beginner Reel example

Topic: website redesign.

0-2s: show the ugly old homepage and the words 'WOULD YOU TRUST THIS SITE?'

2-5s: rapid transition into the redesigned hero section.

5-10s: three close-ups: mobile layout, CTA, trust proof.

10-12s: final full-page reveal.

Caption CTA: 'Which change made the biggest difference?'

07 CAPTIONS: WRITING DESCRIPTIONS PEOPLE READ

Instagram captions can do far more than describe the image. They can tell the story, add searchable language, teach something, build authority and create a reason to comment or save.

1

Write the first line as a headline

The first line should make sense before the reader taps to expand the caption. Uppercase can be powerful for a short opening hook, but avoid writing the entire caption in capitals.

Example: 'THIS STARTED AS ONE STILL IMAGE. <'

2

Use enough text to finish the idea

Do not force every caption to be tiny. A tutorial, case study or story can justify a longer caption. Remove filler, not useful detail.

Example: A case-study caption might use 150-250 words if each paragraph adds information.

3

Use spacing

On a phone, dense text becomes a wall. Use short paragraphs and blank lines between ideas.

Example: Hook → blank line → explanation → blank line → lesson → blank line → CTA.

4

Use emojis as punctuation

Emojis can help the eye find sections or add personality. Use them deliberately rather than after every sentence.

Example: < for a hook, ? for a question, ☐ for a short checklist.

5

Use natural keywords

Say what the post is about in plain language. Search/discovery should not depend entirely on hashtags.

Example: If the post is about AI video advertising, include the words 'AI video advertising' naturally.

6

Finish with one CTA

Ask for one action that suits the post.

Example: 'Save this for your next campaign' is clearer than 'Like, comment, follow, share and DM us'.

CAPTION LENGTH The correct length is the shortest version that fully delivers the value. Sometimes that is 25 words; sometimes it is several paragraphs.

08 CAPTION EXAMPLES YOU CAN ADAPT

AI VIDEO / PORTFOLIO

THIS STARTED AS ONE STILL IMAGE. ✂

We built the environment, locked the character and designed the movement around a two-second hook instead of simply asking AI to 'make it cinematic'.

That is the difference between generating and directing. For #AIVideo and #CreativeTechnology, the prompt becomes a production brief - camera, timing, physics and payoff all matter.

Would you know this was AI if we had not told you? ☐

WEBSITE / SERVICE

YOUR HOMEPAGE HAS ABOUT FIVE SECONDS TO EXPLAIN ITSELF.

A visitor should understand what you do, who it is for and what to click next without hunting through a wall of copy.

For this #WebDesign project we stripped the opening screen back to one proposition, one visual idea and one primary action. Cleaner does not mean emptier - it means every element has a job.

Save this and look at your own homepage with fresh eyes.

PRODUCT

ONE BOTTLE. ONE VISUAL IDEA. NO BORING PRODUCT SPIN. ☐

Instead of placing the product on a pedestal, we made the environment emerge from it. The opening gives you the object; the transformation gives you a reason to keep watching.

That is the principle behind strong #AIAdvertising: the product remains the hero even when the world around it becomes impossible.

Which brand should get this treatment next?

NOTICE THE PATTERN Strong first line → breathing room → useful detail → natural keywords/hashtags → one clear finish.

09 HASHTAGS, KEYWORDS & DISCOVERABILITY

Hashtags are less powerful as a standalone growth trick than they once appeared to be. Treat them as relevant context rather than the strategy itself. Instagram has moved towards a maximum of five hashtags for posts/Reels, so specificity matters.

1

Choose relevance over size

A hashtag should genuinely describe the subject, audience, niche or location.

Example: #AIVideo is relevant to an AI video case study; #viral is not useful context simply because it is large.

2

Use only a few strong tags

With the five-hashtag limit, there is no reason to dump huge blocks of tags.

Example: A post might use #AIVideo, #GenerativeAI and #AutomotiveDesign rather than five unrelated 'growth' tags.

3

Write hashtags where they read naturally

Our preferred style is to integrate them into the description when possible instead of adding a detached block at the bottom. This is a writing preference, not an Instagram requirement.

Example: 'We built this #AIVideo sequence around one continuous camera move.'

4

Use normal searchable words too

Do not replace descriptive language with hashtags.

Example: Write 'AI video commercial for an automotive brand', not only '#AI #video #car'.

5

Do not expect hashtags to rescue weak content

A poor hook, unclear profile or irrelevant post will not become strong because the hashtags are perfect.

Example: Fix the content and positioning before obsessing over tags.

Good vs weak

Weak: New AI video! #viral #explore #fyp #love #trending

Better: We built this #AIVideo concept as a seven-second automotive advert, using one continuous transformation instead of multiple cuts. The challenge was keeping the car identity stable while the environment changed around it.

10 WHEN TO POST AND HOW OFTEN

There is no single universal posting time that is best for every account. Your audience may behave very differently from a global benchmark. Use your own Insights once enough audience data is available.

1

Start with a sustainable cadence

Choose a frequency you can maintain without lowering quality.

Example: For a small business, 3 strong feed/Reel posts per week can be a better starting point than 7 rushed posts.

2

Use Stories between main posts

Stories can keep the account active without requiring a polished feed post every day.

Example: Tuesday: behind-the-scenes Story; Wednesday: Reel; Thursday: question Story.

3

Check follower activity

Inside Insights, look for audience activity times when available.

Example: If followers are repeatedly most active around 7-9pm, test posts in that window.

4

Test a few repeatable windows

Do not change time, format, topic and style all at once or you will not know what caused the result.

Example: Test Wednesday 7pm and Saturday 10am across several weeks.

5

Review after several weeks

One strong or weak post proves very little. Look for repeated patterns.

Example: If Reels posted in one window consistently gain more non-follower reach, keep testing it.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATION Consistency matters more than heroic volume. Build a rhythm you can still maintain three months from now.

11 INSIGHTS FOR COMPLETE BEGINNERS

Insights are Instagram's performance data for professional accounts. They help answer a much better question than 'Did people like it?': What happened after I posted this?

1

Open Professional Dashboard

From your profile, open the Professional Dashboard and find Insights/performance.
Example: Do this once a week even if you are not running ads.

2

Look at reach

Reach tells you how many unique accounts saw the content.
Example: A post reaching 8,000 accounts is different from receiving 8,000 total views.

3

Look at follower vs non-follower exposure

If a post reaches many non-followers, it is doing discovery work.
Example: A portfolio Reel may reach 70% non-followers while a Story mostly serves existing followers.

4

Look at engagement quality

Shares and saves often tell you more about usefulness than likes alone.
Example: A tutorial with 40 saves may be commercially more valuable than a pretty image with 200 likes.

5

Look at profile actions

Check whether content drove profile visits, follows, link clicks or other available actions.
Example: A post with moderate reach but many profile visits may have excellent buyer intent.

6

Relate the numbers to the goal

Use the metric that matches your business objective.
Example: If the goal is enquiries, record actual enquiries rather than celebrating views in isolation.

12 HOW TO REVIEW A POST PROPERLY

Do not call a post 'good' or 'bad' based on the first hour. Review it systematically.

1

Write down the post's job

What was it supposed to achieve? Discovery, trust, education, engagement or conversion?
Example: A tutorial carousel is often designed for saves, not raw reach.

2

Check the opening

For video, did people stay long enough to reach the point? For carousels, did slide one clearly promise value?
Example: If viewers leave immediately, improve the hook before changing hashtags.

3

Check distribution

How much of the audience was non-followers?
Example: If non-follower reach is low, the post may be serving the current community rather than discovering new people.

4

Check valuable engagement

Look for saves, shares, replies, profile visits and meaningful comments.
Example: 'Nice!' is less informative than 'Can you do this for Shopify?'

5

Check business outcome

Did anyone click, enquire, buy or book?
Example: A single £2,000 enquiry can matter more than thousands of passive views.

6

Create a sequel

Take the strongest principle and apply it again to a new subject.
Example: If 'before vs after' worked, make a different before/after rather than reposting the same one.

MAKE A SIMPLE LOG Date • format • topic • hook • post time • reach • non-follower reach • saves • shares • profile visits • enquiries. After 20 posts, patterns become much easier to see.

13 ACCOUNT STATUS, VIOLATIONS & RECOMMENDATION ELIGIBILITY

Account Status is one of the most useful troubleshooting areas in Instagram. It can show removed content, restrictions and, for professional accounts, whether content/profile may be eligible for recommendation to people who do not follow you.

1

Open Account Status

Open Instagram settings/menu and find Account Status. Menu placement can change.
Example: If you cannot find it, search settings for 'Account Status'.

2

Check removed content

Review anything Instagram says breached Community Standards.
Example: Read the reason rather than simply deleting more content in panic.

3

Check features you cannot use

Restrictions may affect specific features.
Example: If a feature suddenly disappears, Account Status is one place to investigate.

4

Check recommendation eligibility

Professional accounts can see whether content/profile may be eligible for recommendation surfaces such as Reels, Explore, Search or suggested accounts.
Example: If the account is not eligible, non-follower discovery can be affected.

5

Review profile-level issues

Instagram may identify a profile element, such as a bio or photo, as relevant to recommendation guidelines.
Example: Do not only inspect posts.

6

Request review when appropriate

If Instagram provides a review option and you believe a decision is wrong, use it.
Example: Keep the appeal factual and specific.

IMPORTANT Being eligible for recommendations does not guarantee reach. It means Instagram may recommend the account/content; it is not a promise that it will.

14 INSTAGRAM LIVE

Instagram introduced a 1,000-follower threshold for starting Live broadcasts. Treat Live as an event with a reason to attend, not simply a camera you switch on.

1

Check eligibility first

Before promoting a Live, confirm the account meets the current follower and account requirements.
Example: Do not announce a launch stream and discover the Live button is unavailable on the day.

2

Choose a useful Live format

Good reasons include Q&A, launch, demonstration, interview, critique or behind-the-scenes event.
Example: A web studio could review three viewer homepages live.

3

Promote the time and benefit

Tell people what they will get, not only when you are going live.
Example: 'Thursday 7pm: I'll redesign one viewer's homepage live.'

4

Prepare the opening

Start delivering value immediately rather than waiting silently for viewers.
Example: Open with the promise and explain the format in the first minute.

5

Use interaction

Answer questions, react to comments and invite specific participation.
Example: 'Drop your homepage URL and I'll pick one to review.'

6

End with one next step

Recap and tell viewers what to do next.
Example: 'Download the checklist from the link in our bio.'

15 SELLING PRODUCTS

Instagram can support product discovery and shopping, but commerce features depend on eligibility, country and Meta's current commerce setup. A professional account must meet Meta's commerce requirements.

1

Make the account commercially credible

Use accurate business information, a clear domain/website and consistent branding.

Example: The Instagram account, website and product identity should obviously belong to the same business.

2

Use the appropriate professional setup

A Business account is typically the natural choice when the account represents a shop.

Example: Review business details before making them public.

3

Create or connect a catalogue

Commerce Manager or an eligible ecommerce partner can provide the product catalogue.

Example: Keep names, prices, availability and URLs accurate.

4

Meet eligibility requirements

Meta requires policy compliance, a supported country, trustworthiness and accurate information among other conditions.

Example: Do not assume every account can immediately access every shopping feature.

5

Create product-led content

Do not make every post a catalogue photo. Show use, detail, comparison, story and proof.

Example: Reel: unboxing. Carousel: 5 features. Story: customer question. Static: hero campaign image.

6

Measure the path to sale

Track site visits, product interactions and sales where available.

Example: If one Reel generates sales, build more content around the same buyer question.

16 SELLING SERVICES

Service businesses often do not need complicated Instagram commerce. Their main job is to turn attention into trust and trust into an enquiry.

1

Show the problem you solve

Start with a recognisable buyer problem.

Example: 'Your website looks fine on desktop but falls apart on mobile.'

2

Show proof of ability

Use before/after work, case studies, process and specific decisions.

Example: Show the old mobile layout next to the rebuilt version.

3

Reduce uncertainty

Answer questions about price range, process, timescale or what the client needs to provide.

Example: Carousel: 'What happens after you ask us for a website quote?'

4

Use a simple CTA

Tell people exactly how to enquire.

Example: 'DM WEBSITE' or 'Use the quote link in our bio'.

5

Create a landing page that matches the post

The visitor should not feel they have arrived somewhere unrelated.

Example: A Reel about AI commercials should link to the AI commercial service page, not a generic home page.

6

Record lead source

Ask enquiries how they found you or use tracking links.

Example: This tells you whether Instagram is producing genuine business.

17 CONTENT PILLARS & IDEA GENERATION

Content pillars are repeatable categories that stop you having to invent the entire strategy every morning.

1

Choose 4-5 pillars

Cover different jobs: Proof, Teach, Process, Personality and Offer is a strong starting framework.
Example: A designer might use: finished work, website tips, build process, founder opinion, service offers.

2

Write ten ideas under each pillar

Do this once and you immediately have a large idea bank.
Example: Teach: '5 homepage mistakes', 'What makes a CTA work?', 'Why your mobile menu matters'.

3

Mix easy and ambitious posts

Not every post needs a three-day production.
Example: Stories and talking-head tips can sit beside highly produced AI videos.

4

Build recurring series

A named series gives the audience something recognisable.
Example: 'Fix This Homepage Friday' or 'One Prompt, Three Results'.

5

Reuse questions

Every real customer question is potential content.
Example: 'How long does a website take?' can become a Reel, carousel and Story Q&A.;



World-building can become a recurring content series.



Character-led visuals are useful for recognisable series content.

18 A REPEATABLE WEEKLY CONTENT SYSTEM

Consistency gets much easier when creation is scheduled as a process rather than left to motivation.

1

Monday: choose the week's objectives

Pick three jobs: discovery, trust and conversion.

Example: Discovery Reel + educational carousel + case-study post.

2

Batch ideas and assets

Collect footage, screenshots, AI renders or photos in one session.

Example: Generate three related AI visuals while the character/style setup is already loaded.

3

Write captions together

Writing several captions in one session keeps tone consistent.

Example: Use the same headline → value → CTA structure, but change the actual content.

4

Schedule or prepare drafts

Remove the pressure of creating at the exact posting time.

Example: Prepare the Reel, cover and caption the day before.

5

Engage after publishing

Reply to genuine questions and useful comments.

Example: A thoughtful answer can deepen the relationship more than another random post.

6

Sunday: review Insights

Pick one winner, one lesson and one experiment for next week.

Example: Winner: before/after Reel. Lesson: first frame too slow. Experiment: shorter hook.

Example week

MON	Carousel	5 homepage mistakes
TUE	Stories	Behind-the-scenes + poll
WED	Reel	Before/after redesign
THU	Stories	FAQ / question box
FRI	Reel	AI commercial process
SAT	Optional	Founder/personality
SUN	Review	Insights + plan

19 THE 30-DAY GROWTH PLAN

This plan is designed for a beginner or a business that wants to reset an untidy account.

DAYS 1-3	Profile	Choose account goal, fix picture/name/bio/link.
DAYS 4-6	Account health	Check Professional Dashboard, Account Status and current Insights.
DAYS 7-9	Content pillars	Choose 4-5 pillars and write 10 ideas under each.
DAYS 10-12	Proof	Create/pin a 'what we do', case study and strongest work post.
DAYS 13-15	Batch	Create 2 Reels, 1 carousel and several Stories.
DAYS 16-18	Publish	Use clear hooks and one CTA; reply to comments.
DAYS 19-21	Caption test	Try one short caption, one story-led caption, one educational caption.
DAYS 22-24	Timing test	Use audience activity to test two posting windows.
DAYS 25-27	Sequel	Make a related follow-up to the strongest post.
DAYS 28-29	Conversion	Check profile visits, link activity and enquiries.
DAY 30	Review	Record what worked and build next month's plan.

MONTH TWO Do not start again from zero. Double down on the topics, formats and hooks that produced the right result, then improve one variable at a time.

20 BEGINNER FAQ

Do I need to post every day?

No. A sustainable schedule with good content is more useful than daily posting you cannot maintain.

Should I delete a post if it performs badly?

Usually not immediately. A low-performing post can still contain useful information, and deleting it does not teach you why it underperformed. Review the hook, topic and format first.

Should I buy followers?

No. Fake or low-quality followers do not create customers and can make your audience data less useful.

Do hashtags make posts go viral?

No. They can add context/discoverability, but they are not a guaranteed reach mechanism.

Should every caption be long?

No. Use the length the idea needs. A great image may need a short caption; a tutorial may benefit from several paragraphs.

Can I use uppercase in captions?

Yes. Selective uppercase is useful for a strong headline. Avoid shouting the entire caption.

How many hashtags should I use?

Instagram has moved to a five-hashtag maximum for posts/Reels. Use the most relevant tags rather than filling the allowance mechanically.

Can I put hashtags inside the caption text?

Yes. It can read more naturally when used selectively. It is a stylistic choice, not a requirement.

Why has my reach suddenly dropped?

Check Account Status, recommendation eligibility, recent content, format changes and audience response before assuming a hidden penalty.

What metric matters most?

The one that matches the goal: reach for discovery, saves for reference value, profile visits for curiosity, enquiries/sales for business results.

21 FINAL CHECKLIST & OFFICIAL SOURCE NOTES

Before calling the account 'ready', run through this list:

- ☐ The account has one clear primary objective.
- ☐ Professional account type is chosen deliberately.
- ☐ Profile picture is recognisable at small size.
- ☐ Bio explains what you do and what to do next.
- ☐ Link goes to the right destination.
- ☐ At least 4 repeatable content pillars exist.
- ☐ Reels open with the interesting part.
- ☐ Captions use readable spacing and one CTA.
- ☐ Hashtags are relevant and limited; normal keywords are present.
- ☐ Posting cadence is sustainable.
- ☐ Insights are reviewed weekly.
- ☐ Account Status and recommendation eligibility are checked.
- ☐ Live is only planned when the account meets current eligibility.
- ☐ Product selling meets Meta commerce requirements.
- ☐ Service posts have a clear route to enquiry.

Official source areas researched

Meta/Instagram Help Centre material was used for professional-account rules, Professional Dashboard/Insights availability, Account Status, recommendation eligibility, commerce eligibility, supported Shops countries and shopping tags. Instagram's menus and eligibility can change, so check the current Help Centre and your in-app wording before making a business-critical decision.

FINAL RULE Good Instagram growth is a system: clear positioning → strong profile → useful or entertaining content → readable captions → consistent publishing → measurement → improvement.



Environmental storytelling can stop the scroll.



Macro detail can make product/portfolio content feel premium.