

IDTA

**DANCE
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Hashtags: *The Magic Ingredient?*



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Tips and insights from Charlotte Howell, Creative Director of Virtual Owl Marketing

If you are on social media you will certainly have heard the term 'hashtags'. Many of us know what they are, but how can we use them effectively and are they the magic ingredient?

A hashtag is a relevant keyword or phrase that you add to your content with a # in front of it in order to attract your ideal audience and to enable your content to sit alongside similar posts. Used correctly they can be a powerful tool; increasing engagement, organising content and connecting users to content relevant to them.

The key word here is 'relevant'! Instagram allows you to use up to 30 hashtags per post but if you are using hashtags such as #coffeefortwo or #dreamholiday on a dance post you are not going to be attracting your ideal client/ follower.

The algorithm for hashtags can vary across the different platforms but there are some common denominators you can adopt to ensure you are showing up on the Explore page or in organic searches.

• Research

Do some research and see where your audience is - what hashtags are they searching? This can be done via organic search or alternatively you can use Hashtagify.me to help you find the best Twitter and Instagram hashtags for your profile. With this tool you can search any hashtag, see its popularity and identify recent trends. You can also type in your Twitter or Instagram caption and it will provide you with hashtag suggestions. Organise your hashtags into lists and save them somewhere ready for when you schedule or post.



• Hashtags in captions or comments?

You will see varying viewpoints on this, some will insist it doesn't make a difference. The only reason to put your hashtags in the comments is to make a post look less spammy. As it is only for aesthetics the suggestion would be to put your hashtags in the caption as recommended by Instagram. To make the caption look less spammy, add a dot and then press 'enter' after typing your caption. Add 3-5 dots and then your hashtags. This means the reader sees the caption and the hashtags are much further down thus not interfering with your copy.

• Don't go big.

Just because a hashtag has a large number of posts i.e. 1.2M it doesn't mean the reach will be. In fact it can actually do the opposite and bury your content. Aim for smaller more niche hashtags (10K-500K uses) for maximum exposure.

• Don't just use 'dance' hashtags

This doesn't mean go completely off topic but add varied hashtags such as a 'location' hashtag if relevant i.e. #wintergardensblackpool and sometimes a 'day' hashtag i.e. #sundayvibes. It provides a well- rounded hashtag strategy.

• It's a numbers game

Each platform has a recommended number of hashtags to use in a post

o **Twitter – no more than 2**

o **Facebook – 3 (only post more if relevant)**

o **Instagram – 3-5 (recommended by Instagram)**

Instagram announced that users should not use more than 3-5 hashtags per post. This has caused confusion as you can use up to 30 hashtags per post. However, this can look spammy and this is what Instagram are trying to improve. Everyone's account and audience is different therefore a different hashtag strategy would be needed for each account. Test and analyse. Try different number of hashtags out and use the stats to see which ones were most effective.

• Don't use banned hashtags.

This is relevant to Instagram. Banned hashtags are hashtags that Instagram users have reported because the posts using them go against Instagram guidelines. These hashtags do not show up on the Explore page therefore you are not going to reach new followers. You also run the risk of being shadow banned if you regularly use banned hashtags. For example did you know #costume, #killingit and #pushups are all banned hashtags. A quick google will give you a list of current banned hashtags as it does change regularly.

• Hashtag Challenges

Create your own hashtag challenge or join in with an existing one. The IDTA introduced #getfamilydancing during the first lockdown and encouraged people to share videos of themselves dancing at home. It raised the profile of the association, provided content and was lots of fun for those who took part.

• Change it up

Don't use the same hashtags on every post.

• Be part of a community

Engage with community hashtags. A community hashtag is an Instagram hashtag that connects like- minded users around a specific subject. For example, the IDTA's community hashtag is #getfamilydancing – initially introduced during lockdown the IDTA now uses it to connect dancers and dance schools around the world with the common goal of getting the whole family dancing from young to old.

• Branded campaign

Create your own hashtag for a campaign that people can use and raise brand awareness

• Hashtags in stories

You can use up to 10 hashtags in a story. Unfortunately Instagram stories are no longer featured on hashtag pages or shown to users who follow a hashtag. This means that hashtags won't necessarily help you get in front of a new audience but they do add context to your content.

• Optimise your bio

Don't forget you can use hashtags in your bio, it is another way to reach new followers.

• Don't look back

Hashtags are time sensitive. Don't add new hashtags to old posts, they won't work.

• Analyse

If you really want to analyse your hashtag strategy and understand what is working Planoly provide a comprehensive tool.

Last of all – don't rely on hashtags solely to attract your audience. It is just one of your ingredients. Produce good quality and engaging content, utilise all the tools available to you: stories, reels, posts, videos and optimise your bio and highlights to increase conversion. Understand and engage with your audience, find out when they are on social media and be strategic.

Useful links

www.planoly.com

www.hashtagify.me

For your chance to appear on the IDTA social media pages use #idtastories to share your stories of success, achievements or a proud moment.