



## Biola University Instagram Style Guide

**Please consider all of the style points below before posting a photograph/video on the @BiolaUniversity Instagram account.**

### **1. Taking a Photo/Video**

*Good Instagram photos take planning.*

- a. Preferably shoot photos/videos on a DSLR or a high-quality camera, if possible. Otherwise, try to enhance an iPhone photo/video with a wide lense camera, attached light or through using natural light. (Make sure the area you are in has good lighting, in general.)
- b. When taking photos outside, have the subject/subjects face the sun.
- c. Photos and videos should not be grainy, unfocused or washed out, unless this is intentional for rare artistic content.
- d. Hold camera or phone horizontally when taking a picture.
- e. Frame a photo/video using the rule of thirds.
  - i. Definition: Aligning a subject with the guidelines and their intersection points, placing the horizon on the top or bottom line, or allowing linear features in the image to flow from section to section.
  - ii. These lines can be turned on in iPhone's camera app by turning on "Grid" under the "Photos & Camera" section under "Settings."
- f. If on an iPhone, shoot outside of the Instagram app.
- g. Take a lot of photos/shots in order to guarantee getting a good shot, as well taking shots from many different angles (above, below, to the side) to find what works the best.
- h. Golden hour (period shortly after the sunrise) and blue hour (shortly before sunset) are the best times to shoot.
- i. Make sure photos do not look too inauthentic. The photo should appear as "in the moment."
- j. Any file too large may not be accepted by Instagram or be cropped (prediction of any sizes over 2038 pixels per side.)
- k. Disclaimer: Any photo/video posted of a student's recognizable face verbal permission by each student featured must be received by the photographer, before posting. (No posting recognizable faces of minors without parent's signed permission.)

### **2. Editing a Photo**

*Images can be enhanced through a filter or edit, but they should never look too unnatural.*

- a. Edit photos and apply filters through third-party applications, such as VSCO, Lightroom, Photoshop, etc.
- b. All photos should be filtered with a slight purple or blue shadowing in order for the feed to look consistent and colorful, but not too uniform (unless it's a user generated photo).
  - i. Currently, Biola's Instagram uses a consistent A6 VSCO preset that can be copy and pasted to each photo.
- c. Avoid using filters from Instagram, unless they enhance the quality and color of a video or boomerang.

### **3. Captioning Posts**

*Captioning the post plays a huge part in receiving good engagement.*

- a. There is no character limit to Instagram comments, but they should not be too lengthy or exhaustive.
- b. Captions should follow Biola's professional branding and [Biola's Stylebook](#) for grammar.
- c. Make sure to include hashtags that could pull in outside audiences and that are trending. Research hashtags ahead of time to make sure they link to appropriate content. Refer to the [list of official Biola University hashtags](#) for more information.
- d. Brand it: Create consistency of Biola's brand by using current Biola branded hashtags and consider using language from the new brand campaign (ex: #AllAsOne, #BiolaLife, #BiolaUniversity).
- e. Relevant questions, polls, encouragements and appropriate humor garner the highest engagement.
- f. According to accessibility requirements, all text on the photo/video should also be written out in the caption, if possible, avoid using text on the photos/videos.
- g. Accessibility adherence also requires that the caption of each post describe the context of the photo.
  - i. For example: If you post a campus shot with flowers, the caption can say, "It's a beautiful day on campus and the flowers are blooming!"
  - ii. Feel free to create descriptions in the comments sections or by using spaces and dots to lower more exact descriptions below the caption.
- h. All videos posted on Biola's Instagram need to include accurate captions or audio captions if there is no speaking, per accessibility requirements.

### **4. Instagram Stories**

*Instagram Stories include 15-second videos, boomerangs or photos that disappear within 24 hours.*

- a. Use Instagram Stories to enhance a user's experience by capturing behind the scenes footage or to show authentic daily life.
- b. Instagram Stories do not have to be as formal or as high quality as a normal post. They are meant to be more personal and engaging.
- c. Make sure to plan a beginning, middle and end to Story series. Consider the audience and the goal of the message you are trying to communicate.
- d. Include short text in the images or videos. Consider using hashtags and the tagging of other accounts featured within the Story to increase searchability.

- e. If you are adding links to a Story, select the link option in the toolbar prior to posting the Story. Make sure to remind viewers to “swipe up” for more information, within the post.
- f. Be intentional when using Stories. Each Story posted needs to have a purpose so you don’t discourage the audience from watching future Stories.

## **5. Cadence**

*Consistency is a key factor in keeping Biola’s Instagram engaging.*

- a. Post on Biola’s Instagram at least 5 times per week (except for during summer, winter and spring break).
- b. Refrain from posting more than once a day unless absolutely necessary (for big events or campus moments only.)
- c. Never post more than 10 Instagram Stories in one day.
- d. Keep a ratio of 1:3 when posting recognizable student faces. This ensures that recognizable face posts are more rare, which results in a higher possibility of engagement.
- e. Post with a verse caption less than once, every two weeks.
- f. Make sure to mix up the kind of post that is being shared (rotate through photos, boomerangs, videos, etc.) in order to keep things fresh, but use photos more than the alternatives.
- g. Use user generated content sparingly (mainly used during photo contests).