

Instagram 101

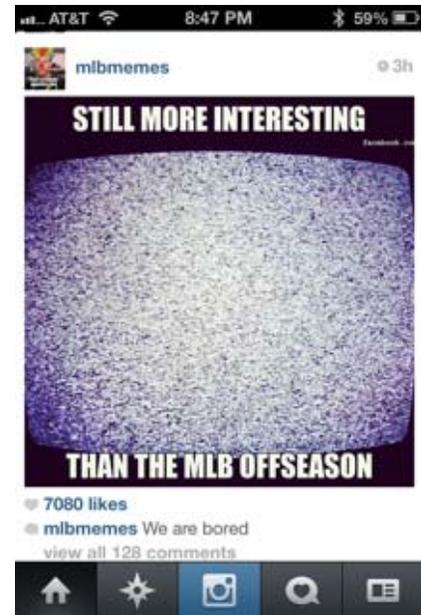
[Instagram](#) is a photo sharing social network mobile app (application) in which users take square sized photos and apply special filters to obtain a variety of unique looks. Users have the ability to follow others and have others follow them similar to Twitter and there is a comment thread for each photo similar to postings on Facebook. Even the likes of National Geographic use Instagram for users to submit their own photos to the magazine for viewing on their online and print magazine.

Kids have taken Instagram to a whole new level. Not only do they post photos; but they also post memes, photo comments and photo questions to their followers. What is a meme? It can be an image with words, a copy of an image, a screen shot of something passed via the Internet from one user to another. Add-on apps for mobile devices such as [Versagram](#) allow them to create text messages within Instagram.



Example of a Versagram post to Instagram.

For many kids, it is the social network of choice before Facebook and Twitter. It's also very easy to install without any e-mail validation or parental consent. The software doesn't even ask for a birth date to validate one's age even though the minimum age required by Instagram's terms of service is 13 years. If your child owns an iPod touch, iPad or any type of Android phone or tablet, he has the ability to obtain this software; that is, if you're giving him access to download his own apps.



A meme on Instagram.

If you and your family decide that your child is allowed to use Instagram, the following steps will help you make sure his account doesn't reveal too much information to too many people:

Make the account private so your child's Instagram images will not be out there for the whole world to see. Only his followers will be able to see his Instagram postings.

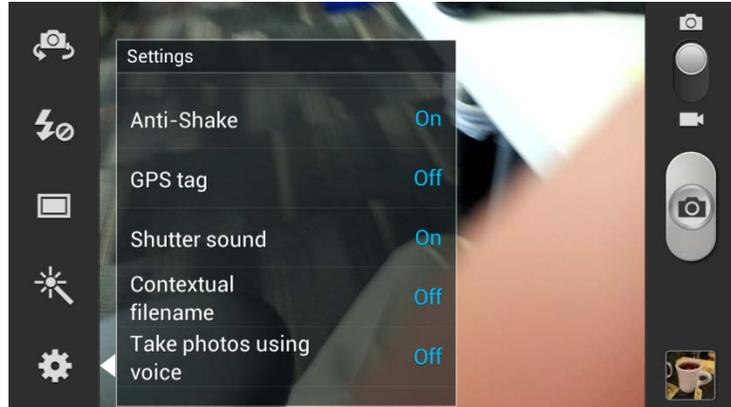
→ *Directions:* Select the bottom right icon within Instagram. It will be the profile page of your child's account. Select the gears icon on the top right side of the page.

Limit Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in his profile. Make sure your child's profile text doesn't reveal too much information. It is available to all Instagram users whether his account is private or not. Never reveal any personally identifiable information in which someone could use to find your child.

Turn off GPS locations for photos.

This way, if for some reason your child turns on the photo map (which can't be turned off), the photos your child posts won't show where you live and places you frequent.

- *Directions for all iOS devices:* Select the Settings icon (looks like gears) on the device. Then go to General > Restrictions > Location Services and turn off the locations for all photo apps as well as Instagram. If you don't already have a password for Restrictions, set one that you and not your child has access to.



Example of how to turn off GPS tracking in Android OS. (Photo/Jeremy Tomlinson)

- *Directions for Android phones:* Open the camera app. Select the Settings icon (looks like a gear) on the device. Scroll through the options and find GPS tag. Toggle the setting to "Off".

Monitor your child's postings, followers and who he is following. Schedule a regular time to look over all aspects of your child's Instagram account. If you deem necessary, tell your child to stop following certain individuals or have your child remove certain followers from your child's account. Take note of the number of individuals following your child and work with him to determine the quantity and quality of followers. Many kids compete to obtain the most followers without realizing the impact of their security and privacy. Do what makes sense to you.

- *For example:* limit the number of followers only to kids your child personally knows, just like you would on sites such as LinkedIn.
- *Important:* Your child's friends will regularly change their screen names, obtain new accounts and/or create fake accounts. It's all part of what they think is fun.

Resources:

<http://instagram.com>

<http://adage.com/article/startup-watch/versagram-lets-tweens-talk-instagram/238431/>

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"A mom's perspective to protecting your family's digital life."