

Review: Instagram video a savvy move by Facebook

June 21 2013, by Barbara Ortutay



Instagram's new video feature is demonstrated at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif., Thursday, June 20, 2013. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

If you think Instagram snapshots of lunch plates, drooling babies and random desk objects are exciting, just wait until your friends start

posting 15-second videos.

You won't have to wait long. On Thursday, [Facebook](#)'s popular Instagram photo-sharing app added a video feature. Much like its [competitor Vine](#), which is owned by Twitter, Instagram now lets you record and share short videos using a few taps of a finger on a mobile device.

Most people don't do this. Vine has just 13 million users (one-tenth of Instagram's user base), and no other video-sharing apps have attracted mass appeal. Part of the reason: technical limitations. Instagram co-founder Kevin Systrom said during the service's unveiling that the video feature was initially left out of Instagram because the "speed, simplicity and beauty" the creators strived for in the app "were definitely possible with photos—but it was really hard for video."

It's easier now. [Internet connections](#) have become faster, and mobile phones are snappier and equipped with better cameras. And as Systrom promised, Instagram's video feature is certainly simple. Download the latest version on your [iPhone](#) or Android device. Open it and tap the camera icon on the bottom of the screen. This will take you to a new screen with a video camera icon. Another tap and you're ready to go.

You can record whatever your heart desires. The videos don't have to be shot in one take. Lift your finger and the recording stops until you tap the icon again. Writing about the feature is actually more complicated than using it.

The finger-tap recording feature that Vine fans are familiar with works well with Instagram, especially for patient videographers. Tap-stop-tap your way through recording a puppet show or a piece of cake being eaten and you'll have yourself a 15-second stop-motion animation clip—or shorter if you wish.

One of my biggest complaints with Vine is that many of the videos I took using the app are shaky. To address problems like this, Instagram has added a "cinema" feature that stabilizes the videos. Unfortunately, it only works on the iPhone 4S or higher, and it's not yet available on Android.

As for speed, videos my friends posted on Instagram loaded fairly quickly, though not as fast as photos. Sometimes they wouldn't play, possibly due to a less-than-ideal connection in our office. A small video camera icon differentiates the videos from photos on Instagram. You can view a video by tapping its icon. The problem is that tapping is also a shortcut for "liking" a [video](#) or photo.

Systrom's third aspiration, beauty, is harder to gauge.

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