

Instagram Post Planning Guide

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Step-by-step from idea to published post. Designed for brands posting under 3x/week. Follow every step in order — skipping steps is the #1 reason posts underperform.

Step 1 — Define the post goal

Before anything else, answer: what do you want someone to DO after seeing this post? Options: visit the link in bio, DM you, save this post, tag a friend, or just build brand awareness. Every decision below flows from this answer. Write it down.

Step 2 — Choose the content format

Match the format to the goal:

- Reel (15–60 s) — best for reach and new audience discovery.
- Carousel (2–10 slides) — best for saves and educational content.
- Static image — best for lifestyle/aesthetic and community building.
- Story — best for polls, quick offers, and behind-the-scenes.

Step 3 — Write the caption draft

Lead with a hook in the first line (visible before "more"). Use the P-A-S structure: Problem !' Agitation !' Solution. Keep it under 150 words for static posts; Reels can carry longer captions if they are story-driven. End with a single, clear call-to-action — not two.

Step 4 — Select or create the visual

Your visual must stop the scroll within 0.3 seconds. Rules:

- Use brand colours consistently.
- Show a face or recognisable product whenever possible — they outperform scenery.
- Leave breathing room (avoid text-heavy overlays unless it is a Quote post).
- Export at 1080 × 1080 px (square) or 1080 × 1350 px (portrait) for feed posts.

Step 5 — Research and attach hashtags

Use a mix of three hashtag tiers:

- Niche (< 500k posts) — 5 hashtags.
- Mid (500k–5M posts) — 5 hashtags.
- Broad (5M+ posts) — 2 hashtags.

Total: 12 hashtags. Rotate sets weekly. Avoid banned hashtags (check via IG search).

Step 6 — Schedule or publish

Post when your audience is most active. Default windows if you have no data yet:

- Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday at 8–9 am OR 6–7 pm local time.

Use Instagram's native scheduling tool or Later/Buffer. Never schedule more than 7 days in advance — trends shift fast.

Step 7 — Engage for the first 30 minutes

The first 30 minutes after publishing are the highest-leverage window. Reply to every comment immediately. Jump into 5 related hashtag feeds and leave genuine comments. Share the post to Stories. Signal to the algorithm that engagement is happening NOW — this directly affects reach for the next 24 hours.

Step 8 — Log and review

After 48 hours, check: reach, impressions, saves, shares, and profile visits. Log these in a simple spreadsheet. Posts with high saves = repeat the format. Posts with high reach but low saves = adjust the hook or caption next time. Do this review every single post — compounding data beats gut instinct.

Built by Arise Digital Solutions. Questions? Reach out at ariseditalsolutions.com or DM @ariseditalsolutions on Instagram.