Instagram

Instagram is a photo and video sharing social media platform that can be accessed via its website or as an app, given that users are above the age of 13 and have registered an account. The platform allows users to share their photos and videos publicly or privately among approved "followers", live-stream, and video call. Instagram users can like, share and comment on one another's posts, send each other private messages, and shop for goods.

What are the safety concerns with Instagram?

- **Child exploitation.** Instagram do not condone child exploitation or child sexual abuse material on their platform and reports instances of both to relevant authorities. However, there have been reported instances of offenders circumventing platform security and using Instagram to groom minors, live stream sexual activity with minors, and share child sexual abuse material online. It's important that children on Instagram are encouraged to tell someone if they have upsetting experiences online, and that they know how to use the block and report features.
- **Romance scams.** There have been several cases of romance scams on Instagram. This scam occurs when a scammer messages an individual pretending to have romantic feelings towards them to gain their affection and trust. The scammers then use this trust to obtain personal information, money, or other benefits to exploit the victim.
- **Malicious links.** There have been several cases where scammers hack into users' accounts and send direct messages containing malicious links to the user's friends. Upon clicking the link, you may be diverted to a website that will expose your device to malware or attempt to obtain your personal information. Users should beware of suspicious messages that appear to be sent by legitimate friends.
- **Harmful content.** Instagram uses a mix of filters, human review and feedback to hide or remove harmful content, however, no app's safety features are 100% fail-safe. Sometimes users may be exposed to upsetting or offensive photos and videos.

How do I stay safe using Instagram?

- **Switch to a private account.** By default, Instagram accounts are set to public once they are created, although privacy settings allow you to switch accounts between public or private. If your account is set to private, you can approve or deny new followers, remove existing followers, and choose who can comment on your posts. Livestreams and content posted on private accounts can only be viewed by the account's followers. To switch your account to private, go to your account page and select the three lines in the top right corner, tap "Settings" and select "Privacy".
- **Manage comments.** In the privacy section of account settings, you can also manage who can comment on your posts or message your account, this can be done by tapping on "Comments" or "Messages".
- **Sensitive content control.** In the "Sensitive content control" section of your account settings, you can limit upsetting or offensive content from appearing on your explore page.
- **Managing time.** You can view your time spent using Instagram and set reminders to stop using the app in the "Your activity" section on your account.

How do I report online abuse on Instagram?

- **Report posts and accounts.** Report posts by tapping the three dots above the post and selecting report. To report an Instagram user's account, you can press the three dots at the top of their account page and select report.

I want some more information about how to stay safe on Instagram

If you want further information about Instagram or how to stay safe online, you can follow the links below:

- Instagram's online safety webpage
- Keep it real online
- Te Tari Taiwhenua, Department of Internal Affairs – Factsheet on 'Helping children stay safe when using smart devices'
- Netsafe's parent's guide to Instagram