



Introduction to Instagram

What is Instagram?

Instagram is a social media platform dedicated to pictures and videos.

It is owned by Facebook but operates separately.

One billion people use it worldwide and use mainly the mobile app, although there is a web page.

Many creative and visually-oriented businesses use it to promote their work.

As with other platforms, you can 'like' and comment on other people's posts. You can send them to individuals, though you cannot 'share' them on your own timelines, as you can with posts on Twitter and Facebook (see Sharing).

It is sometimes referred to as 'the happy platform' because, in contrast to other social media platforms, content posted tends to be 'feel good' - positive and upbeat, although this is not always the case.

GETTING STARTED

Open an account

To open an account, download the Instagram app from the Apple Store or Google Play (Android) or go to www.instagram.com.

Details you will need to provide are . . .

Your bio is important as it's here that you can say who you are and what your business does. Include a link here to your website.

Use a good head shot of yourself as your profile pic. It needs to be professional, so avoid pouting or face-pulling, but can still be relaxed!

Picture tips

You can upload existing pictures to your Instagram account from your phone or tablet or you can post them as you take them.

Pictures on Instagram are square so you need to keep this in mind when you are taking your pictures. If possible, use a vertical (portrait) format – so hold your phone vertically to take your shot.

You can, of course, crop your images to make them square, though you may have to lose some of the detail.

To post

Tap the plus icon at the bottom of your screen, find your image or video in your smartphone's camera roll, add a filter and comment, and tap 'share'.

CONTENT

What to upload

The quality of pictures on Instagram tends to be better than on Facebook or Twitter because images are its primary focus. People are also more selective about what they post.

Your pictures don't need to be amazing technically but they do need to be clear, well focused and showing something of interest to the audience, rather than hastily taken snapshots.

Start by posting a picture of something clearly business-related – the premises or room where you practice, your business card or logo. In the text, explain a bit about who you are and your interest in homeopathy.

From there, think about other things you do that add to the picture: homeopathy remedies, books, events you attend but also add in some of your personal interests – pets, places you visit. This gives people reading your posts an idea of you as a person as well as a homeopath and is more engaging, so makes you more memorable.

You can also annotate your pictures using the tools in the app.

What to write

Pictures are what people go to Instagram for but the words are important, too.

Add a caption to your image that has impact, rather than just describes. If appropriate, look to create an emotional response. For example . . .

Think about adding a call-to-action – invite your audience to comment, answer a question or tag their friends.

Tell your followers to click the link to your website or Facebook page in your bio, to learn more about the image you've posted.

What to like

Look out for mentions of homeopathy in the news, for example, celebrity comments in interviews, as well as news that is specifically about homeopathy, such as new products, legislation or campaigns.

Homeopathy accounts

Homeopathy organisations: 4homeopathy, i.love.homeopathy, HomeopathyUK

SHARING

Hashtags

Hashtags are the way to draw your pictures to the attention of other people. When you hashtag an image, it will appear in a list when someone else searches for that word or phrase.

You can add up to 30 hashtags in the text with your picture.

To find popular hashtags, go to the search button and type in what your content is about which will bring up a range of related hashtags

For example, typing in 'Homeopathy' brings up #homeopathy #homeopathyworks #homeopathy heals #homeopathyworksforme #homeopathyrocks #homeopathyresearch

Location

Adding your location or the location shown in the post also makes you more likely to be seen by others

Untagging

If someone tags you in an image and you feel it's inappropriate or not relevant to your business, you can removing the tagging.

Go to the three dots at the top right-hand corner and tap 'photo options'. Go to 'Hide from my profile' and the image will be hidden.

OTHER

Filters

Adding filters can make your posts more eye-catching and engaging to your audience.

To add a filter, upload your post then click 'Next' and pick one of the range of options.

It's tempting to go for different filters every time but keep in mind that, as a business, you are effectively trying to build a brand, so consistency is important. Initially, people will be able to see all your posts in one go in a grid so too much variety of 'look' can look a mess.

Instagram Stories

Instagram Stories are short visuals, using images or video, that will last for a maximum of 24 hours after you have posted them.

You can use them to do things like giving a behind-the-scenes look at your business.

Tips for advanced users

Experienced Instagram users might feel confident enough to be more creative.

1. For example, using multicoloured writing to annotate your pictures can make them more eye-catching

Highlight your text and open the colour palette at the bottom of the screen by tapping and holding a colour of your choice.

Hold it down and use your other hand to tap the pointer at the bottom of the text, then drag your fingers along the screen so the text changes colour.

2. Use drawing tools

Select the pen tool, choose a colour and tap and hold the screen down. The screen will fill with colour. You can either use this as a background to your story, or use the eraser to reveal the image underneath.

If you select the highlighter pen, you can create a see-through layer on top of your image or video.