



National Volunteer Workforce Solutions
Social Media Handbook Part 5:
Instagram 101

Table of Contents

What is Instagram and Why Should Departments Use it	3
Getting Started	3
Creating an Account	3
Making Your Account a Business Account	4
Your Profile	4
Editing Your Profile	4
Posting on Instagram	4
Editing and Deleting a Post	6
Following Users	6
Home Page	7
Interacting with Posts	7
Direct Messaging a User	7
Moderation	8
Blocking and Reporting	8
Unfollowing Accounts	10
Public vs Private Account	10
Instagram Management	10
Before You Start	10
Frequency of Posts	11
Instagram Tips	11
Scheduling Posts	11
Insights	13
Post Insights	14
Glossary	14

[To Table of Contents](#)

What is Instagram and Why Should Departments Use It?

Instagram is one of the most popular photo sharing social media platforms in the world. Its users are extremely active with over 500 million daily active users. The visual nature of the platform causes people to interact more than other social media platforms. Instagram is a fast-growing platform with engaged and interactive users, making it a great platform for you to interact with your community and raise awareness about your fire department and its activities.

Instagram is particularly appealing to younger individuals with roughly [59% of 18-29-year olds using it](#). This number is expected to increase with [Instagram being described as the second most important social network by teens](#), number one was Snapchat. This makes it a key social media platform to use, if you are trying to connect with individuals under the age of 30.

Getting Started

Instagram does separate business and personal accounts, but unlike some social media platforms you don't have to create a personal account to create a business account. Instead you create an account, and after it is created you identify the account as a business account. This process is described below in the [Making Your Account a Business Account](#).

Instagram is a mobile platform and its desktop capabilities are limited. There are work arounds that will allow a social media manager to use a desktop to manage the account, but it is still necessary that you download the free Instagram app from your app store. The instructions in this handbook will be for utilizing the Instagram app unless otherwise specified.

Creating an Account



To create an account:

1. Download the Instagram app for iOS from the [App Store](#), Android from [Google Play Store](#) or Windows Phone from the [Windows Phone Store](#)
2. Open the Instagram app
3. Tap *Sign Up with Email or Phone Number*
4. Enter the email address you want associated with the account
5. Tap *Next*
6. Create a username; this cannot have any spaces and should be similar to your department name and your other social media handles
7. Create a password
8. Enter your department's name where it asks for the *Full Name*
9. Fill in the rest of the profile information as prompted

Making Your Account a Business Account

Making your account a business account, gives you access to Instagram business features and Instagram Insights. It also allows you to link your Instagram account to a Facebook Page.

To make your account a business account:

1. Go to your profile page
2. Click the options icon,  on Android or  on iPhone, at the top of your screen
3. Scroll down to *Switch to Business Profile*
4. Tap *Switch to Business Profile*
5. Review your department's contact information, making any necessary changes
6. Tap *Done*

Your Profile

Your profile lets users know your brand and story. It is important to have an up-to-date bio and a working website URL on your profile page. Having an inviting and informative profile will encourage users to click your link to learn more about your department and potential opportunities.

Editing Your Profile

You can edit your profile from your computer or the app.


To edit your profile:

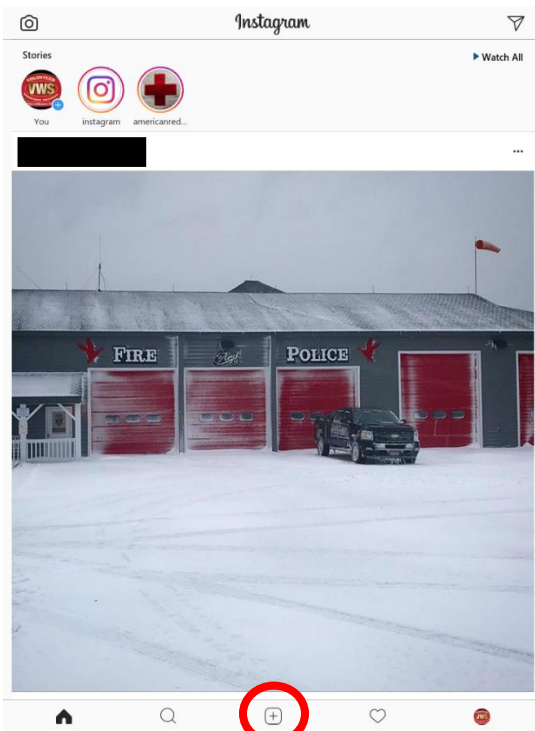
1. Open the Instagram app
2. Tap your profile image in the bottom right corner of your screen
3. Tap *Edit Profile*
4. Make appropriate changes
5. Tap the check mark in the upper right corner of your screen

Posting on Instagram

Instagram is a photo sharing site. It requires a photo or short video for you to post. Instagram does not hyperlink any links you place in your photo's comment. Many people will not copy and past a link. The only location where a link is clickable on Instagram is on your profile in the website field. This makes it important to have the website you use on your profile page a strong landing page that is easily navigable. Another option is to update the link in the website field to the link you want people to click on. If you are recruiting new members, you may want your link to be to your application or a new member information page.

To create a post:

1. Open the Instagram app.
2. Tap the plus sign icon  at the bottom of your screen.





3. Select the photo or video from your library that you would like to add. (You can also take a photo or video directly in the app, by tapping on *Photo* or *Video* at the bottom of the screen.)
4. You can move the photo to have it fit the Instagram photo area by placing your finger on the image and sliding it in the direction you want the picture to move.
5. To resize the image place two fingers on the image and separate them to zoom in on the image or bring them together to zoom out.
6. Tap *Next* in the upper right to continue
7. You can now filter and edit your image
8. Tap *Next* to continue
9. Type in your caption for the image
10. Tap *Tag People* to tag any users in the photo
11. Tap the user in the photo
12. Type their username into the search bar
13. Tap the user from the search results when they appear
14. Tap *Done* when you have finished tagging users in the photo
15. Add the location for the image
16. Tap *Share* to post the image and comment


[To Table of Contents](#)

Editing and Deleting a Post

To edit a post:

1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to the post you want to edit
3. Tap the post
4. Tap the options icon,  on Android or  on iPhone, in the upper right corner of the post
5. Tap *Edit*
6. Make the appropriate changes
7. Tap *Done* in the upper right corner


To delete a post:

1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to the post you want to edit
3. Tap the post
4. Tap the options icon,  on Android or  on iPhone, in the upper right corner of the post
5. Tap *Delete*
6. Tap *Delete*


Following Users

Following other Instagram users is an important aspect of the site, and can help people find you. It is important to remember to be selective in those you follow, as following a particular person or business can be viewed as you support for their content or brand.

To follow other users:

1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to your profile page
3. Tap the add person icon  at the top of the screen
4. This will open a list of suggested contacts for your account based on who you are currently following
5. Tap the *Follow* button next to the users you want to follow


To find a specific user:

1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to your profile page
3. Tap the search icon  at the bottom of the screen
4. Type the name or username of the user you are looking for in the search bar at the top of your screen
5. Tap the user when they appear in the search bar
6. Tap the *Follow* button on the user's page

Here is a list of Instagram usernames that we recommend you follow:

- @fireheronfff
- @kiddefiresafety
- @hazmatfc_iafc
- @nfpadotorg
- @fema
- Local community groups
- Local schools
- Local government
- Neighboring departments
- Local government agencies
- Local stores
- Local sports teams


Your Home Page

Your home page is the first page you see when you log into Instagram. This is where you can scroll through your news feed and view Instagram Stories. You can access your home page at any time by tapping the home icon .

Interacting with Posts

Interacting with posts from other users is a key part of Instagram. Instagram allows you to interact in two ways: liking and commenting. Liking shows general support for the post, and can be done by double tapping on the post. Commenting allows you to share your thoughts and expertise and to push your brand by showing your department's voice and personality. Make sure you read any other comments on the post prior to commenting to get a feel for what others are saying. You may be able to join in on a conversation already occurring, which is a better interaction than creating a new comment that isn't relevant to the conversations taking place.

To comment:





1. Go to the post you would like to comment on
2. Tap the comment bubble icon 
3. Type your comment at the bottom of your screen, where it says *Add a comment as . . .*
4. Tap *Post*

Direct Messaging a User

Instagram Direct allows you to send a message directly to an individual or a group of people in private. The message can contain photos, videos, posts from your news feed, profiles, text, hashtags and locations. While you can use hashtags in your message the message will not appear when you click on the hashtag.

[To Table of Contents](#)

To direct message:

1. Tap the paper airplane icon 
2. Tap the plus icon in the upper right corner 
3. Tap next to *To:*
4. Type the username of the user you wish to message
5. Select the user when they appear by tapping their username
6. Repeat steps 3-5 until all users you want to receive the message are added
7. Write your message by tapping *Write a message . . .* at the bottom of your screen
8. Tap the image icon  to add an image from your library
9. Tap the camera icon  to take a new photo or video
10. Tap *Send*

Note: The heart icon will instantly send a heart to the receivers of the message. This is used as a quick reply, and is the same as liking a post.



Moderation

Instagram is an app of sharing, but you will occasionally find a user that is posting inappropriate or abusive comments and posts. When this occurs, you need to look at the violation and find the whole story. This will ensure that you are not misunderstanding it by taking it out of context. Make sure you check the hashtags associated with the post as well as the user's profile. If you find it was not a misunderstanding and it was indeed inappropriate, you need to decide if the problem is the user or if this is an isolated incident. You have several courses of action that you can take and should decide on the level of action based on the offensiveness of the violation.

Blocking and Reporting

If a user is consistently being inappropriate, you can block and/or report the user. Often blocking the user is enough to solve the problem. Blocking a user does not notify them that you have blocked their account. It prevents them from finding your profile, posts or story. The user can still mention your username, but you will not be notified of the mention. The blocked user can still see your likes and comments on posts that are shared by public accounts and accounts they follow. Blocking a user will not delete any of their previous comments or likes. In extreme cases, you should report the user as well.



To block a user:

1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to the user's profile, by tapping on their name or searching for them
3. Tap the options icon,  on Android or  on iPhone, in the upper right corner of the post
4. Tap *Block*
5. Tap *Block*



To unblock a user:

1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to the user's profile, by tapping on their name or searching for them

[To Table of Contents](#)


3. Tap the options icon,  on Android or  on iPhone, in the upper right corner of the post
4. Tap *Unblock*
5. Tap *Unblock*

To report a user:


1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to the user's profile, by tapping on their name or searching for them
3. Tap the options icon,  on Android or  on iPhone, in the upper right corner of the post
4. Tap *Report*
5. Follow the onscreen instructions

When the comment is an inappropriate comment on one of your posts, you can delete the comment, or you can report the comment then delete the comment. In most cases, deleting the comment will be enough.

To delete a comment:


1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to the inappropriate comment
3. Swipe the comment you would like to delete to the left
4. Tap the red delete icon 

To report a comment:



1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to the inappropriate comment
3. Swipe the comment you would like to report to the left
4. Tap the report icon 
5. Follow the onscreen instructions

If it is an inappropriate comment on someone else's post or an inappropriate post by someone else, you can report it.

To report a comment:

1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to the inappropriate comment
3. Swipe the comment you would like to report to the left
4. Tap the report icon 
5. Follow the onscreen instructions

To report a post:

1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to the inappropriate post
3. Tap the options icon,  on Android or  on iPhone, in the upper right corner of the post
4. Tap *Report*
5. Follow the onscreen instructions

[To Table of Contents](#)

Unfollowing

The users your department follows is a reflection on your brand. It is important that you only follow Instagram accounts that represent the values of your department. In some cases, you may find it necessary to unfollow a user.

To unfollow a user:


1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to your profile page by tapping your logo
3. Tap *following* at the top of your page



VolunteerWorkforceSolutions
Nonprofit Organization

4. Tap *Search*
5. Type the username of the account you want to unfollow
6. Tap *Following* to the right of the account
7. Tap *Unfollow*

To unfollow a user from a post:

1. Go to the post
2. Tap their username
3. Tap the following icon 
4. Tap *Unfollow*

Private vs. Public Account

By default, your Instagram account is a public account, which means anyone can follow you and everyone can see your posts. Making your account a private account will require you to approve all followers, and only your followers can see your posts. It is not recommended that you make your Instagram account private. Private accounts discourage people from following you, and makes it harder to gain new followers as users are unable to see your current posts. This inability to view your posts prevents them from seeing the value your posts have.

Instagram Management

Before You Start

Instagram is a popular app that is relatively easy to use, but many departments get stuck when it comes to posting. What your department posts on Instagram should be driven by your brand and your department's voice. Your department's brand and voice should be used to generate a content strategy, to allow for the greatest return on your investment and help you build a strong engaged following.

The first step of your content strategy, should be defining your brand and voice as a department this will help guide you in the next steps. When you define your brand and voice, you should also create a style guideline. This style guideline should include grammatical guidelines and any branding specific guidelines.

[To Table of Contents](#)

A couple of brand specific guideline examples are that you do not use emoji or emoticons in your captions, or a list of brand specific hashtags that you use when appropriate.

The second step is to outline your engagement guidelines. These guidelines are the foundation for your department on Instagram and should outline how and when your department interacts with other users on Instagram. This is a crucial aspect of your department's presence on Instagram. Make sure you clearly outline the do's and don'ts on interaction to give the person or people handling your department's Instagram account the freedom to interact and create a strong following and presence within specific limitations. It is also important to not be overly restrictive with your do's and don'ts, as this can prevent crucial interactions. When developing these guidelines, make sure you address engaging users that comment on your posts and engaging other posts by users.

The third step is to create your posting guidelines. Much like the engagement guidelines, the posting guidelines will help the people posting for the department's page do so in an appropriate way. In these guidelines, you should identify content that is appropriate to post without approval, content that requires approval prior to being posted, and inappropriate content. You also should clearly state the approval process for any content requiring approval.

Frequency of Posts

Post lifespans on Instagram are relatively long, compared to other social media platforms. It is still important to post regularly on the platform. The recommended frequency is once every other day, but start out posting every other week and slowly build up to every other day, as you become more comfortable with posting. If you have an event it is ok to post multiple photos, through out the event. A better strategy though is to wait to post the photos, and post them together. You can post up to 10 images to be swiped through in a slideshow format or you can download *Layout from Instagram: Collage* and put your photos into a collage to be posted.

Instagram Tips

Every department will have a different strategy when it comes to utilizing Instagram. Here are some tips that will help you gain more followers and keep your followers engaged, while getting your messages out to your community.

1. Post lively and visually appealing photos
2. Use relevant hashtags
3. Don't use too many hashtags, try to limit it to 5 or less
4. Post consistently, avoiding long gaps of inactivity
5. Tag relevant users
6. Mention relevant users
7. Interact with users' content
8. Post images of you interacting with your community
9. Express gratitude
10. Reply to questions on your posts in a timely manner

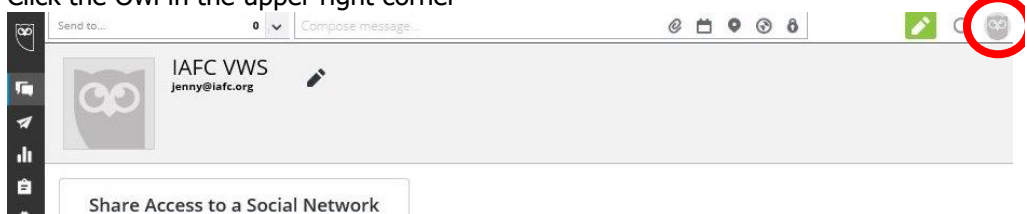
Scheduling Posts

Instagram does not allow you to schedule posts on the app, instead you must use a service like Hootsuite. Using this service for scheduling posts remains cumbersome and requires you to manually post it. We recommend using manual posting with Instagram. Hootsuite is a free social media management system that will be discussed further in Part 6 of this handbook.

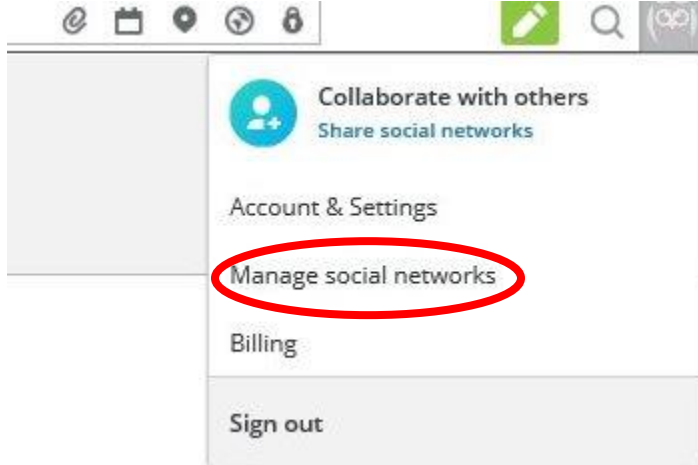
[To Table of Contents](#)

To add Instagram to Hootsuite:

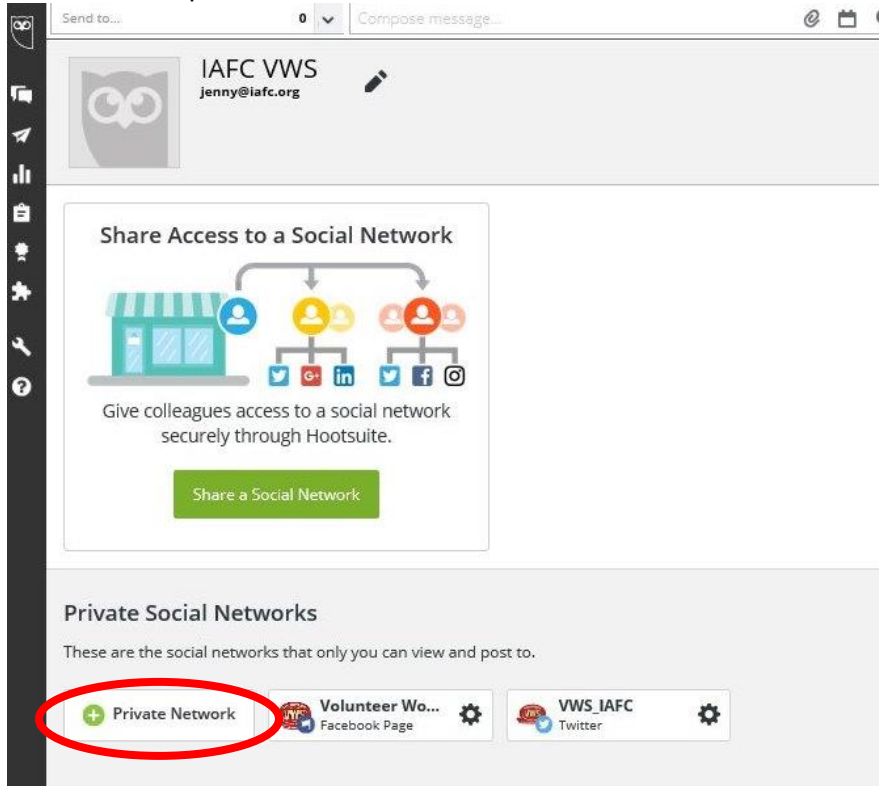
1. Log into www.Hootsuite.com
2. Click the Owl in the upper right corner



3. Click *Manage social networks* from the drop-down menu

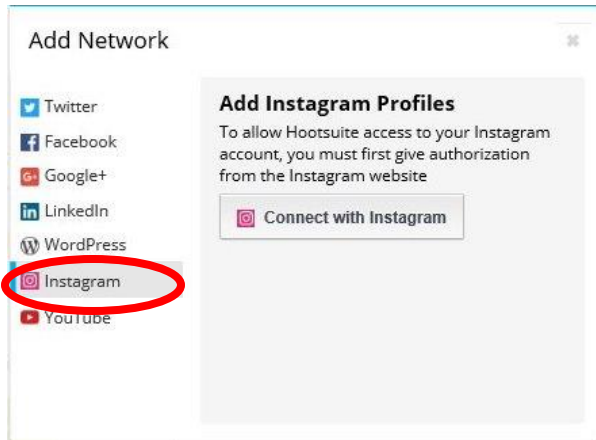



4. Click the add a private network button



5. Choose Instagram from the list

[To Table of Contents](#)




6. Click *Connect with Instagram*
7. Click *Setup publishing now*
8. Install the Hootsuite app onto your mobile device. The app is available for [Android](#) or [iPhone](#)
9. Open the Hootsuite app
10. Tap the 3 bars  in the upper left corner
11. Tap *Settings*
12. Tap *Notification Settings*
13. Toggle the dot to the right of your Instagram account to on. It will change from gray to green. Green means on.
14. Schedule your post
15. When it is time to post your post, you will receive a notification from the Hootsuite app
16. Go to the notification
17. Tap the notification
18. Tap *Open in Instagram*
19. Post as normal (The image will be uploaded automatically. The caption will be automatically copied, so you only need to hold and past the caption.

Insights

Instagram has a limited insights feature that you can access if you have a business account. You will not be able to see information on your followers until you have 100 followers, but you can see information on your account, posts, stories and promotions right away.

To view your insights:

1. Open the Instagram app
2. Go to your profile
3. Tap the insights icon  at the top of your profile.
4. This provides an overall view of how people are interacting with your profile, including account impressions, reach, website clicks, direction clicks, email clicks and profile views; and follower demographic information.
5. You can scroll down and select specific posts, stories, or promotions to view the insights on that post

You can also view specific insights by tapping on the post from your profile page or home page and tapping view insights.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Post Insights

The insights page of a specific post, promotion or story provides valuable information for your department, and should be used to guide future posts.

The page starts by showing you engagement with the post, including likes, comments and saves. The more engagements a post receives the more likely users that are not following you will see it.

Your next section on the page is actions. This is helpful because it shows you if your post generated any new follows or profile visits. This can help you tailor posts according to what has resulted in action and what has not resulted in action, allowing you to generate an improved and increased conversion rate.

The last section is labeled *Discovery*. This section is particularly insightful, as it shows you how users are finding your content. It starts by showing the percentage of your reach to users that are not following you. This number is important because it shows if your posts are going beyond your followers. If only your current followers are interested in your content you will not gain new followers.

The insights page also shows you a breakdown of how users found your post. This is vital information because it helps you refine your posts to ensure they are being seen by your followers and by non-followers. It can also help you tailor your hashtags to help reach new audiences by showing you what hashtags work and don't work. One thing to keep in mind when looking at statistics on hashtags is what is happening in the world. A hashtag can be successful based on various outside factors. Try to always use relevant and timely hashtags. Using trending hashtags can also help increase the visibility of your post.

Glossary

Album: The collection of posted images on your profile, also referred to as your feed or gallery.

Bio: This is a short description of your department that lets people know who your department is.

Conversion rate: The number of potential visitors performing the desired action. The desired action would be to follow your department. Your conversion rate would be the number of new follows over the number of profile visits. If you had a post that generated 100 profile visits and 10 follows, your conversion rate would be 10%. It is important when you discuss conversion rate with individuals to ensure the metrics are clearly defined. Different people will use different metrics, depending on their goals.

Direct Message: The act of sending a private message directly to a user.

DM: Abbreviation for direct message

Emoji: This is a small digital image or icon used to express an idea or emotion.

Feed: The collection of posted images on your profile, also referred to as your gallery or album.

Filter: A pre-created style that will change your photo in some way.

Follower: An individual who receives updates on their activity feed when the account they are following posts something.

Gallery: The collection of posted images on your profile, also referred to as your album or feed.

GIF: Is an acronym for Graphics Interchange Format. This is often an image with animation or a short 3 to 5 second video clip. They are often humorous and are used to express an idea, response or emotion. These are a good way to draw attention to a post.

[To Table of Contents](#)

Handle: Another term for username that identifies a specific account.

Hashtag: A word or phrase without spaces preceded by a hash or pound symbol (#) and used to identify a message to a specific topic or keyword. The selection of the hashtag should bring up similar or related posts. For instance, if you select the hashtag #SAFERGrant in a post you would bring up all of the posts from around the world that also contained #SAFERGrant. You can also search hashtags in the search bar.

Impressions: Impressions are the number of times a post from your Page is displayed. One individual may have multiple impressions on the same post. For example, if someone sees a Page update in their News Feed and then sees that same update when they go to the Page, it would count as 2 impressions.

Instagram Direct: The name of Instagram's direct messaging.

Like: An indication of liking or supporting a post.

Mentioning Users: When you mention a user in a caption or comment, Instagram will notify that user of the activity. You can mention a user in comments or captions by typing the @ and their username together without any spaces.

News feed: The homepage of Instagram that shows you what users that you follow have posted recently on Instagram.

Post: An image uploaded onto Instagram that may include a caption, tags and a location.

Reach: Reach is the number of people who received impressions of a Page post. Reach is typically less than impressions, since one person can count as multiple impressions. For example, if a person sees a Page update in their News Feed and then sees that same update when they go to the Page. That post's reach would show 1, but its impressions would show 2.

Tag: This ties an individual to the post, and creates a link to their profile. When you tag someone, they'll be notified and invited to include the post on their timeline. Also, if you or a friend tags someone in your post, the post could be visible to the audience you selected and friends of the tagged person.

Tagging: The act of identifying an Instagram user in a photo. You can tag people in a photo when you post the photo. The user will be notified by Instagram of the activity, when they are tagged.

Trending/Trend: A currently popular topic or hashtag.

Your activity feed: Accessed by clicking on the heart icon at the bottom of your screen next to your profile image. This shows you a list of anyone that has liked or commented on one of your posts, any mentions or tags of you by users, and when your photo is posted to the popular page.

Your following activity feed: This shows any actions done by the users you are following. This is accessed by clicking on the heart icon at the bottom of your screen next to your profile image then clicking on *Following* at the top of the screen.