



# Get Grammin'! How to Instagram Your Genealogy

**Elizabeth Swanay O'Neal**

<https://www.thefamilyheart.com>

[https://www.instagram.com/elizabeth\\_oneal](https://www.instagram.com/elizabeth_oneal)

*Instagram is a visual social media tool that allows users to share photos, videos, gifs, inspirational quotes, and more. Instagram is also a favorite platform among the younger generation, making it a vital tool for genealogists of all ages to learn and embrace. As you get 'grammin' with Instagram, you will quickly see the benefits of sharing your family photos, your genealogy research, and your passion for family history with others. Learn how to get up and running with Instagram so you can "Insta" your family history!*

## What is Instagram and Why Should You Use It?

**Instagram** is a photo and video sharing app for smartphones and desktop computers where users can share with all of their followers or with a select group of friends. They can also view, comment, and like posts shared by their friends on Instagram.

Family historians are sharing their genealogy on Instagram everyday. Why?

- Instagram is free to use and easy to set up.
- Creating content can be quick.
- Easy to interact with friends and followers.
- Quickly share time-sensitive information.

Sharing your family history online is the *best* way to find potential cousins. It is also a lot of fun to "Insta" your family history to connect with other genealogists!

## Getting Started with Instagram

Create an Instagram account on your smartphone using the app:

- Download the Instagram app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.
- Once the app is installed, tap the icon to open it.
- Tap Sign Up With Email or Phone Number (Android) or Create New Account (iPhone), then enter your email address or phone number (which will require a

confirmation code) and tap Next. You can also tap Log in with Facebook to sign up with your Facebook account.

- If you register with your email or phone number, create a username and password, fill out your profile info and then tap Done. If you register with Facebook, you will be prompted to log into your Facebook account if you are currently logged out.

Create an Instagram account from your computer:

- Go to [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com).
- Click Sign Up, then enter your email address, create a username and password, or click Log in with Facebook to sign up with your Facebook account.
- If you register with an email, click Sign up. If you register with Facebook, you will be prompted to log into your Facebook account if you are currently logged out.

NOTE: If you sign up with email, make sure you enter your email address correctly and choose an email address that only you can access. If you log out and forget your password, you will need to be able to access your email to get back into your Instagram account.

## Public vs Private Accounts

Your Instagram account is public by default (if you are over 16), which means that anyone can see your profile and posts. However, you can choose to make your account private so that only your approved followers can see what you share.

To set your account to private from the Instagram app:

- Go to your profile; tap the “hamburger menu” (top right).
- Tap the “cogwheel” icon for Settings.
- Tap Privacy
- Toggle the Private Account button to make your account private.



Things to remember about private accounts:

- Once you make your account private, people will need to send you a follow request to see your posts, your followers list, and who you are following. Follow requests appear in the Activity section where you can approve or ignore them.
- If a user was following you before you set your account to private, and you no longer want them to see your posts, you can block them.
- Users can direct message a photo or video to your private account even if they are not following you.

Setting your account to private means you could miss interactions and collaboration opportunities with other genealogists and potential cousins. If you have photos that you want to keep private, and others that you want to share publicly, consider creating a separate private account for family and friends, and a public account for sharing family history.

## Sharing Content

### **Feed**

- Your Instagram Feed is the first thing you see when you open the app. It is the primary place where you connect with others who share your interests.
- When you open Instagram or refresh your Feed, the photos and videos Instagram thinks you care about most will appear towards the top of your Feed. In addition to seeing content from people and hashtags you follow, you may also see suggested accounts that are relevant to your interests.
- Posts in your “grid” appear in the Feed of your followers and other Instagram users.
- Feed Post Image Sizes:
  - Square –1080 x 1080 pixels, or a 1:1 ratio.
  - Vertical (portrait) –1080 x 1350 pixels, or a maximum 4:5 ratio.
  - Horizontal (landscape) – 1080 x 566 pixels, or up to a 16:9 ratio.
- Content posted to your Feed does not disappear unless you delete it.

### **Stories**

- Stories appear in a bar across the top of your feed. When there is something new to see, the profile photo will have a colorful ring around it.
- Add interactive elements, such as polls, surveys, questions, countdowns, etc. to your content. This helps you share time-sensitive content and build a relationship with your followers in a creative way.
- Size: 1920 x 1080 (9:16 ratio).
- Stories disappear after 24 hours, but can be archived as Highlights.

### **Reels**

- Short-form, vertical videos, up to 60 seconds long.
- Record and edit video and photo clips set to music.
- Share Reels to your Feed, Stories, and the Reels Explore page.
- Users can see Reels from all accounts on the Reels tab.

## **Live Video**

- Broadcast to connect with your followers in real time.
- Limited to 60 minutes of uninterrupted streaming.
- Once a live broadcast has ended, you can share a replay from your Live Archive.

## Using Hashtags

- Hashtags are a tool that provides context about your post and supports delivering your post to others who are interested in a particular topic.
- Current Instagram guidelines recommend adding only 3-5 hashtags per post.
- Hashtags should always be relevant to the content.
- You can follow hashtags, as well as other users. Content marked with the hashtags you follow – even if you do not follow the poster – will appear in your Feed.
- Popular genealogy hashtags include: #adoption #ancestry #archives #cemetery #dna #family #familyhistory #familystory #familytree #genealogy #genealogyresearch #heritage #history #househistory #memoir #nostalgia #oldphotos #photos #rememberwhen #research #storytelling #tbt (Throwback Thursday) #vintage.

## Content Sparks

- Old family photos and the stories behind them.
- Photos or scans of the documents you are researching, along with information about the archives where you found them.
- Photos of family heirlooms and ephemera.
- “This Day in History” - share your experience or that of an ancestor.
- Recipes and family traditions.
- Photos from trips to an ancestral homeland.
- Historical photos with the insight you have into that point in history.
- “Today I’m researching \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Current family moments – it doesn’t always have to be about the past!
- Ask for help, such as identifying an ancestor, a location, or a research problem.
- Participate in “challenges” for genealogy, such as #GenealogyPhotoADay.

## Getting the Most Out of Instagram

- **Complete your profile.** Your followers want to know who you are and how to contact you. Your profile includes a clickable link, so if you have a blog or website, be sure to link to it.

- **Be authentic.** Post original content. Sharing the same, old stock photos and memes is boring. Whenever possible, share photos you have taken yourself or photos relevant to your family history stories.
- **Be creative.** Instagram offers basic editing tools and filters, but there are many other photo-editing apps available. Use templates and add stickers and text to make your content unique.
- **Engage with Followers.** Engaging with followers shows that you value them. Be sure to answer comments and comment on the content of users you follow.
- **Be Consistent.** The best way to get – and keep – followers is to post consistently. That said, it is better to post one or two great photos a day with relevant hashtags than ten mediocre photos with weak hashtags.

## Tools for Creating Engaging Content

**Layout** – Easily combine multiple photos into a single image. Choose from a range of custom layouts, drag and drop photos to rearrange them, pinch to zoom or pull the sides of each photo to adjust its size and get your layout just right. For iOS or Android (free).

**Unfold** – An app for creating posts and stories. Free templates available. <https://unfold.com>

**Adobe Creative Cloud Express** – Create graphics on the web and mobile. A free starter plan with 2 GB storage is available. For iOS and Android. <https://www.adobe.com/express>

**Canva** – Create images and graphics from 250,000+ templates on the web and mobile. Free plan includes 5 GB storage. Apps for iOS and Android. <https://www.canva.com>

## Scheduling Tools for Instagram

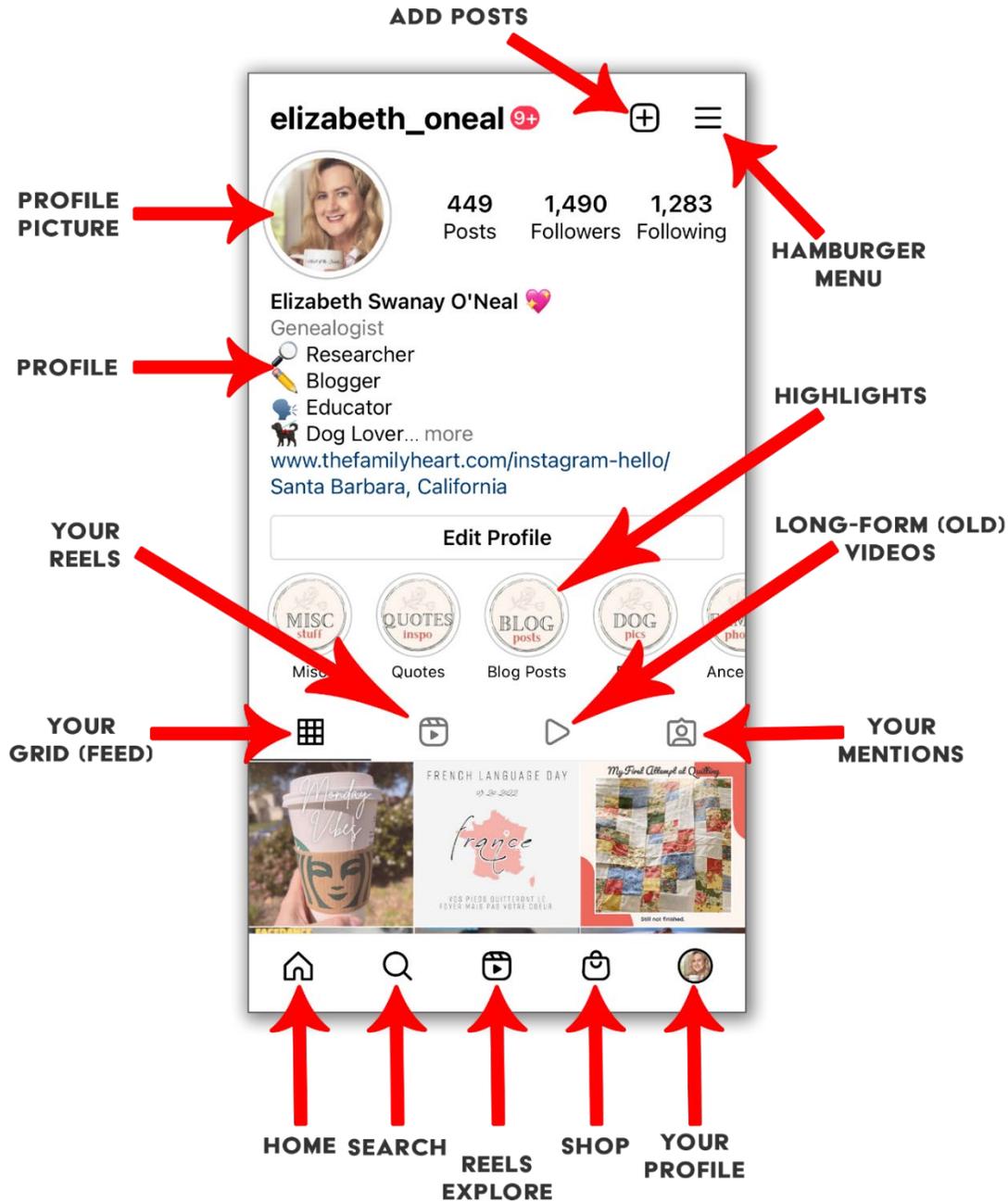
**Later** – Free plan includes 10 posts per month (decreasing from 30 as of 31 March 2022). Mobile app for iOS and Android. <https://later.com>

**Buffer** – The free plan includes 3 social channels and 10 scheduled posts per channel for one user. Mobile app for iOS and Android. <https://buffer.com>

**Hootsuite** – Limited free plan for 1 user, 2 social channels, and 5 scheduled posts per month. Mobile apps for iOS and Android. <https://hootsuite.com>

**Tailwind** – \$9.99/month paid annually. Free trial for Instagram 30 posts. Mobile app for iOS and Android. Browser extensions for Chrome, Safari, Firefox. <https://www.tailwindapp.com>

# ANATOMY OF A PROFILE



Instagram Help Center - <https://help.instagram.com>