

Instagram Export Guide

Digital Life Project — digital-life.org

This guide walks you through requesting and downloading your Instagram data. We'll configure the export to include only the data needed for the study, excluding sensitive information like direct messages.

Time required: ~10 minutes to request, then wait a few hours for Instagram to prepare your data

What you'll need: Access to your Instagram account (web browser or app)

Step 1: Navigate to Settings

Open Instagram in a web browser or in the app.

1. Click on **More** (hamburger menu)
2. Select **Settings**
3. Click **See more in Accounts Center**

Instagram

 Home

 Search

 Explore

 Reels

 ⁹⁺ Messages

 Settings

 Your activity

 Saved

 Switch appearance

 Report a problem

Switch accounts

Log out

 More



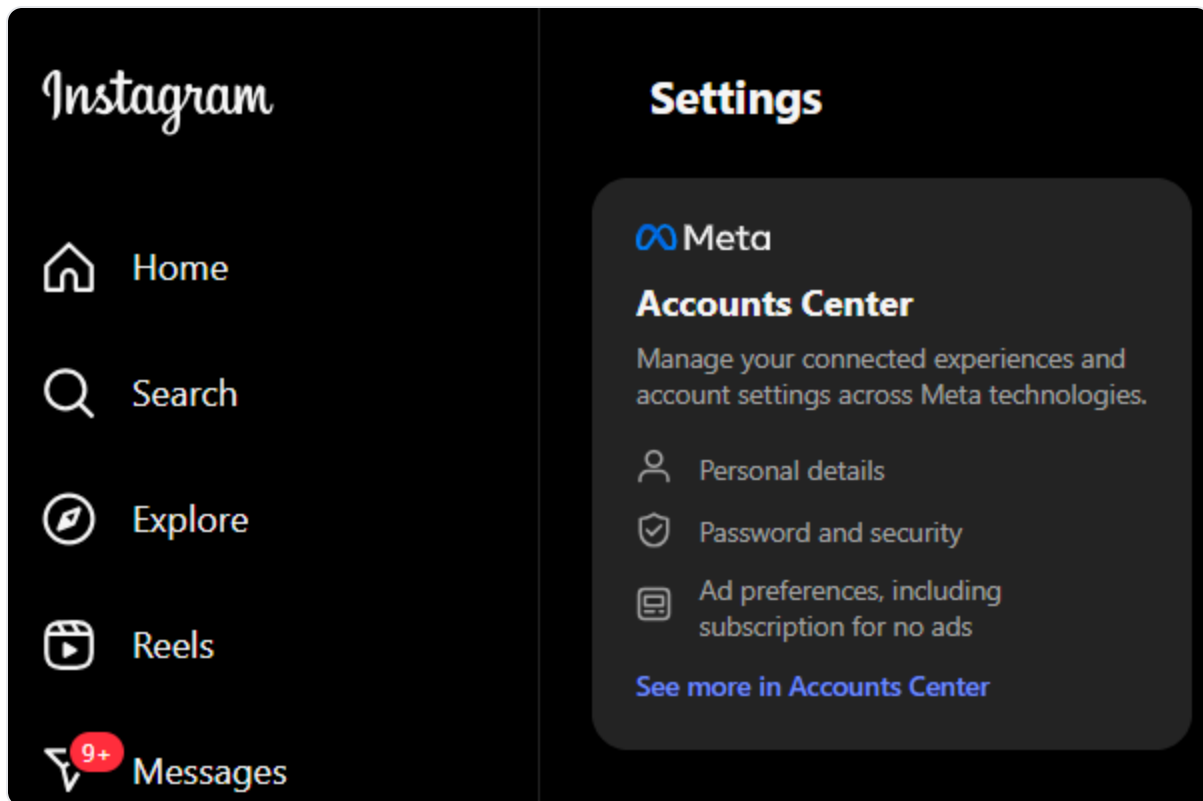
Also from Meta

Click Settings in the menu

Step 2: Access Export Options

In the Accounts Center:

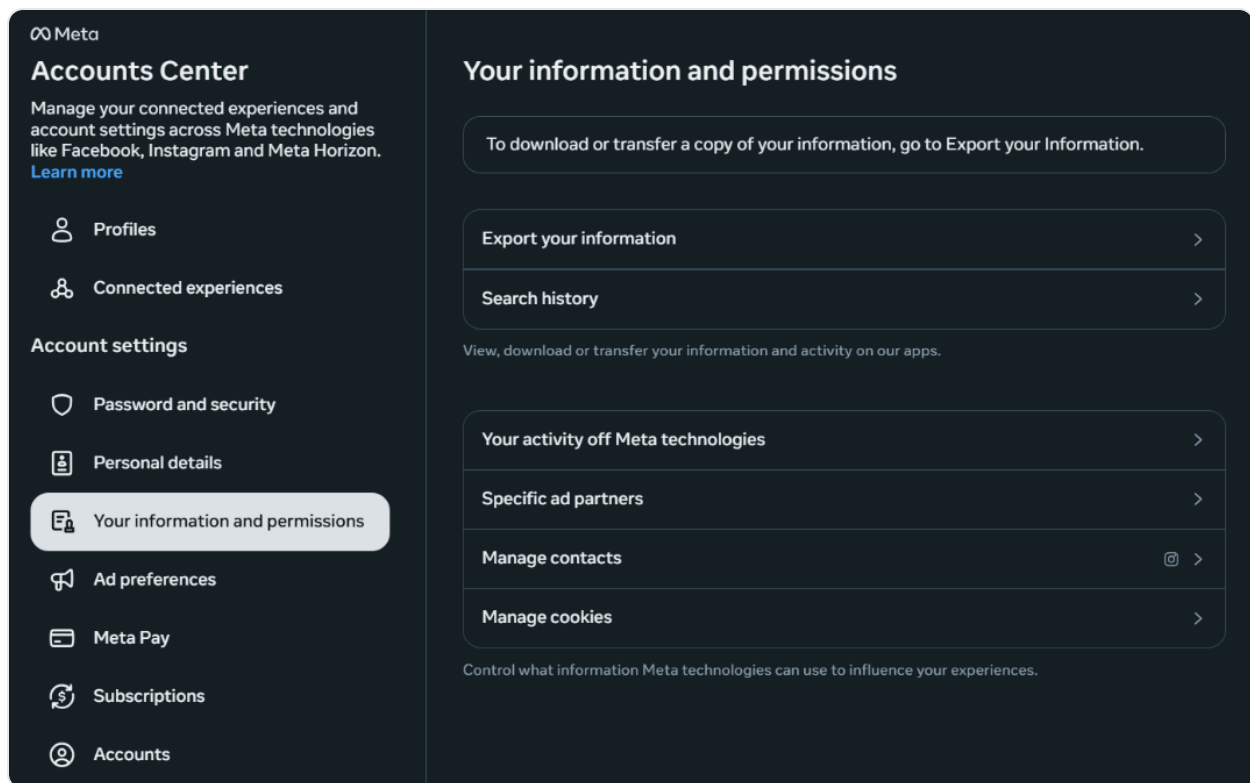
1. Select **Your information and permissions**
2. Click **Export your information**



Select 'Your information and permissions' then 'Export your information'

Step 3: Create Export

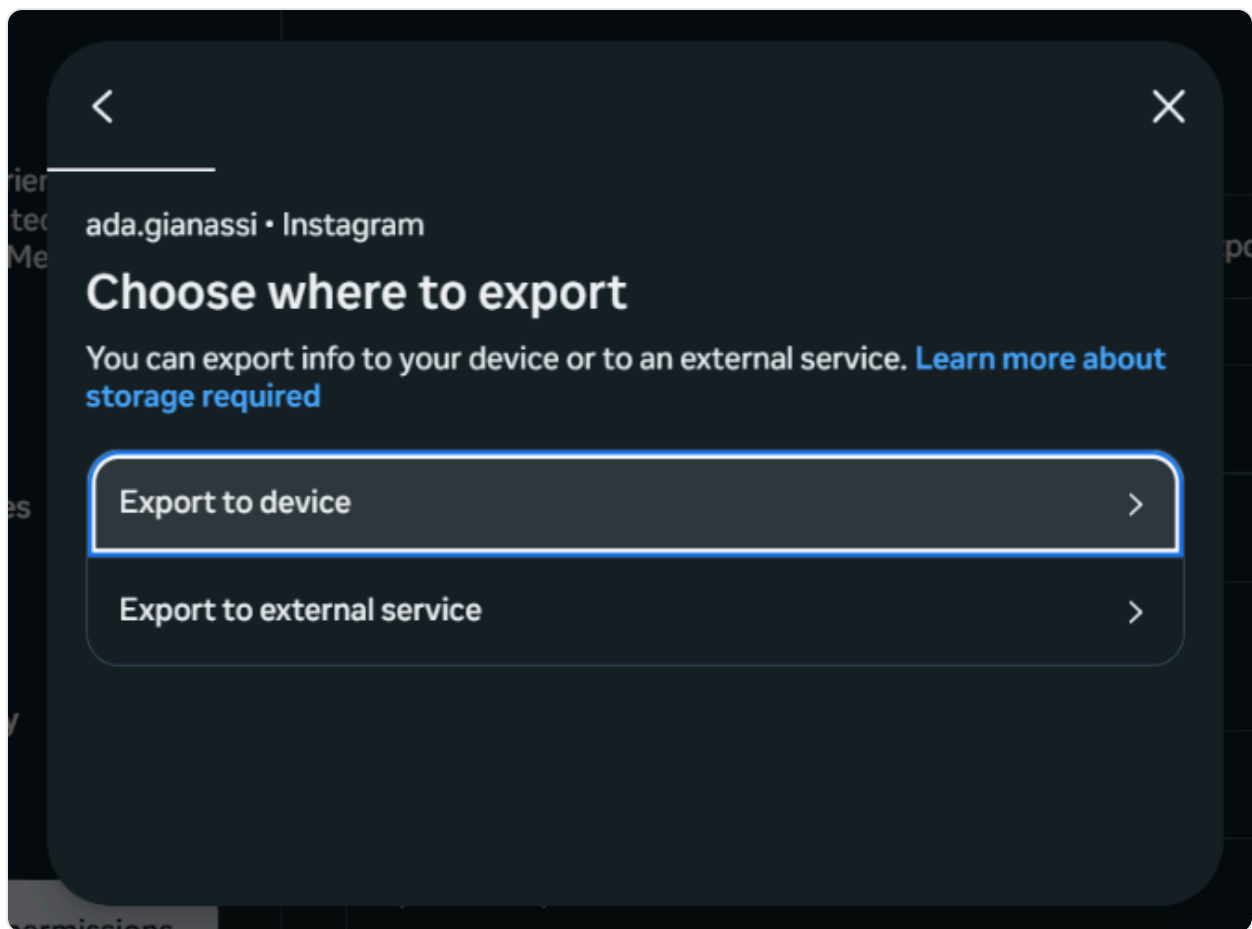
1. Click **Create export**
2. Select your Instagram profile
3. Choose **Export to device**



Step 4: Configure Export Settings

You want your options to look like this:

- **Customize information:** Likes, Followers and following, Instagram ads and businesses, Advertising, Ads and topics
- **Date range:** All time
- **Format:** JSON
- **Media quality:** Medium quality



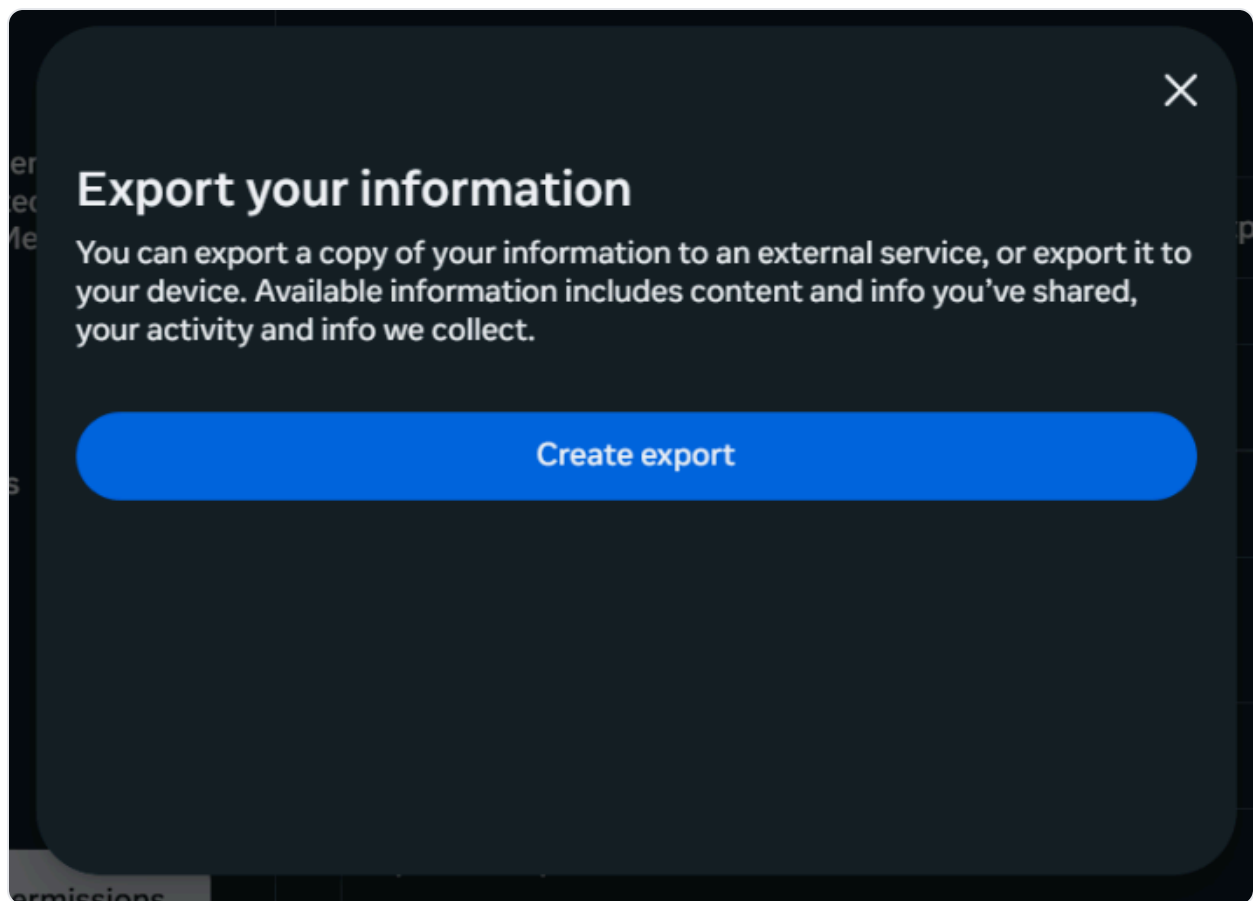
Your final settings should look like this

Important: Make sure to click **Save** after you change each field, or the change will not be made.

Step 5: Set Date Range

Click on **Date range** and select **All time**.

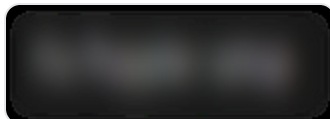
Click **Save**.



Step 6: Set Format

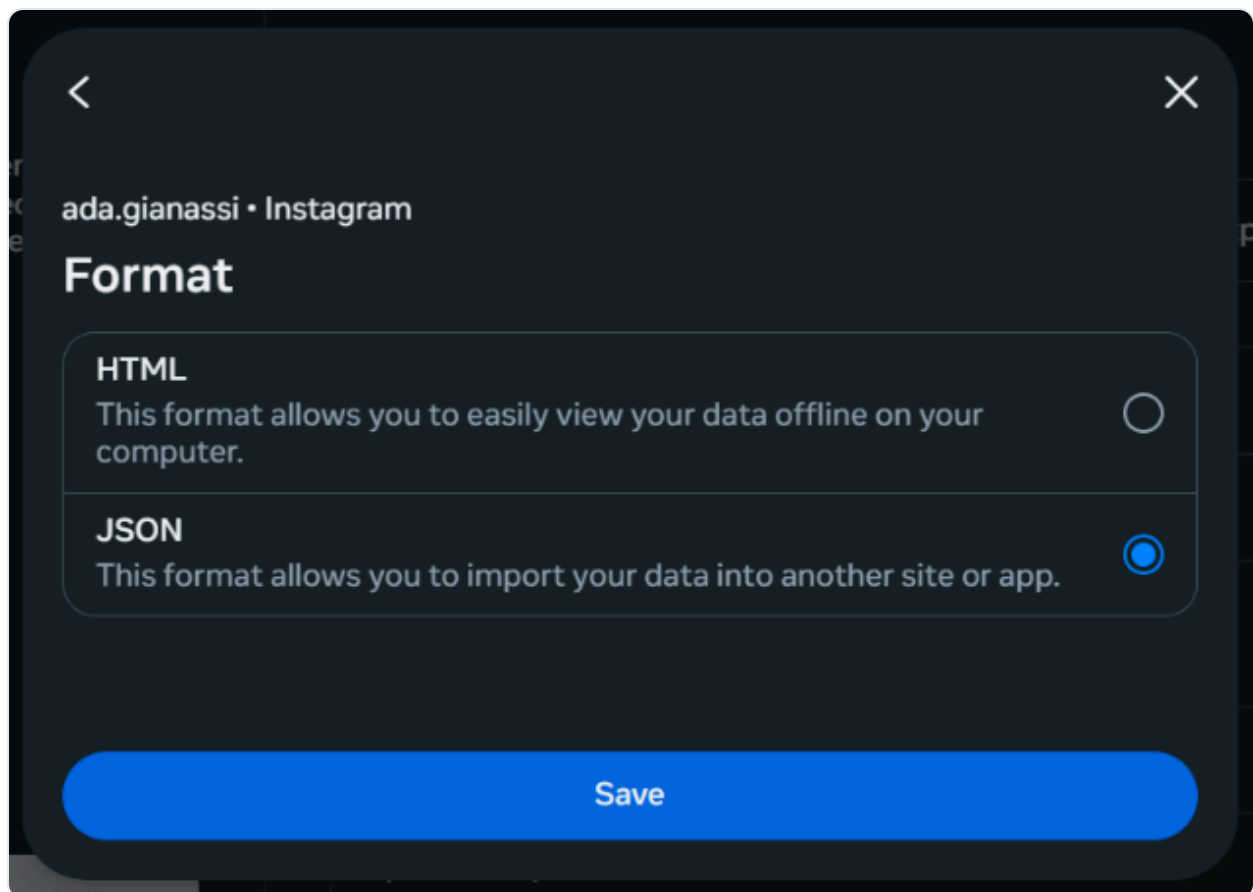
Click on **Format** and select **JSON**.

Click **Save**.



Step 7: Customize Information (Important!)

This is the most important step. You need to **deselect all sensitive information** such as direct messages, keeping only specific data categories.



Only select the specific items shown - deselect everything else

What to SELECT:

Your Instagram activity:

- Likes

Connections:

- Followers and following

Ads information:

- Instagram ads and businesses
- Advertising
- Ads and topics

What to DESELECT (leave unchecked):

Your Instagram activity:

- Avatars Store, Checkout, Comments, Events, Fundraisers, Gifts, Meta Spark, Monetization, Saved, Story interactions, Subscriptions, Other activity, Quicksnaps, Threads, Media, Edits, Reports, Shared access, AI, **Messages** (especially important!)

Personal information:

- Autofill information, Loyalty accounts, Personal information, Device information, Information about you

Other sections to leave unchecked:

- Contacts (under Connections)
- All items under Logged information
- All items under Security and login information
- All items under Apps and websites off of Instagram
- All items under Preferences

Tip: To be sure that you remove all sensitive information, first deselect all options in every field, then tick only the boxes listed above. If you accidentally include some sensitive data, the redactor tool in the next step will remove details such as names, addresses, and financial details, but try to avoid mistakes!

Click **Save** when done.

Step 8: Start the Export

Once all settings are configured, click **Start export**.

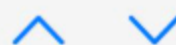
Important: The export process typically takes a few hours. You'll receive an email from Instagram/Meta when your data is ready to download.

Step 9: Download Your Data

After a few hours, you'll receive an email from Instagram/Meta.

Click on the link in the email or refresh the request page, then click **Download**.

< All Inboxes



Your Meta information download is ready



The Meta information files you requested are now available to download. You can find your files on the [export your information](#) page.

For security reasons, you will have 4 days to download your information after you receive this email. If your files are no longer available by the time you read this email, you can [request a new download](#).

Because this file may contain private information, you should keep it secure and take precautions when storing, sending or uploading it to another service.

Thanks,

The Meta Privacy Team

If you did not request a copy of your information, please take [steps to further secure your account](#).



Click Download when your export is ready

Note: You'll have 4 days to download your files after receiving the email.

Step 10: Upload to Our Platform

Now you're ready to upload your data to our secure research platform.

1. Sign in to your [our portal](#)
2. Select **Instagram** from the platform tabs
3. Drag and drop the ZIP file into the upload area, or click to browse for it
4. Wait for the file to upload and process
5. Review the redaction preview to see what information will be anonymized
6. Confirm and submit your donation

Privacy guarantee: Your data is processed securely in your browser with automatic PII redaction before it ever leaves your computer. Only the anonymized version is retained for research purposes.

What You'll Get

The downloaded .ZIP file will contain JSON files with:

- Your likes
- Followers and following lists
- Ad-related activity and preferences

Troubleshooting

Export taking too long?

- Instagram exports typically take a few hours
- Check your email (including spam folder) for the notification

Can't find the export option?

- Make sure you're accessing the Meta Accounts Center, not just Instagram settings
- Try using a web browser instead of the mobile app

The ZIP file seems too small or too large

- **Too small (under 1 KB):** The download may have failed. Try downloading again.
- **Larger than expected:** This is normal for very active users. The file should still upload without issues.

Need Help?

If you encounter any issues or have questions not covered in this guide, please don't hesitate to reach out:

- **Email:** info@digital-life.org
- **Study IRB:** IRB25-1521 (University of Chicago)

We typically respond within 1-2 business days.