There has been much talk as of late about the Instagram shadowban. Many Instagrammers are reporting a dip in engagement and believe that shadowbanning is to blame for the drop in engagement. I've seen Instagrammers go as far as starting a brand new Instagram account because they believed their old account had fallen victim to the Instagram shadowban. But how do you know that your account has truly been banned and that the drop in engagement isn't just related to Instagram's ever-changing algorithm?

**What the heck does Instagram shadowban mean?**

Instagram takes their rules very seriously. So much so that engaging in spammy behavior can result in your account being banned.  What happens when you're shadowbanned? You can still post and add hashtags to your captions and your followers can see your posts, but your posts won't be public. Your posts will no longer appear in the feeds of any hashtags that you use in the captions, which eliminates the possibility of being discovered by new audiences.

**How to tell if your account has been a victim of the Instagram shawdowban?**

There's a very easy way to tell if your account has been shadowbanned by Instagram:

1. Find a friend who is not following your account on Instagram.

2. Create a new Instagram post and include a few low-density hashtags (INSERT LINK), the fewer posts that share that hashtag the easier it will be for your friend to find your post.

3. Have your friend go to Instagram and see if they can find your post by searching one of your selected hashtags in Instagrams discover tab.

4. If they can see your posts, this means your account has not been shadowbanned. Contrarily, if they can't see your post, this means your account has indeed fallen victim to the Instagram shadowban.

If you have in fact been shadowbanned, check out this article from Preview to learn some possible techniques to remove the ban.

**How do you avoid getting Instagram shadowbanned?**

**Using banned hashtags:** Check out this list of shadowbanned hashtags to familiarize yourself with hashtags that may flag your account. Additionally, periodically perform safety checks on all your hashtags to make sure they are not being banned by Instagram

**Using the same hashtags:** If you use the same hashtags too many times in a row, Instagram isn’t a fan.

**Using software that goes against Instagram’s terms:** such as commenting bots or auto-liking bots.  These clearly violate Instagram’s terms and will increase your chances of being shadowbanned.

**Following/Unfollowing too fast:** Instagram sets limits on how many accounts you can follow and unfollow per day. If you are continually being blocked from following or unfollowing for reaching these limits, chances will rise that you will be shadowbanned

If your account hasn’t been banned but you’re still not seeing strong engagement on your hashtags, check out my recent blog post on the new Instagram hashtag rules to increase enagement on Instagram.