

How to Make Money on Instagram



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Instagram is an ATM machine in the palm of your hand – *if* you know how to use it correctly.

The app has been around since 2010, but is still wildly popular with users and entrepreneurs alike. Instagram overcame TikTok and other social media platforms in Q4 2021 to reclaim its position as the #1 most-downloaded app, according to data released by SensorTower, an app intelligence company.

“I grew my business to six figures in my first year, and I know it was because of how I leaned into Instagram as a sales tool,” says Monica Monfre Scantlebury, a course creation and audience growth strategist. “I used Instagram lives to sell my coaching program and made \$25,000 in revenue in less than 10 days with an audience of less than 10,000 followers. You don’t need a huge audience to make money on Instagram.”

Pro Tip

Focus on engagement. Engagement is more valuable than follower count or other vanity metrics.

With over one billion monthly active users – and over 62% of those users being under 35 years of age, according to research from Statista, a market data company – Instagram is a gold mine and will likely continue to be so for years to come. We asked three experts their tips for how to make money on Instagram and the different ways you can get started today.

Tips For Earning Money on Instagram

Making money on Instagram falls into one of three categories: Being paid by your followers, being sponsored by companies or brands, and being paid by Instagram itself.

No. 1: Have Your Followers Pay You Directly

If you want to be paid by followers, your focus should be on helping your followers understand why they need the thing that you sell. Why should they care, and why should they buy this now? Use every Instagram post as an opportunity to connect with your audience, and notice how many followers engage with you along the way.

Over the years, Instagram has rolled out tools to help followers purchase from or tip their favorite creators directly within the app. Some of the most recent updates include:

- **Instagram Shopping**, a feature that allows ecommerce companies to tag and promote their products from their Instagram shop directly in posts.
- **Badges and Stars**, features in which Instagram users can contribute in the moment when a creator is live. Think of badges and stars as ways to tip your favorite creators who have the

features enabled.

- **Instagram Subscriptions**, a Patreon-style feature that allows Instagram users to subscribe to creators directly from the app.

These features make it easier to streamline how to make money on Instagram. But you don't have to use them in order to get revenue flowing. Many people primarily use Instagram as a way to invite users to book an appointment with them or sign up for a workshop or service.

"One super easy way I recommend people get started making money on Instagram is to connect their Instagram account to an appointment-booking software," says Tivi Jones, a marketing communications consultant who has been building social media campaigns for companies since 2008.

"This allows people to book an appointment with you directly from the platform. Whether you charge for haircuts, salon services, or consulting, an action button gives people a direct way to reach you and pre-pay for your services." Popular appointment booking software options include Calendly, Acuity, and ScheduleOnce.

No. 2: Get Sponsorships, Paid Partnerships, and/or Brand Deals

You've probably seen posts before on Instagram that have the phrase "Paid partnership with _____" under someone's name. These are examples of sponsored posts, and sponsorships can come your way sooner than you think.

"Being an influencer is something that is available to all of us as 'micro influencers'," says Scantlebury. "Micro influencers are what brands are looking for these days. An engaged community of Instagram users who know you, like you, and trust you are key to being an influencer. The brand deals Instagram influencers negotiate outside of the app can be valued at four or even five figures."

Don't try to pull a fast one on companies or brands, though. Influencer marketing has gotten way more savvy in recent years, and businesses will do their due diligence on you before bringing you on for any sort of sponsorship.

"Micro influencers can definitely pitch themselves to brands, but the pitch has to be relevant," says Hallie Wilson, director of brand marketing at Darkroom Agency, an integrated growth marketing agency that connects brands and consumers through digital storytelling at scale. "High relative engagement rate is the number one thing I look for. An account needs to have proven that they publish compelling content consistently."

When exploring how to make money on Instagram via sponsored posts, it may make more sense to pursue long-term partnerships that include several posts or campaigns and fit in seamlessly with your personal brand. Expectations management with sponsors is key.

“Most people expect the influencer to make miracles with one sponsored post, when we all know that it takes several touches with a brand to make a sale,” says Manu Muraro, founder of Your Social Team, an Instagram training membership and template shop. “Long term partnerships work much better than one or two pieces of content.”

“It’s important to remember that the job of influencers is to send their audience to your brand channels, whether it’s your sales page, lead magnet or Instagram account. The influencer can’t perform miracles if your website is not optimized for mobile, your offer is not clear, your user experience lacks, or your Instagram account doesn’t have appealing content to make people want to follow.”

No. 3: Earn Bonuses From Instagram Themselves

Instagram (and its parent company, Meta platforms) wants to compete with TikTok. In an effort to tempt creators off of TikTok and onto Instagram, Meta unveiled its bonuses program last year. The \$1 billion fund incentivizes creators to develop Reels and short-form videos that attract lots of views and engagement. Reels are a new Instagram marketing strategy that is separate from Instagram posts, Instagram stories, and Instagram live videos.

If you’re curious about how to make money on Instagram using this approach, know that entertaining content will be the name of the game. Think of Instagram and Meta as talent scouts in this instance; they want to persuade the most innovative and effective creators on social media to make money on Instagram instead of other apps.

To unlock these features from Instagram, you have to complete their application and confirm that you meet the eligibility requirements. Your Instagram account has to be an Instagram business account to be eligible.

Takeaway

Decide which Instagram moneymaking approach makes sense for you, then focus your efforts on that one strategy to start.

How many Instagram followers do you need to make money?

Here's the good news: You probably need way fewer followers than you think to start making money. We often associate large audience numbers with influence, but these are often vanity metrics, and numbers can be artificially inflated using follower bots. To unlock the money on Instagram, focus on attracting engaged followers rather than more followers.

"A small, engaged audience can make you thousands of dollars," says Scantlebury. "I have clients with 500-600 followers who are making six figures. This is because they focus on engaging with *their* audience instead of creating viral content that will grow their followership, but not their true fandom."

Muraro agrees. "You can start making sales or monetizing your account even before getting to 1k followers. The problem is that most people create sales content for Instagram as if 100% of their audience saw 100% of their content, which we know couldn't be further from the truth."

In strategizing how to make money on Instagram without having a million followers, here is what our experts had to say:

It's not about how many followers you have, it's about audience and engagement. You could have one million followers who never comment, like, or buy anything from you. Work to keep your engagement high, because that gets both you and the brands you work with the highest return on investment.

Tivi Jones

Instagram is highly effective to generate leads and direct sales *when* you communicate your offers clearly and enough times that your audience can go through their decision-making process.

Manu Muraro

If I had to give a [follower] number, I would say shoot for at least 1,000. But start asking for the sale in your captions and stories now.

Monica Monfre Scantlebury

It's easy to feel wooed by follower counts. Know that, beneath the surface, accounts of all shapes, sizes, and niches are making money on Instagram in different ways. Your audience doesn't need to be huge to start the moneymaking process.

Takeaway

Connecting and engaging with a small group of followers can often be as lucrative or even more

lucrative than trying to build a huge, disinterested audience.

Tips to increase your followers and reach on Instagram

But what if you're starting from zero? Okay – in that case, you do need at least *some* followers. Users can't peek at your Instagram shop or be wooed by your Instagram stories until they're following you in the first place. If you're trying to grow your reach or followership on Instagram, two metrics that will help you measure your progress are saves and shares.

Saves refer to the number of users who saved or bookmarked your posts for later use using the bookmark icon. If your posts consistently get a lot of saves, it means your audience finds this content valuable and wants to refer back to it later; strive to create more posts that people love.

Shares refer to the number of users who share your post with someone else using, whether it be as a direct message or to their story, using the paper airplane icon. If your posts consistently get a lot of shares, it means your audience finds the post interesting and are excited to share your perspective with their own audiences. When you prioritize content that is shareworthy, your audience will grow.

“Fortunately, the basics – like getting featured on other people’s accounts, running ads, hashtags, contests, and direct outreach – still work,” says Jones. “Reels are also still really effective for reaching new audiences.”

Reels, Instagram’s TikTok-esque feature that launched in 2021, are the darling of Instagram marketing strategists at the moment because create great distribution opportunities. Many people think of Instagram as a photo-sharing app, but over the years the platform has morphed into more of a video app.

“Instagram Reels are still a great way to reach new people and grow your account,” says Scantlebury. “We are seeing an uptick in ‘talking head’ reels where you record yourself sharing 1 actionable tip or piece of advice while looking directly at the camera.”

Also challenge yourself to try out different types of Instagram posts, says Muraro. Different forms of content appeal to different Instagram followers’ learning styles and audiences.

“My advice is not to use one type of content to grow your reach and followers,” she says. “Instead of starting by posting Reels every day, which is a popular strategy, it’s best to have a multi-part strategy so you reach people who are attracted to different types of content.”

To make money on Instagram, you need initial reach. Here are some additional tips our experts noted when it comes to increasing your digital footprint:

Beyond Reels, using Instagram Lives are another powerful way to grow your account, create content that can be repurposed, and if you are looking to monetize, an excellent way to sell your services regardless of your account size.

Monica Monfre Scantlebury

Post a variety of post types, in order to perform better in the algorithm – I've been telling clients for years that Instagram's algorithm "likes" when you use as many features as possible. We post a lot of "collaborator" posts with guests on our show. This appears as one post, by two accounts on Instagram.

Tivi Jones

My suggested strategy to reach new people and grow your Instagram audience today includes one live room a week with three other people, three to four reels a week, and looking at your insights to see which content got you the most shares and follows. Then, reuse all that content.

Manu Muraro

How much do Instagram influencers make?

Instagram influencer incomes can often feel like a black box. Are influencers actually rich, or are they faking it? If their Instagram bio has the coveted blue check, does it really mean anything?

The numbers vary widely. What we do know, however, is that companies and brands are continuing to invest in sponsored posts and influencer marketing. Influencers were a \$13.8 billion industry in 2021, according to year-over-year research tracked by Statista, a market and consumer data company.

You might think that most or all of this money goes to big internet personalities who have millions of followers, but this isn't always the case. Companies have become increasingly interested in working with nano influencers: personalities who have under 10,000 followers, but a very engaged audience. Multiple sponsored posts with a smaller personal brand often get a better return on investment than a single sponsored post with a celebrity.

Even if you don't have a giant audience, you can make money on Instagram over time by optimizing your Instagram page, getting in front of your target audience, and engaging your Instagram followers.

Pro Tip

As influencer marketing becomes increasingly common, many companies are choosing instead to

sponsor nano influencers: Personalities that have less than 10,000 followers, but high levels of engagement.

3 Ways to Make Money on Instagram

Now let's talk about the nuts and bolts of how to make money on Instagram. What are some of the different strategies or tactics that actually earn money and leverage your business account? Here are three strategies you can start using today.

No. 1: Slide into DMs... to Have Sales Conversations

If you're just getting started, don't have an audience yet, and have a specific service you'd like to offer people, pitching your services directly in direct messages (DMs) can be an effective approach. Consider warming up a relationship first before you go in with your pitch.

"Watch and engage with the stories of people you follow," says Jones. "Why? Over time, when accounts don't engage with each other, they start showing up less and less in each others' feeds."

"Remind people that you follow them. When they return the favor and engage with your content, you'll instantly start showing up higher in their feed. As an added benefit, you will be more active on Instagram overall, and the algorithm prefers active, engaged users."

Another good strategy is to create a call to action in your post and invite people to message you for more information.

"I teach my clients to use polls in their stories to increase engagement, then teach live on the winning topic for 7-15 minutes with a clear call to action to have a sales conversation in the DMs," says Scantlebury.

No. 2: Do a Launch

In online business lingo, a launch refers to any period of time in which you're actively promoting a service, program, or product. A common feature of launches is to have the offer only be available for purchase during the selling window, or to have an additional incentive for purchasing during the launch. Launches help your followers overcome procrastination and buy now rather than later, whether it be for a service, a program, or a product from your Instagram shop.

"No matter what you sell, the best way to generate sales from Instagram are launches and campaigns," says Muraro. "Your audience has a chance to get enough information, and social proof in the form of testimonials, as well as enough reminders to get them to buy."

To you, a launch can feel overbearing. Remember that many users need to see a message several

times before it sticks, and not all users will see everything you post; you want to create awareness. Many small business owners use launches as their entire business model.

“There’s a lot of messaging around not being “salesy” on Instagram, or the dated concept that Instagram is only for awareness,” adds Muraro. “This is a limiting belief that keeps brands and entrepreneurs from promoting themselves effectively and clearly on Instagram.”

No. 3: Go After Sponsored Posts

If you know your audience would be a perfect fit for a certain product, service, or brand, don’t wait to have a million followers before you start. Brands *want* their products to be put in front of ideal users! To make money on Instagram, you can start pitching sponsored posts yourself today, or look at signing on with an influencer marketing agency that can go after these deals for you on your behalf.

“Brands have better audience measurement tools than you do,” notes Wilson. “They’ll be able to pull data on your audience, overall engagement, and even where your followers are geographically located. Never purchase followers; companies and brands have the technology to figure this out.”

“Also make your pitch unique when you pitch a company; think of it like a cover letter. Vague, templated messages won’t work; your pitch should be smart, strategic, and specific to that brand.” Wilson also recommends having a basic media kit with different partnership package options.

If you decide to pursue partnership opportunities yourself, be prepared to illustrate how you’ll use your platform and following to get your sponsors the best possible results. Gather data from past Instagram stories, posts, and overall metrics on your Instagram account to paint a compelling picture. Also see if there is an affiliate program that will let you promote affiliate links or promo codes.

“True social media influencing, especially on Instagram, starts with understanding that it’s about delivering content to particular audiences in order to get specific results,” says Jones. “It’s an influencer’s job to know the different tools on Instagram to deliver that content and best leverage the algorithm to make sure they stay top-of-mind for their followers.”

Takeaway

Strategies for making money on Instagram include sales conversation DMs, launches, and paid partnership opportunities. Choose one that resonates with you, or experiment with all three.

Instagram presents many opportunities to make money, but it’s also important to pace yourself and figure out what works best for you.

“What’s not discussed enough is the importance of considering your business and personal priorities,” says Muraro. “Trying to implement every strategy is very time consuming, and no strategy is more

important than great customer service, quality of product, and life-work balance. Tying your Instagram goals to sales instead of vanity metrics like followers and likes is a great way to decide how much time and budget should be spent on the platform.”

Take the time to decide on one strategy for Instagram, then start implementing it consistently. Eventually you’ll crack the code for your unique audience – and, with it, a shiny new stream of income.

Source: [How to Make Money on Instagram](#)