

10

INSTAGRAM

SECRET WEAPONS

MUST HAVE APPS &
TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

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INSTAGRAM

You love it. You hate it. I get it!

But the fact remains: if you're growing a blog, brand, community, or business then you know that Instagram is one of the most powerful tools out there for reaching your homies. And by homies I mean your dream customers, ideal audience, and the people out there who need your creativity, talent, and gifts!

Great in theory, amirite? There's just one small problem: the Almighty Algorithm. Ouch, I know.

There's no magic cure for the algorithm. I'm not going to lie to you. But there are strategies and tools. And you do not need to buy followers, follow/unfollow (yuck), or have a sculpted backside, golden locks, and spend an inordinate amount of time in the tropics to grow your following. Though if the latter sounds like you, that's rad!

The number one strategy, now more than ever, is to lead with your best photo forward at the right time, engage, and use appropriate + varied hashtags. Instagram used to be about moments (Insta!), but now Instagram is about curating high quality images & building community more than moments shared "instantly". I've got all the tools you need below to edit like a pro.

That said, Instagram Stories is about moments, so share all those **hilarious** (but kinda unphotogenic) snapshots & videos there and keep your feed a curated representation of your brand. Instagram stories is also a great place to show that beautiful face! People love to connect face to face, and it's the perfect place to do it. I've got crazy awesome tools for your stories below, too!

Bottom line: Consistency is **king** on Instagram (and for your brand in general!) You want your photos, editing, content, and voice to remain consistent so that people get what they signed up for and stay around! And post consistently! Whether it's once a week, or 3 times a day, try to keep a consistent rhythm.

What you may not know is that pro influencers use a whole **host** of apps & tools to help them slay on Instagram and keep it consistent, timely, hashtagged, and on point. And because Instagram is changing, those tools are always changing too. If you have my earlier guide, you may notice some different apps in this one because some of the ones I used to use are either no longer around or no longer relevant. This is my current & up to date list of essentials cause there are no secrets to success!

xo, *Beth*

1 VSCO

This is one of the OG editing apps, and their filters emulate film.

Fact: a lot of your favorite accounts are using VSCO filters and tweaking them to make them their own! If moody or vintage is your thing, then you'll love this app.

As for me, I use VSCO to edit my Instagram story photos on the fly. I like my feed a little brighter and cleaner, but I love the fun, analog feel for stories. The editing tools in VSCO are responsive and comprehensive, and include transform tools (great for straightening crooked lines!), highlight and shadow tint color mixing (great for personalizing tones), and you can see a before and after preview (which is **essential** to me) by holding your finger down on the photo.

Best part? It's **free**. Go to the in-app shop to grab a variety of different preset packs—try the Aesthetic collection for free...I use it on my stories all the time!

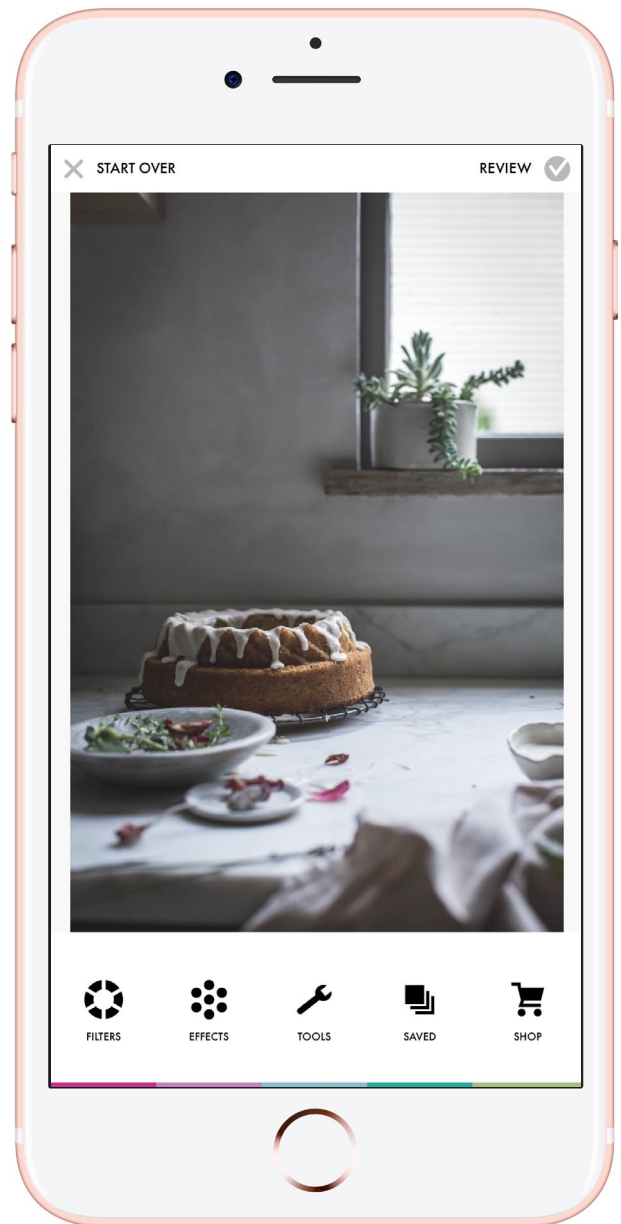


2 COLOR STORY

If moody isn't your thing, and you want a clean feed with minimal effort, this is the free editing app for you.

A shout out to my friend, [@RebekkaSeale](#) for showing me this gem! This is another great editing-on-the-go app I love to play with. It's a similar concept but a very different aesthetic than VSCO. Whereas VSCO's strength is vintage, film-like filters, Color Story's strength is in its comprehensive color mixing tools and ability to bring colors to life in your photos, make them more true to life, and customize them to fit your brand's aesthetic.

The app has transform tools, tone curve, and so much more in-depth editing you can do, and the filters that come with this app are super bright, modern, and poppy making them ideal for editing photos for a bright, white, or minimalist feed.



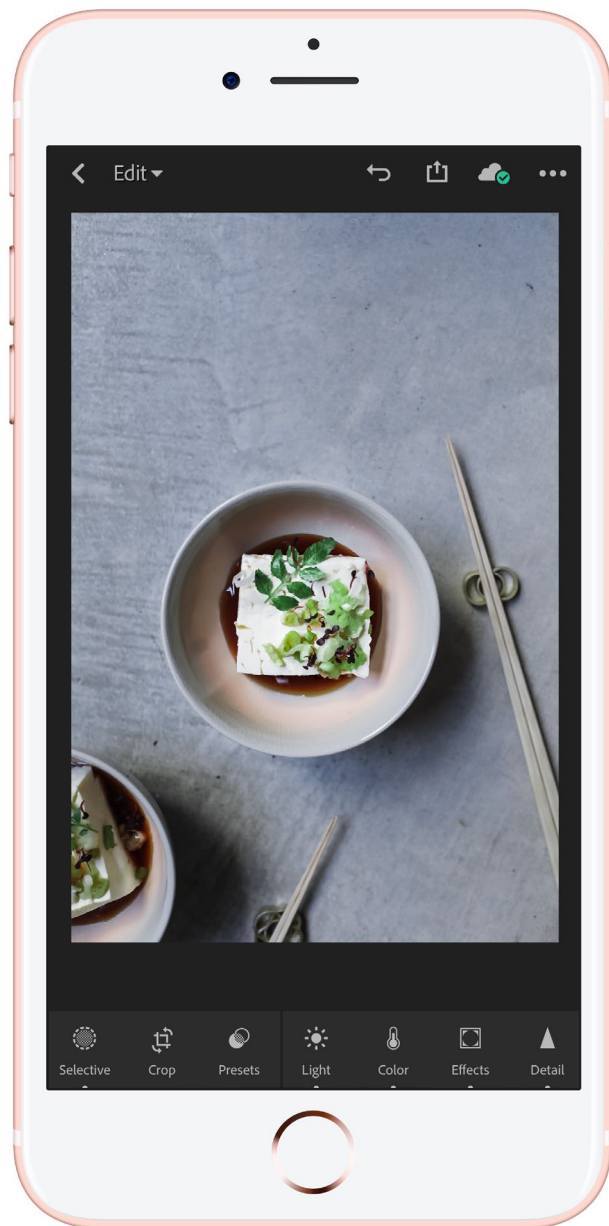
3 LIGHTROOM

Ok. This is the big guns of mobile editing.

I would join Adobe Creative Cloud just for this app, however I also use Adobe programs for all of my desktop editing needs (I use InDesign, Premier, Lightroom, and Photoshop!) Needless to say, my Adobe Creative Cloud membership is worth every penny.

I couldn't do what I do without them! So, if I ever need to edit a photograph for my feed on my phone, this is my personal go to, and it's almost as powerful as Lightroom Desktop (which is my ultimate fave for editing!)

My favorite features are that it now has a curves tool, a color mixing panel, and **selective editing!!** Woohoo! That means you can apply brush, radial, and linear masks to your photos to just edit one portion of the photo instead of the whole thing. The app is free, but you have to upgrade to premium for selective edits, but it's **totally** #worthit. Because selective edits mean perfect, finely tuned photos. Yes, please!

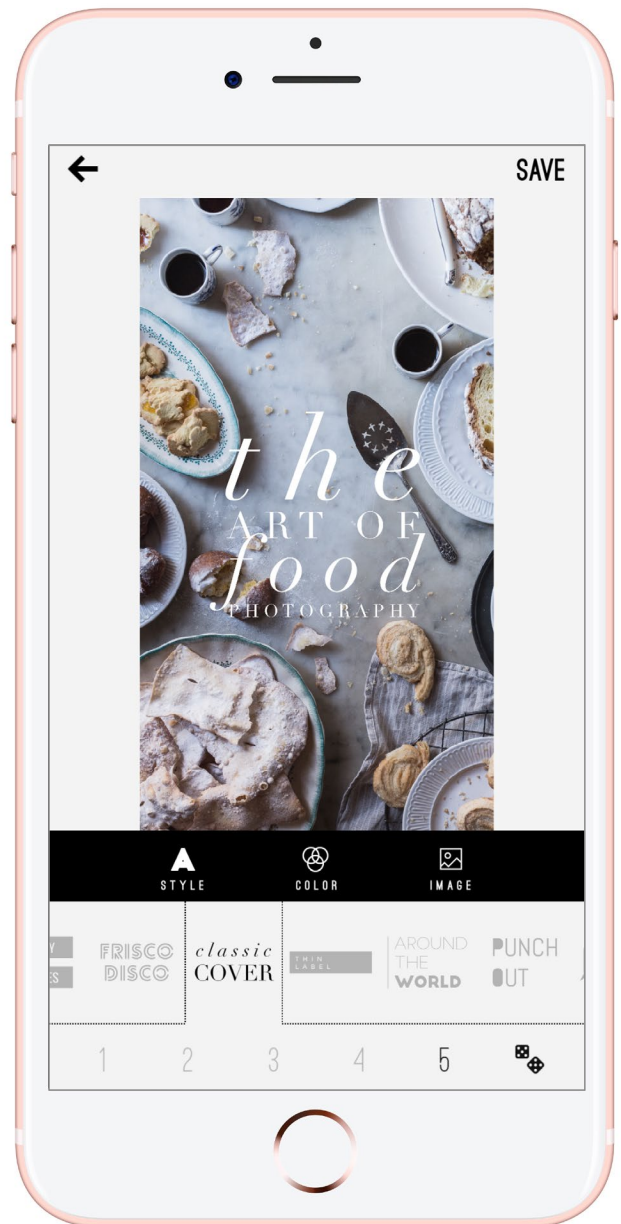


4 WORD SWAG

It's like having a graphic designer in your pocket.

A big shout out to [@Jenna_Kutcher](#) for turning me on to this app. Ever wonder how I am getting those sweet fonts on my IG stories instead of the, ah, less-than-ideal (a.k.a. fugly!) default font? Well, this is it.

But! Not only that, I can also use it to create Pinterest posts, Facebook posts, and opt in buttons for my website on the go! Score!

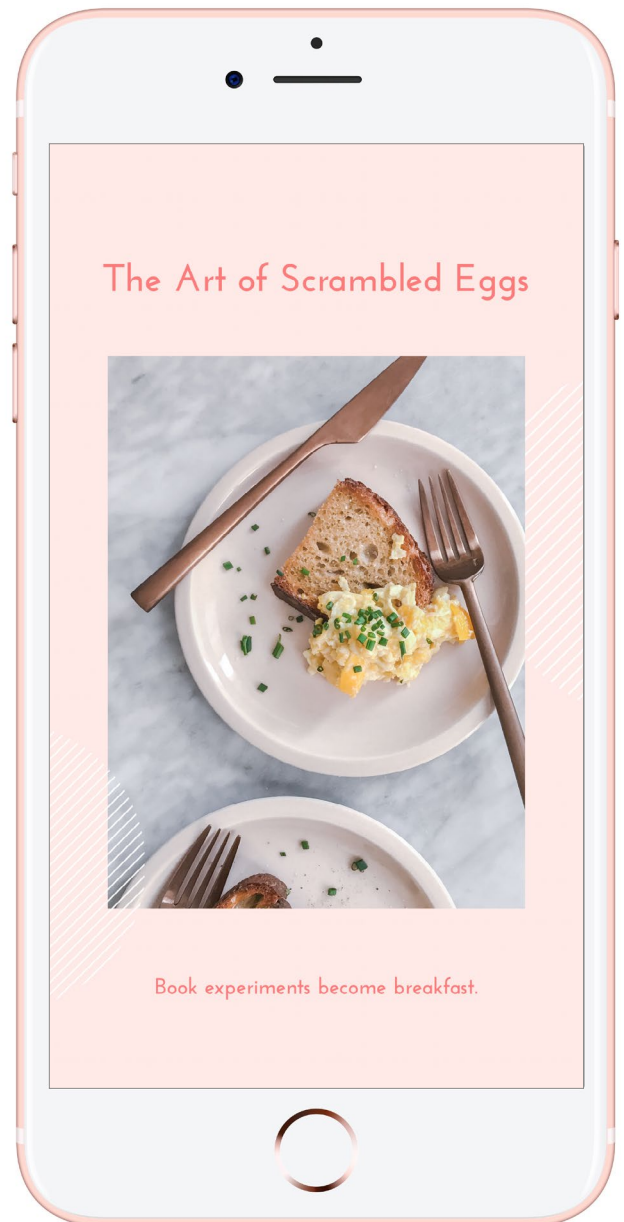


5 CANVA

Another awesome app for creating professional looking graphics on the go (and trust me I'm no graphic designer!)

Whereas Word Swag focuses on dope, ready-made type, Canva is a more comprehensive design tool you can use to create everything from creative IG stories, posters, Pinterest graphics, Facebook banners, and even those cute little Instagram story highlight icons you see people using! If you want to know that, I recorded a little tutorial video you can grab [here](#)!

Canva can be used both on your phone and on desktop—I use both! You can get really creative and create shareable worksheets and story templates, infographics, collages, and more. And, yep, it's also **free**.

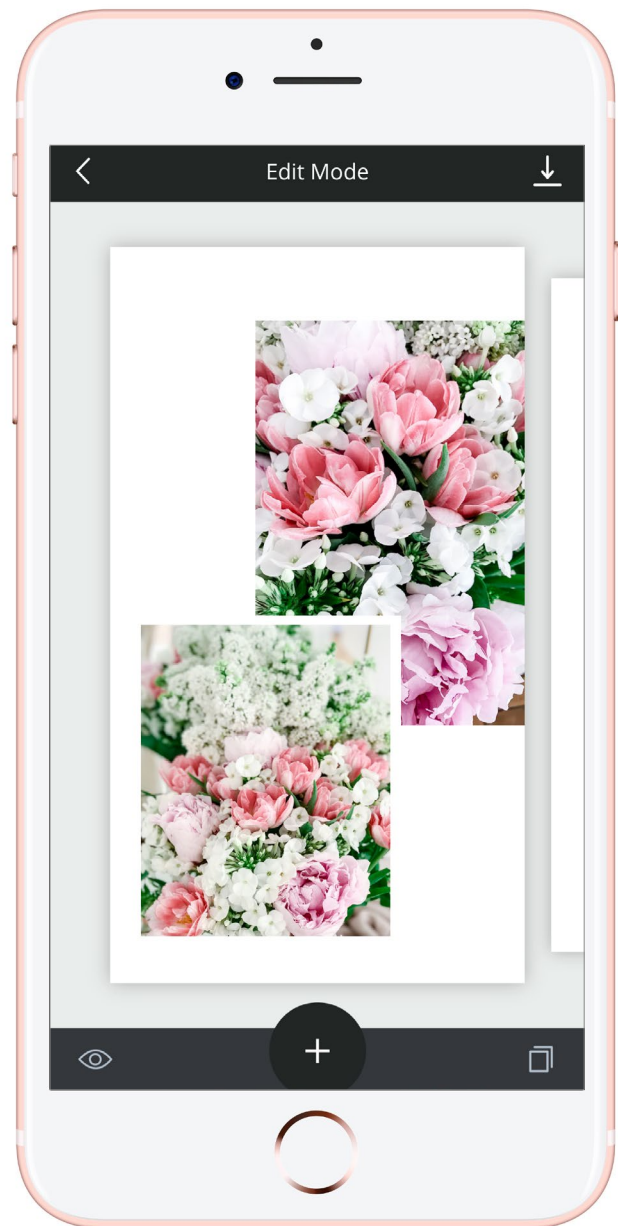


6 UNFOLD

This is a design app devoted to creating beautifully designed Instagram stories in a few clicks.

Credit for discovering this app goes to my homie @Emma Louise Sophia! With multiple collage and text templates to choose from, this clean app will give your IG Stories an editorial feel and break up the monotony.

I love to mix this with using Canva and WordSwag so it never gets boring. I use a similar color palette and favorite fonts across them all to keep it on brand and consistent, but I don't worry about it too much. For now, IG Stories are at their best when they're fun, real, and full of life.



7 PLANOLY

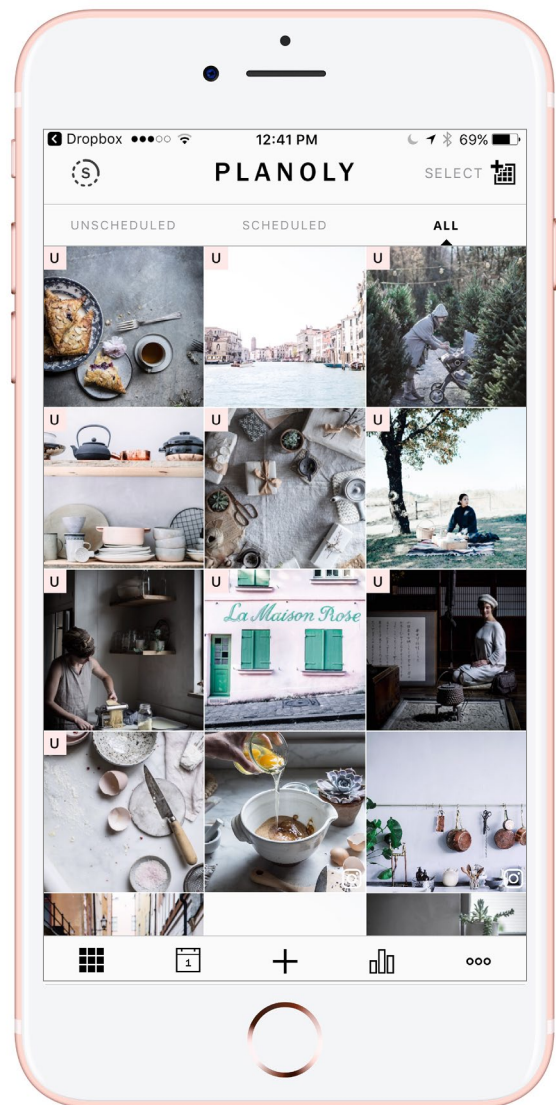
I use it to plan out my grid in advance.

I love, love this app. The app is free, but I pay for the “solo” \$9/mo plan, but as I grow my team I can upgrade to plans where multiple people can manage multiple accounts. Small business gold! I use it to plan out my grid in advance. When it’s time to post, I get a notification on my phone. Then it’s just a few clicks and bam—my post is live!

I used to schedule my posts using apps like Prime (which no longer exists) and When to Post (which I find to be really inaccurate), and now I just use my Instagram analytics to determine when to post. If you don’t have an Instagram business account or a ton of followers, you might not be able to see your analytics. While I used to recommend analytics apps, I have found them to largely not be that helpful and have found that good old common sense is best.

By common sense, I mean know your audience. Usually between 12 PM and 3 PM EST is best if you are US based. And more generally speaking, you are looking to post when the bulk of your audience is both awake and likely to be engaging with Instagram. This is VERY important because though the feed is no longer chronological, it’s that initial boost of engagement when you post that will help the algorithm determine whether to show your post to more people! So you need your tribe to be active so they can give it that initial love!

This app offers a drag and drop grid so you can plan your feed easily, create & manage hashtag groups, and moderate and respond to comments all within the app. If you are a business account, they can even auto post for you!! Also, they’re Instagram approved so you don’t have to worry about it doing anything weird to your account!



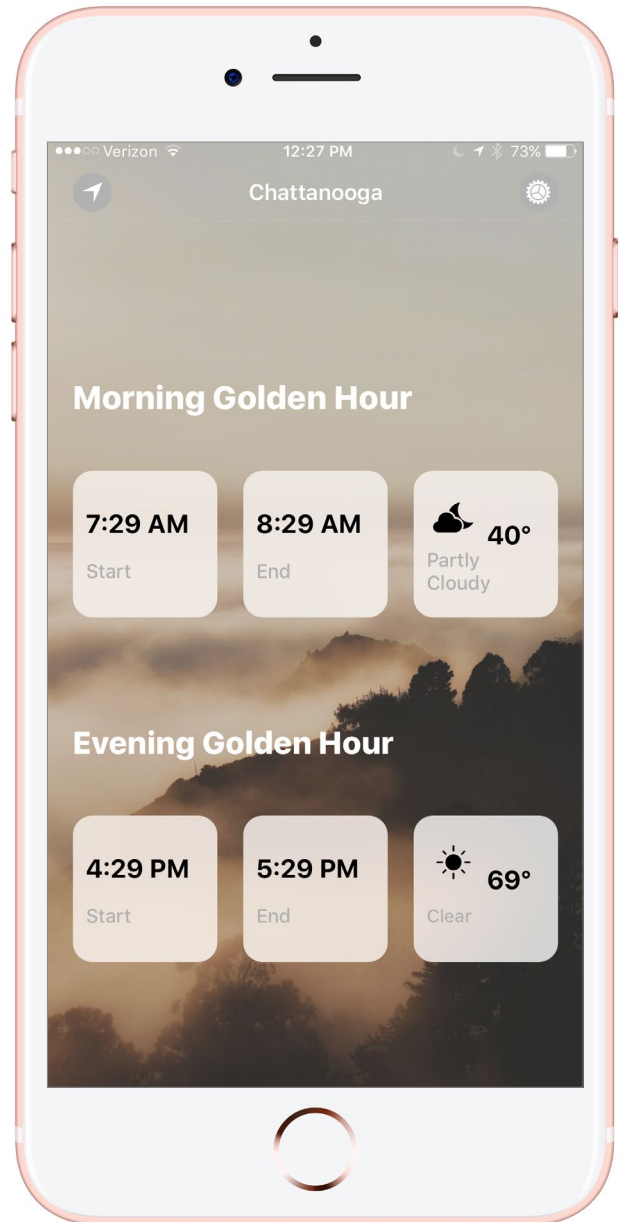
8 GOLDEN

Catching golden hour is the difference between a photo that makes me say, "Oh, some trees" and "Holy magical forest!".

As all seasoned photographers know, light is **everything** when it comes to getting a beautiful shot, and on Instagram it's no different. Making sure you take your photographs in the most beautiful (natural!!) light will make a **huge** difference in your photographs if you aren't doing it already.

This handy app let's you know when morning and evening golden hour are in your time zone on that particular day so it takes the guesswork out of getting beautiful travel shots, portraits, and anything outdoors. It also lets you know when you will lose light if you're shooting indoors because "golden hour" is the hour right before the sun sets and is at a beautiful, glowy angle in the sky.

And remember what we said about leading with your best photo forward? Yeah. You definitely want that magical forest. So get stalking golden hour (aka **magic hour**)!

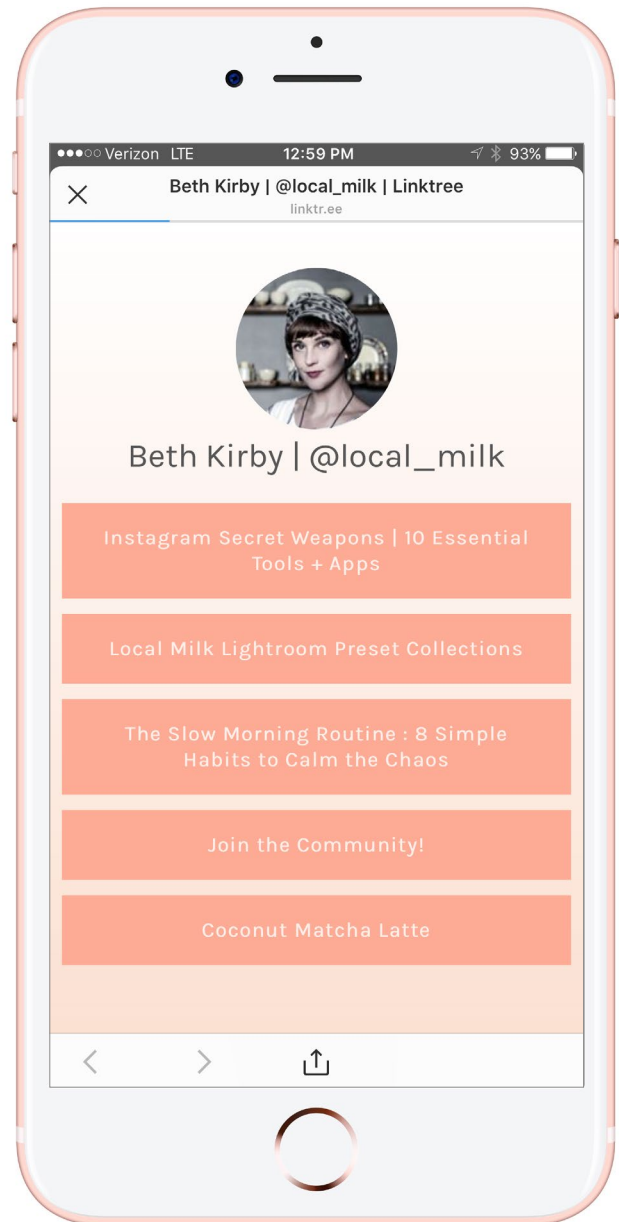


9 LINKTREE

Linktree creates a little landing page out of the link in your bio.

Okay this isn't an app. It's a service. But if you've ever struggled with which amazing thing to link in you bio (Your blog? Your portfolio? Your store? Your e-course?!!! Ahhhh!!!!) then this is the solution for you!

Linktree creates a little landing page out of the link in your bio. When people click they see options to click on all of the above!



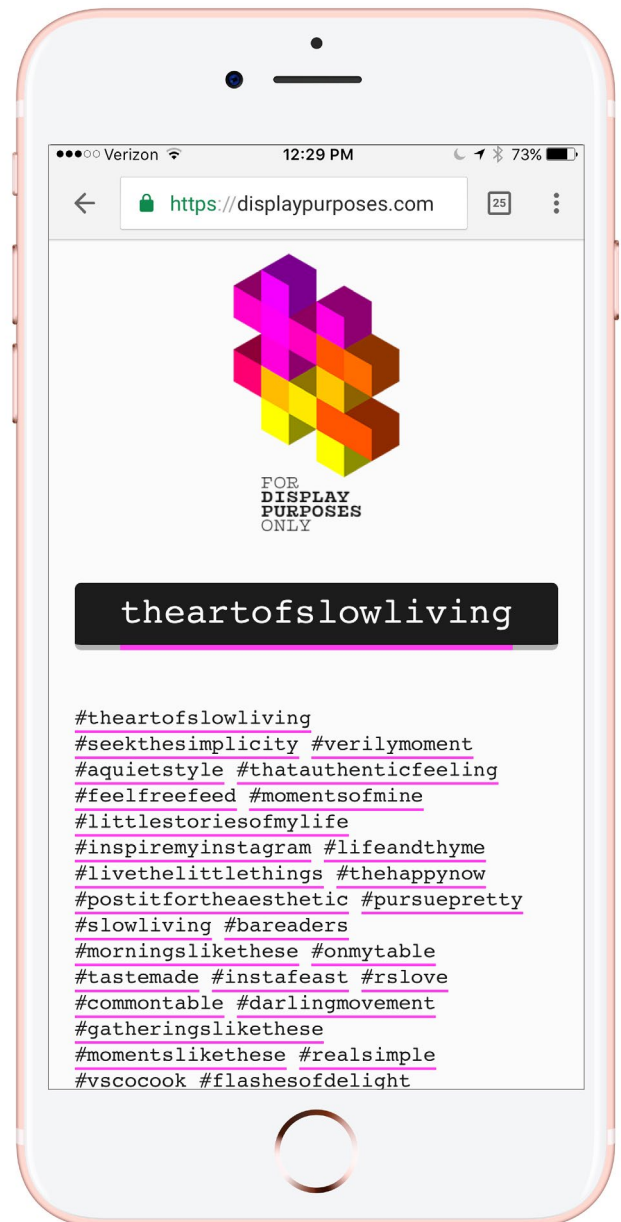
10 DISPLAY PURPOSES

You get 30 hashtags per post...
use every dadgum one!

Also not an app, but rather a website that acts a hashtag generator. Type in a relatively popular hashtag, and this generator will bring up a cloud of other related hashtags. You then simply click “copy mode”, and you can copy a cloud complete with nifty dots to separate it from your caption.

My favorite way to use this is to use it along with good old fashioned research to collect a variety of high (over one million uses) and low density (under 1 million uses) hashtags and create 2-3 clouds per topic I post about (i.e. creative biz, food, travel, motherhood) and save those in Planoly. I create 2-3 different clouds for each topic because when you post the same hashtags over and over again, Instagram can consider this spammy or robotic and you might get shadowbanned! Yikes! Which just means that people who don't follow you won't see you in the hashtags, and since the point of hashtags is to be seen by new people, that's no bueno!

By saving my clouds with Planoly's nifty hashtag saving option, I'm just one click away from perfectly curated clouds of hashtags instantly! And remember: you get 30 hashtags per post... use every dadgum one!



NOW THAT YOU'VE GOT THE TOOLS...

Remember. You are not a number on a screen, and the sum total of your worth is **not** your followers. If your goal is to grow a meaningful brand and share your gifts with the people out there who need them, then it's **quality** of followers that matters, not quantity.

I am a believer in the "1000 True Fans" theory. What that theory says is that if you have just 1000 people who truly **love** what you do, will show up when you show up, will invest in what you create, and will support your work then you can make an excellent living selling them just \$100 of product a year.

Popularity doesn't matter. You don't get a dollar for every Instagram follower you have. **What does matter is that the followers you do have like, know, and trust you.** Make that your focus, and you will be successful.

If you find Instagram is really getting you down, step away. People don't unfollow you for not posting— they can hardly remember to! Take a break, reconnect with what you're passionate about & your **why**, and then start up again when you feel inspired. The world can always wait, and whatever opportunities are out there for you won't be snatched by someone else because you are the only **you** out there, and no one can compete with that.

xo,
Beth