



MIDDLE SCHOOL | UNIT 6

Growing and Protecting Your Finances

Title

Who Owns Instagram?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- **research** Instagram’s ownership from its inception.
- **evaluate** how the ownership of a company might impact their use of its products.

Content Area

Social Studies

Grades

6–8

Overview

Who owns Instagram? Students learn about publicly versus privately owned companies as they research the history of Instagram. Students create a time line of events answering the question, “Who owns Instagram?” Then, students consider the ownership and whether that impacts or should impact their use of the platform.

Themes

Personal Finance: Investing

Social Studies: Stocks and investing, historical time lines

SS: C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

D2.Eco.3.6-8: Explain the roles of buyers and sellers in product, labor, and financial markets.

D2.Eco.4.6-8: Describe the role of competition in the determination of prices and wages in a market economy.

Connect

How does this connect to the student?

Many students use social media platforms every day. Understanding the ownership evolution of a company will help them make choices in what social media products they use and how.

How does this connect to careers?

Venture capitalist:

When a person has an idea for a business, they often need money from investors to launch their company. Venture capitalists are one source of this funding. They usually provide money in exchange for a portion of the company's ownership.

How does this connect to technology?

Mobile apps are a part of everyday life for millions of people around the world. Students are involved with apps at school and home. Apps are becoming important to complete many basic activities, such as banking, buying goods, and playing games.

Key Terms

Personal Finances: prototype, seed money, investor, private company, publicly traded company

Social Studies: economics, competition

Prepare

Background: It is no secret that teens are frequent users of social media. Consider these statistics from [Pew Research Center](#):

- 46% of U.S. teens age 13–17 say they are almost constantly online.
- YouTube ranked the highest in usage with 95% of teens using it, followed by TikTok at 67%. Instagram at 62%, and Snapchat at 59% While parents and educators often provide lessons on digital citizenship and staying safe online, it can also help students to understand that the apps they interact with daily are owned by profit-minded companies. The focus of this activity is Instagram, which is now owned by Facebook (Meta)—**a publicly traded company** (a company whose stock is available for purchase by investors).

Note: Facebook was renamed Meta in 2021 but is still commonly known as Facebook. For that purpose, all references use Facebook. Choose which to use with students and/or mention that they can be used interchangeably.

In the activity, students will develop an understanding of how the app was created, the process the founder went through to grow the business, and how it eventually was sold to Facebook. The **Detailed Time Line Teacher Resource** provides background for you as the educator as well as a model for what students might create in the activity.

Materials

- **Detailed Time Line Teacher Resource**—one copy
- **Computers with internet access**—one per student
- [The Risks and Rewards of Investing Unit 6 Student Video](#)

Engage

- Invite your students to share what social media platforms they use regularly and/or are familiar with.
- Ask students if they know who Mark Zuckerberg is. If not, let students know that he is known as being a founder and the majority owner of Facebook.
- Challenge students to think about and discuss if it matters to them who owns a social media company. Why or why not? Should they consider the ownership when they think about who can control and access their information and the materials they post or publish?
- Explain that many of these platforms are publicly owned—meaning people can purchase ownership in the company through stocks. Show the [The Risks and Rewards of Investing](#) Unit 6 Student Video.

Teach

- Inform students that they will be working to answer the question, “Who owns Instagram?”
- Challenge students to research the history of Instagram from inception through present day. In small groups, students should create a timeline of major occurrences in the history of the app. Let them know that they must include important events including when the creator had the idea for the app, when the app was first created, and key points in the company’s creation and growth.
 - **Note:** *There is a Detailed Timeline Teacher Resource provided that shows the type of information students may gather. If needed, provide your students with dates as guidance for their research.*
- When they are finished, instruct students to write a statement explaining who currently owns Instagram. They can use information from their timeline to defend their response. Provide time for students to share their responses.
- Discuss the information students uncovered about Instagram’s history. What do they think caused the app to grow so quickly in popularity? Why would Facebook pay so much money to purchase Instagram? Who are some of Instagram’s current competitors? Should Facebook try to buy the competitors as well? Challenge students to defend their answers with information they uncovered during their research.
- Challenge students to explain why knowing who owns a social media app should matter to them. Anticipated responses include:
 - The company may collect data from a person’s Instagram photos, check-ins, likes, and more.
 - Advertisements in the app and on other websites can be influenced by data the company collects.
 - Information could be sold to other companies for a profit.

Conclude

- Direct students to submit an exit ticket answering the following question: Will what you learned about the ownership of Instagram make you reconsider or change your use of social media? Explain.

Extend

- **Writing:** Challenge students to write a persuasive essay in which they encourage their friends to know who owns the information they share on social media.
- **Government:** Invite students to research the role of government in protecting children online. Notable legislation includes:
 - Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)
 - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
 - Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
- **Research:** Direct students to investigate the price of Facebook’s stock (ticker symbol FB) over time. Challenge students to research what stock market analysts believe the stock price will do in the future. Invite them to write a paragraph explaining why they do or do not think Facebook would be a wise stock in which to invest.

Detailed Time Line

2009	Kevin Systrom teaches himself how to code at night and on weekends while working for another company (Nextstop).
October 2009	Kevin Systrom develops Burbn, the prototype (early sample) of Instagram. It was an app for photo sharing, checking in, and posting plans.
March 2010	Kevin Systrom attends a party for Hunch, another Silicon Valley startup, where he meets several investors (people and companies who provide funding to help businesses grow, usually in exchange for ownership in the company) and demonstrates the prototype. Within two weeks of that meeting Systrom had raised \$500,000 in seed funding (money invested to help a business get started) and quit his job to focus all his time on making the app a reality.
May 2010	Systrom begins to build a team and invites Mike Krieger to be the co-founder. Systrom and Krieger decide to focus the app on photo-sharing and re-named the app Instagram (combination of the words instant and telegram).
July 2010	First post to Instagram (of a dog). Friends and family test the app and bugs are fixed.
October 2010	iOS app is launched. Within hours, over 25,000 people download the app and it becomes the #1 free photo-sharing app in the iOS app store. Within a week, there are over 100,000 users.
December 2010	Instagram has over 10 million users.
February 2011	Instagram gets \$7 million from additional investors (Series A funding).
August 2011	Instagram has fewer than 10 employees.
December 2011	Instagram is named iPhone App of the Year.
April 2012	Instagram releases an app for Android users. Instagram receives an additional \$50 million in funding from investors (Series B). Instagram announces plans for purchase by Facebook for \$1 billion.
May 2012	Facebook goes from a private company (owned by founders, initial employees, and investors) to a public company (the general public can purchase shares/ ownership in the company).
July 2012	Instagram has 80 million users.
September 2012	The purchase of Instagram goes through with Facebook paying one billion dollars. At the time, this equaled 25% of the current value of Facebook.
June 2013	Instagram adds videos.

Detailed Timeline

October 2013	Instagram users begin seeing ads when using the app.
December 2014	Instagram has 300 million users.
August 2016	Instagram launches Instagram Stories.
December 2016	Instagram has 600 million users.
September 2018	People can shop for items they see in Stories.
September 2018	System and Kreiger announce they are leaving Instagram.
October 2018	Adam Mosseri is named as the new Head of Instagram.
March 2019	Checkout on Instagram is announced which allows users to buy items without ever leaving the app.
May 2020	Instagram introduces Instagram Reels.
January 2021	Instagram Guides is introduced.
October 2021	Facebook changed its name and rebranded as Meta.

Sources:

- [The Story of Instagram: The Rise of the #1 Photo-Sharing App \(FB\)](#), Investopedia
- [Time Line of Instagram](#), Wikipedia
- [Statement from Kevin System, Instagram Co-Founder and CEO](#), Instagram
- [Instagram: Now with Ads](#), CNN
- [Here's the First Instagram Photo Ever](#), Time
- [How Instagram Grew from Foursquare Knock-Off to \\$1 Billion Photo Empire](#), Inc.