HASHTAGS

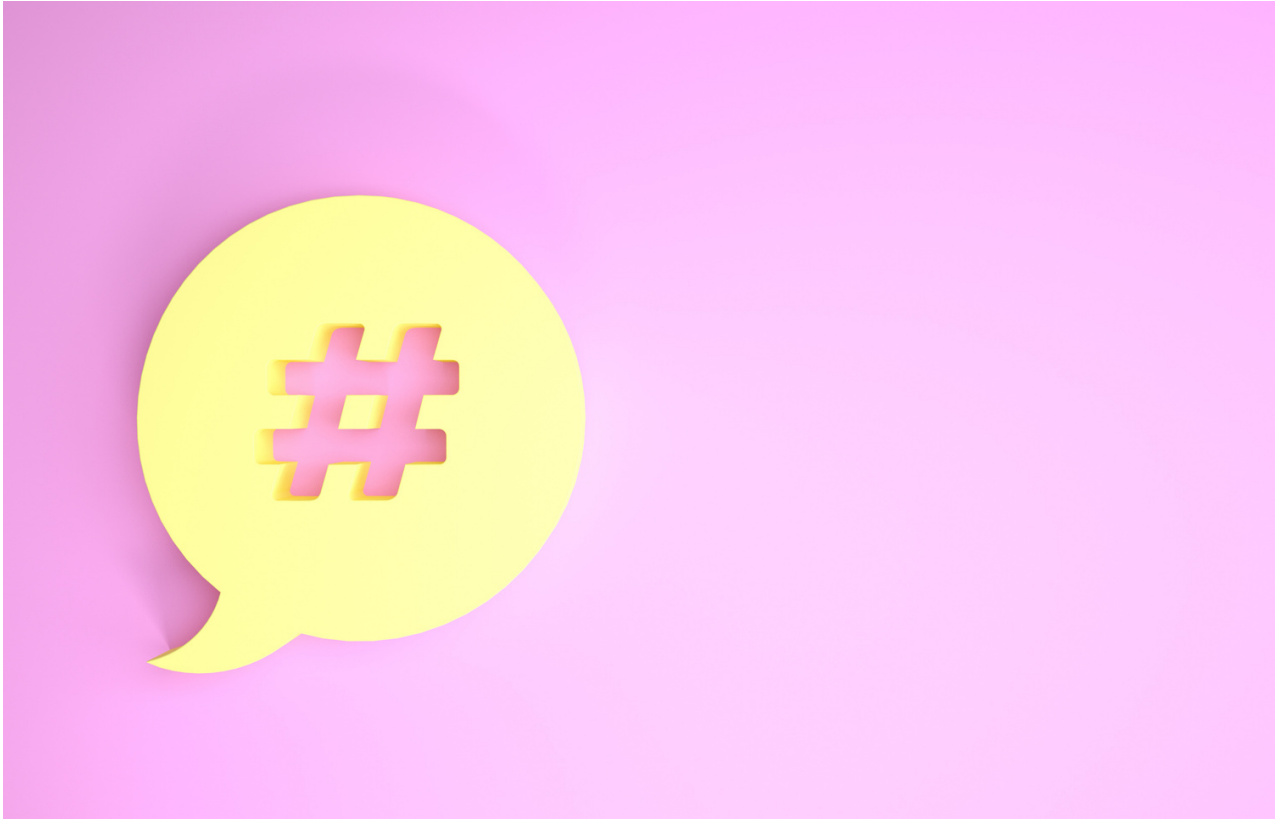the ultimate guide to hashtags for audience growth

Spending time on hashtag research is always a good idea. We've put together our ultimate guide on doing it the right way to help you gain more (real!) followers and fewer spammy bots

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now for an extender crash course in hashtags, because you know you want it!

Hashtags are still the number one tactic to get new people discovering your account. If you're able to back it up with gorge/one-of-a-kind content, they're likely to chuck you a follow. (#funfact – People find you for the imagery, but stay for the captions!)

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Should I post Instagram hashtags in comments or caption?
Instagram hashtags may be placed in the photo or video caption at the time you post. Or, hashtags may be added in a comment (or several comments) after posting.

There's no difference to their functionality, so it's your choice. I prefer adding hashtags in comments, as these are quickly buried once you get a few user comments. Starting in 2018, the caption is cut off after 2 short lines of text, so caption hashtags don't show at first glance either. However, 'grammers clicking either the "More" tag or the comment icon will see the full caption – including all the hashtags you placed there. If you've written an engaging caption with a call-to-action or question (please do!), people may get distracted by a raft of hashtags and forget to complete your desired action. This is why I recommend Instagram hashtags in comments rather than captions.

Get ready to raise the roof on your follower count!
You're working away posting gorgeous photos on Instagram and you're making sure your branding is on point, but how do you find Instagram hashtags to use? If you're already creating great shareable content, then congratulations you're already on track for success!

But there's one more piece to the Instagram puzzle – hashtags!
In order for others to find your corner of Instagram, hashtags have been designed to help create or allow you to be part of wider conversations online and make you more discoverable.

Hashtags are the road signs that direct people to your Instagram Profile.
Think of hashtags as your own Google keywords for people to discover you. Figuring out how to find Instagram hashtags to use is one of the biggest pain points and where many Instagram users get tripped up.

Never fear, I'm here to guide you through the maze of hashtags so you can select just the right ones and get your business visible to all the right people.

How many hashtags to use on Instagram?
Instagram allows for 30 hashtags to be used on each post and I highly recommend using all 30 hashtags. It might sound like a lot, but the more you use, the more eyeballs you get on your posts.

Tip: Research and categorise relevant hashtags, and copy/paste straight into Instagram when you are ready to post. Tick, job done!

Find Instagram Hashtags for Authentic Followers
To make sure you attract authentic followers and your ideal audience, you want to carefully choose your hashtags for your specific business and images. Be aware that some hashtags attract spammers and certain types of photos that you might not want to be associated with. The easiest way to avoid this is to check out
every hashtag you plan on using to make sure you're happy to be seen there.

What is a 'Spammy Hashtag?'
The big culprits that attract spammers are hashtags such as #instagood, #happy, #love and #followme to name a few. These hashtags should be avoided if you don't want to be spammed to death with a whole lot of smiley faces[a], or "follow me for free followers" comments. You can easily recognise the hashtags to avoid as they will have well over 100,000,000 posts on them. Checking how many photos have been posted on a specific hashtag not only helps you weed out the spammy ones, but also allows you to find those smaller to mid-range hashtags which will help you stand out. Do not create great content just to be killed by death by "shadow banning".

How to find out the density of hashtags?

To figure out the number of photos posted on a specific hashtag, simply type the word you'd like to use as a hashtag into the search bar on Instagram. Then check the number under the hashtag, as shown in the photo below. This number tells you how many photos using this hashtag are floating around Instagram right now.

What's a good size 'Hashtag Density'?

To attract people who are really interested in your posts, I recommend that you find Instagram hashtags that have under 500,000 posts on them (unless you have a bigger following or a REALLY engaged audience, then definitely try working with bigger hashtags).

And don't be shy of including some that are 20,000 or under. If you decide you want to use some larger hashtags, make sure you research them carefully first. You want to avoid anything that is overrun with photos offering a "million-dollar lifestyle overnight" or other spam.

Another reason to find Instagram hashtags sitting in the mid-range and smaller hashtags is visibility. When someone does a search on Instagram, the most popular photos sit in the Top Posts section. The rest of the photos reside in chronological order in Most Recent, as shown in the photo below.

Let's say you took a photo of the beach in Santorini. Your photo would have so much more of a chance of making it to the prominent position of Top 9, if you use the hashtag #santorinigreece, which has under 100,000 photos in it, rather than #beach.

By the way, don't be put off by the term 'popular photo'. The way Instagram works this out, is quite detailed and not necessarily the photo with the most likes and comments. Keep niching and you'll find yourself in the Top Post section in no time.

How to find Instagram Hashtags for your niche?

So now you know what to avoid and what you're looking for, let's go find some genuine people, to discover you and your business.

While there's a number of ways to research hashtags, the fastest and easiest way for you to do this, is to look on Instagram itself. To begin, tap on the little magnifying glass icon at the bottom of your Instagram screen, and type in a word or words, that relates to your business, and hit 'search'. Then up the top of your screen, select "Tags". This will show you your hashtag, along with a list of similar hashtags. You can find some appropriate hashtags by scrolling down that list of suggestions.

You can also take that search a step further, by selecting one of the hashtags in the list. You'll then see another set of hashtags suggested at the top of the screen.

Get specific!

Now let's get a bit more clever with those hashtags. Let's say you're a fashion stylist, you'd be very tempted to use the hashtag 'fashion'. But at over 350,000,000 hits on Instagram, you now know your photo will be seen for all of a split-second on the front page for #fashion. Instead, we can get strategic and niche down a bit according to your business and the photo you are posting.

Just under #fashion, you can see #fashionstylist at just over 2 million posts. Much better. You post your photo and you'll get lots of likes and people will know you're a fashion stylist. But we can still do better. Think about other keywords that you would use in your business. For example, you want to inspire your followers with some new season fashion, a good hashtag to use would be #winterstyle or #springstyle depending on where you live. At nearly 500,000 hits on Instagram for each of these hashtags, you're much more likely to be found there than on #fashion. At the same time, you're able to really hone in on what your customers are looking for. Hurray! Now you can build your list of hashtags, choosing ones that really describe your business and your offering.

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Find Instagram Hashtags for Feature Accounts

Another type of hashtag to look out for, is one started by someone else who curates photos and re-posts them on their Instagram page. The way this works is that you add their specific hashtag to your photo, and if the account likes your photo, they will repost it along with a link to your Instagram page.

These sorts of Instagram accounts usually have a huge following, so getting featured by them is kind of a big deal that opens you up to a whole new audience. Many people who are featured on a curated account find that their likes and follower count skyrockets as they're found by a larger audience.

Here's a list of some different types of accounts that you can try your hand at getting featured on by using their hashtag. Remember to look at the accounts first to make sure that your style of photo fits their aesthetic. This gives you a higher chance of being featured, and a higher chance of attracting others to look at what you're all about.

Zomato
Use the hashtag #zomato on any food or drink photos.
CoffeeShots
Use the hashtag #coffeeshots for photos of your coffee
Travel and Life
Use the hashtag #travelandlife on travel photography
The Glitter Guide
Use the hashtag #flashesofdelight on any pretty, pastel and feminine type photos
Huffington Post Weddings
Use the hashtag #HuffPostIDo to wedding photos
Wake Up and Make Up
Use the hashtag #wakeupandmakeup on photos featuring makeup

Need some more ideas?
Take a look at any of the Instagram accounts run by your favourite magazines or websites in your specific market. There are many who will feature photos that fit to their style. All the information on what hashtag to use will be in the bio section of their Instagram page. So there you have it. Your go-to-guide for using hashtags on Instagram, to attract authentic people who are looking for exactly what you have to offer. Use these suggestions and you'll be in hashtag heaven in no time, attracting more people to your Instagram account.