A parent and guardian's **guide** to Instagram

In collaboration with:

MEDIAMONITORING AFRICA

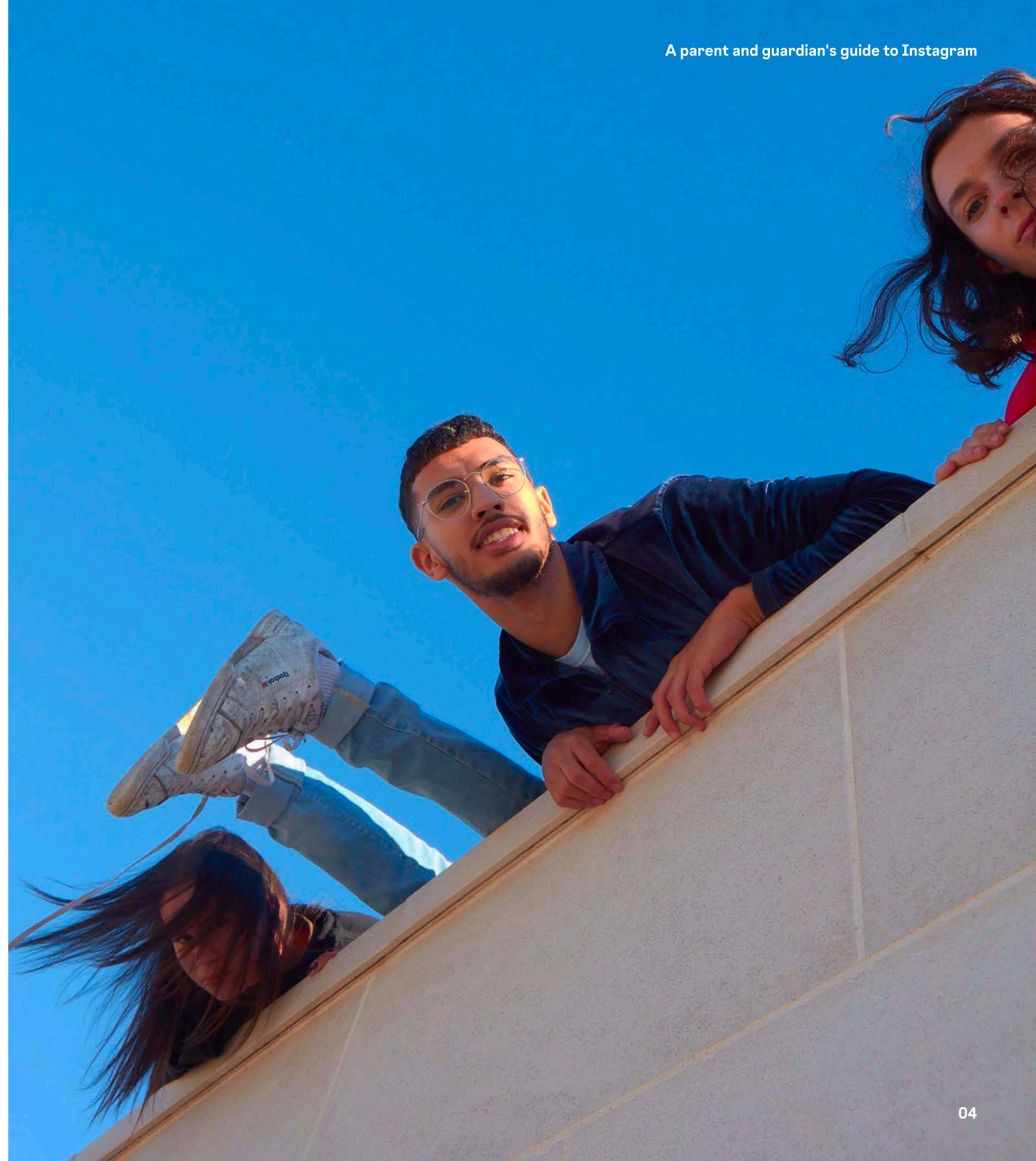# Table of contents

01

Introduction

A message from
Media Monitoring Africa

❝ Over the past decade, Media Monitoring Africa (MMA), guided by the Ubuntu principle that "it takes a village to raise a child," has worked with schools, parents, digital platforms, and policymakers to empower children to harness technology- not only to develop their talents but also to participate meaningfully in society while prioritising their digital safety. The launch of this guide in partnership with Meta is another step in upholding the best interests of the child by supporting parents and guardians to foster open and informed conversations with their children about Instagram usage, digital rights and responsibilities. As primary caregivers, navigating the complexities of a rapidly evolving digital world, this guide offers practical tools and safety features to help families create a balanced digital environment that nurtures both children's agency and online participation while safeguarding their wellbeing online.

MEDIAMONITORING
AFRICA

02

Instagram FAQs

What is Instagram?

Instagram is a photo, video and message-sharing app, where people can explore their interests, be creative, connect with friends and family and be inspired. Instagram is especially popular among teens. They use it to capture special moments, express themselves, relate to one another and carry on conversations in a fun way through photos, videos, filters, comments, captions, emojis and hashtags. Whether it's through feed, direct messages (DMs), stories, reels or live video, Instagram helps bring people closer to the people and things that you love.

Instagram is available on Apple iOS, Android devices and the web.

What are the rules?

We have Community Guidelines on Instagram, which serve as our rules. Everyone who uses Instagram must adhere to these guidelines, as they are designed to create a safe and open environment for all. This includes rules against nudity and hate speech. Failure to follow these guidelines may lead to deleted content, disabled accounts or other restrictions.

At what age can you join Instagram?

We require individuals to be at least 13 years old to sign up for Instagram and ask for their age during the account creation process. While many people are honest about their age, we are aware that some younger individuals may provide false dates of birth. Determining a person's actual age online presents a widespread challenge within the industry. Many teenagers may not always have the necessary documents for straightforward age verification. In response to this issue, we are investing in age-verification tools that are both accessible and privacy-focused to ensure that teenagers using Instagram have age-appropriate experiences. Additionally, we are leveraging artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies to enhance our understanding of people's age.

You can also work with your teen to ensure that they have their accurate age listed. To do this, have your teen visit their profile, tap "edit profile" and then "personal information settings" and make sure that their year of birth is listed correctly.
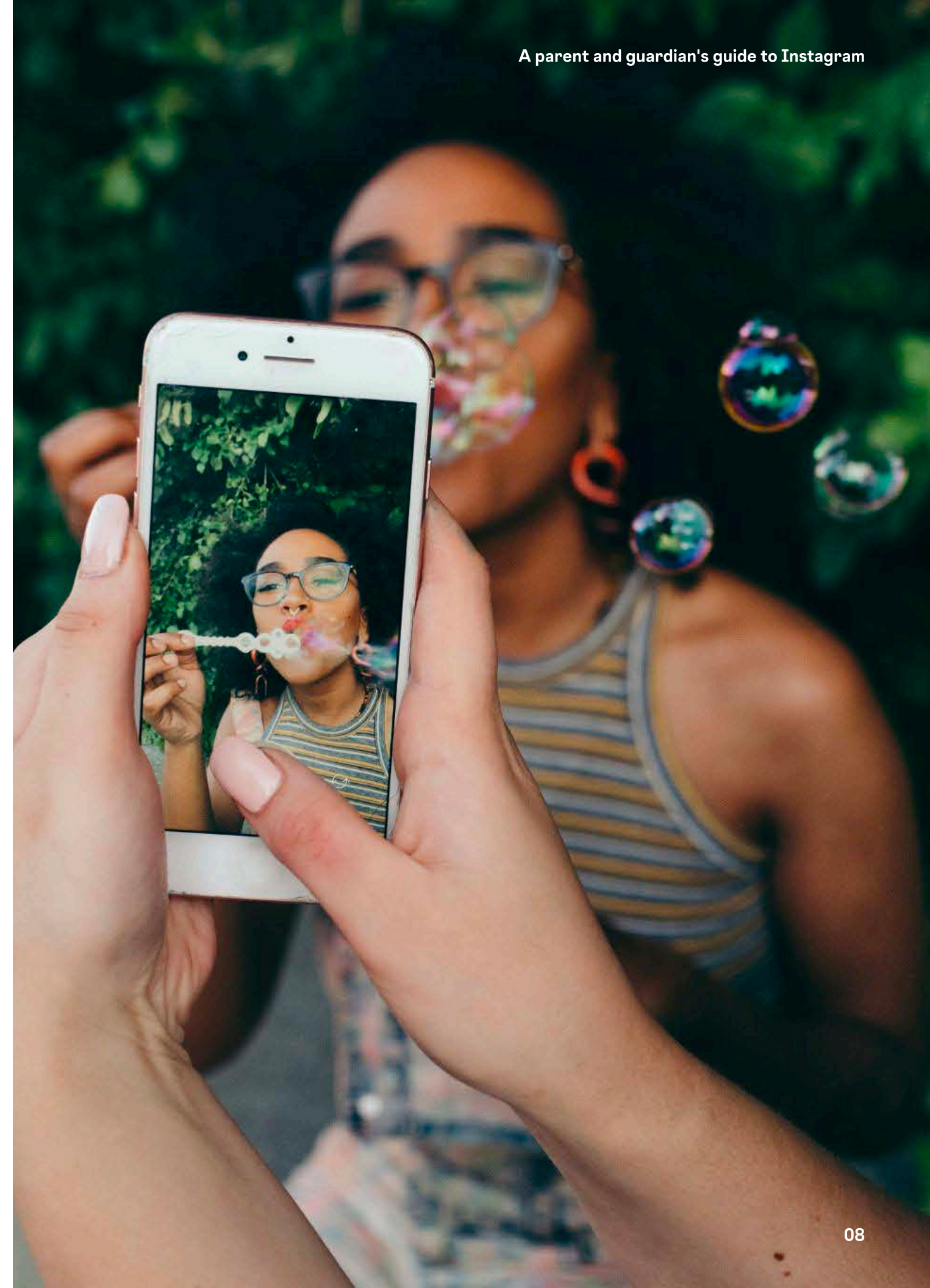
03

Instagram
Teen Accounts

Built-in protection for teens, peace of mind for parents

Designed with your teen's safety in mind, Teen Accounts are a new, protected experience for teens, guided by parents. Teens on Instagram will automatically be placed in Teen Accounts, which have built-in limits on who can contact them and the content they see, as well as more ways to connect and explore their interests.

Teen Account settings

Teens under 16 who attempt to change their account's default settings to less protective options will need to request permission from their parents. If your teen already has a supervised account, you'll be notified of their request and can approve or deny it. Teens under 16 without supervision in place will need to set up supervision in order to make a request.

Once supervision has been established, you can approve or deny your teens' requests or allow them to manage their settings themselves. In the near future, you will also have the ability to directly change the settings to more protective options. You'll also have access to information and tools to monitor and manage your teen's account. For more information and helpful tutorials on navigating Teen Accounts, please click here.

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# Family Centre and parental supervision tools

Family Centre and parental supervision tools

We want parents and teens to have ways to navigate social media together. That's why we have launched parental supervision tools. Teens under 16 without supervision in place will need to set up supervision in order to request to make their default settings less strict.

Once a parent and teen have agreed to set up supervision, the parent can help supervise their teen's experience on Instagram. Supervision tools allow parents to:

- View how much time your teen spends on Instagram

- Manage screen time with time limits and sleep mode

- Receive insights about reported accounts and content that your teen chooses to share

- View and receive updates on what accounts your teen follows, the accounts that follow your teen and who your teen has blocked

- For teens under 16, see certain settings and approve or deny requested changes to these settings

- For teens aged 16-17, see certain settings and be notified if a change is made to these settings

- Get insights into who your teen is messaging
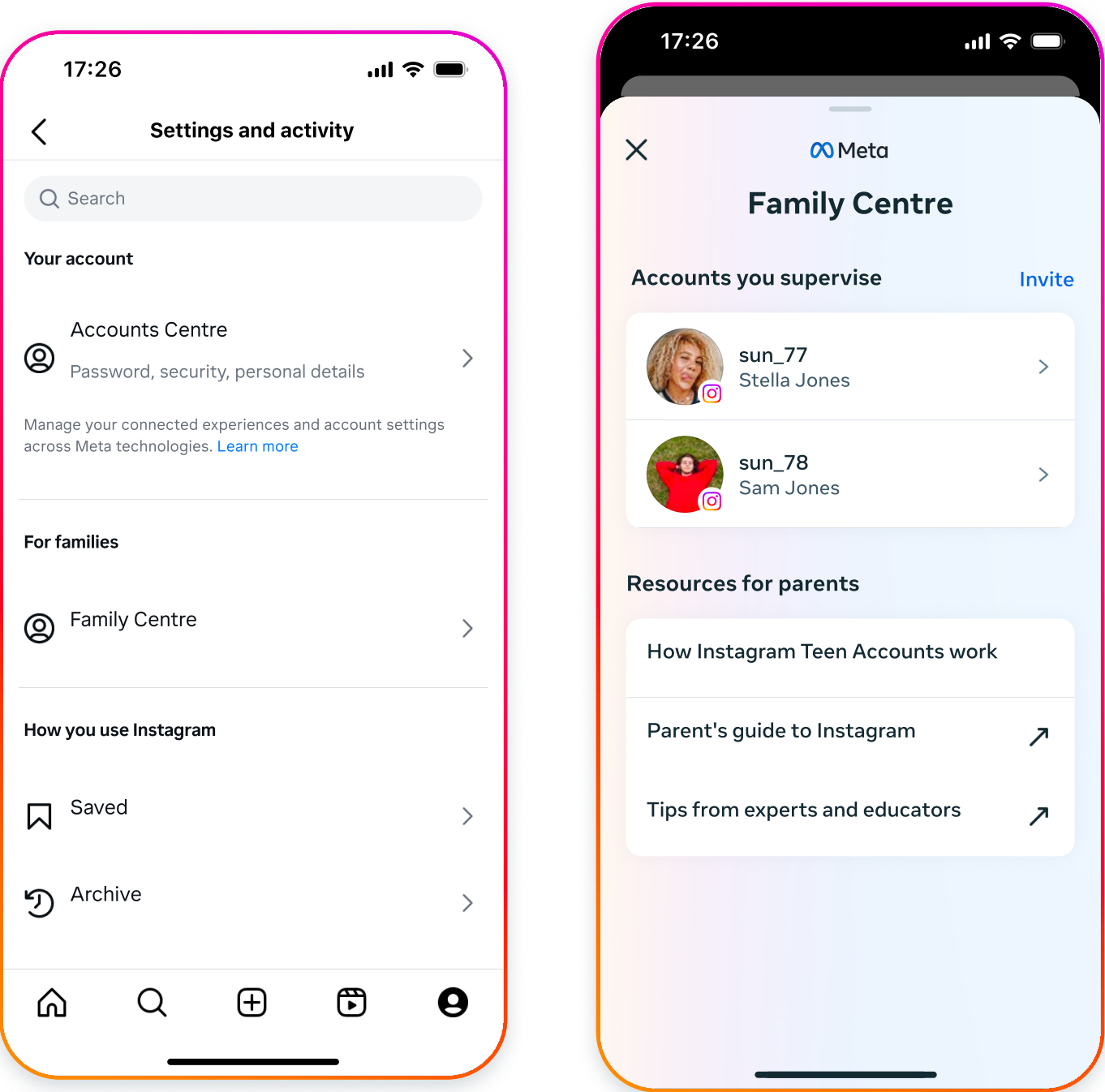
Parents or teens can remove supervision at any time. If teens under 16 remove supervision, any changes to their settings that their parents may have approved will be reset to the default Teen Account settings. You can access supervision tools in-app or with Family Centre – the central place where you can support your teen's experiences across Meta technologies.

With Family Centre, you can also access articles, videos and tips from experts on how to help your teen navigate social media. We worked closely with groups such as the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) and Net Family News to develop these resources, which include video tutorials on how to use supervision tools on Instagram. Themed pages also address key topics, such as digital wellness, safety and privacy, relationships and communication and media literacy and misinformation.

Learn more about the tools and resources at **familycenter.meta.com.**
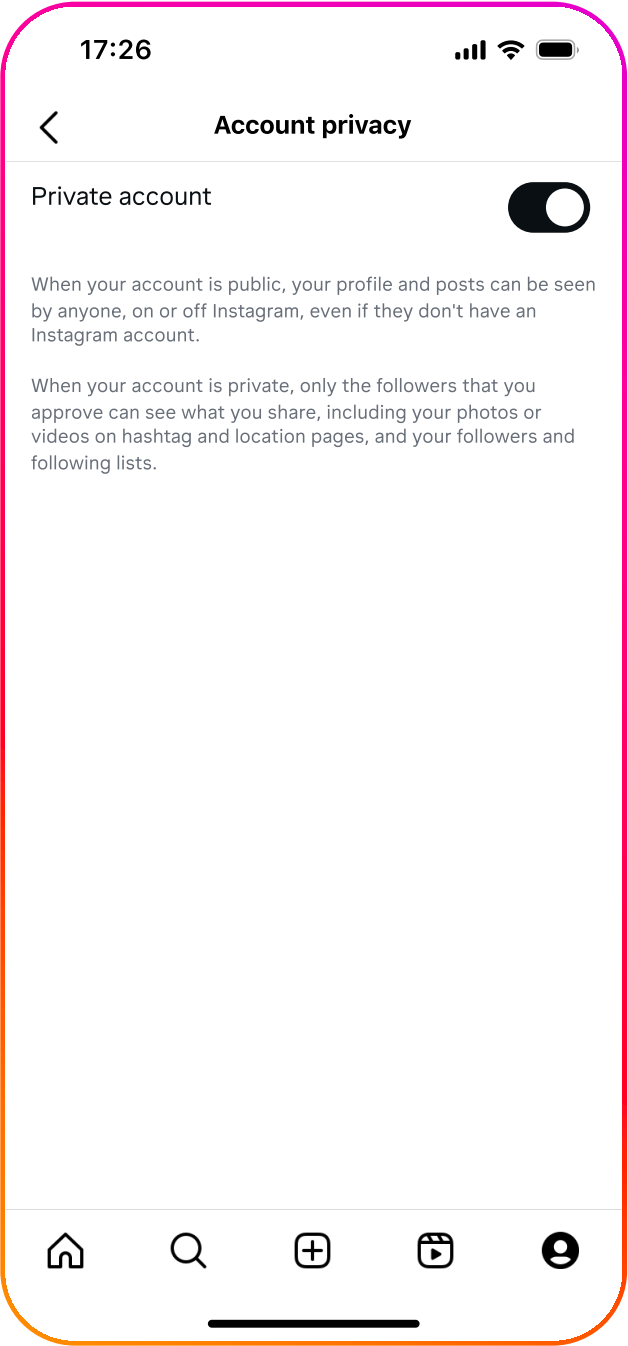
05

Manage
privacy

Account privacy

When teens join Instagram, they will automatically be set to a private account. Teens under 16 will need parental permission to make changes to their account privacy.

With a private account, your teen must approve a follower request before they can see what your teen shares. Accounts that your teen hasn't accepted also can't like or comment on their content, and they won't see your teen's content in places such as Explore.

If your teen's account is public, anyone on or off Instagram, with or without an Instagram account, can see the content that your teen posts and can follow them without needing approval. Even with a public account, your teen can remove followers and choose who can comment on their posts and who can tag them in posts.

For teens on Instagram who have a public account, we will periodically show them a notification highlighting the benefits of a private account and explaining how to change their privacy settings.

17:26

Account privacy

Private account

When your account is public, your profile and posts can be seen by anyone, on or off Instagram, even if they don't have an Instagram account.

When your account is private, only the followers that you approve can see what you share, including your photos or videos on hashtag and location pages, and your followers and following lists.
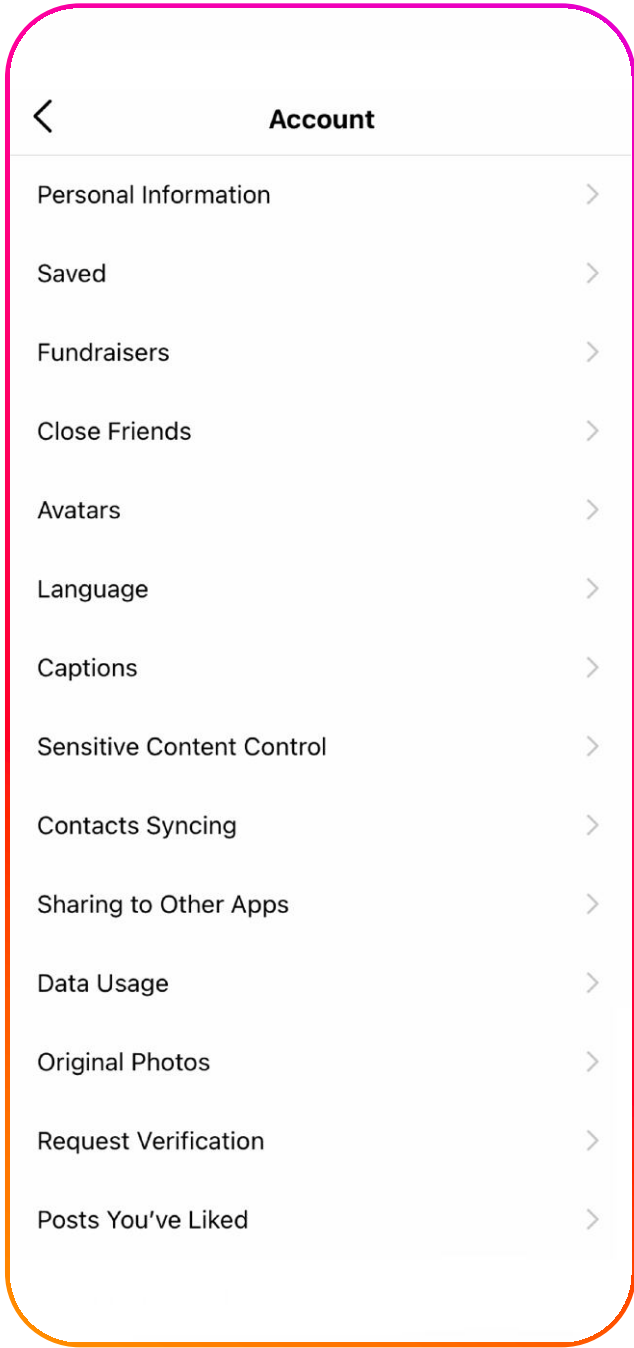
Share with Close Friends

Your teen can create a Close Friends list and share their stories, posts, reels, live or notes exclusively with the people on that list.
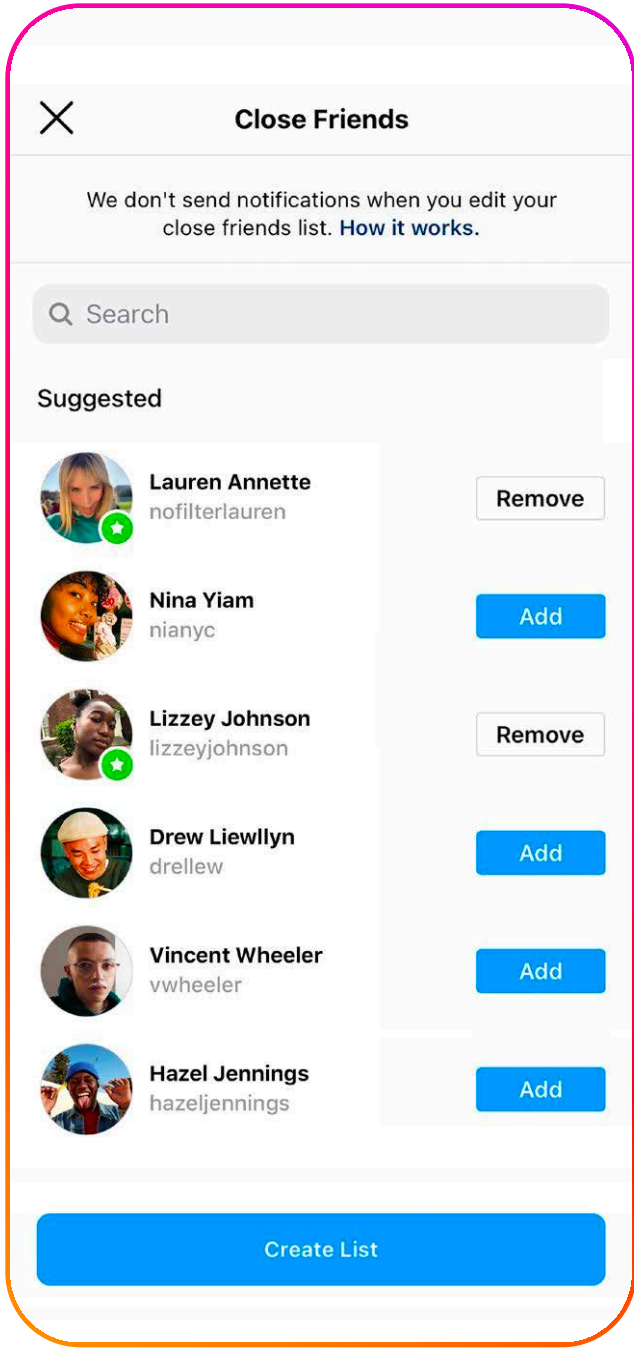
They have the option to add or remove people from the list at any time, and those individuals will not receive notifications when they have been added or removed.

Close Friends enables your teen to share with a more select audience, regardless of whether they have a private or public account.

Share with Close Friends

SETTINGS → ACCOUNT →
CLOSE FRIENDS LIST

ADD OR REMOVE PEOPLE FROM
FOLLOWER LIST

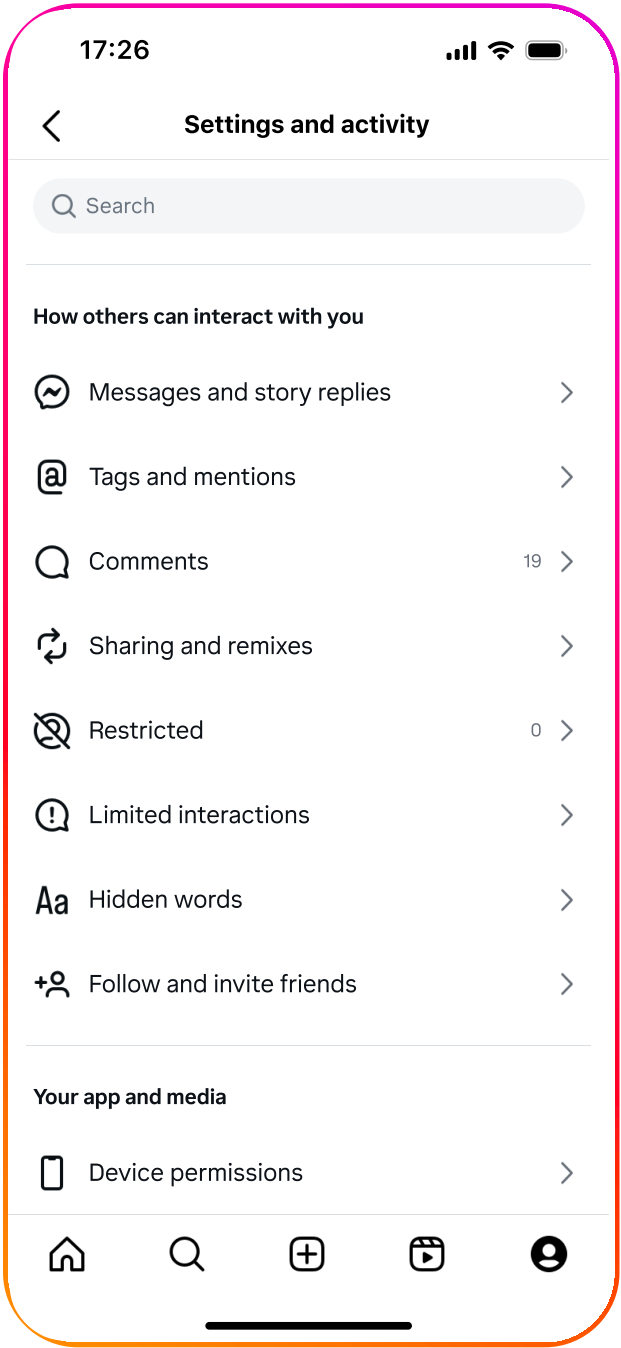STORIES SHARED WITH CLOSE
FRIENDS HAVE A GREEN RING

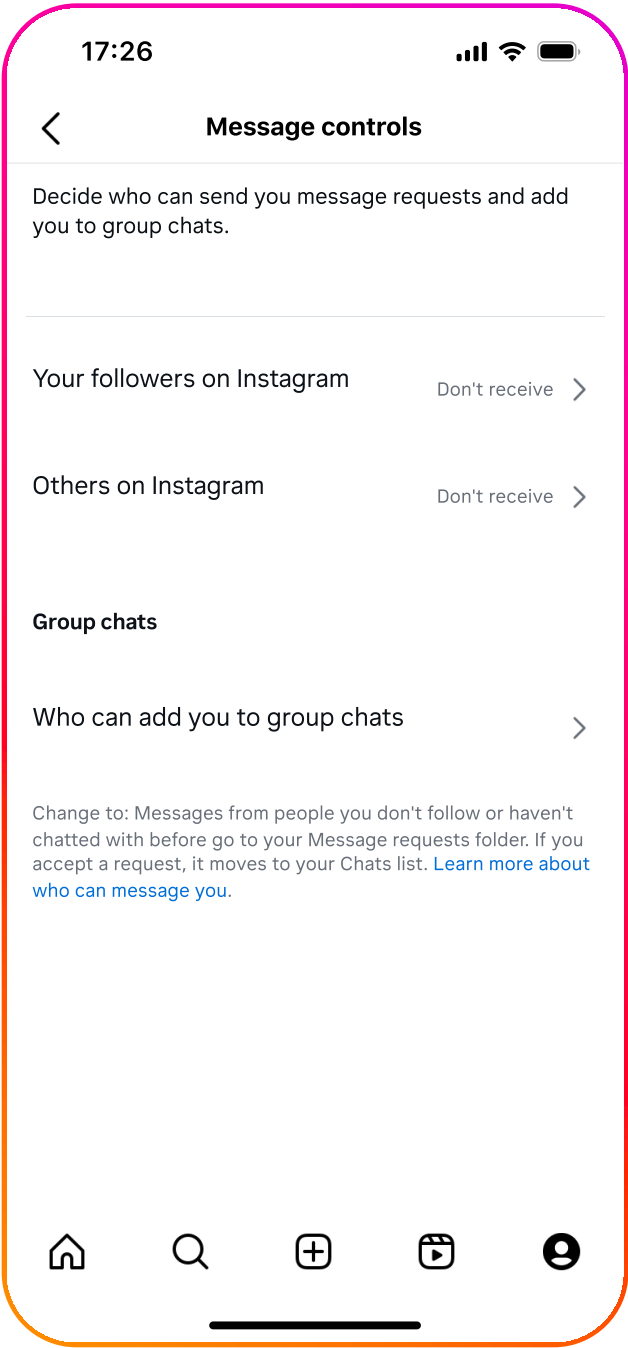VIEWING STORIES SHARED WITH CLOSE
FRIENDS HAVE A GREEN TAG

Message controls

With Instagram Teen Accounts' updated protections, teens can only be messaged by people – including other teens – that they follow or are already connected to, and this protection can't be turned off for under 16s without parental approval.

Message controls

Settings and activity

17:26

Search

How others can interact with you

💬 Messages and story replies >

@ Tags and mentions >

🔍 Comments 19 >

🔄 Sharing and remixes >

🚫 Restricted 0 >

❗ Limited interactions >

Aa Hidden words >

➕ Follow and invite friends >

Your app and media

📱 Device permissions >

Message controls

17:26

Decide who can send you message requests and add you to group chats.

Your followers on Instagram Don't receive >

Others on Instagram Don't receive >

Group chats

Who can add you to group chats >

Change to: Messages from people you don't follow or haven't chatted with before go to your Message requests folder. If you accept a request, it moves to your Chats list. Learn more about who can message you.

SETTINGS → PRIVACY → MESSAGES

MESSAGE CONTROLS

06
Manage interactions

We want teens to nurture their relationships online in a safe, positive and supportive environment. There is no room for bullying and harassment of any kind on Instagram. It is against our policies to create an account, post photos or make comments with the intention of bullying or harassing someone else.

Instagram allows people of all ages to regulate their interactions on the app by offering features such as:

- Anonymous **reporting of profiles, content or interactions** that are deemed inappropriate, offensive or violate Community Guidelines

- Blocking unwanted interactions

- Muting or restricting accounts

- Hiding like counts on your teen's posts or the posts that they see in feed

For more detailed information on each of these interaction management settings and tools, please refer to the following sections.
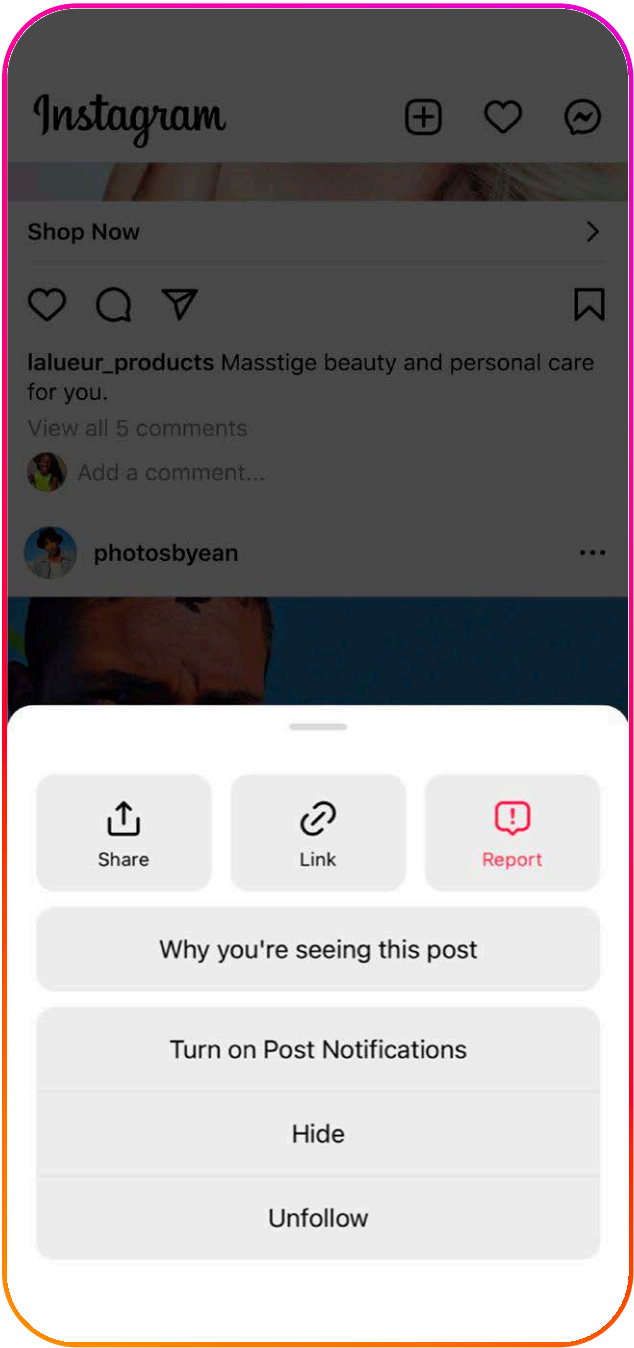
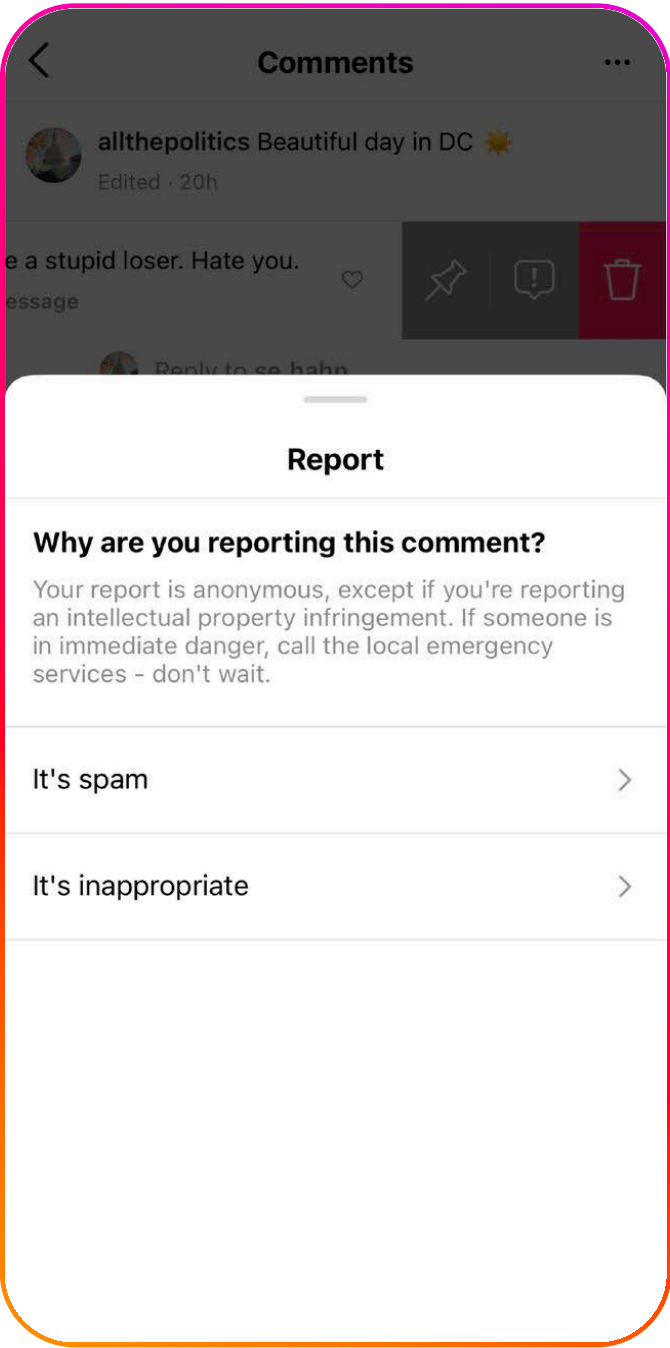# Report accounts and interactions

Anyone can anonymously report content on Instagram, including profiles, accounts, posts, comments, direct messages, live videos, stories and reels. You can report content or accounts that aren't following Instagram's Community Guidelines or Terms of Use right when you see them by using our built-in reporting features.
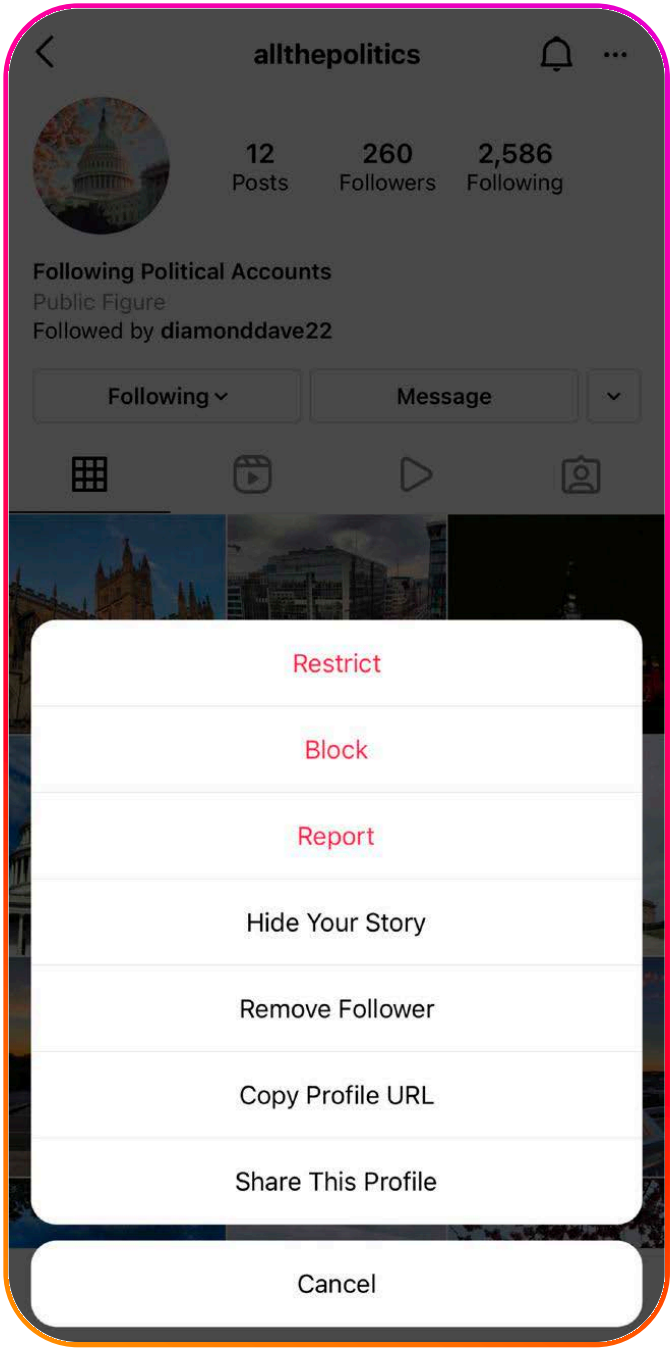
PROFILES

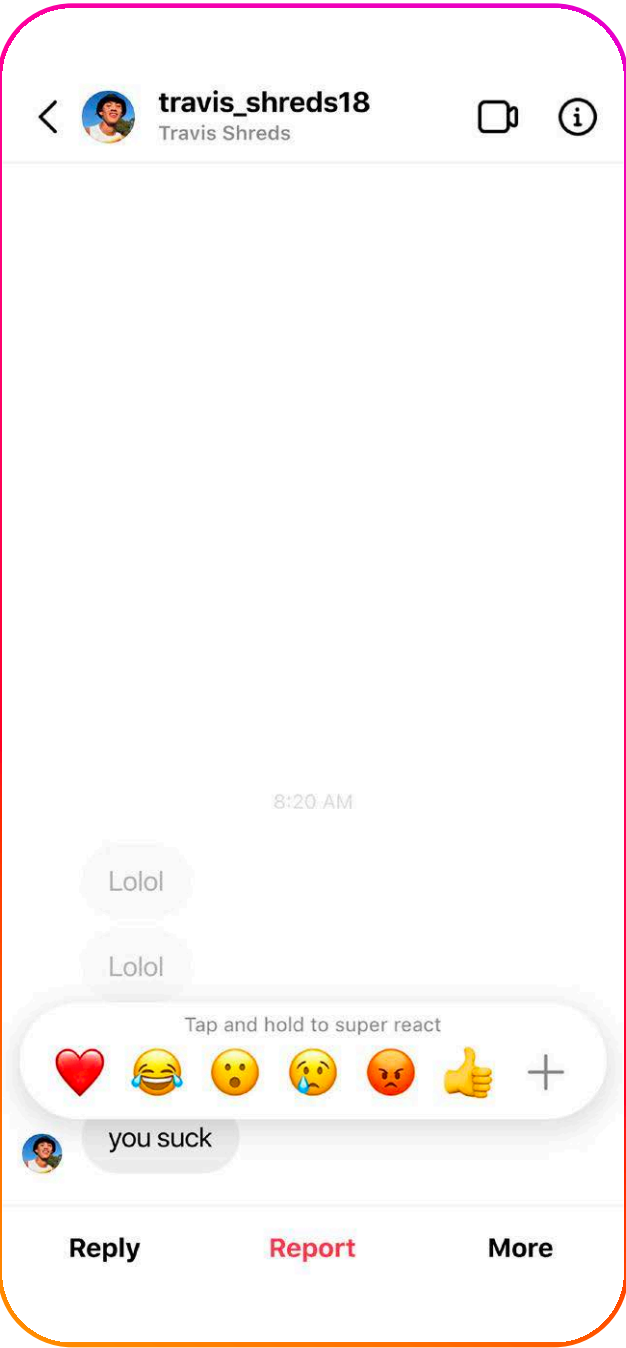TAP "..." ON TOP RIGHT-HAND CORNER

OF PROFILE → REPORT

POSTS
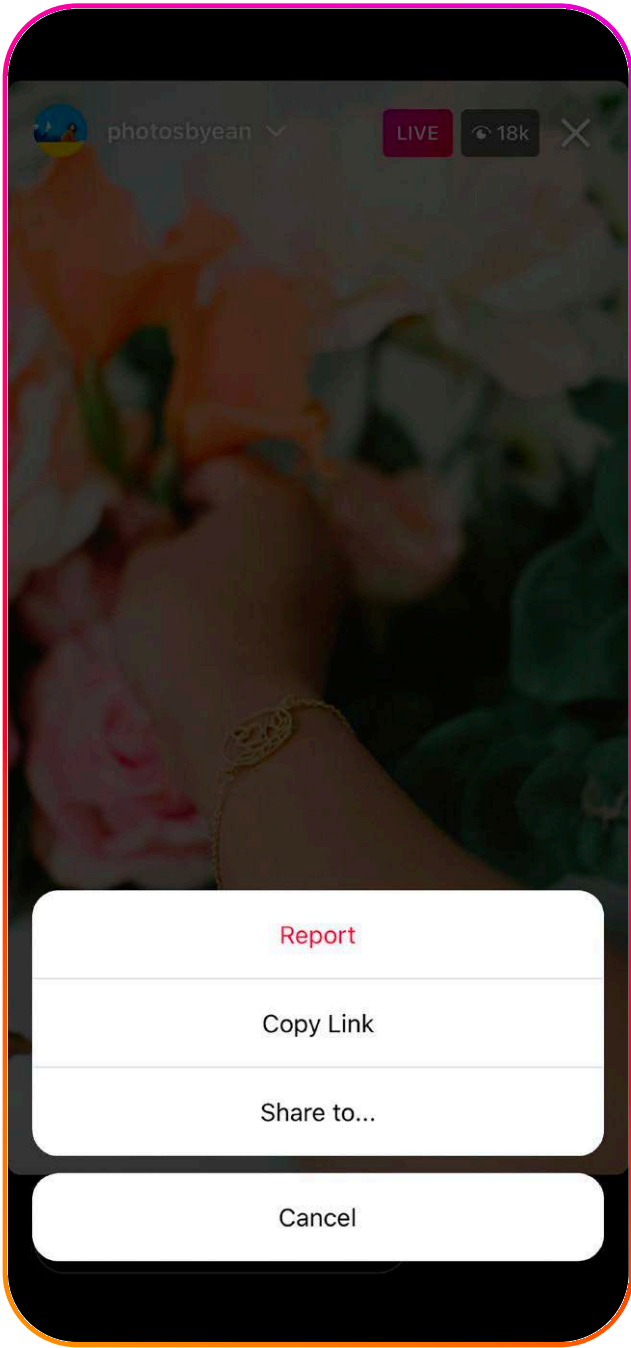
TAP "..." ON TOP RIGHT-HAND CORNER

OF POST → REPORT

COMMENTS

SWIPE LEFT ON COMMENT → TAP " " →
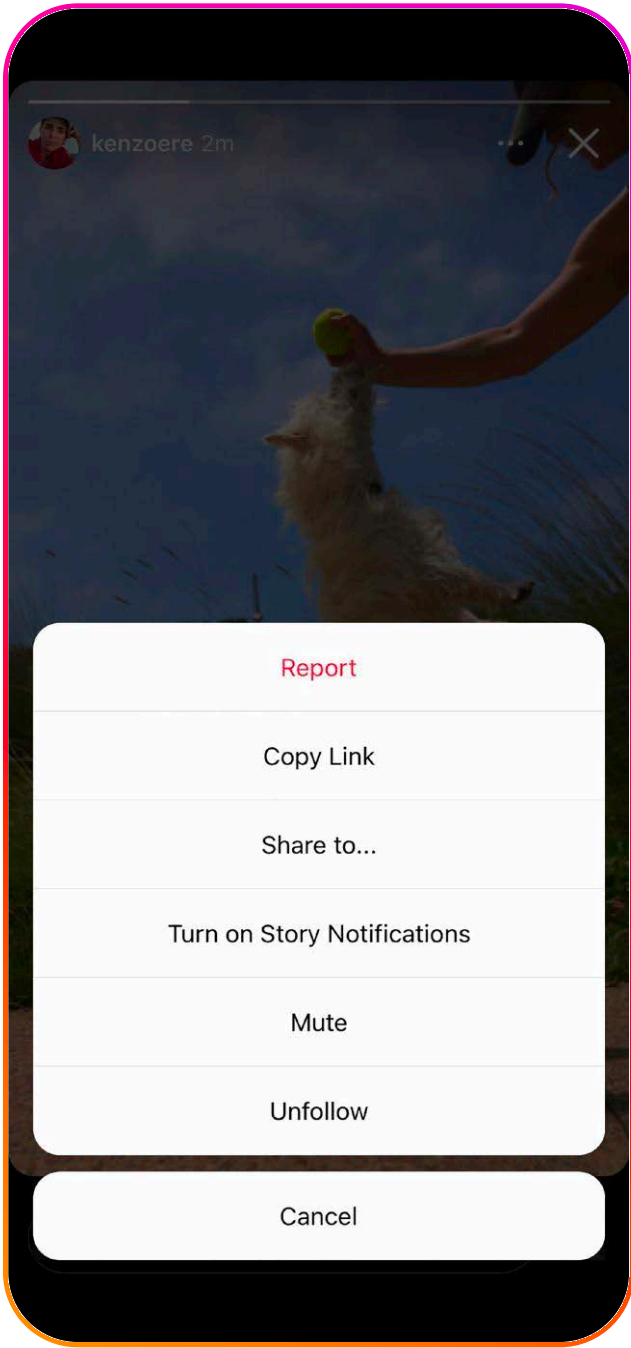
REPORT THIS COMMENT
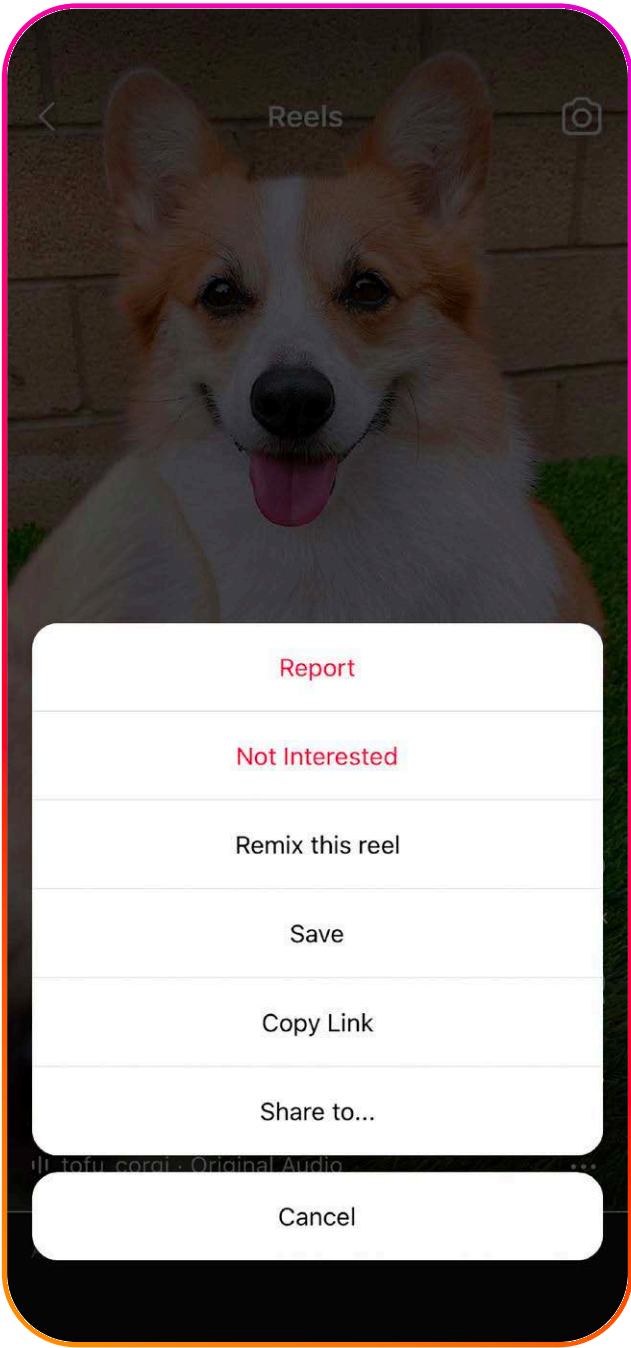
Report accounts and interactions

DMs

TAP AND HOLD INDIVIDUAL

MESSAGE → REPORT

LIVES

TAP "..." NEXT TO "COMMENT" AT THE

BOTTOM OF THE LIVE → REPORT

STORIES

TAP "..." ON TOP RIGHT-HAND CORNER

OF STORIES → REPORT

REELS

TAP "..." ON BOTTOM RIGHT-HAND CORNER

OF REEL → REPORT

Block unwanted interactions

Your teen can block accounts that they do not want to interact with. This action will prevent the account from seeing or commenting on anything that your teen shares, as well as from messaging your teen.

We understand that teens may hesitate to block people out of concern that the person will be notified. Rest assured that we do not notify individuals when they have been blocked or reveal who has blocked them. You have the option to unblock an account at any time.

We also make it harder for someone who you have already blocked to contact you again through a new account. Now, whenever you decide to block someone on Instagram, you will have the option to both block their account and preemptively block any new accounts that person may create.

Block unwanted interactions
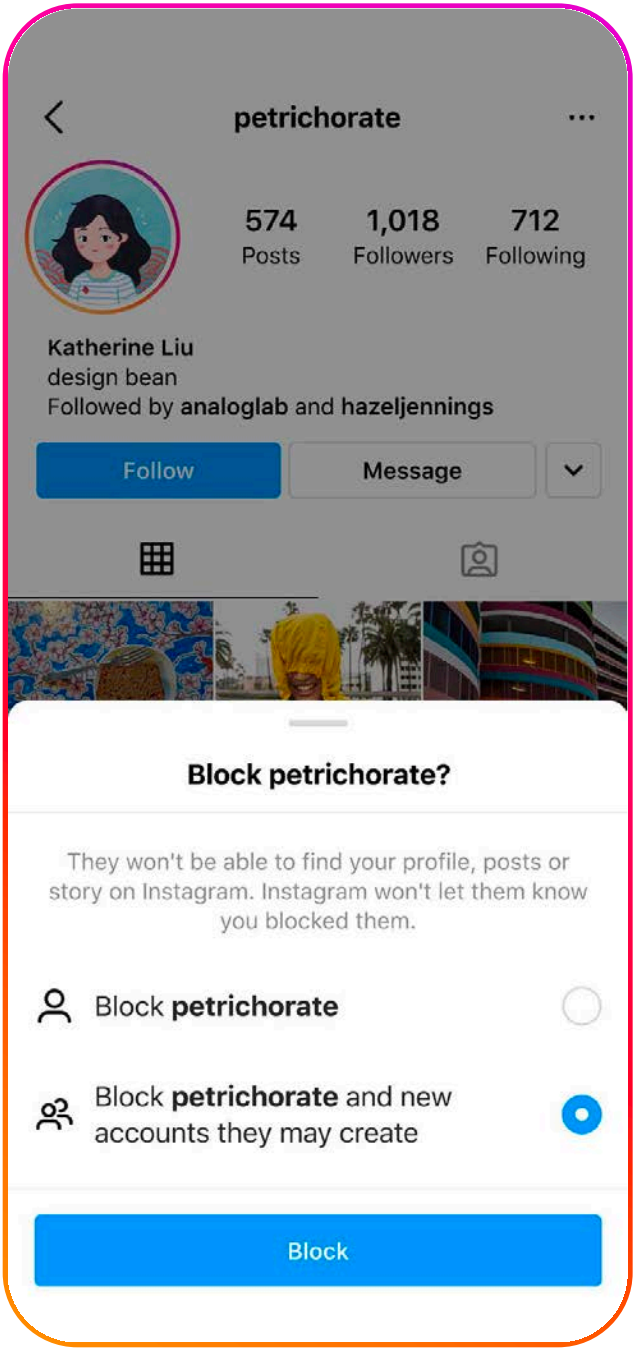
PROFILE → TAP "..." IN TOP
RIGHT-HAND CORNER → BLOCK
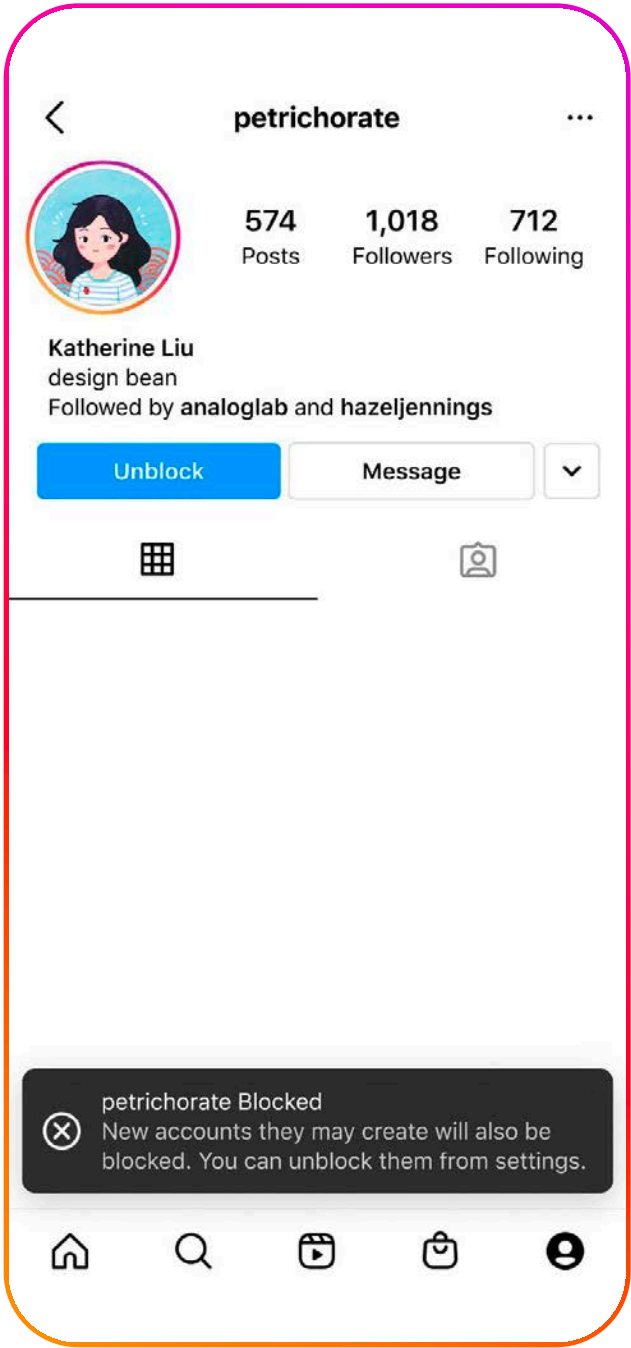
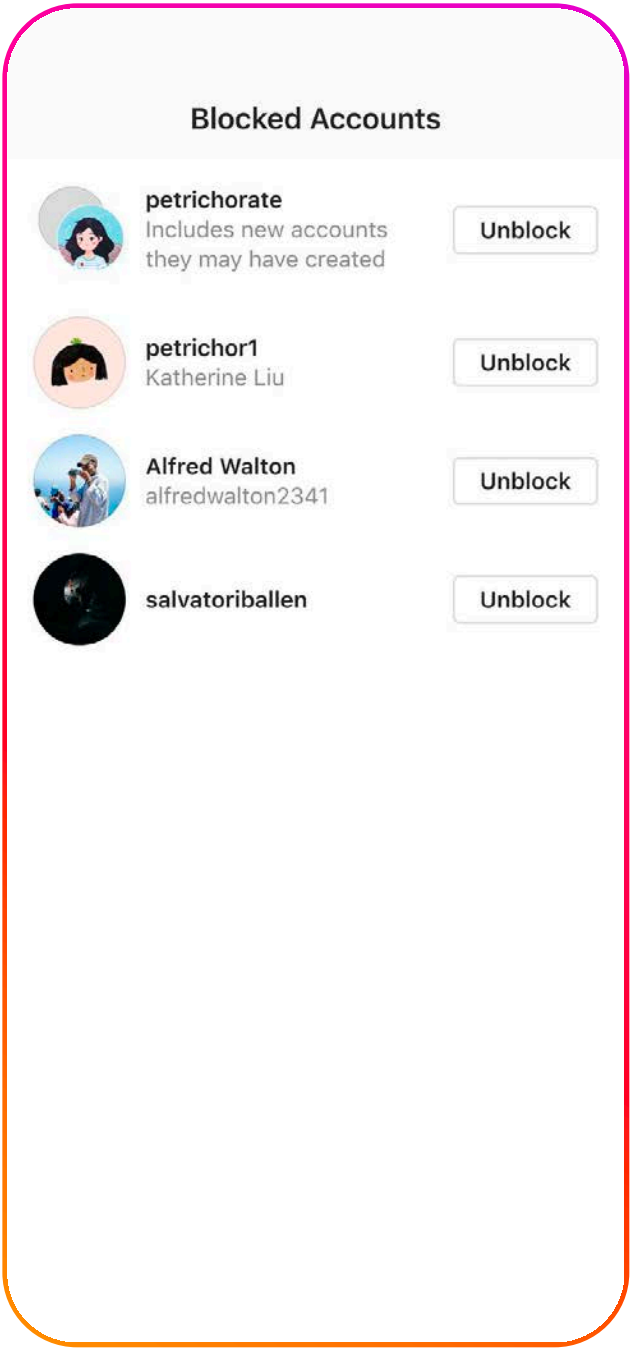BLOCKED ACCOUNT

SETTINGS → PRIVACY →
BLOCKED ACCOUNTS

Mute an account

Sometimes, your teen may want to take a short break from an account. Muting will prevent posts and stories from that account from appearing for your teen. The other person will not know that they have been muted and your teen can unmute that account at any time.

Restrict an account

With restrict, teens can protect their accounts from unwanted interactions in a quieter or more subtle way.

Once restrict has been enabled, comments on their posts from a restricted person will only be visible to that individual. Restricted individuals also cannot see when your teen is active on Instagram or when they have read their direct messages. We will never disclose to someone if your teen has restricted them and your teen can remove restrictions at any time.
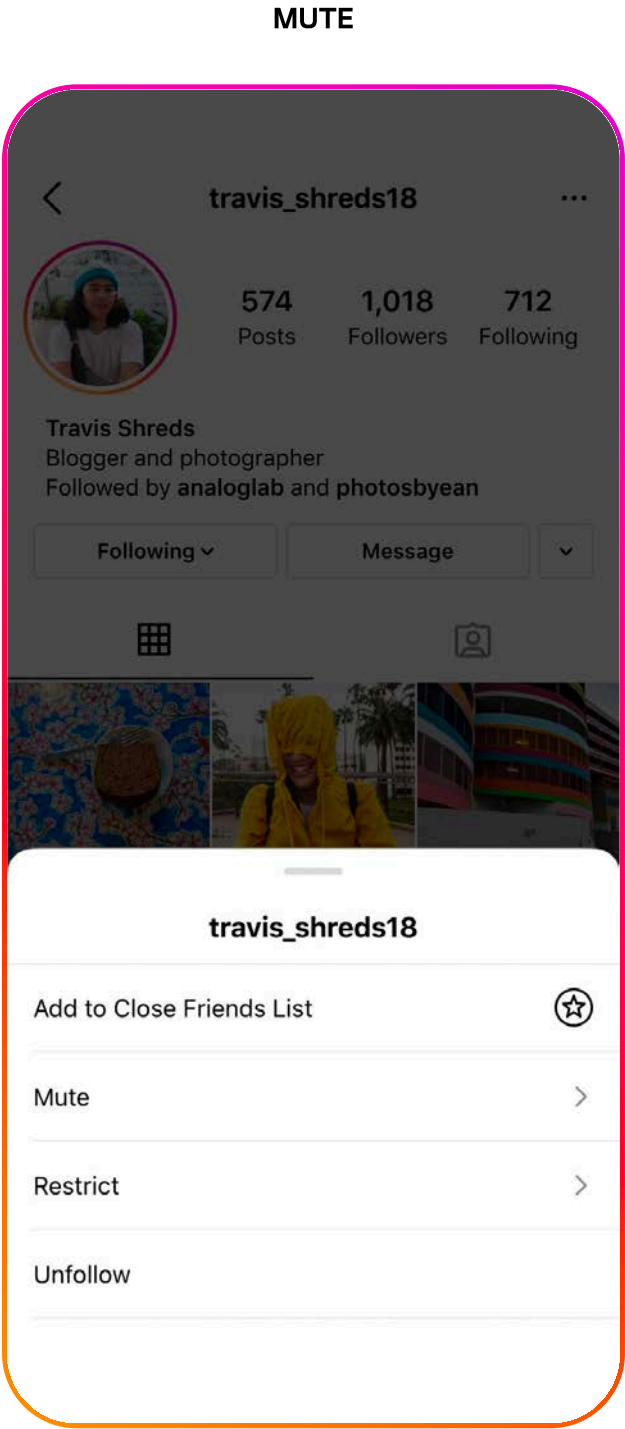
MUTE

RESTRICT

PROFILE → TAP "FOLLOWING" → MUTE
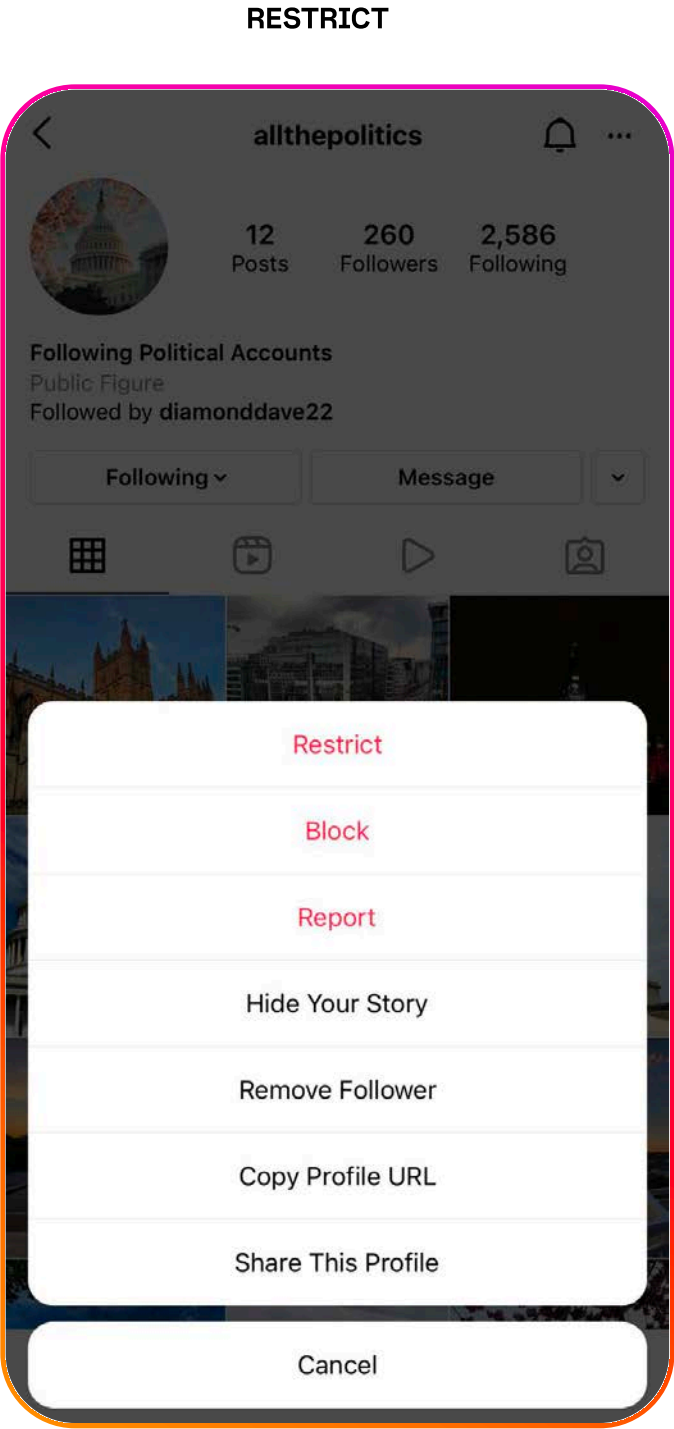
PROFILE → TAP "..." IN TOP RIGHT-HAND CORNER → RESTRICT

25

Manage like counts

We want people to focus on what's being shared on Instagram rather than how many likes a post receives.

That's why we offer everyone the option to hide like counts on the posts that they see in feed. You'll also have the choice to hide like counts on your own posts, preventing others from seeing how many likes your posts get. This can also be done on a post-by-post basis.

Changing the way that people perceive like counts can create a significant shift and hiding them may help to depressurise your teen's Instagram experience.

Manage like counts
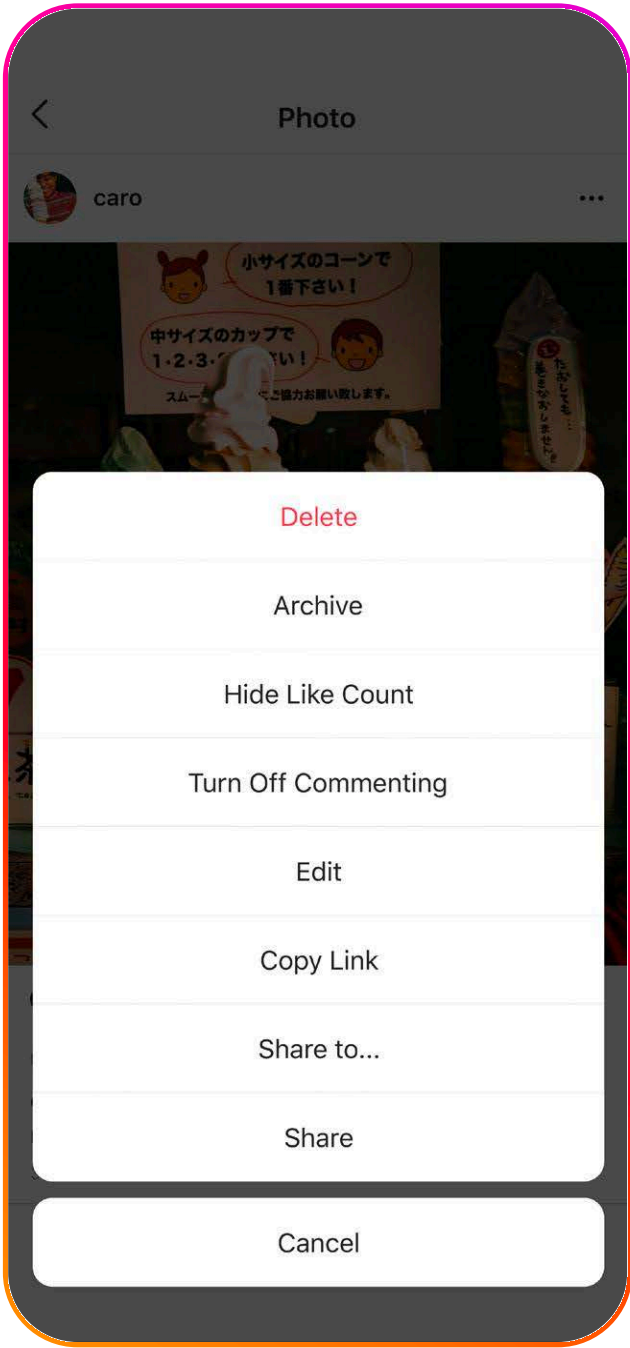
HIDE LIKE COUNT ON
YOUR POST
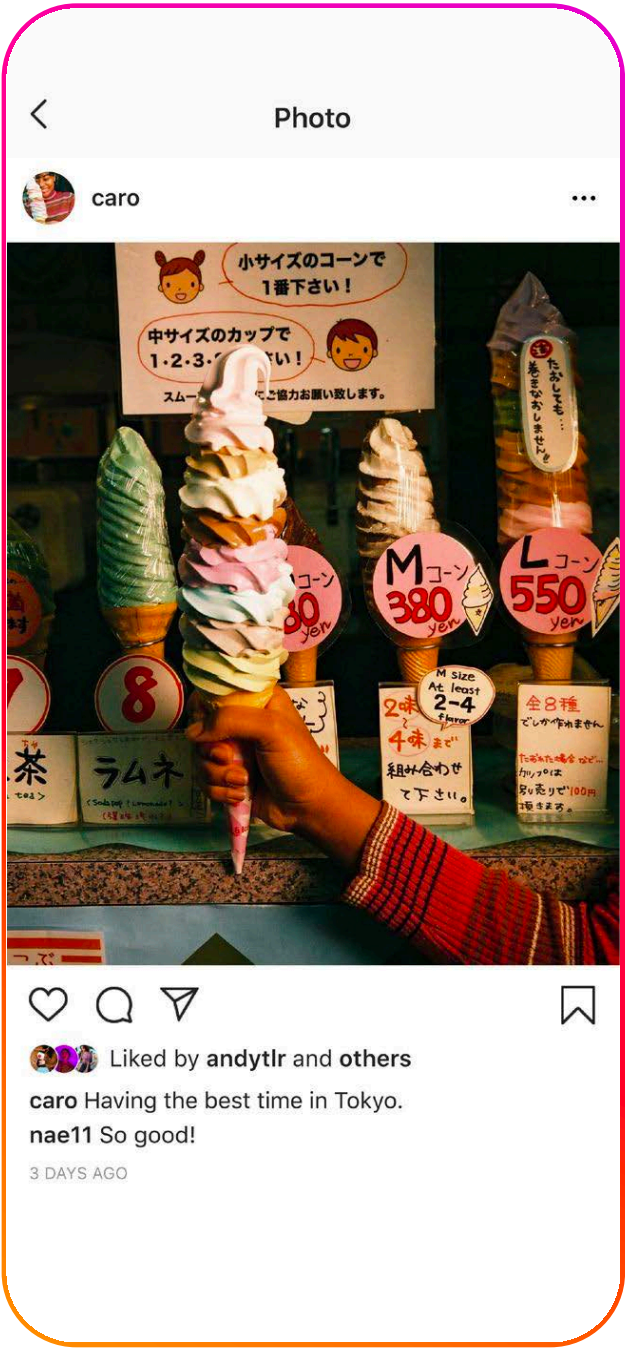
YOUR POST WITH NO
LIKE COUNT
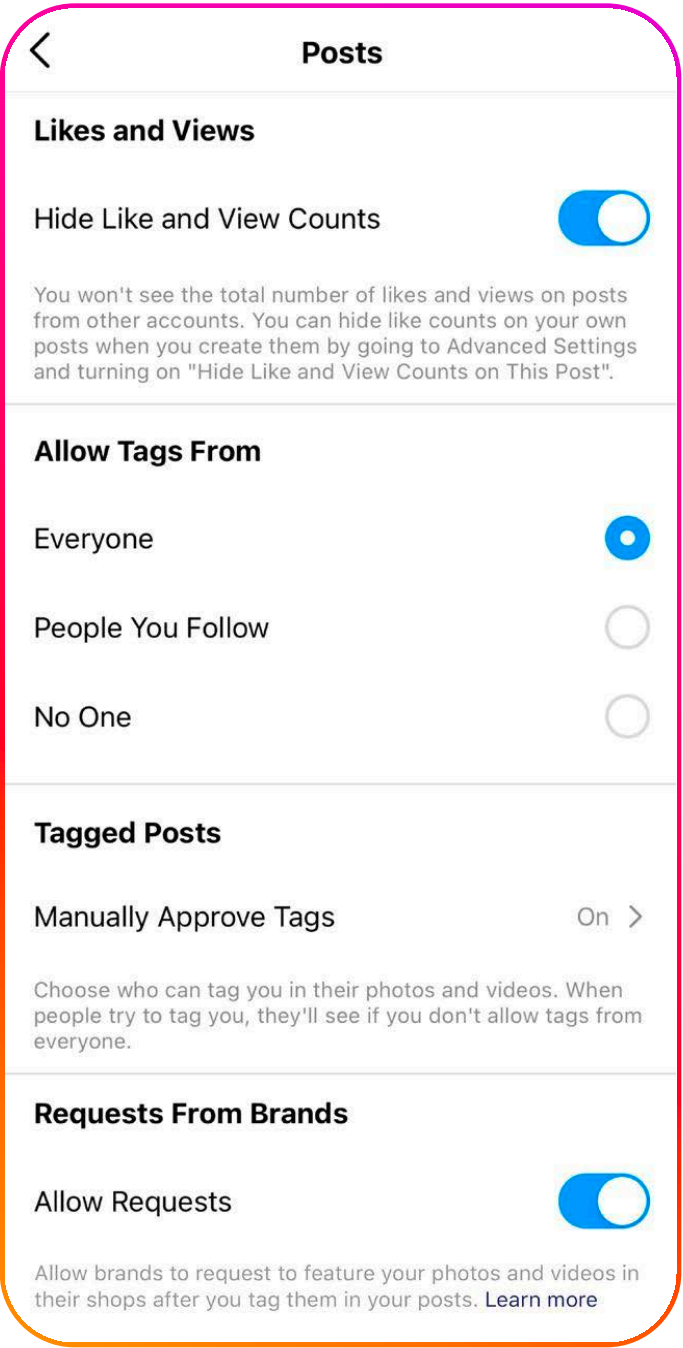
VISIT SETTINGS TO HIDE LIKE
COUNT ON OTHERS' POSTS

07

Manage
what you see

We take proactive measures to enhance everyone's safety. Our team works to review and remove content that violates our Community Guidelines. Teens can further manage the content that they see by utilising a variety of tools and features as outlined in the following sections.

Comment controls

Your teen can further control who can comment on their posts by blocking comments from specific accounts in the "Comment" section of their privacy settings. These account owners won't be notified when they've been blocked. Your teen can also turn off comments entirely for their posts.

Hide offensive comments and messages

There are several ways for teens to hide potentially offensive comments and messages that they don't want to see on Instagram. Along with a built-in Hidden words feature that automatically filters out offensive words or phrases from teens' comments and direct messages, we also offer:

- **Advanced comment filtering:** This setting filters out even more comments and messages that may contain offensive words or phrases.
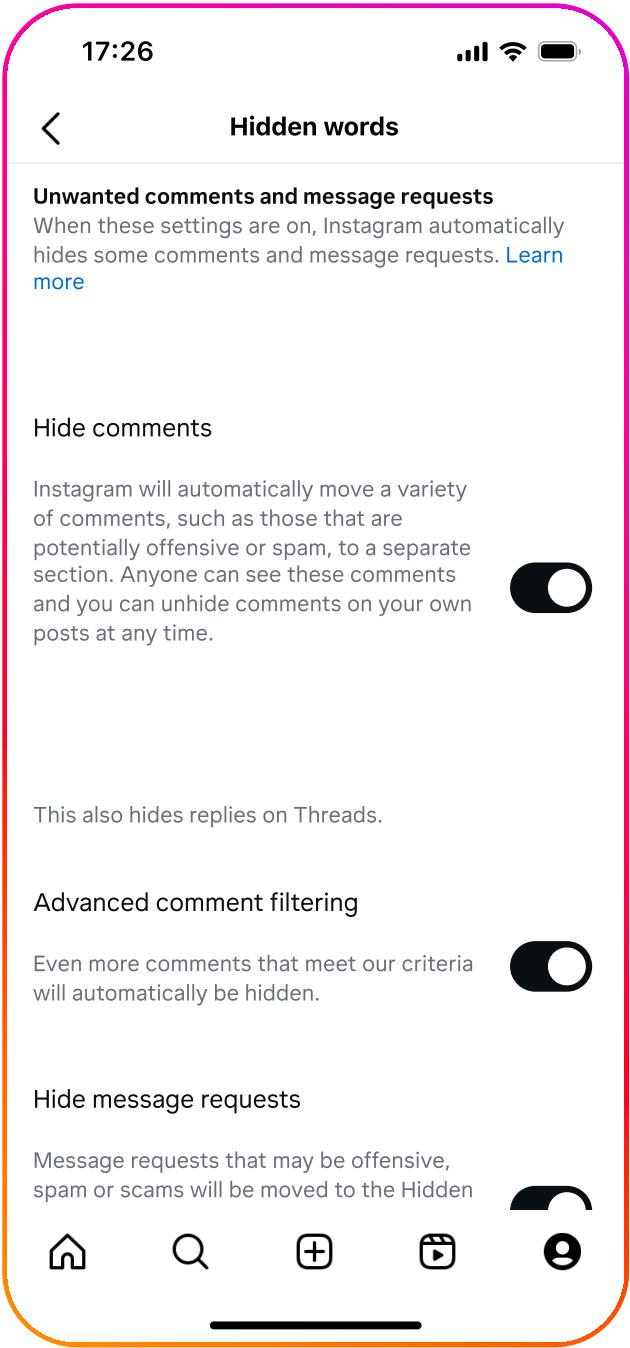
- **Custom list:** Different things can be offensive to different people, so your teen can also create a custom list of words, phrases or emojis that they don't want to see in comments or messages. Any comments using these terms will be hidden under their posts so that they and their followers can't see them. Direct messages using these terms will filter into your teen's message requests folder.

17:26

Hidden words

Unwanted comments and message requests
When these settings are on, Instagram automatically hides some comments and message requests. Learn more

Hide comments

Instagram will automatically move a variety of comments, such as those that are potentially offensive or spam, to a separate section. Anyone can see these comments and you can unhide comments on your own posts at any time.

This also hides replies on Threads.

Advanced comment filtering

Even more comments that meet our criteria will automatically be hidden.

Hide message requests

Message requests that may be offensive, spam or scams will be moved to the Hidden

SETTINGS → PRIVACY → HIDDEN WORDS →
MANAGE LIST

Comment warnings

We've learnt that there are cases where people mean well, but may misjudge how their words could negatively affect others, especially when they're interacting online.

That's why we use artificial intelligence (AI) to detect when someone may be trying to post a comment that could be harmful or offensive, and we send them a warning to encourage them to pause and consider whether they'd like to edit their comment. This warning reminds them of our Community Guidelines and warns them that we may remove or hide their comment if they choose to post it.

Since launching these comment warnings, we've seen that reminding people of the consequences of bullying and providing real-time feedback as they are writing the comment is an effective way to shift behaviour.
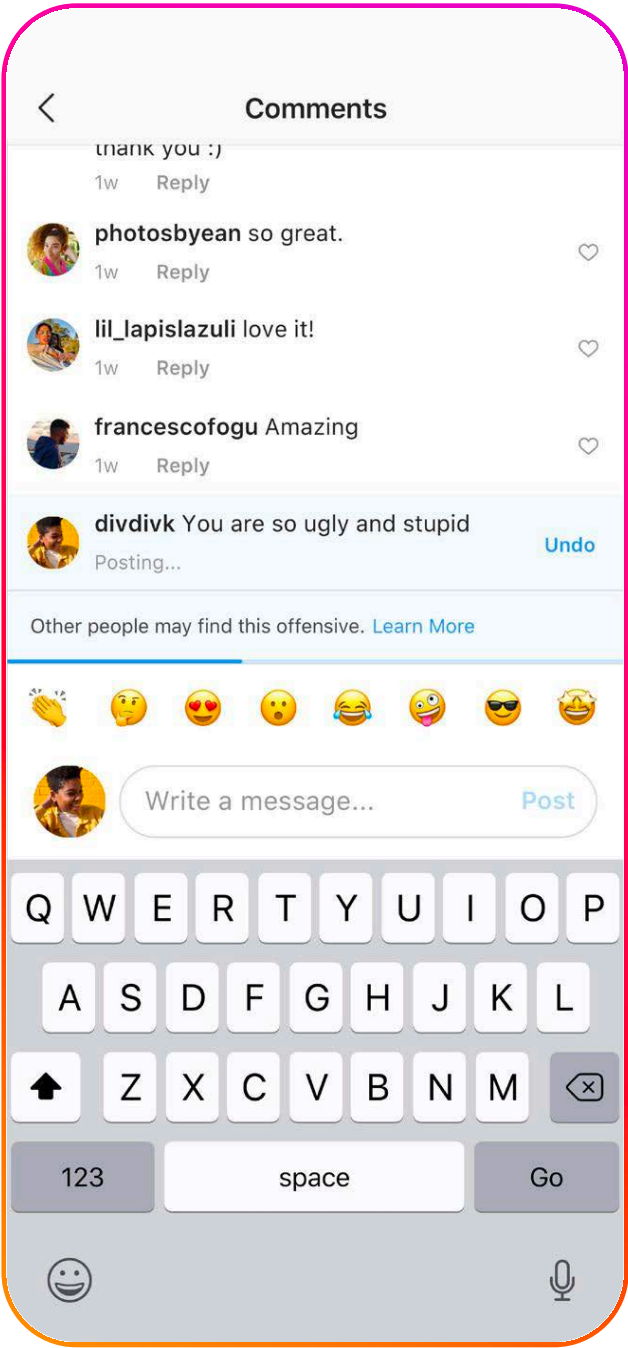
WARNING WHEN POSTING
OFFENSIVE COMMENTS
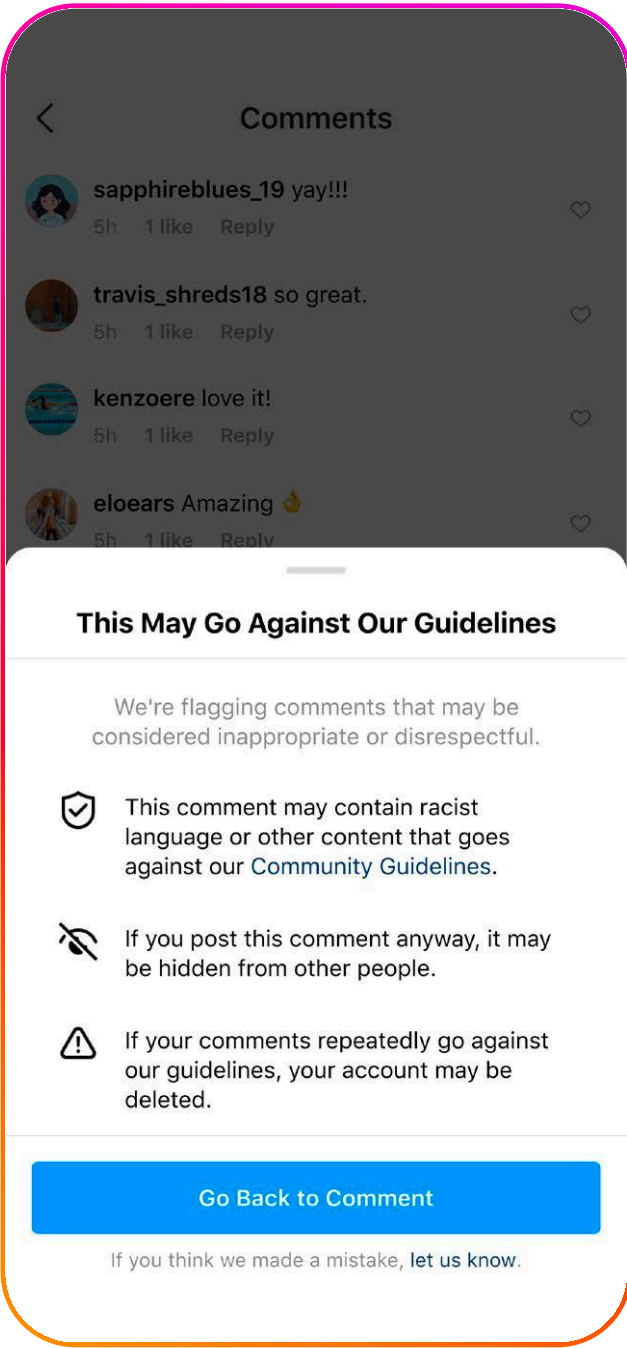
COMMUNITY GUIDELINES
REMINDER

Pin positive comments

In addition to removing negative comments, we want to provide people with an easy way to amplify and encourage positive interactions. Pinned comments allow your teen to set the tone for their account by pinning a select number of their favourite comments to the top of their comments thread.

Pin positive comments
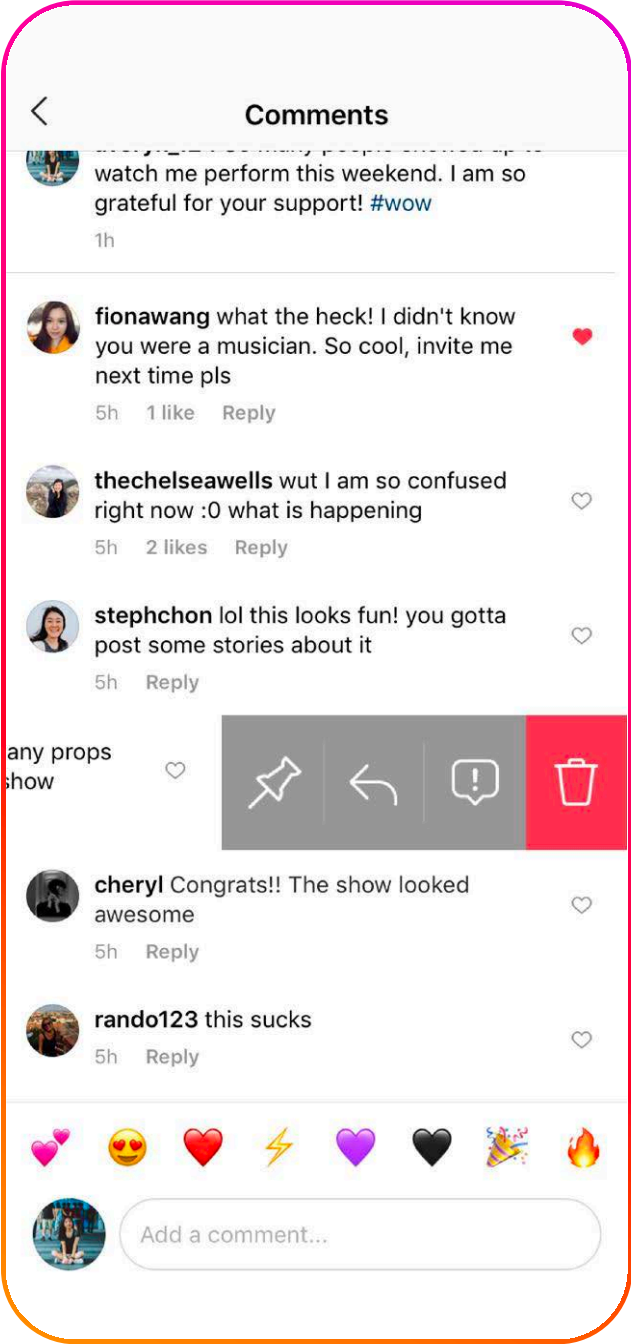
SWIPE LEFT ON COMMENT →

TAP " "
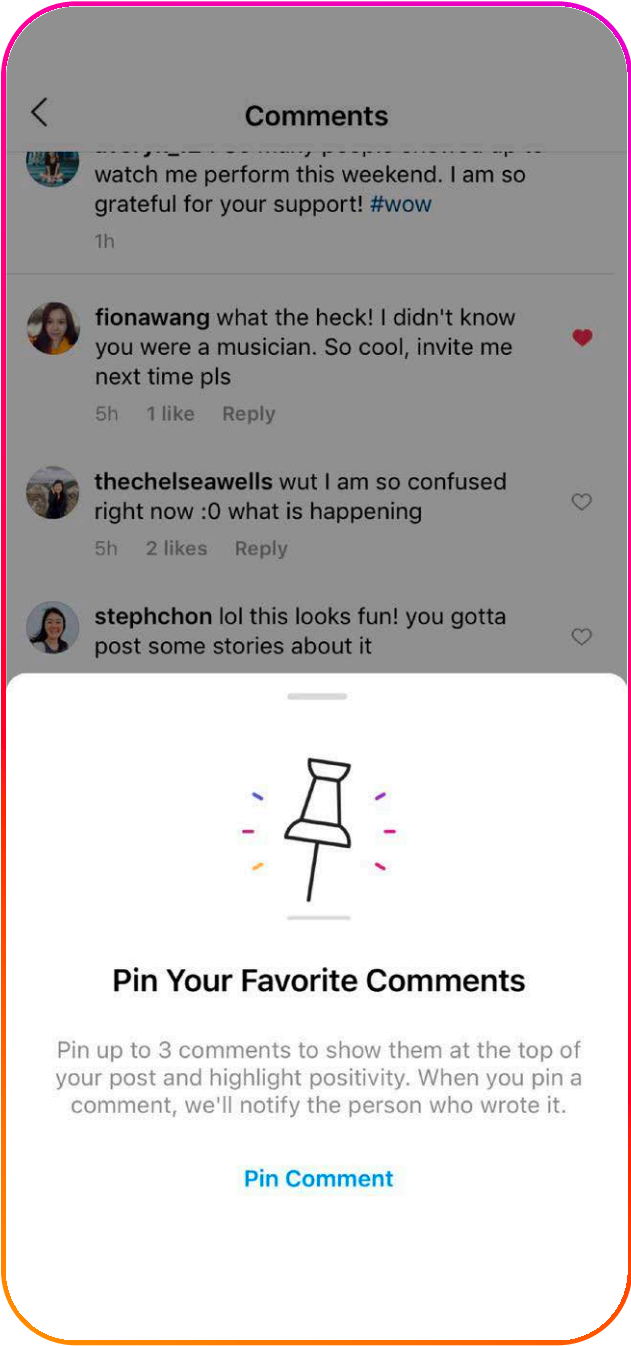
TAP "PIN COMMENT"
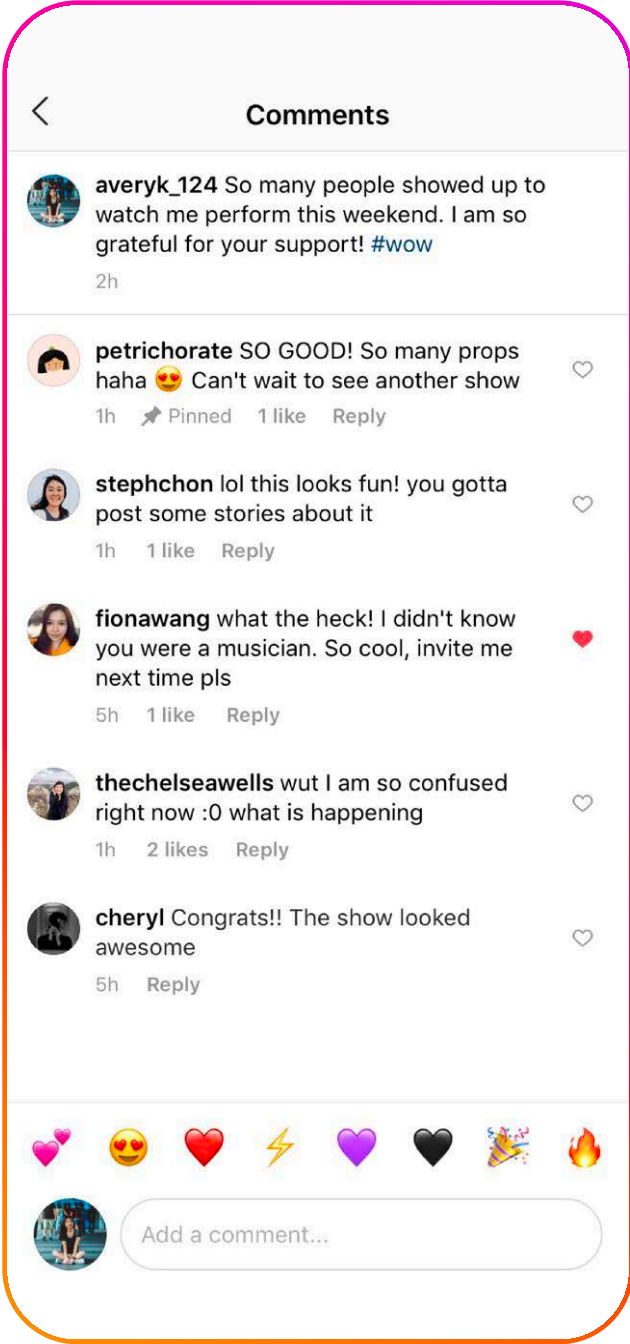
PINNED COMMENTS APPEAR AT TOP OF

COMMENTS THREAD

Control tags and mentions

There are controls on Instagram that allow your teen to manage who can tag or mention them.

Teen Accounts by default are only allowed to be tagged or mentioned by accounts that they follow. Teens under 16 will need their parent's permission to change this setting.

Control tags and mentions

17:26

← **Tags**

Who can tag you

Allow tags from everyone ○

Allow tags from people that you follow ●

Don't allow tags ○

Choose who can tag you in their photos and reels. When people try to tag you, they'll see if you don't allow tags from everyone. Potential spam will always be filtered.

17:26

← **Mentions**

Who can @mention you

Allow mentions from everyone ○

Allow mentions from people you follow ●

Don't allow mentions ○

Choose who can @mention you to link your account in their stories, notes, comments, live videos and captions. When people try to @mention you, they'll see if you don't allow @mentions.

TAGS AND MENTIONS →
ALLOW TAGS FROM
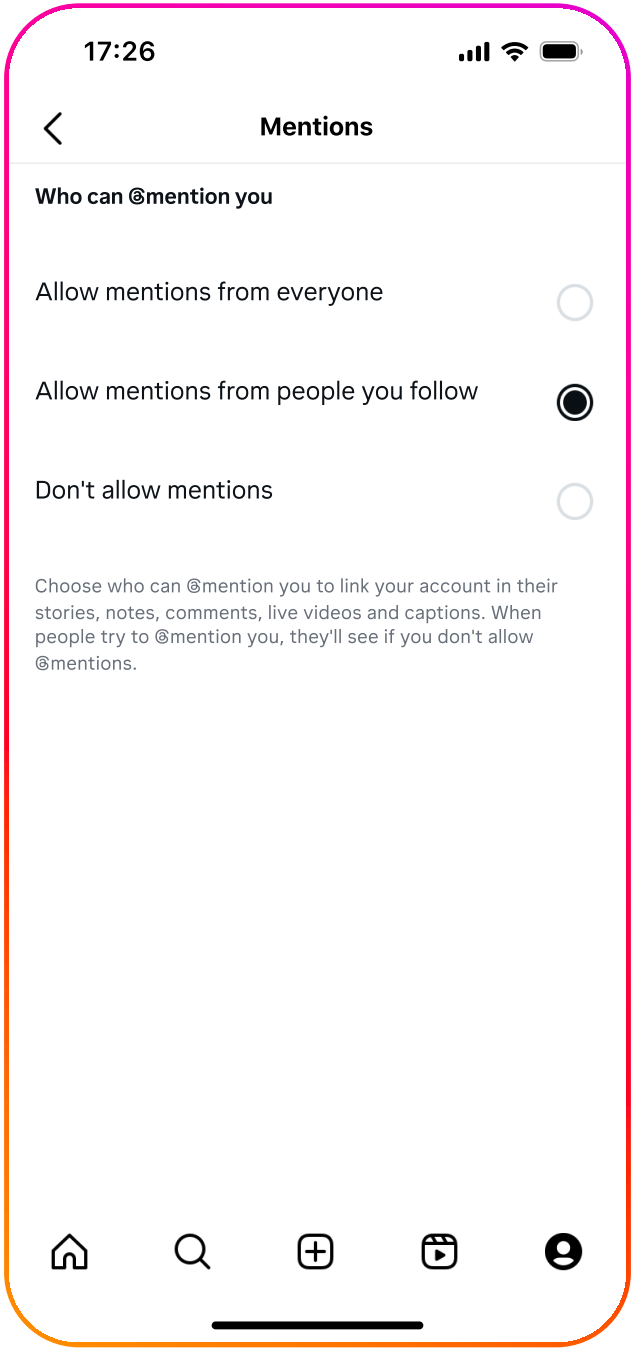
TAGS AND MENTIONS → ALLOW
@MENTIONS FROM

Controlling your content recommendations

Many people use Instagram to connect with their passions and discover new interests. To create more opportunities for discovery, Instagram recommends personalised content and accounts based on interests. While recommendations provide inspiration and entertainment, we also aim to give people greater control over them.

There are several ways to inform Instagram about the content that your teen does not wish to be recommended.

Your teen can choose to hide or indicate that they are "not interested" in content on the Explore page. We will then avoid showing similar content in future recommendations, such as in Reels, Search and other areas. Additionally, your teen can specify words or phrases that they wish to avoid, such as "fitness" or "recipes". We will refrain from recommending content with those words in the caption or hashtag. This feature is accessible in the Hidden words section of settings.

Sensitive content control

Our sensitive content control feature helps to reduce the likelihood of teens encountering potentially harmful or sensitive content or accounts while using various features on Instagram such as Search, Explore, hashtag pages, Reels, feed recommendations and suggested accounts.

Teen Accounts are automatically set to "see less" sensitive content. Teens under 16 will need their parent's permission to change this setting.

Sensitive content control
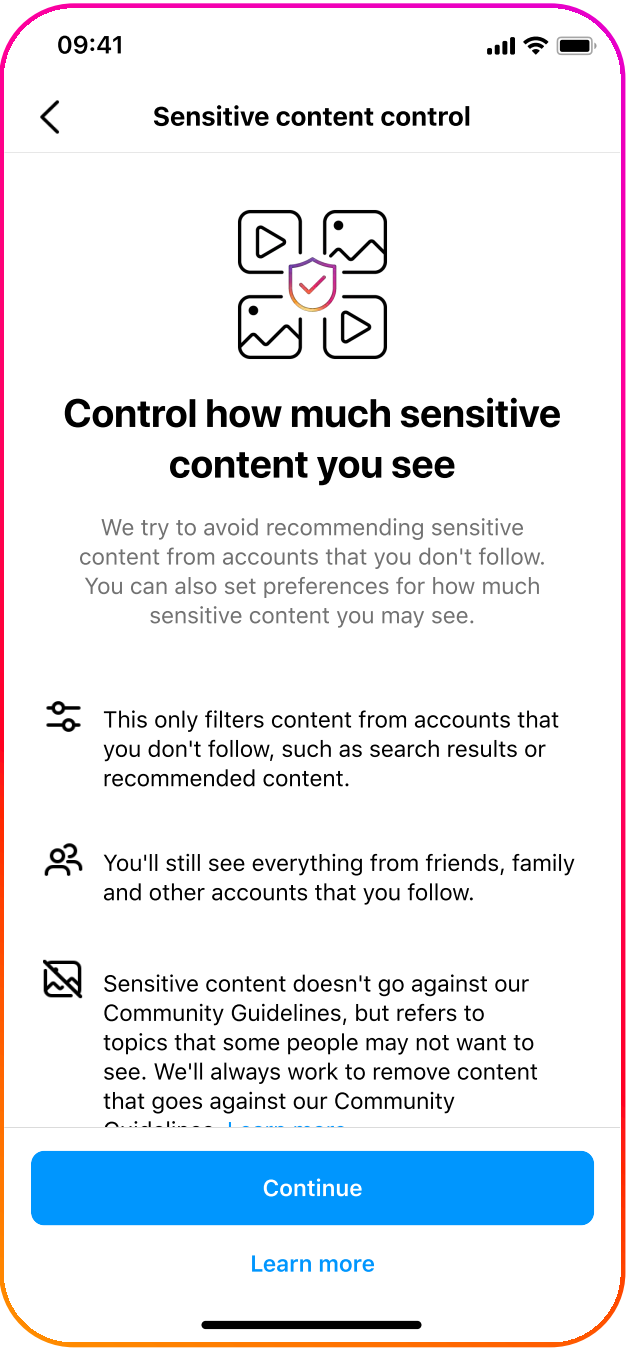
SENSITIVE CONTENT CONTROL
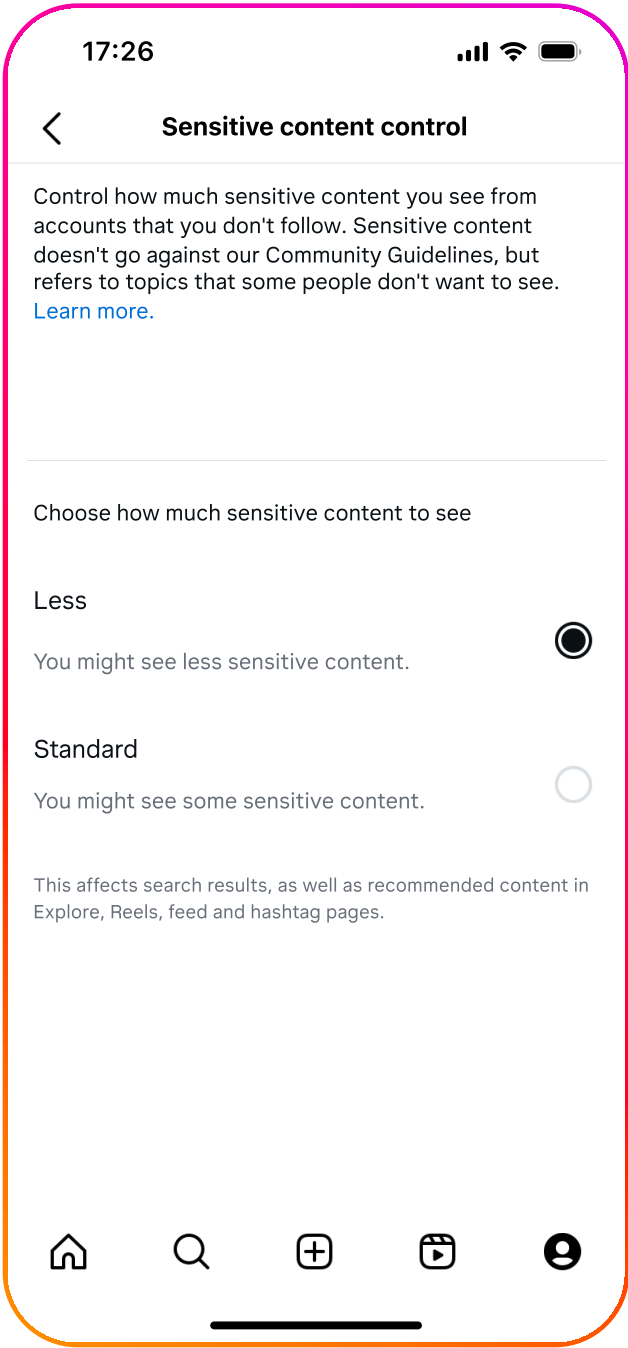
SETTINGS → ACCOUNT → SENSITIVE CONTENT CONTROL

08

Manage
time

When it comes to spending time on Instagram, it's important to have open conversations with your teen and come to an agreement about what is an appropriate amount of time on the app each day or each week. Taking regular breaks can also be important, especially during stressful times.

There are a number of tools and built-in settings to help you and your family understand and manage the time that your teen is spending on the app. You can work together to decide what the right balance is for your family. Many of these features are also available with our parental supervision tools (see Section 4: Family Centre and parental supervision tools).

Tips for helping teens manage screen time

Many parents worry about their teen's screen time. How much is too much? And is there a way to get your teen on board if you need to implement rules?

A good first step is to understand the role that technology and time online play in your teen's life. If you worry that your child is having too much screen time, it's not about how much time that actually is; it's about what it may infringe on. You can ask questions, such as:

- How long do you go in the morning before checking your phone?

- Do you find yourself getting distracted or anxious without your phone?

- When you hang out with your friends, are you on your phone a lot?

- Is the time that you're spending online keeping you from completing your schoolwork or spending time on hobbies and extracurriculars that matter to you?

From there, you can ask follow-up questions to understand how your teen feels about the time that they spend online:

- Do you feel like you are spending too much time online? Do you ever feel like you need a break?

- How is the time that you're spending online affecting you, physically or emotionally?

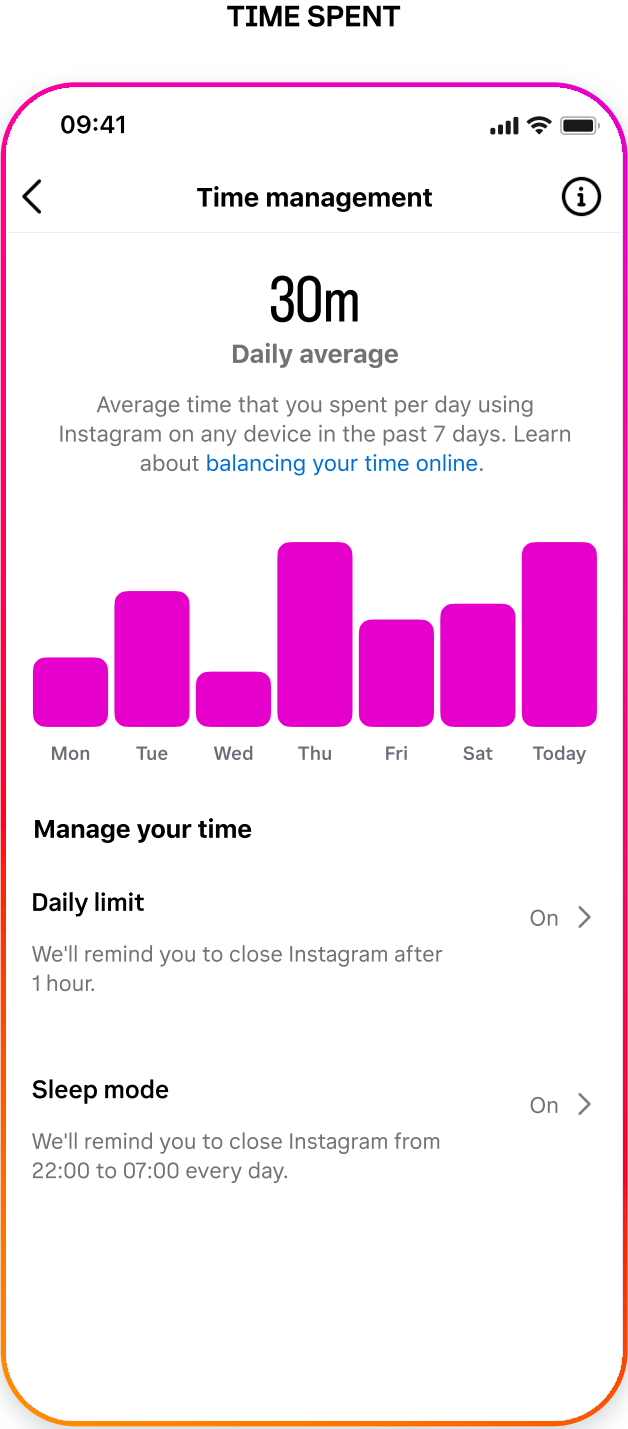After working through some of these questions, you may decide that you do want to help your teen better manage their screen time. But remember: rules don't need to be rigid or extreme to be helpful. Try these techniques to set healthy boundaries:

- **Start with compassion.** Unstructured screen time is an important source of comfort and entertainment for many teens. Letting your teen know that you understand their needs is a simple way to reduce stress for everyone.

- **Share time management tools.** Understand which tools are offered across social media platforms and other online spaces and discuss those tools with your teen. For example, with Instagram, you can discuss daily limit or sleep mode. Or, you can choose to use parental supervision tools to set time limits with your teen.

- **Model appropriate screen use.** If you make a point of setting aside your own screens during set times, your teens will be more likely to do the same without putting up a fight. Plus, taking breaks from tech has the added benefits of helping you limit your own media intake and giving you moments of mindfulness with your teens.

- **Gather data and re-evaluate.** To get older teens to buy into a new screen time rule, it can be helpful to compromise based on their wishes – with the understanding that you'll start with a trial run. For example, your teenager might assure you that using screens after a certain time doesn't affect their sleep or that homework is easier with a friend online. In cases like those, you can give their version a try and track how it goes for a couple of weeks. Do they wake up on time in the morning? Does all of the homework get done? See what you learn and then readjust as necessary.

View activity

The activity dashboard shows your teen the amount of time that they have spent on Instagram in the past day and week, along with their average time on the app. Your teen can tap and hold the blue bars to view the specific amount of time that they have spent on Instagram on a particular day.

TIME SPENT

09:41

Time management

30m

Daily average

Average time that you spent per day using Instagram on any device in the past 7 days. Learn about balancing your time online.

Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Today

Manage your time

Daily limit   On >

We'll remind you to close Instagram after 1 hour.

Sleep mode   On >

We'll remind you to close Instagram from 22:00 to 07:00 every day.

SETTINGS → YOUR ACTIVITY → TIME SPENT

Set daily time limit

Have a conversation with your teen about how they feel while using the app. Is there a point when they feel that they aren't benefiting from it as much? Teen Accounts include a default time limit reminder that prompts teens to leave Instagram after 60 minutes each day. Teens over 16 can extend this time if they prefer, but younger teens will need their parent's permission to turn off this reminder. With supervision turned on, parents can work with teens to set total daily time limits for teens' Instagram usage. Once a teen has hit that limit, they'll no longer be able to access the app. Setting a daily time limit together can be a helpful way to discuss how they are utilising Instagram throughout the day.
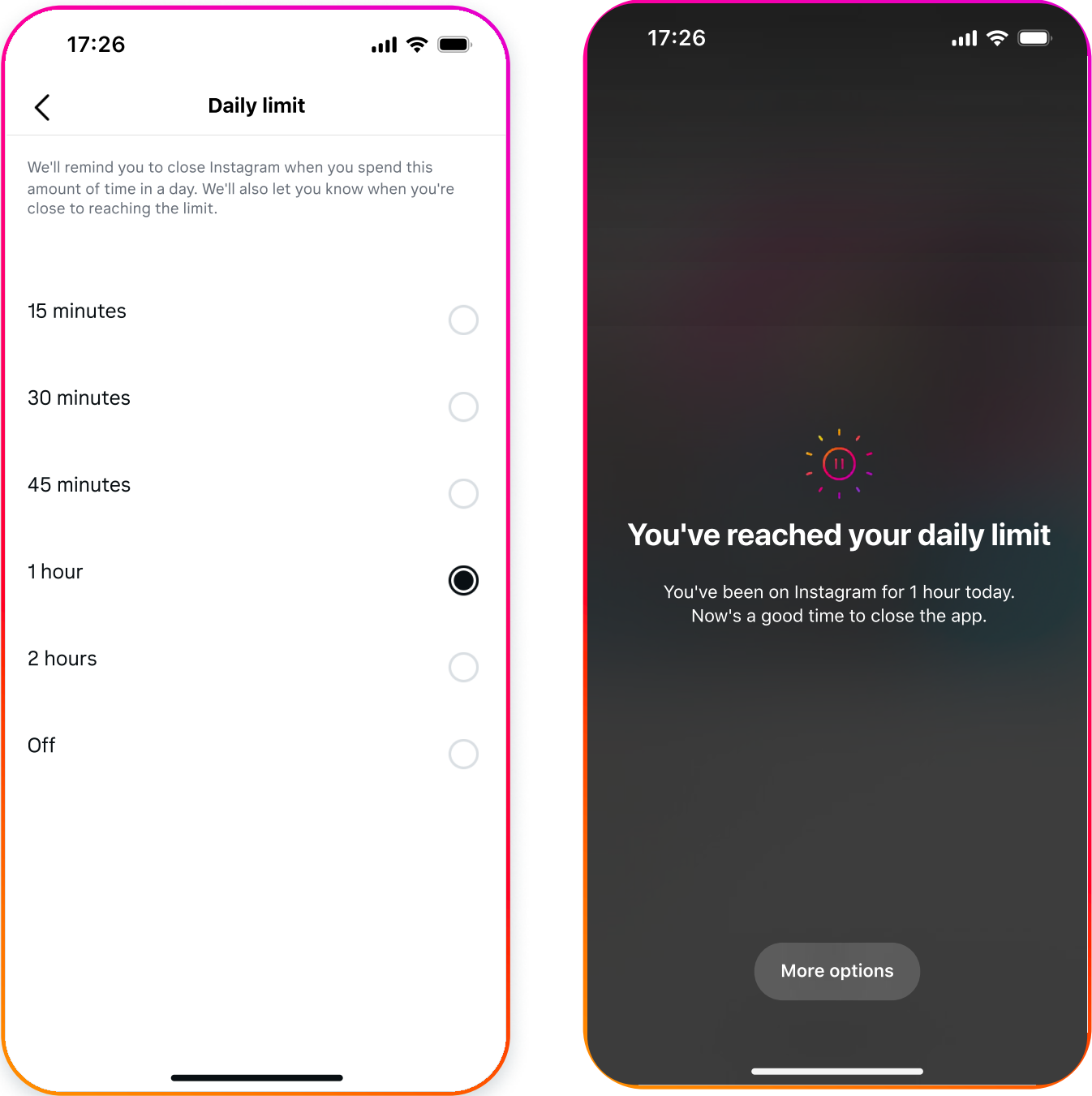
Sleep mode

Teen Accounts are automatically placed in "sleep mode" between the hours of 22:00 and 07:00, preventing teens from receiving any notifications during this time. With supervision turned on, you can choose to completely block access to Instagram during this time.
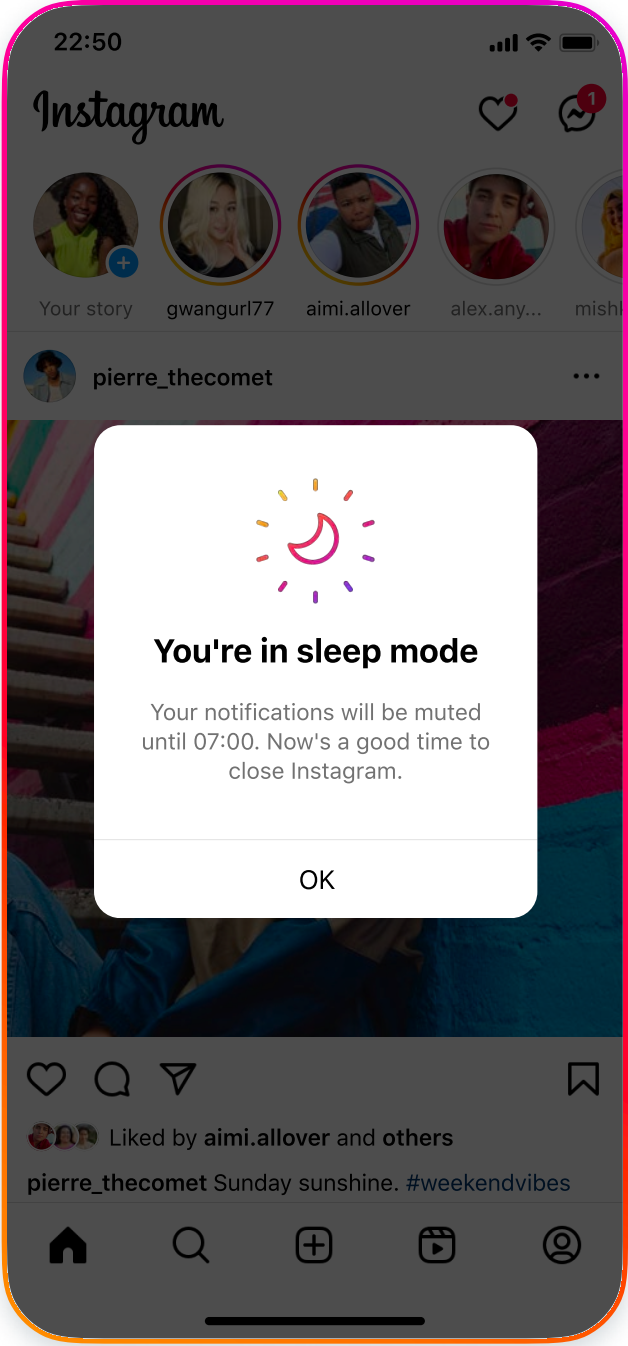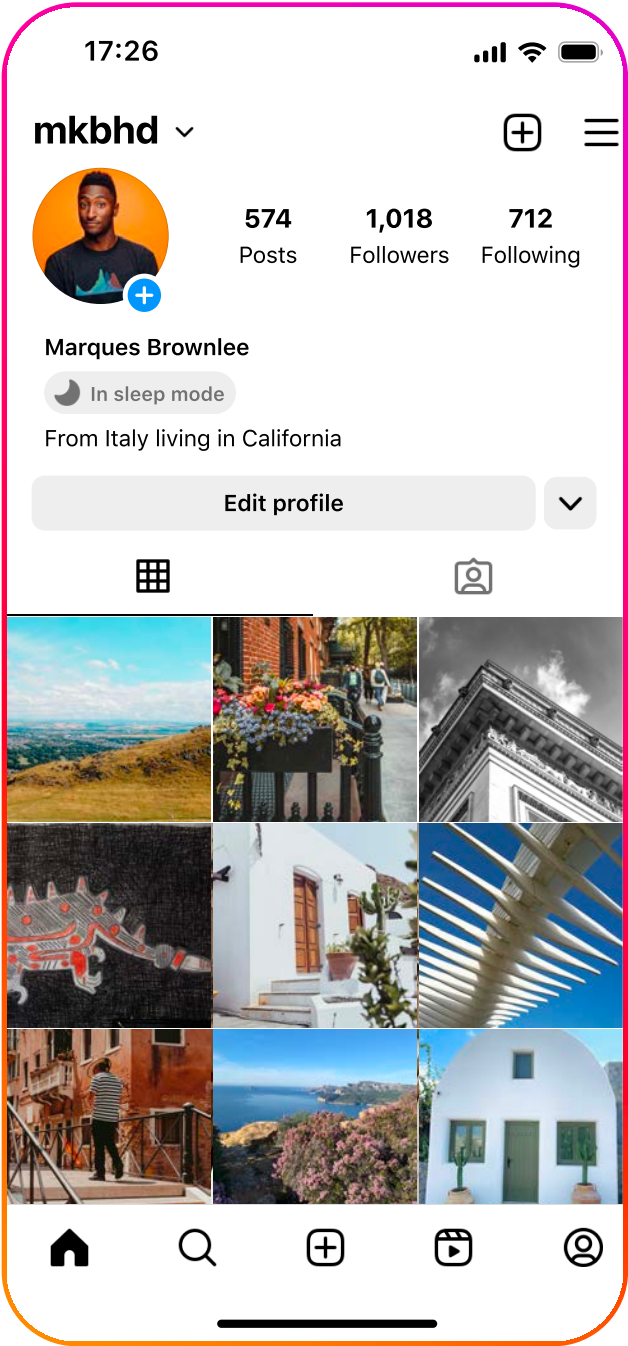
Mute push notifications

Your teen can utilise the "pause all notifications" feature to temporarily silence Instagram notifications. This is a helpful tool for teens who need to concentrate on tasks, such as homework or studying for a test.

Once the preset time has expired, notifications will automatically revert to their original settings without the need for manual adjustment.
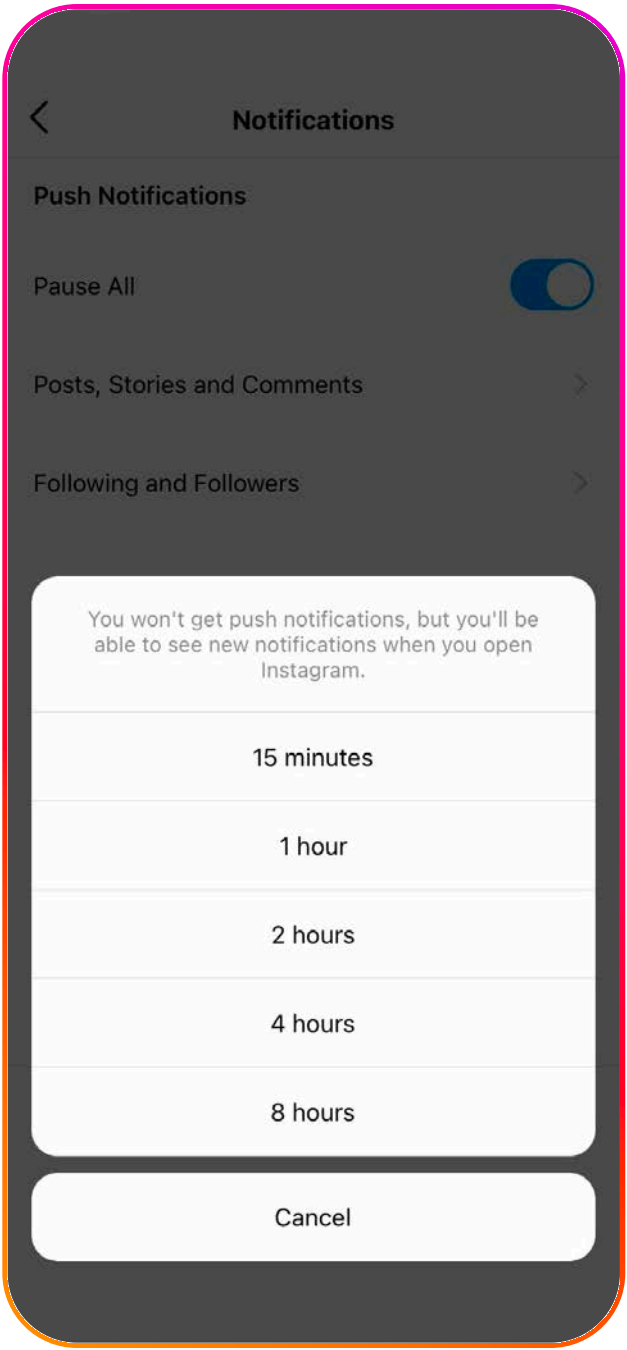

SETTINGS → NOTIFICATIONS →
PAUSE ALL

09
Manage
security

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Security Checkup

Security Checkup guides people through the steps needed to secure their accounts. This includes checking login activity, reviewing profile information, confirming which accounts share login information and updating account recovery contact information, such as a phone number or email address.
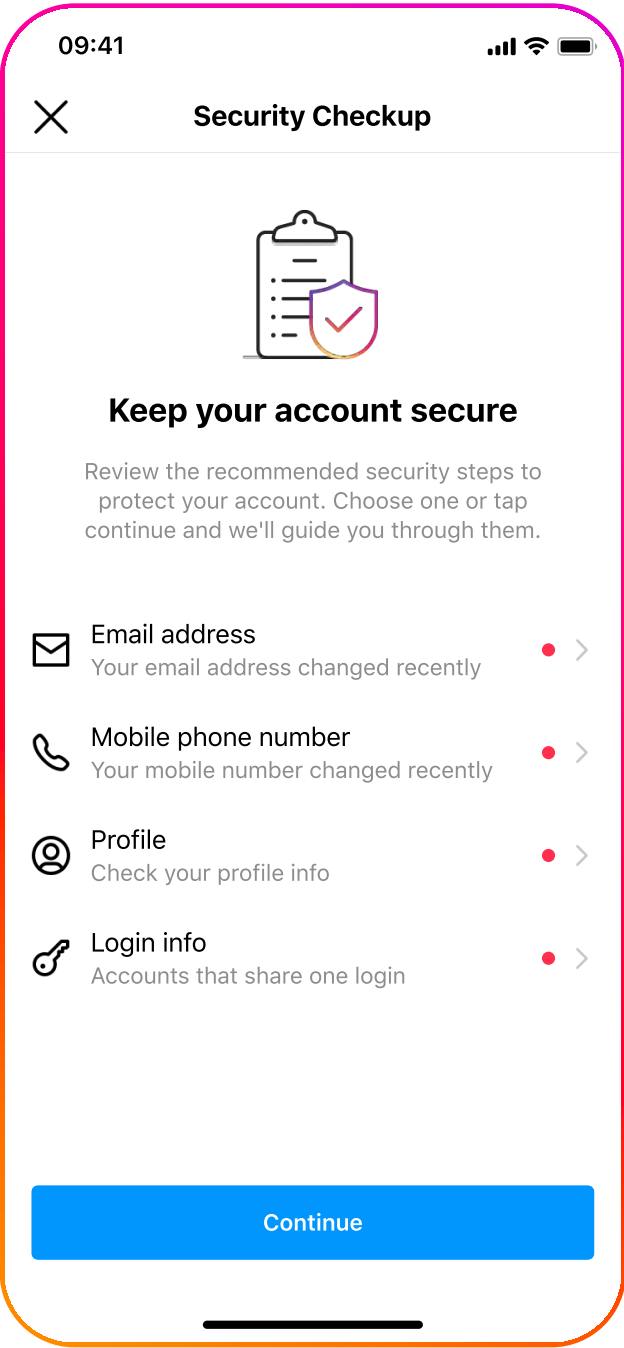
ACCOUNTS CENTRE > SECURITY >
SECURITY CHECKUP

Two-factor authentication

To keep your teen's account secure and their login private, especially across multiple devices, enable two-factor authentication. This additional security layer helps protect an account from unauthorised password usage and can be turned on within Settings.

When logging in to an Instagram account with two-factor authentication enabled, you will need to enter both your password and secure code. This code is sent through an authenticator app or via text message.
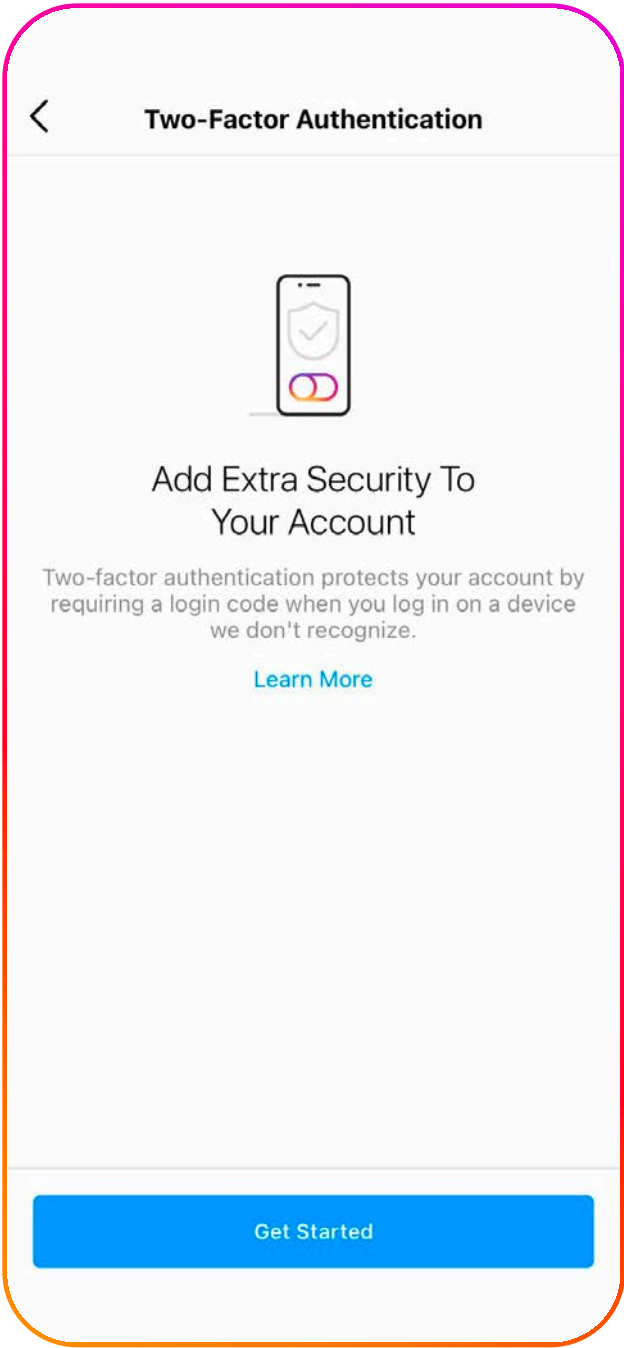
SETTINGS → SECURITY → TWO-FACTOR
AUTHENTICATION

Login activity

You can only be logged in to one Instagram account at a time, but your device can store login information for multiple accounts. You have the option to add or remove login information from your Instagram app settings.
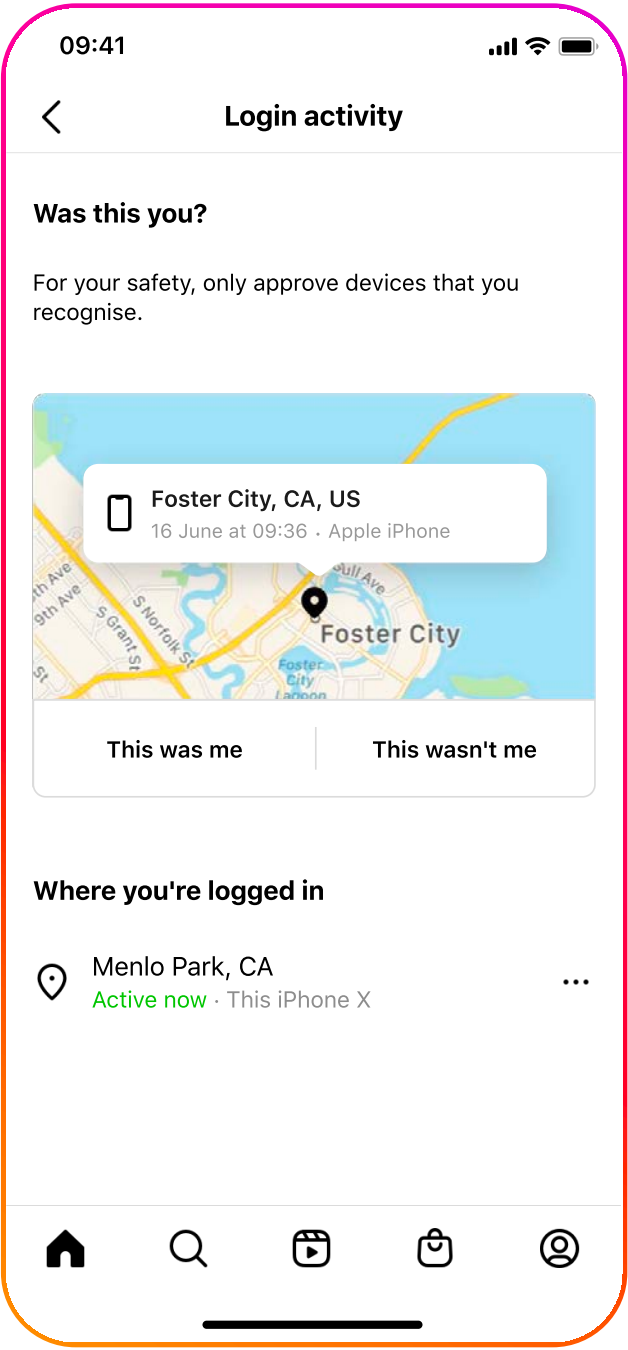
SETTINGS → SECURITY →
LOGIN ACTIVITY

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Supporting others

It may never happen, but if your teen sees something on Instagram that leads them to be concerned for someone's well-being, they can anonymously report the post to us. We may then send resources that we've developed with suicide prevention experts to the person. If they appear to be in immediate danger, we may contact emergency services.

We collaborate with suicide prevention experts to shape our products and policies. Additionally, we guide individuals who search for self-harm or suicide-related content to local support organisations, such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, The Trevor Project and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

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Eating disorders

If your teen is struggling with negative body image or an eating disorder, Instagram offers resources to provide assistance. For example, we remove content that promotes or encourages eating disorders. We also offer resources that direct people to local support organisations, such as the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) in the US, and display expert-approved resources when searching for eating disorder-related content.

We collaborate with experts to inform our product and policies and work with community leaders and curators to assist in creating and sharing positive, inspiring body image content.

Seek help through Instagram
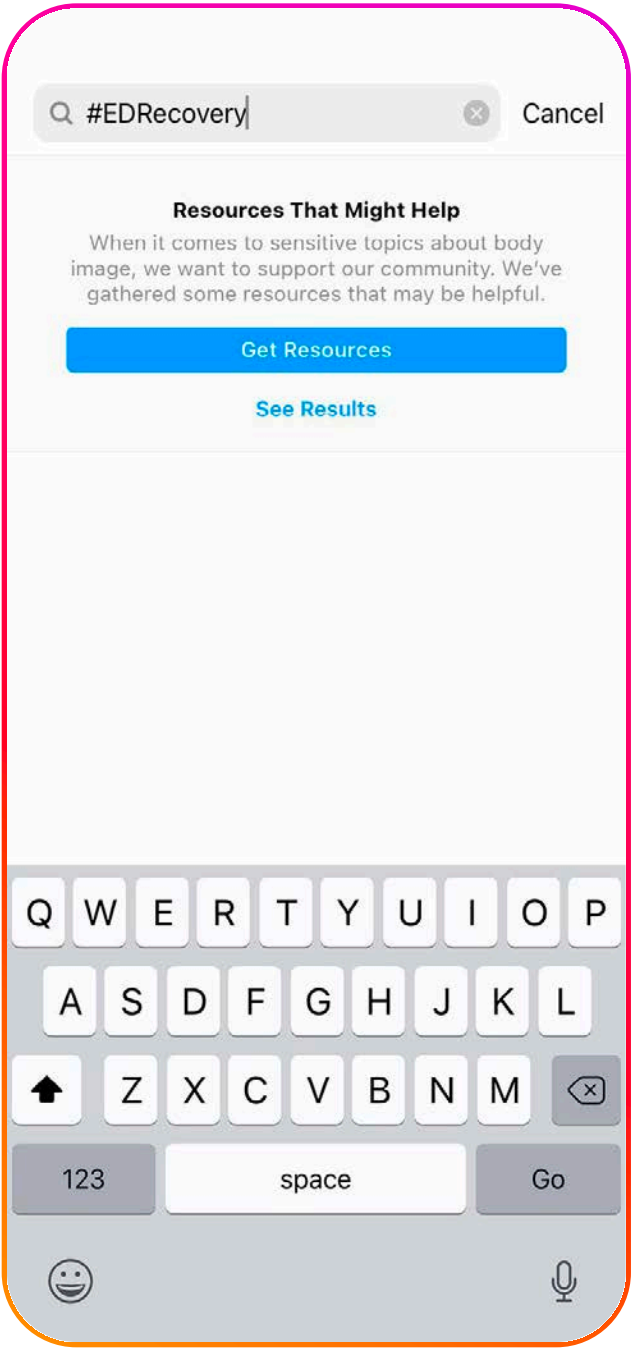
RESOURCES SUGGESTED WHEN
SEARCHING ON INSTAGRAM
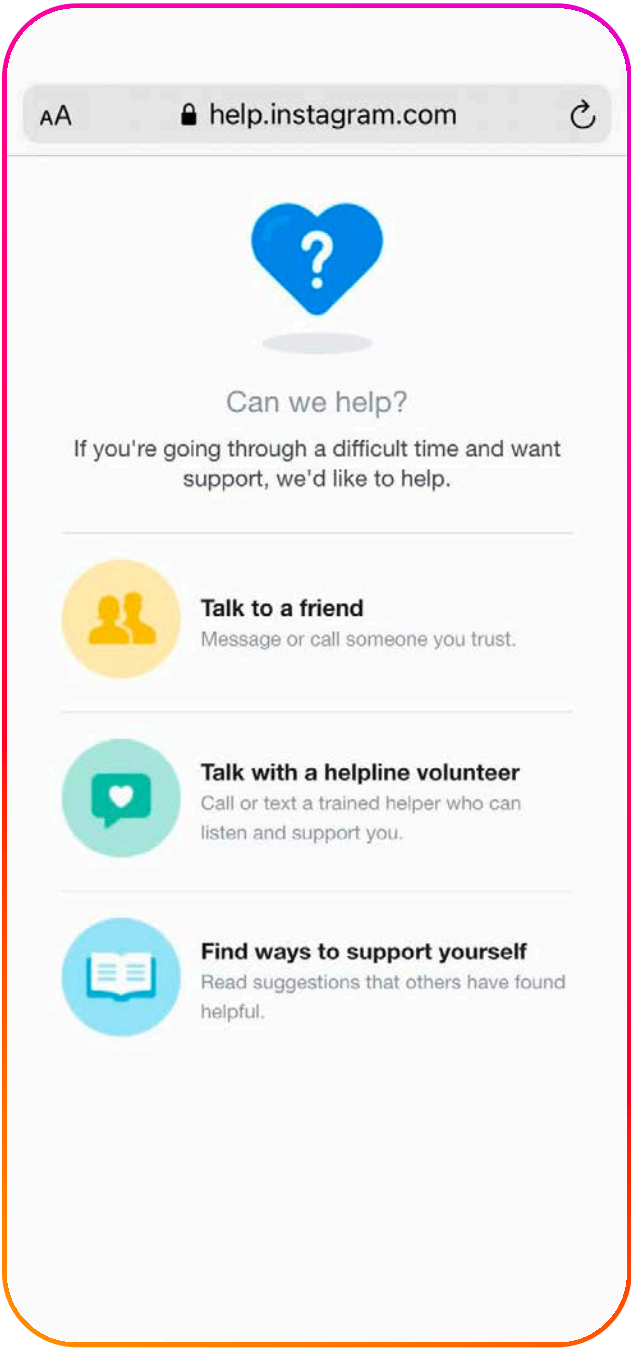
INSTAGRAM RESOURCES

Negative or self-harm thoughts

Hearing that someone you love and care for is having thoughts of suicide or self-harm is a challenging experience. It can evoke a range of emotions for you as a parent or guardian, and it's crucial to acknowledge and process those feelings.

If you are concerned about a young person's current safety or feel that they are unable to keep themselves safe, or if they require medical assistance for self-harm, contact local emergency services.

You can find additional mental health and safety resources at **help.instagram.com/1666662083590610.**

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Glossary of
Instagram terms

BLOCK

Block is a tool that your teen can use if someone is bothering them on Instagram. When your teen blocks someone, the other person isn't notified, but they'll no longer be able to interact with your teen in any way.

COMMENT

A comment is a reaction to the content that someone posts on Instagram. Comments appear below posts on your teen's feed and can use words or emojis.

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

We want to foster a positive, diverse community. Everyone who uses Instagram must adhere to our Community Guidelines, which are designed to create a safe and open environment for everyone. This includes things such as no nudity or hate speech. Not following these guidelines may result in deleted content, disabled accounts or other restrictions.

DIRECT MESSAGES (DMs)

Direct message is a feature where people can message each other individually or in groups. They can also share photos and videos exclusively with the people that they're messaging.

EXPLORE

Explore is where people can discover photos and videos from accounts and hashtags that they may be interested in. Explore varies for each person using Instagram as the content changes based on the accounts and hashtags followed by your teen.

FEED

Feed is where people can view posts from the accounts that they follow. Young people typically see feed posts as being more celebratory or special, which can include photos or videos.

LIVE AND VIDEO CHAT

Your teen can go live to share with their followers in real time. While on live, they can invite friends to join them, co-host a live session or leave comments and send hearts. They can also use Instagram video chat in direct messages with up to four people.

MUTE

Muting allows teens to avoid seeing posts and stories from certain people without having to unfollow or block them.

POST

A post refers to the media being shared on feed or on Stories, which can be photos or videos.

PROFILE

Your teen's Instagram profile is where their friends and followers can find their posts and access their stories. It also includes a short bio. If your teen's profile is private, only their main profile picture and bio are visible.

REELS

Reels allow people to record and edit short videos up to 90 seconds. You can add effects and music to your reel or use your own original audio.

REPORT

Reporting is a way for your teen to let Instagram know that they have seen something inappropriate. Your teen can report anything on Instagram that they believe violates our Community Guidelines.

RESTRICT

Restrict is a feature that allows your teen to prevent certain people from messaging them and commenting on their posts, without those individuals knowing.

STORIES

Stories will disappear from the app after 24 hours unless your teen has enabled archiving. This feature makes their expired stories only available to them. Your teen can then share these in their Story Highlights, which don't disappear. Anyone who can view your teen's stories can take a screenshot of them.

TEEN ACCOUNTS

Teen Accounts are a new, protected experience for teens. Teens on Instagram will automatically be placed in Teen Accounts, which have built-in limits on who can contact them and the content they see, as well as more ways to connect and explore their interests. Teens under 16 need their parent's permission to change these settings.

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Resources

For more tools and resources to help you navigate positive social media habits with your teen, visit **familycenter.meta.com/resources.**

from

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