Facebook and Instagram ads quick-start guide

Get Meta ads off to a good start: business account ownership, the Meta Pixel and Conversions API, a simple first campaign and what to check in week one.

Facebook and Instagram ads are run through Meta's Ads Manager. They're good at reaching people who haven't heard of you yet, which is different from Google, where people are already searching. That means creative and tracking matter even more. Here's how to get set up properly.

Before you start

- **Set up a Meta Business portfolio** (previously called Business Manager) owned by your business, and add your Facebook Page, Instagram account and ad account to it. Give staff and agencies access as people or partners, rather than handing over logins.
- **Turn on two-step sign-in** for everyone with access. Ad accounts are a common target for hackers.
- **Decide on one goal** for your first campaign: online sales, enquiries or leads.
- **Prepare a few pieces of creative.** Short videos and simple images that work on a phone screen, with the main message visible in the first second or two.

Step 1: set up tracking

Meta needs to know who bought or enquired after seeing an ad. There are two parts to this, and you want both.

1. **Install the Meta Pixel** on your website. It's a piece of code that records what visitors do. Shopify, WooCommerce and most other platforms have an official integration that does this for you.
2. **Set up the Conversions API.** This sends the same events directly from your website's server or shop platform to Meta, so they still arrive when a browser blocks the Pixel. Many shop platforms include it in their Meta integration.
3. **Choose your key events,** such as Purchase or Lead, and make sure they send the right values.
4. **Check for duplicates.** When the Pixel and the Conversions API send the same sale, Meta should recognise it as one event. Events Manager shows whether this is working.
5. **Test it.** Use Events Manager's testing tools, place a test order, and check it appears once with the right value.

Step 2: build a simple first campaign

- **Pick the objective that matches your goal.** Sales for online purchases, Leads for enquiries.
- **Keep the structure simple.** One campaign, one or two ad sets, and three to five ads to start. Too many small ad sets split your budget and slow down learning.
- **Start with broad audiences** in the areas you serve, and let your creative do the targeting. A clear message attracts the right people.
- **Check where your ads will show.** Automatic placements spread ads across Facebook, Instagram and Meta's partner apps. Review the placements report after launch.
- **Set a budget you're comfortable testing with** for a few weeks.

Step 3: check in after a week

- **Compare Meta's numbers with your own sales.** Meta counts some sales from people who only saw an ad and never clicked it. Check the attribution setting in your reports so you know what's being counted.
- **Look at cost per result,** not likes, reach or clicks.
- **Watch for creative fatigue.** When the same people see the same ad too often, results drop. Plan to add fresh creative regularly.
- **Read the comments** on your ads. Reply to genuine questions and hide spam.

Common mistakes

- Running ads from a personal ad account instead of a business-owned one.
- Using only the Pixel, so sales from people with ad blockers or privacy settings go unrecorded.
- Judging results by Meta's reports alone, without checking against real sales.
- Boosting posts from the Page instead of building proper campaigns in Ads Manager.
- Changing budgets and audiences every day, so the system never settles.

A note on privacy

The Pixel and Conversions API share information about your website visitors with Meta. Make sure your privacy policy says so, and that your cookie banner (if you use one) works with your tracking. If you're unsure, our Privacy policy page shows the kind of plain-English wording that helps, and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner publishes guidance for businesses at oaic.gov.au.

Where Blend can help

If Meta reports more sales than you can see in your shop, read why your ad platforms report more sales than you made. Our Ads & Analytics Audit checks your Pixel, Conversions API and campaigns against your real sales.

This guide is general information, not professional advice for your situation. Read it online and find more free guides at www.blend-datastrategy.com/tools.