

Instagram Hashtag Strategy 2020: A Definitive Guide

Getting Started

Hashtag research is easy and doesn't require a lot of time, unless you want to go deep and research lots of ideas. If you don't have a lot of time to spend on research, you can still put together a great strategy that will give you great results. In this guide, I breakdown a few easy steps to follow to create a few lists of hashtags that you can work into different types of posts.

1) Researching Instagram Hashtags

You can easily research hashtags within Instagram by typing any hashtag into the search box. When you enter a hashtag, it will show you a variety of hashtags that use the same text you searched, along with the number of posts under each hashtag. Once you've done that, you can start to choose which ones you want to use.

If there's a lot of people watching the hashtags you're considering, then there will be a lot of people hitting this tag to see what's going on. This has positive and negative issues, as we'll see later in this guide.

2) Choosing What Instagram Hashtags To Use

This is the most important step in an Instagram hashtag strategy, as the choices you make will determine your effectiveness & visibility. It's fairly easy to choose a variety of hashtags that will perform well for you.

The Three Phase Instagram Hashtag Strategy

You can divide and conquer on a strategy that has three categories of hashtags: low, medium and high volume. Here's why you want to do all of these: ranking for the low volume hashtags increases your chances of ranking on the medium volume hashtags. Once you start ranking medium volume ones, you increase your chances of ranking on the high volume ones, which are the most competitive and will give you the best results in the long run. The low and medium volume hashtags will boost your post visibility immediately when you publish it, so these are important.

Low Volume Hashtags: under 50,000 posts

Medium Volume Hashtags: 50,000 - 250,000 posts

High Volume Hashtags: 250,000 - 1,000,000 posts

This 'bottom-up' approach will benefit you in the long run, as your posts will continue to collect likes when they stay visible on a low or medium volume hashtag page for days or even weeks.

It's not worth using many high-volume hashtags, because your post will quickly get pushed far down the page to be replaced by all of the posts that came after yours. Try creating one to test this — you'll quickly see that there's 100 new posts within minutes following yours. Your post will no longer be visible to the audience you're seeking, and will not be effective.

Instead, use hashtags with medium and low volume, because these still get viewed by a lot more people, and your post will "float" near the top of hashtag page for longer, giving you more visibility for the audience you're seeking.

Since we get 30 hashtags per post, here's what I recommend for each one: use 15 low volume hashtags, 10 medium volume hashtags and 5 high volume hashtags.

3) Saving Instagram Hashtag Lists

Now we can start saving Instagram hashtag lists. Create a document to store a list of your chosen hashtags along with the number of posts under each hashtag. This will allow you to target which hashtags to use when, and make smart choices on how you deploy them.

When you've put all of your hashtags in the list, you can separate them into three categories, and they're the three phases we talked about earlier: low, medium and high volume.

4) Variety & Changing Your Instagram Hashtags Up

Don't repeat the same hashtags on every post, because the Instagram algorithms see that as being spammy. Instead, create 3 - 5 different hashtag lists so that you can easily change things up. Then you'll have them ready to go when you want to post.

You can even create different types of lists for different types of posts, so if you post about different topics, you'll have a hashtag list ready to go for each topic.

5) Keep Your Instagram Hashtag Strategy Simple

The best thing to keep in mind is to keep it simple with your Instagram hashtag strategy. Once you start researching, you'll find that things will fall into place about what hashtags you want to

use, and you can make smart choices about low, medium and high volume ones to use. From there, it's easy to create your different hashtag lists for different types of posts.

Simplicity and ease-of-use is the biggest goal here. After you've written your Instagram post, you'll have a strong list of hashtags ready to copy and paste into your post.

6) Tracking Instagram Hashtag Performance

After you've created your hashtag lists, you get the best part: monitoring how they perform over time. You'll find that some of your chosen hashtags will consistently reward you, while others are just kind of *meh* in how they perform.

How to track Instagram Hashtag Performance

Since Instagram analytics don't track hashtag performance, the best way to see what hashtags perform and which ones don't is to use a third party tool. I personally use Later, which not only has better analytics tools than Instagram but also lets you track your post & story performance for likes, comments, impressions, reach, video views, saves and revenue. Under the "Hashtag" column of the Later Analytics section, you'll see data for how many likes, comments, impressions, reach and saves each hashtag earned. From this you can easily breakdown which hashtags perform, which ones are kind of meh, and which ones aren't working.

Another way is just to manually click on hashtags in your posts and see how much "hang time" you get on each post on a hashtag page, i.e. how long does your post hover near the top of recent posts and keep its visibility, as I spoke about earlier. If you hang near the top of recent posts AND you're still getting likes on a post a few days after you posted, you have data that there's decent performance for that hashtag. Keep using hashtags that are like this.

From there, you'll be able to choose what hashtags you want to drop off your list and consider new hashtags to replace them as you move forward. This is where the three-phase Instagram hashtag strategy kicks into high gear: you can really drive your reach and impressions up more and more as time goes on. Older posts will generate less impressions over time, but the cumulative effect of all of your posts continuing to be viewed will net you better and better impressions over time.

I encourage you to continuously refine your hashtags as you move forward. This is good for telling the Instagram algorithms that you're not a spammer, and will open your strategy to new and trending hashtags. Find hashtags that work consistently, and stop using hashtags that underperform.

Other Things To Keep In Mind

How Many Instagram Hashtags Should I Use?

A lot has been said on the optimal number of hashtags we should use, but there's no reason not to use all 30 in a post. Instagram won't favor your post because you've chosen to use less. With that in mind, why not just use all 30 to increase your reach? Choosing to use less than 30 hashtags is a way to make your post less visible to others.

That Whole Instagram Shadowban For Hashtags Thing

The Instagram hashtag shadowban issue got out of control as a lot of theories were thrown around. There never was an "Instagram shadowban" per se, but the Instagram algorithms would penalize people for certain types of hashtag use. This led to people to talk about a shadowban when really all that was happening was that people were being penalized for being spammy by using the same hashtags over and over again.

Change your hashtags up once in a while to keep them fresh and optimize their use and you'll be happy with your results. There's more on how to win on this in step four.

Never try to trick any of the Instagram algorithms with the types of advice you find online that fall under the tips, tricks or hacks categories because they'll always provide a short-term boost at the expense of a long-term penalty. **HACKS NEVER WORK** in the long run. Why sacrifice a short-term boost for long-term damage?

Conclusion

That's the Flux Three-Phase Instagram Hashtag Strategy. I like to keep it simple and straight-forward, but most of all actionable in how it works. Continuous improvement is what works here, and keeping it simple makes it easy and effective to consistently upgrade.