IN THIS CHAPTER

- Deciding what info to use in your profile
- Creating an effective bio
- Upgrading to a business profile
- Determining your privacy settings

Chapter 1
Setting Up Your Profile

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

After you install the Instagram app on your mobile device, you will need to set up your account with some personal information including your email and/or phone number and your birthdate. You'll also need to set up a password for your account. Then, the first major task you face is setting up your profile. Your profile should accurately represent you.

In this chapter, we show you how to set up the different components of your profile, including a username and name and a bio. We also explain how to set up a professional profile, in case the account you're creating is for a business or a brand. Finally, we end the chapter by showing you how to select your privacy settings.

Practicing Good Personal Profile Management

Instagram gives you the option of choosing between a personal or professional profile. We start by explaining how to set up a personal profile. Later in this chapter, we discuss how to upgrade to a professional profile — either as a business or a creator.



TIP

If you want both a personal and a business profile, you can't do that in one account. You have to set up two separate accounts — one with a personal profile and another with a business profile.

Your Instagram profile is not only your first impression to potential followers and new visitors but also your consistent message to your existing audience. Your profile should be recognizable as your style and representative of what you want people to see about you. Figure 1-1 shows you what a standard personal profile looks like on Instagram.

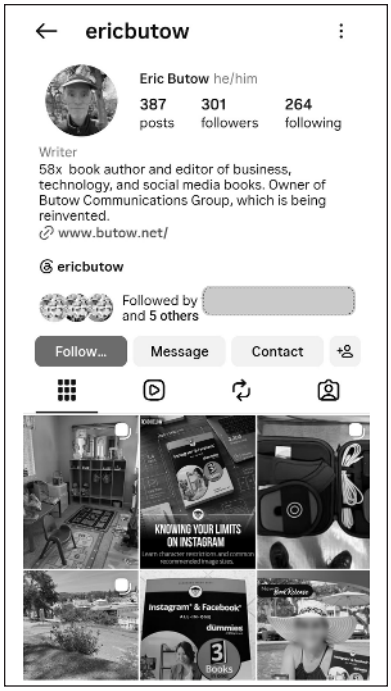


FIGURE 1-1: The Instagram profile consists of these standard components.

Instagram profiles are composed of the following six components: username, name, pronouns, profile photo, bio, and web address.

Choosing a username and name

Your username and name are two of the most important components of your Instagram profile because they help other users find you in search results. When users are looking for an account on Instagram, they type that name in the Search

field and the app looks at the username and name fields of accounts to determine if an account is relevant to that search query.


TIP

Instagram also scans the caption text within your posts and your profile bio description to see whether your content appears in a user's search results when looking at keyword searches. If you want to get even more eyeballs to your profile, start adding keywords to your posts' captions and see what good things happen. We explain how to add captions in Chapter 3.


REMEMBER

The username is the string of characters at the top of the profile. The name is the bold text beside the profile photo. If you want your account to be found by a keyword or phrase, be sure to include it in either the name or username for your account.

Choosing the best username

When you set up a new Instagram account, you're required to choose a username. Your Instagram username is how you're recognized on Instagram: All activity, from the content you post to how you engage with others, is associated with your username. The username is at the top of the profile (refer to Figure 1-1).

Your username is delineated with the at (@) symbol when referring to you as a user. The web address (technically known as the *URL*, short for *Uniform Resource Locator*) for your Instagram account is:

```
https://instagram.com/yourusername
```

When you interact on Instagram, the username appears as:

yourusername

An Instagram username is limited to 30 characters and must contain only letters, numbers, periods, and underscores. You can't include symbols or other punctuation marks as a part of your username.


TIP

Choose a username that represents you or your name, is recognizable, and, if possible, distinguishes what you do. Your username may be simply your name or nickname. If you're already established on other social media, such as TikTok, you may want to choose the same username on Instagram as you use on other sites, so that your current audience can easily find you.

During the registration portion of your Instagram account, you're prompted to select your username. A check mark indicates whether the username you selected is available. If someone is using the username you entered, you see an X in the username field. Keep selecting alternatives until you find an available username.


TIP

If the username you want to use is unavailable, you can use alternative options by adding periods or underscores to the username, by using abbreviations, or by adding another word.

If you're signing up for a new Instagram account using the website, Instagram populates an available username for you. You're welcome to use this suggested name, but we don't recommend it because it's generic and won't represent you or be nearly as creative as one you come up with yourself.

You can also make a slogan your username or add a word in front of your name to differentiate yourself from a generic name. For example, a clothing boutique in Vancouver, British Columbia, called Plenty has the word "Get" in front of their name, so their username is "GetPlenty."


TIP

Always check what your username looks like as one long word. If you want your username to be "christopher u," it will appear as "christopheru," which may be misread as "chris to pheru," "christophe ru," or some other version. Instead, include an underscore or a period to separate words, like "christopher_u."


TECHNICAL STUFF

There is little you can do to have an existing username transferred to your account if it's in use or was previously registered by another user. If another account is using your registered trademark as its username, visit `https://help.instagram.com/101826856646059` for information on how to file a claim of trademark violation.

After you select a username, all content linking to your profile is associated with the username's URL. If you want to change the username at some point, your URL also changes, and you need to update all backlinks and links to that profile accordingly. This is why it's best to choose the right username when setting up your profile.


WARNING

If you have a verified Instagram account, you can't change your username without losing your verified status, which means the blue check won't appear next to your new username.

If you want to change your username, follow these steps (see Figure 1-2):

1. **Go to your profile on Instagram on either your mobile device or your computer.**
2. **Tap or click Edit Profile.**
3. **In the Username field, type the new username.**
4. **Save your changes.**

   To do so, tap the check mark, Done, Save, or Submit button (depending on the device you're using).

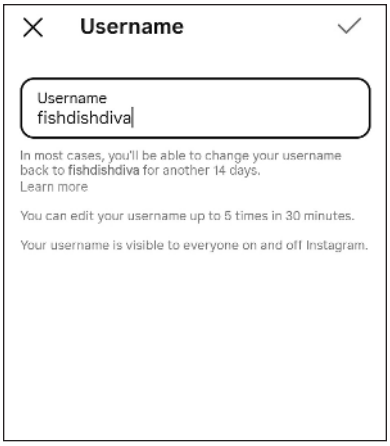


FIGURE 1-2: Editing your username on Instagram.

Choosing the best name

Your Instagram name is visible only when someone visits your profile directly or it appears in search results. The name appears in bold beside the profile photo (refer to Figure 1-1). You can use your actual name or a nickname as your name on Instagram.

Your profile performs better in searches and looks less amateurish if the name and username are different. Having a name that's different from your username provides double the opportunity for keywords and searchable criteria in the Instagram app. Power users on Instagram take the time to craft good username and name components.

Unlike your username, which is one word, your name should be in proper sentence structure with capital letters and spacing. Your name (like your username) is limited to 30 characters, including spaces.



WARNING

Avoid using a font generator to make your Instagram name look unique. These font generators allow you to create cursive fonts or block letters, but each letter is considered an emoji, not a character. Instagram doesn't consider those when "reading" the text of your name, so it diminishes your likelihood of appearing in search results.



TIP

You can be found in more searches on Instagram if you include a keyword or phrase in your name or username or both. If you don't put a defining keyword in your username, you should include one in your name field, in addition to your actual name.

The name on your profile is not tied to your URL or other defining aspects of Instagram, so you can change it without your username being affected and you can change it as often as you like. Consider adding or changing keywords, as necessary, to appeal to your target audience on Instagram.

If you want to change your name, do the following:

1. **Go to your Instagram profile, and tap or click Edit Profile.**
2. **In the Name field, type the new name.**
3. **Save your changes.**

   To do so, tap the check mark, Done, Save, or Submit button (depending on the device you're using).

Deciding on a profile photo

The *profile photo* on your account, as well as your username, is associated with all your activity. When you post anything to Instagram or engage with other users in any way, your profile photo is visible.

Your profile photo should represent you and be recognizable to others. If you actively use other social media platforms, you may want to use the same photograph for your Instagram profile as you already use on other platforms. That way, you create cohesion across your online media and assure your followers that they found the correct account when searching for you. The account of @jenns_trends in Figure 1-3 is a good example of having a profile photo that stands out, is easy to recognize, and represents her as a person.



FIGURE 1-3: A good profile photo represents you.



TIP

Profile photos on Instagram are cropped to a circle, so your photo should fit properly within that crop. Don't use a logo or an image that loses valuable content when cropped to a circle.

The profile photo on your profile page appears larger than anywhere else on Instagram. When interacting with others, the profile photo is a thumbnail (small) version. Choose an image that isn't too busy, overwhelming, or cluttered with text, which can make the image difficult to decipher as a thumbnail.

The best profile photos have a clear object of focus, contain a simple background, and are sized at least 550 × 550 pixels. The ideal image size is 1,080 × 1,080 pixels for a square image. (If you upload a photo that's too small, it may appear *pixelated*, which is what happens when a low-resolution image is enlarged too much and the individual square pixels become obvious, making the image blurry.)

Writing a Dazzling Bio

Your bio is a short description on your profile that tells people about you. This description is similar to a 30-second elevator pitch — it's how you tell new visitors what you're about and entice them to follow your account.

Most people only read your bio the first time they visit your profile. Your bio is the first impression you give to new viewers and should accurately convey the message you want to share.

Deciding what information to include

Before you start writing your bio, choose at least two or three key aspects of your life to highlight, such as the example shown in Figure 1-4. These should be traits that will connect emotionally, in some way, with those you want to attract.

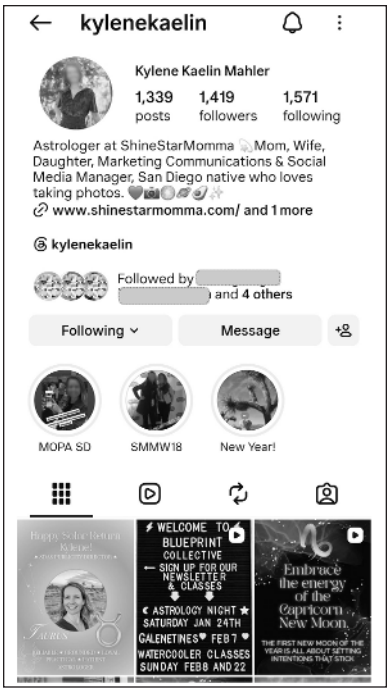


FIGURE 1-4: A well-written bio attracts more followers.

You need to determine the voice and style of your bio. If you're the next Amy Schumer, your Instagram bio should reflect that irreverent, hilarious style through words and relevant emojis. In contrast, if your identity is more straitlaced and serious, your bio shouldn't be silly and humorous.



REMEMBER

Even if your profile is meant to connect with friends and family, sharing your personality and purpose in the bio helps clarify that to people who may find you.

The Instagram bio is limited to 150 characters, including spaces. The bio is designed to be one single paragraph of information, but you can use formatting techniques to add spaces and line breaks.



TIP

Because Instagram was designed to be used on a mobile device, it's best to format your bio on a mobile device so that you retain the correct alignment.

Make use of emojis and symbols from your mobile device's keyboard to create visual appeal in your bio. To add emojis, open the emoji keyboard on your mobile device — just tap the smiley-face icon at the bottom of your keyboard.

Instagram is a visual platform, and having emojis in the bio helps yours stand out from other users'. You have many emojis to choose from. If the traditional funny face and cartoonish emojis don't translate to your style, use simple emoji symbols such as squares, diamonds, triangles, and arrows to add color and visual content without detracting from your professional style.

TO HASHTAG OR NOT TO HASHTAG

Generally, hashtags are not a good idea in Instagram bios. Although they are clickable, if someone clicks the hashtag in your bio, they'll leave your profile and explore the hashtag gallery results instead. Using a hashtag like #photographer sends visitors from your profile to millions of other posts using that hashtag. Using hashtags in your bio is not a viable way to get more followers or showcase your own content.

Include hashtags in your bio only if they're specific to you, your content, or your business. For example, if you recently got married and had a hashtag for your wedding, you can include that hashtag in your bio so that anyone tapping on it will find all the other content created at your wedding.

Formatting your bio

You can edit or create your bio by tapping the Edit Profile button in your Instagram profile. On the Edit Profile screen (see Figure 1-5), go to the Bio field and insert the text for your bio. Save any changes when you're finished.

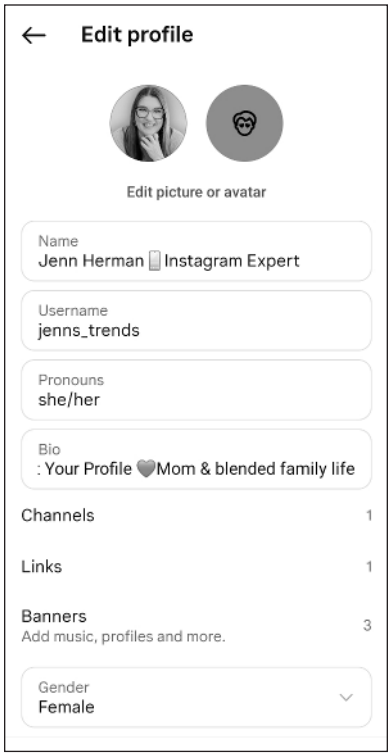


FIGURE 1-5: You can edit your Instagram profile sections from the Edit Profile screen.

Android users can format a bio completely in Instagram. If you want to include line breaks and spacing, tap the Return or Enter key (on the keyboard of your mobile device) at the end of the line. Make sure that you don't have an extra space after the final character on the line and that the last character on the line is not an emoji. If you have an extra space or an emoji as the final character, the space breaks you inserted with the Return or Enter key don't appear in your published text.

iOS users can format a bio in Instagram, but line breaks aren't retained. Instead, it's best to open the Notes app on your device and use it to craft your bio description, including all formatting. Then copy the bio, open Instagram again, select

Edit Profile, and paste the description in the Bio field. As with Android users, you must ensure that no extra space appears after the final character on the line and that the last character on the line is not an emoji.



TIP

You can edit and rewrite your bio as often as you want. We recommend reviewing your bio every six months to verify that the information is still accurate and relevant.

Considering layouts for your bio

Instagram has traditionally had the profile photo on the left side of the profile and the bio directly beneath it. As Instagram has added more features, like Reels and Story Highlights, the profile section has gotten longer and taken up more space. To alleviate this problem, Instagram began truncating the bios with a ". . . more" link as shown in Figure 1-6. Tapping the ". . . more" link opens the full bio.

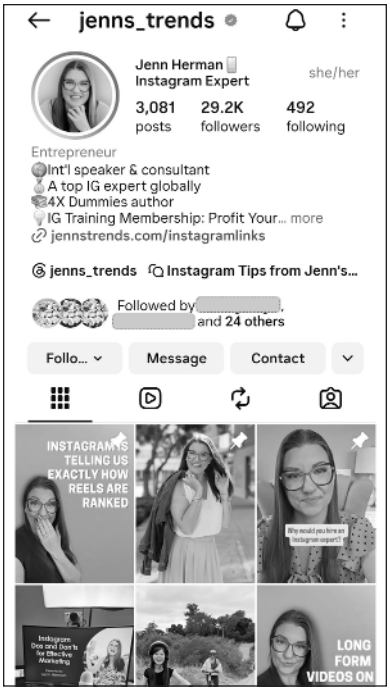


FIGURE 1-6: The "more" link in the bio appears just above the website link.

Adding a web address to your bio

Most people use web addresses in their bios when they're using their Instagram profiles for business purposes. But there may be occasions when you want to share a website link even on your personal profile.

Perhaps you want to send people to your YouTube videos, your personal gallery of photos on Flickr, or a reservation link for an upcoming party. In any of these situations, or others, you can include the URL for that destination in the link location in your bio.

The link in your bio is the most commonly used link location on Instagram and is commonly referred to as "link in bio" when using a call to action on your Instagram posts to send people to your link. You can't include clickable links in regular posts. If you have any reason to send people to a website link, you need to place that link here in the bio.

From the Edit Profile button on your Instagram profile, you have the option to list a URL link. Simply copy and paste or type the link address in this field.

On a personal profile, you don't get Instagram analytics regarding how many people clicked the link in your bio. If you want to use this feature for business and drive traffic for your business, you should upgrade to a business profile on Instagram (see the upcoming section, "Taking Advantage of a Professional Profile Upgrade").

Modifying Your Account Privacy Settings

When you set up a new Instagram account, it defaults to a public account, meaning that anyone on Instagram can find you and see your content. Many Instagram users are okay with this, but if you want to keep your account more private, you can.

When your account is private, other users can see your username, name, profile photo, and bio, but they can't see any of your posts unless they request to follow you and you approve them.

To edit your privacy settings, follow these steps (see Figure 1-7):

1. **Go to your Instagram profile and tap the three-line button in the upper-right corner.**
2. **Scroll down to the Account Privacy option and tap that.**
3. **Tap the toggle button to choose Private account.**
4. **Click the button to acknowledge changing to a private account.**

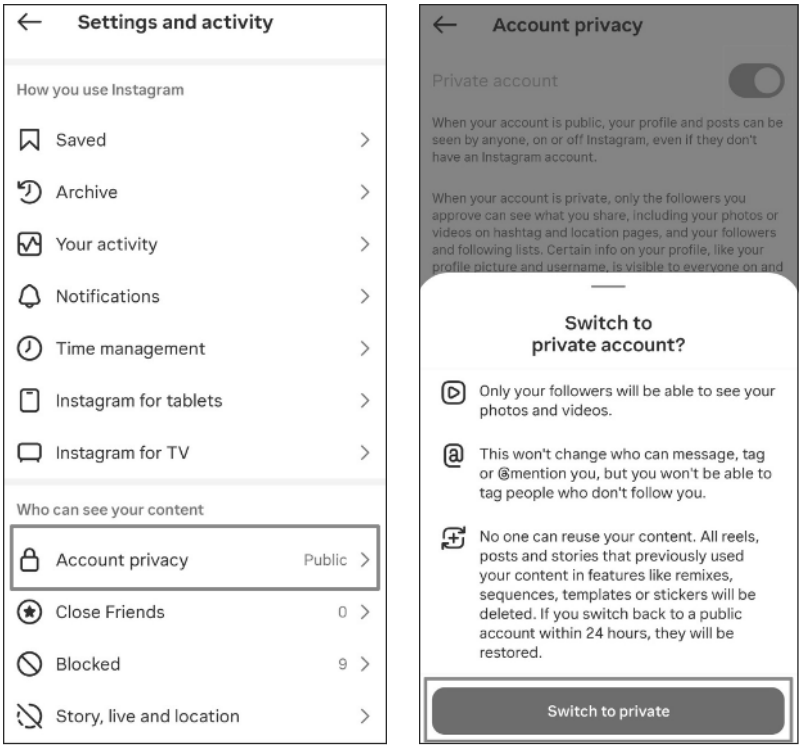


FIGURE 1-7: Making your account private.

When you make these changes, anyone who is currently following you doesn't see anything different on your profile, but anyone who is not currently following you can no longer see your account posts. If someone wants to follow you, they need to request to follow you.

Taking Advantage of a Professional Profile Upgrade

In late 2016, Instagram introduced business profiles and then added creator profiles in 2019. Both Business and Creator accounts are considered "professional" accounts. Now, brands have the capability to stand out from personal accounts and can benefit from a variety of features available only to professional profiles.

By upgrading to a professional profile on Instagram, you get features such as the following:

- Convenient contact buttons that make it easy for your customers to email you, call you, order food, book an appointment, reserve a table, or get directions to your location
- An industry listing (category) that informs visitors what you do as a business
- In-app analytics to best monitor what is and isn't working in your content strategy
- The ability to boost posts from your Instagram profile and run ads on Instagram
- The ability to manage your Instagram comments and engagement through your Facebook page

To upgrade to a business profile, do the following:

1. **Log in to Instagram on your mobile device and tap Edit Profile.**
2. **Scroll down and tap the Switch to Professional Account option (see Figure 1-8).**
3. **Follow the prompts to choose your category (Entrepreneur, Digital Creator, Photographer, Restaurant, etc.) and tap Switch to professional account.**
4. **Choose the type of professional account — Creator or Business — based on the options listed in the app.**
5. **You can sync your account to your Meta account for ads and better access or you can skip this and keep your professional account separate from your Facebook and Meta account.**

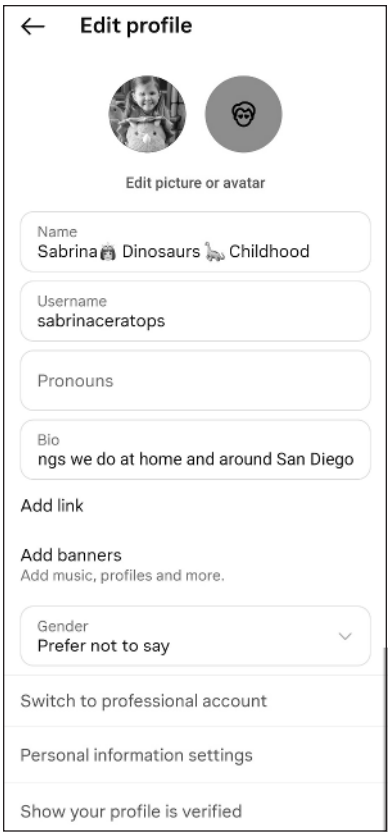


FIGURE 1-8: Upgrade to a business profile by selecting the Switch to Professional Account option.

Your Instagram account is now set up as a professional profile! After upgrading your account, your new profile appears to anyone visiting your profile.



REMEMBER

Even though you have these additional features as a professional profile, your profile characteristics, such as your username, name, bio, and URL, remain the same.