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# THE ULTIMATE INSTAGRAM HASHTAG GUIDE





Hey!

Thank you so much for buying this guide and investing in yourself and your business

I'm Kimba and I run Kimba Digital Ltd - a social media agency based in Bristol. I specialise in teaching people how to use Instagram for business. In my spare time I'm a semi-professional hula hooper.

I taught myself how to use Instagram to promote a hula hoop company that I'm sponsored by. It's fair to say that my skills did the trick as I out-sold the other sponsees by 10:1!

I've also used Instagram to grow my own service-based agency and taught 1,000s of small businesses how to get leads through Instagram too.

I get asked about hashtags all the time - it seems to be the one thing that really baffles people and that's why I created this guide.

Let's get started!  
Kimba ♥



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# 1. What are hashtags, how do they work and why do I need to use them on Instagram?

Hashtags are a mystery to most people. In the simplest of terms - they are a way of searching and organising posts.

Putting a # symbol in front of a word or phrase turns it into a link.

An example of how a hashtag works:



If you share a post about a banana and use [#banana](#) in the caption; anyone searching for [#banana](#) will be able to find your post.

Anyone reading the post can also click on [#banana](#) in your caption and be taken to every other post that contains that hashtag. (so they can find more bananas!)

This is how hashtags work. Someone interested in tattoos will search on Instagram for [#tattoos](#) to find posts about tattoos. Or if they like fishing they might use [#fishing](#) to find posts about fishing.

Searching for content using hashtags is a large part of how Instagram works which means that using hashtags well on Instagram will improve your chances of success.

Using the right hashtags could increase your reach, engagement and even following. Most importantly - using the right hashtags could attract potential customers to your content.

You can include up to 30 hashtags per post but there's no point just writing any old thing and sticking a hashtag in front of it! (which is something that a LOT of people do!)

[#forexample](#) [#haveyoueverseenwhenpeople](#) [#runloadsofwordstogether](#) [#afterahashtagsymbol](#) [#thinkingtheyarefunny](#) [#itiskindaannoying](#) [#itdoesnotmakeanysense](#) [#itisawasteofcaptionspace](#) [#andnobodyissearchingforthesehashtags](#)

It's important to understand how hashtags work to use them effectively - this guide is designed to teach you exactly that.



## 2. Relevant Hashtags

Let's talk about relevant hashtags!

Always use hashtags that relate to your image and caption. If you post a photo of a boat and your caption is about an epic journey it makes no sense to use [#twerking](#). (Even if some guru told you to or [#twerking](#) is trending)

There are two reasons.

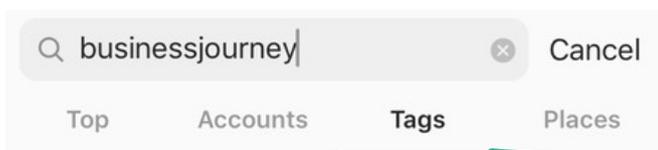
1. People use hashtags for searching – if they search for [#twerking](#) and your photo of a boat comes up they aren't going to follow you or interact. Your content simply isn't what they are looking for. (They wanted to see twerking!)
2. Instagram dislikes spammy content. If you are posting about one thing but using hashtags that aren't related, Instagram could downgrade your content in the feed or worse – for repeat offenders disable your account.

## 3. How do you find hashtags that are relevant and that are being used by people?

Consider your post is about an epic journey – let's say it's your business journey.

You can search on Instagram for hashtags by using the discovery tab. (The button on the bottom of your screen that looks like a magnifying glass.  )

Use the search function to look for words that match your image and/or caption and navigate to the 'tags' section (button at the top).

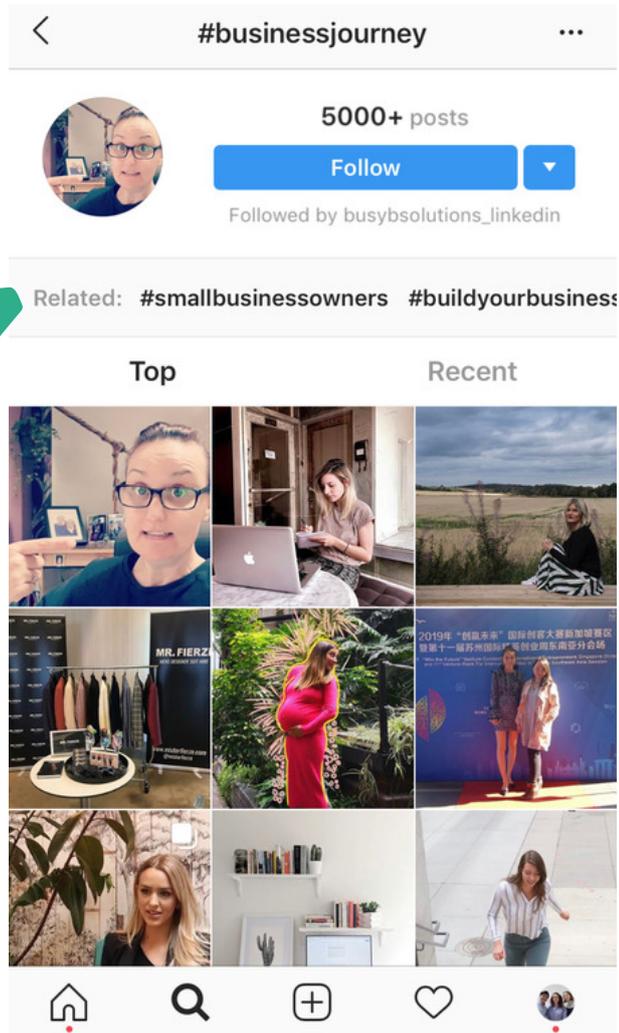


Tags section



Instagram will show you a list of hashtags that it thinks relate to your search. For some of them - if you click into the hashtag it will list other related hashtags across the top (above the images) which you can scroll through by swiping across.

Related Hashtags



#### 4. Hashtag bank

Make a note of any relevant hashtags for your post and keep them somewhere so you can use them again in the future. (This could be a notes file on your phone, a word document, a spreadsheet or your notebook - whichever works best for you)

You should also keep a list of any hashtags that you find that you could use in future posts. By doing this you'll start to build up a bank of hashtags you can use in different posts creating a hashtag bank.



## 5. Hashtag Categories

Here are some types of hashtags that you could search for to match with your post:

Location hashtags like #Bristol #Uk #Europe #gloucesterroad

Date hashtags #April #Wednesday #2019 #may2019

Descriptive hashtags #Boat #green #happy #cake #weddings #bridgetobe

Community hashtags #InstaBizWeek #MeetTheMaker #hincing

Trending topics (including TV shows) #Brexit #GBBO #Pancakeday

Event hashtags #SMW #worldcup #LondonMarathon

Industry hashtags #business #finance #accounting #photographer #blogger

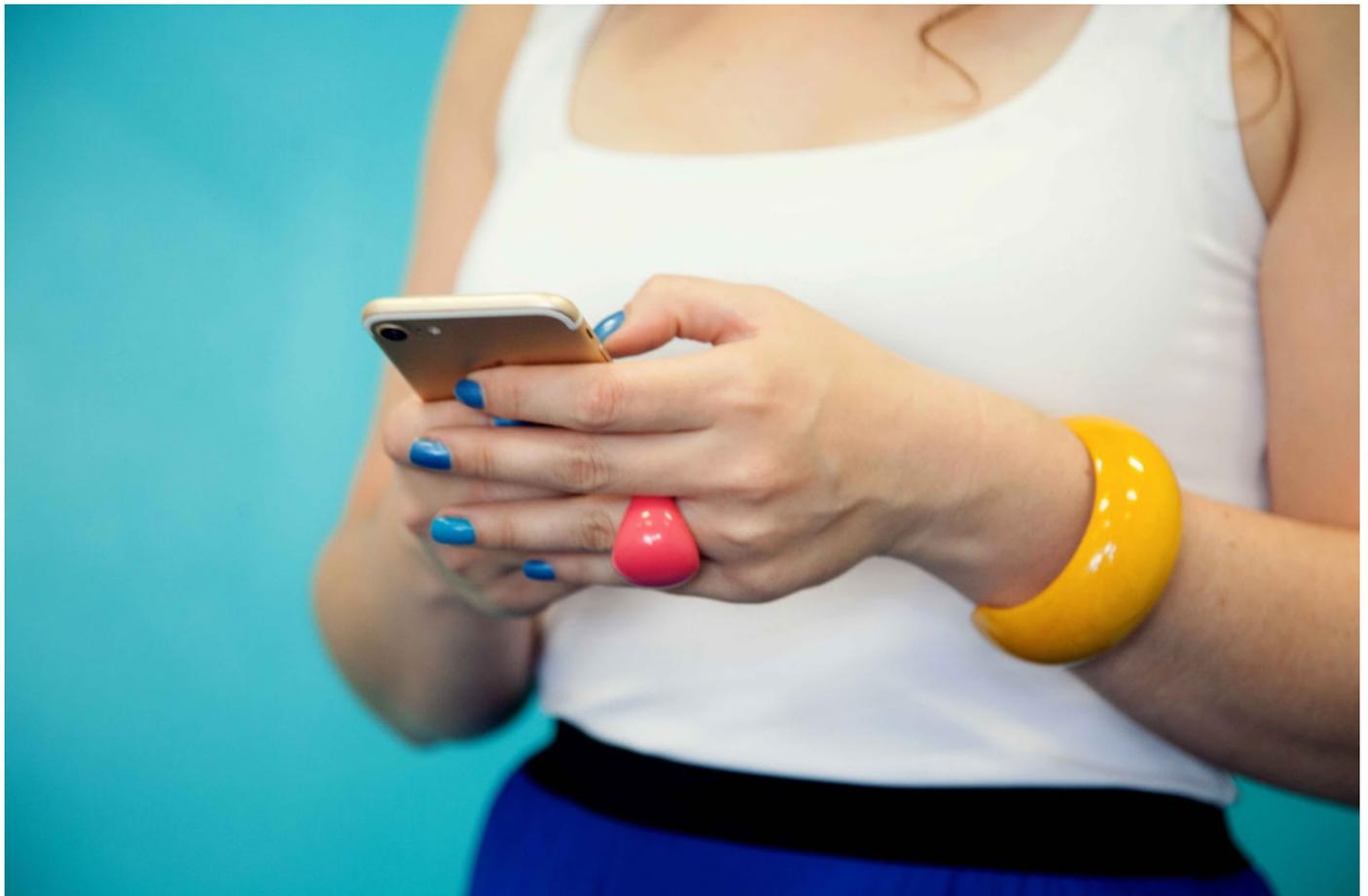
Branded hashtags #KimbaDigital #Entrepreneursgodmother

Seasonal hashtags #festivalseason #Christmas #halloween

Celebration days #StDavidsDay #WorldEarthDay #InternationalDayOfFriendship

For the most part - these hashtags are generic, used worldwide and used lots of times. The more a hashtag is used, the harder it is to be found among the noise.

You therefore want to look for hashtags that are a bit more niche. Particularly if you are looking for location specific customers!



## 6. Niche hashtags

The best way to find niche hashtags is to combine a couple of the categories above and search for them as a possible hashtag - for example:

Location + industry: #Bristolbusiness #londonphotographer #UKmodel

Date + event: #SMW19 #parisairshow2019 #worldcup2019

Location + description: #UKweddings #flowerslondon #bristolfood

There are also a few things that people often add before or after one of the above categories to make a new hashtag like:

Add 'insta' before anything = #instafood #instabusinesss #instagay #instafashion

Add 'life' or 'lifestyle' after anything = #boatlife #boatlifestyle #businesslife #businesslifestyle #entrepreneurlife #entrepreneurlifestyle #weddinglife #weddinglifestyle

Adding 'stagram' after anything = #foodstagram #catstagram #carstagram

Making a hashtag into a plural = #businesses #entrepreneurs #cakes

You can also look for even more niche hashtags by adding many of the categories together:

#weddingphotographer2019

#welshweddingphotographer

#instagramtraineruk

and so on and so on.

## 7. Mixing it up

Sometimes you can find new hashtags by changing the order of the hashtag around:

#ukmum #mumuk

#ukbusinesscoach #businesscoachuk

#lifestyleblogger #bloggerlifestyle

#photodog #dogphoto

**Remember - when you find a hashtag that could work with your posts add it to your hashtag bank to use later.**



## 8. Hashtag usage. (Does the number of times a hashtag has been used matter?)

When you search for a hashtag on Instagram, it shows how many times that hashtag has been used. Has it been used 500 times or 5 million times? This is important because you want to appear at the top of the search results.

Generally, the content with the most engagement (likes and comments) appears at the top of the search results. If you are a small brand that gets some engagement but not loads, you're more likely to appear at the top of the search results for less used hashtags.

[#Business](#), for example, is used millions of times across the planet, but [#Bristolbusiness](#) is much more local and used less often.

We recommend that in each post you use a combination of big (1 M +), medium (25k – 1 M), and small (< 25k) hashtags. This way you increase your chances of being found.

**Use the discovery tab to take some of the above ideas and search for hashtags that you can use in your posts.**

## 9. How can I see if my hashtags are effective?

For business accounts there is a 'view insights' button under every post. Click into the post to see how many times your content was found as a result of the hashtags you used.

Cancel	Insights
<b>Interactions</b> ⓘ	
7	
Actions taken from this post	
Profile visits	7
<b>Discovery</b> ⓘ	
312	
Accounts reached 14% weren't following you	
Follows	1
Reach	312
Impressions	455
From home	393
From hashtags	46
From profile	14
From other	2

Number of views from  
hashtags



This is where your post was seen the most. It got the most impressions from Home, Hashtags and Profile.



## 10. Hashtags in stories

Did you know that you can add hashtags to your stories? You can do this by either using the hashtag sticker (you can add one hashtag this way) or by using the text tool to add up to ten hashtags.

This can look a little messy though - so why not try making the text as small as possible and covering it with a sticker, gif, emoji, a drawing... you get the point. (Let's keep those stories looking swish and uncluttered!)

## 11. Top Tips

1. Use different hashtags depending on what you are posting about.
2. Use a combination of different sizes of hashtag.
3. Use hashtags that relate to your business and the person you are trying to attract. (Create content for your target market so that you can include hashtags about them.)
4. Use specific or niche hashtags.
5. You can use up to 30 hashtags in a post and up to 10 in a story - use them wisely.
6. Look for Instagram accounts in your industry that have high levels of engagement (comments and likes) - look at what hashtags they are using. They've already done the work for you - why reinvent the wheel?
7. Make sure that hashtags mean what you think they mean. Have a quick scroll through the posts for that hashtag to check before you use it.
8. Check each hashtag is being used before you add it to your post. Don't waste your hashtag space!
9. Avoid spammy hashtags like [#like4like](#) [#comment4comment](#) [#follow4follow](#) - you will just attract bots and spammy accounts who are interested in increasing their engagement. They don't care about your content at all.
10. Keep your posts tidy by separating your hashtags from your caption. You can do this by hitting return a few times or using three dots like this:

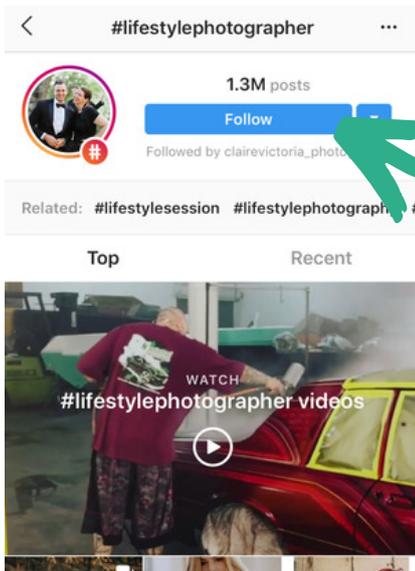
.  
.  
.

[#business](#) [#bristolbusiness](#)

Some people also like to put their hashtags in the first comment - but to get the most out of this make sure you do it immediately.



11. If you find a good hashtag where your ideal customer hangs out - follow it. That way your ideal client will start to appear in your feed and you can interact with them.



12. Look at the hashtags your customers and potential customers are using - add them to your hashtag bank!

13. If you're running a competition - create a hashtag that people can use to enter. It will make it easier for you to monitor entries. Make sure it isn't already being used first!

14. Test test test. Try not to get stuck using the same sets of hashtags over and over again. Trial hashtags and swap and change them.

15. Research hashtags regularly - add new ones to your hashtag bank and use new ones in your posts.

16. Don't use hashtags with too few uses. Aim for hashtags with a minimum of 1,000 uses. Ideally you should be using a good mix of hashtags between 1,000 and 25,000, some between 25,000 and 1 million and a couple over 1 million in each post.

17. Spaces and punctuation don't work in Instagram hashtags as they break the link - but you can try numbers and emojis 😊.

18. Hashtags in bios are now clickable. If you've found one or two perfect hashtags that you know your customers are searching for - consider adding them to your bio. Be careful not to add too many though - it can make your bio hard to read.

19. Plan your posts in advance so that you have time to match the right hashtags to your post. Posting in a rush may mean that you miss important hashtags.

20. If you are a product based business you might want to consider using a branded hashtag to track Instagram posts from your customers about your product. If you're a bigger brand - your customers may already be using one without your knowledge! One you've picked one add it to all of your marketing and encourage customers to use it.

21. Vary the hashtags you use in your stories to attract new people.



## 12. Common mistakes

1. Only using hashtags that relate to your industry - if you do this you're likely to attract other businesses in your industry rather than your ideal client.
2. Not researching hashtags before you use them. Sometimes hashtags don't mean what you think they do or can be interpreted differently by others. Some good examples:
  - Places with the same name: #Worcester is used in Worcester, Massachusetts and also in Worcester, Worcestershire.
  - Hashtags that can be read differently: #susanalbumparty can be read as Susan Album Party or Sus Anal Bum Party.
  - Phrases with multiple meanings: #EnglishSchool could mean a school in England, could mean an English owned school in another country or could be a school that just teaches English.
3. Only using massive hashtags. If the hashtags you are using have been used millions of times - your posts are likely to get lost amongst the other millions of posts.
4. Using the same hashtags in every post. This will limit who your posts reach and also could get you shadowbanned (see below)
5. Making up hashtags. Hopefully if you're reading this you will know by now that making up hashtags won't get you very far.
6. Not updating your hashtag bank. Many people do their hashtag research once and never again - new communities, ideas and brands pop up all the time and new hashtags are created. Regularly research for new hashtags to use.
7. Using too many or none. If you use over 30 hashtags - Instagram won't post your caption. If you don't use any hashtags you significantly reduce the amount of people who your post will reach.

## 13. Bonus Info - Shadow Ban

If a hashtag is shadowbanned then any content posted using that hashtag will be undiscoverable - which means it won't show up in a search. It will however still be shown to your followers.

As it won't be shown to anyone who doesn't follow you it will reduce the reach of your post.



## 13a. How do know which hashtags are being banned?

Sometimes Instagram bans particular hashtags if they are being misused by bots or for spammy content. To check if a hashtag has been banned - when you click on it the top posts section will have nothing in it.

Even the most innocent sounding hashtags can be banned, so it's important to be aware of them or your post will not be visible. You can usually tell if you have been shadow banned if you see a big reduction in likes and comments.

Accounts can also be shadow banned. In the same way as with a banned hashtag - it will mean that your content can only be seen by your followers - which will reduce your reach and engagement.

## 13b. How to reduce the risk of being shadowbanned

- Don't use the same hashtags in every post - Instagram sees this as spammy. Mix up your hashtags in each post for best effect.
- Don't use automation - if you complete actions too quickly (auto-liking, auto-messaging, auto-commenting, auto following) Instagram could shadow ban your account.
- Don't be spammy. If a number of other accounts report you to Instagram for spammy activity then Instagram may shadow ban you.

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### I hope you've found this guide useful!

For more tips and tricks follow us: [Instagram.com/KimbaDigital](https://www.instagram.com/KimbaDigital)

I offer 1:1 bespoke Instagram review sessions which are designed to give you actionable tips so that you can improve your Instagram results. You can find out about these sessions and our other services on our website. [KimbaDigital.com](https://www.kimbadigital.com)

Thanks so much

Kimba ♥



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# FREE FACEBOOK GROUP

If you'd like to give it a go but don't know where to begin we've got a FREE Facebook group called Get Leads From Instagram that you can join with lots of free video training and further tips and tricks:

[Facebook.com/groups/getleadsfrominstagram](https://www.facebook.com/groups/getleadsfrominstagram)

## ABOUT KIMBA

Kimba runs Kimba Digital – a social media agency based in Bristol.

When Instagram first appeared, Kimba was straight in there with her hula hooping hobby. She quickly became a micro-influencer and gained sponsorship from an American hula hoop company, outselling the other sponsees by 10:1.

Today, Kimba and her team help businesses to grow a targeted audience and generate sales on Instagram. Her #InstaBizWeek free 5 day challenge has helped more than 2,000 businesses so far.

What Kimba doesn't know about Instagram (and hula-hooping), isn't worth knowing.