

Instagram hack details

[Instagram hack details](#)

[Modus operandi](#)

[Why did my IG account get hacked?](#)

[What was the hack?](#)

[How could the hack have been prevented](#)

[How to claim your account back](#)

[Steps to claim your account: If your account has a photo of you](#)

[Steps to claim your account: If your account DOES NOT have a photo of you](#)

[Report an impersonation account](#)

[Personal context and bias](#)

Edit: Turns out this is more popular than I originally thought. More people have reached out to me saying they experienced this too. Writing this to be shared more generally.

Modus operandi

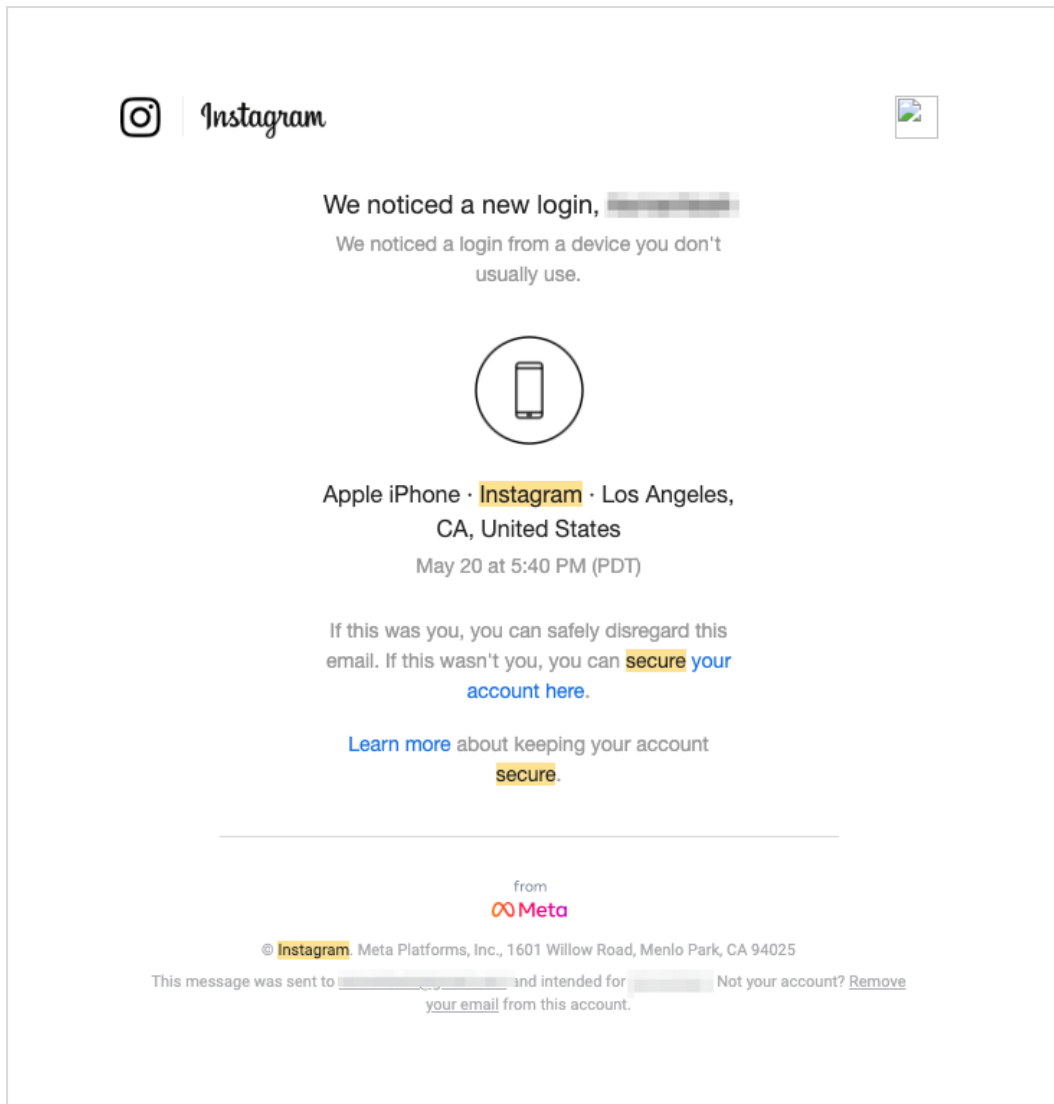
1. Hacker ("they") reached out to me from a friends account, which I realized was compromised.
2. They tried to engage me at least 4 times with different excuses
 - a. "I need someone to verify that I'm me"
 - b. "Can I add you to my friend's instagram account with 1M+ followers"
 - c. "I need to win an influencer contest :) can you please vote ..

In every case, they explicitly say " I DO NOT need you to click on a link, can you please SEND ME A SCREENSHOT that you received the link".

By now I realized they had access to something, but I could not figure out what.

I kept trying to "debug" this (*like any engineer would*) and I kept sending them wrong URLs, claiming I didn't get it etc, mostly trying to buy time to understand what I needed to lock down.

Only warning I got was this automated email from Instagram, which went to my *Social tab* and was ignored.



Why did my IG account get hacked?

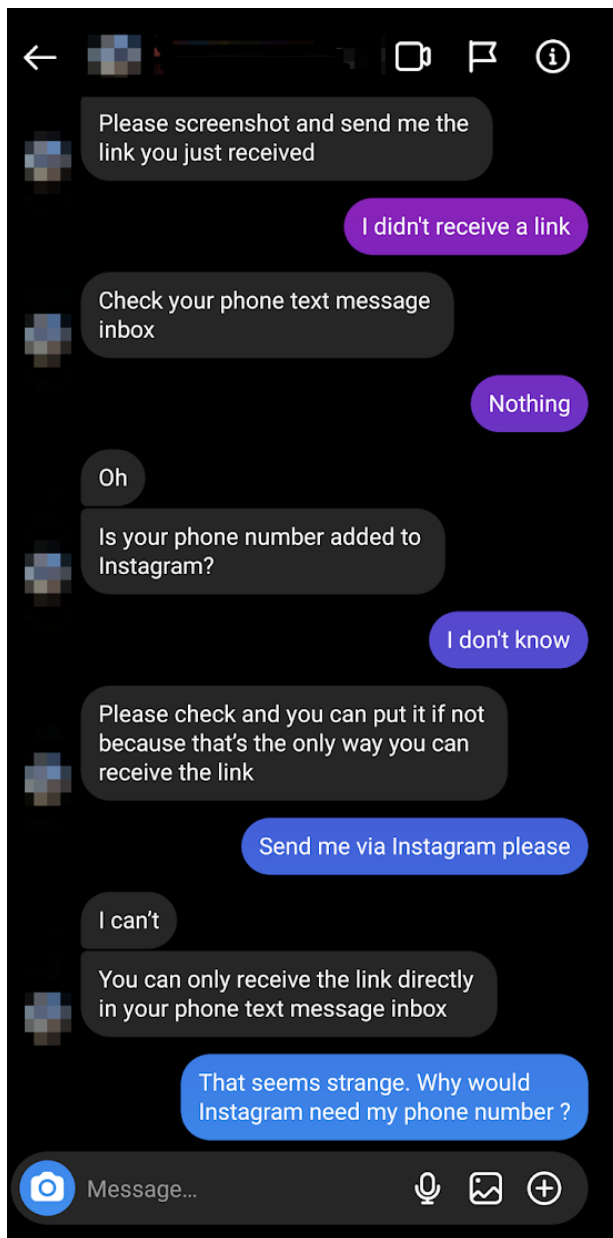
- Mostly because I DID NOT ENABLE **2FA** (Two Factor authentication - using your primary login + additional challenge) on my account. I did not know that I needed to.

Also, **Copy paste** on mobile failed me badly.

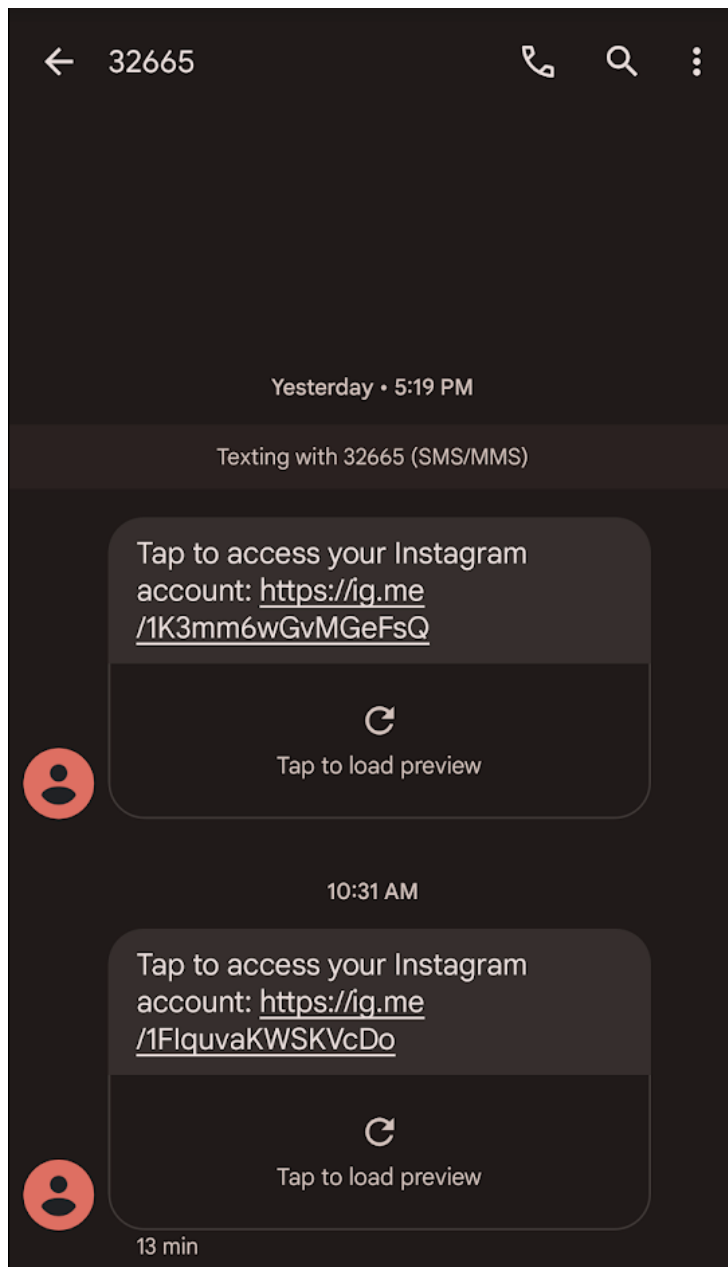
What was the hack?

- Hacker searches popular handles and tries using "Send login link" via one of the many available flows on the product
- This is easier without 2FA enabled on the account.
- This is the link they ask you to send them, which allows them to login by literally typing in the link and getting access to your account.

Here's a screenshot of my conversation



Here's the message that I received from IG



How could the hack have been prevented

- Change the mobile copy to - "Tap to access your Instagram account: <url/bleh> **DO NOT SHARE OR FWD**"

How to claim your account back

After a few friends who I don't hear from reached out in concern, I wanted to claim my account back. The result of MY security lapses should not involve my friends losing their money, reputation, or relationships. Here's what I control on my end.

What I control:

- Recovery email
- Recovery phone number (mapped to my actuals)

What the hacker controls:

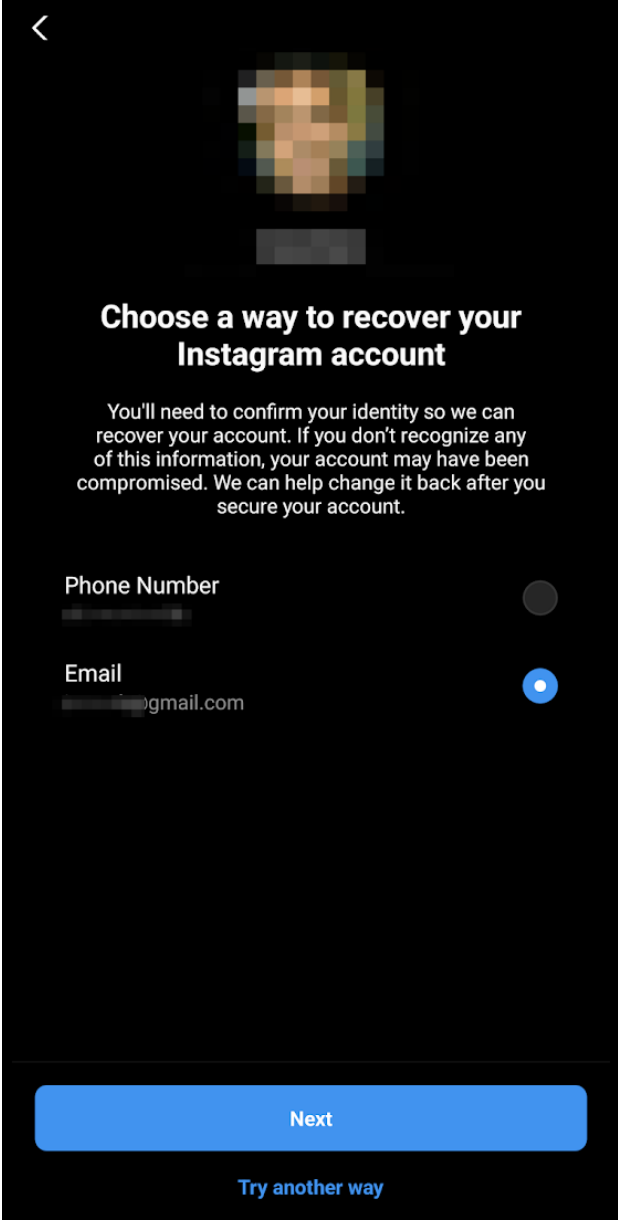
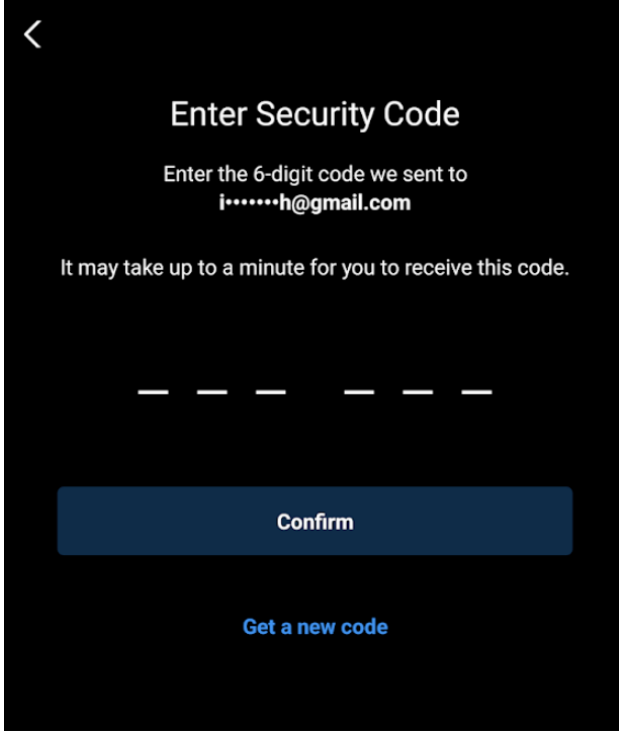
- Primary email
- Primary phone number
- 2FA via an authenticator app

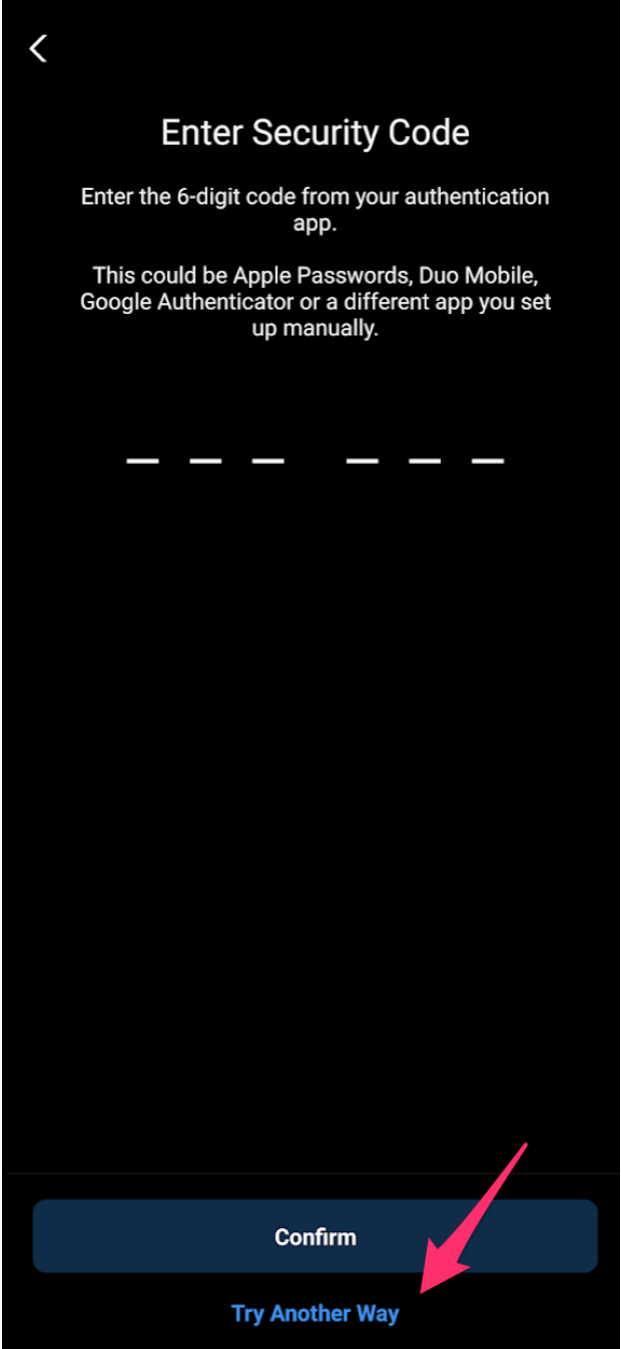
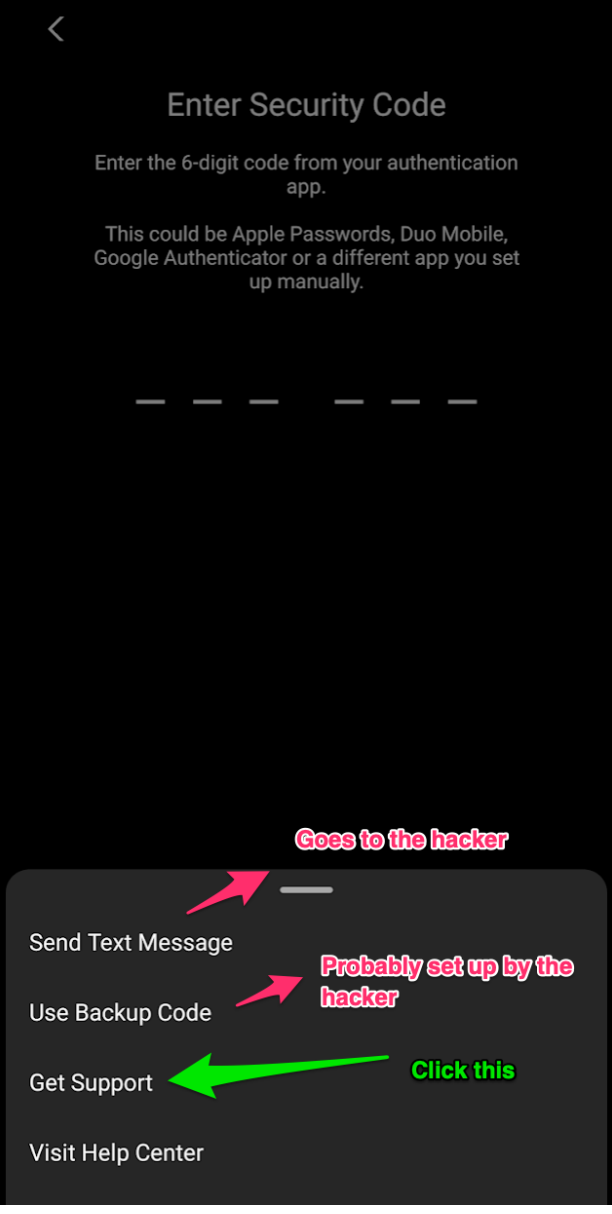
All of which they were able to setup fairly quickly and lock me out completely.

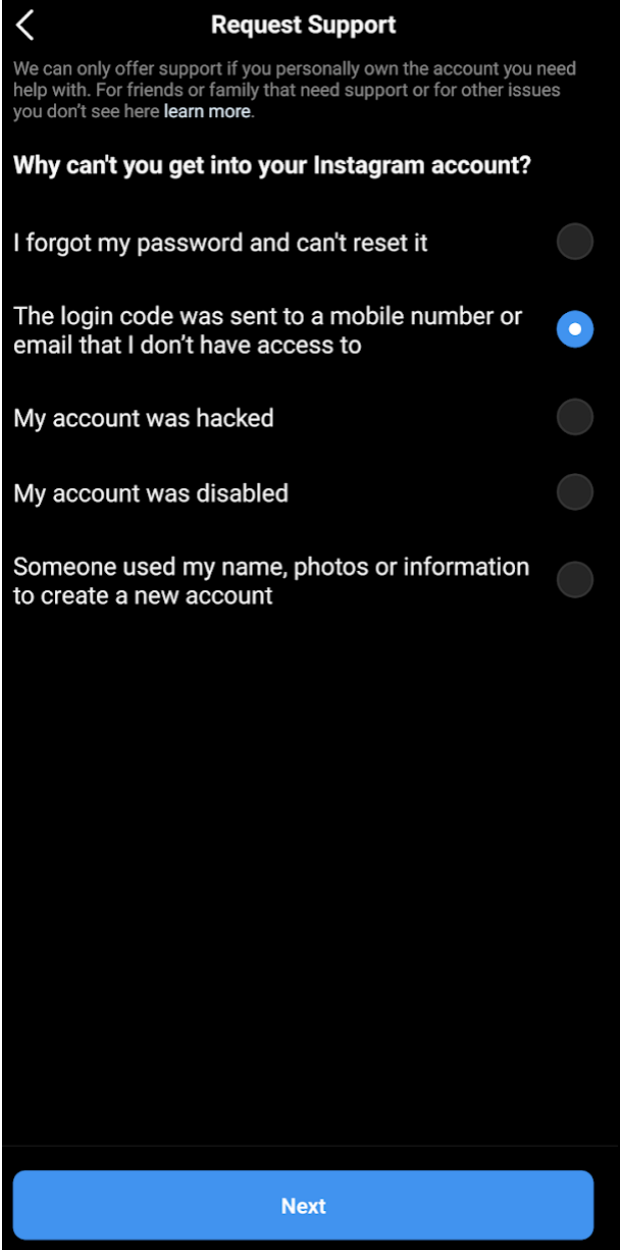
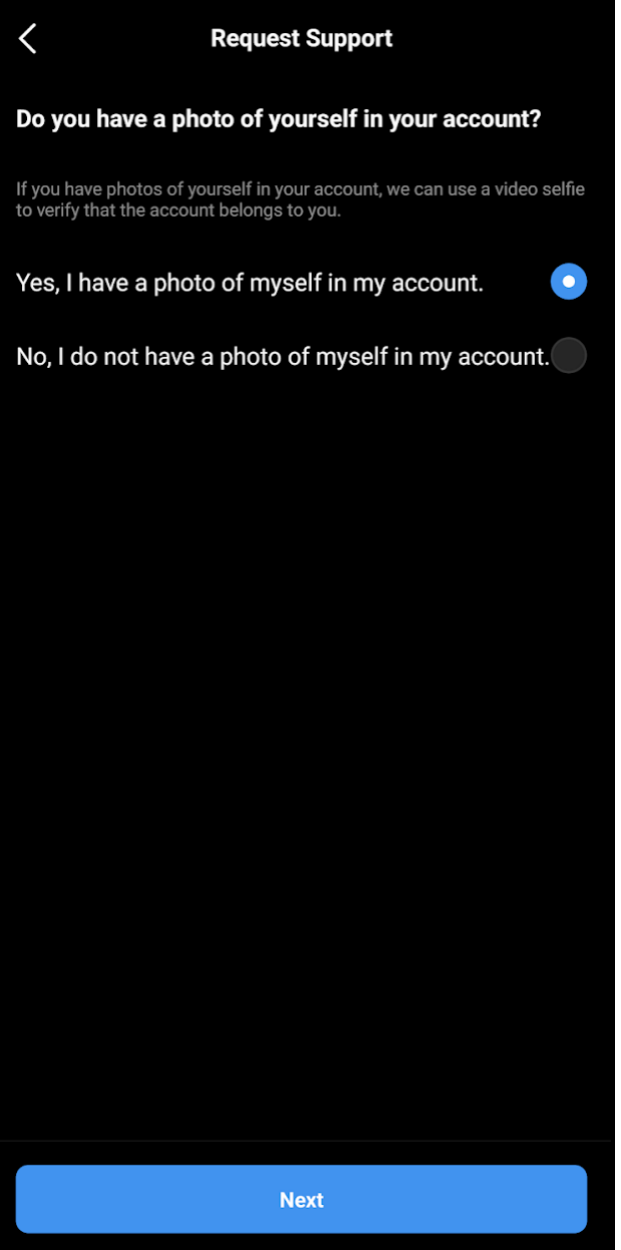
If your instagram is hacked and you have no control over your account credentials, here's the process to recover it.

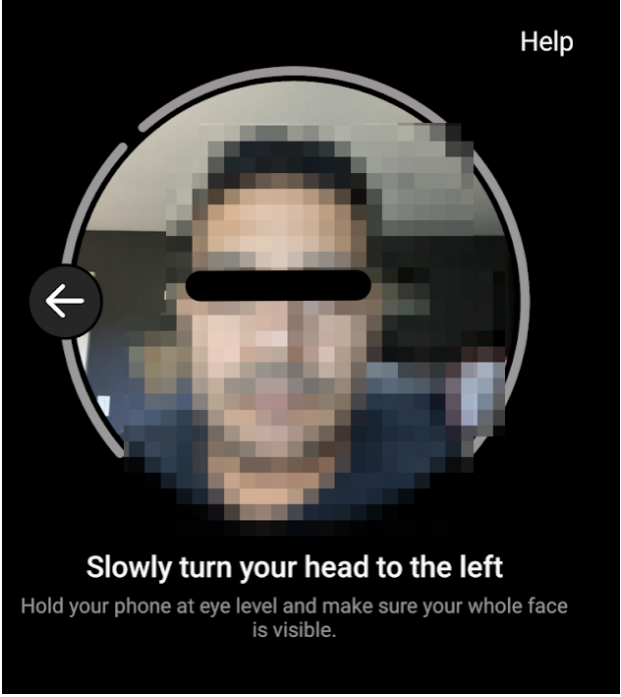
Steps to claim your account: If your account has a photo of you

Login help Find your account Enter your username or the email or phone number linked to your account. Username, email or phone Next OR f [redacted] Can't reset your password?	← Access your account  ✉ Send an email 📱 Send an SMS f Log in with Facebook Need more help?
1. Enter your username & click on “Can’t reset your password” at the bottom of the screen.	2. Both the email and SMS listed here is what the hacker controls, so there’s no point in using them. If your Facebook and Instagram are connected, then you can Login with Facebook (I guess) For others click, “Need more help?”

 The screenshot shows the Instagram account recovery interface. At the top is a back arrow and a blurred profile picture. The main heading is "Choose a way to recover your Instagram account". Below it, a paragraph explains that identity confirmation is needed for account recovery. Two options are presented: "Phone Number" with an unselected radio button and "Email" with a selected radio button. The email field is partially filled with "gmail.com". At the bottom, there is a large blue "Next" button and a smaller link "Try another way".	 The screenshot shows the "Enter Security Code" screen. It features a back arrow at the top left. The heading is "Enter Security Code", followed by the instruction "Enter the 6-digit code we sent to j*****h@gmail.com". A note states "It may take up to a minute for you to receive this code." Below this is a six-digit input field represented by dashes. A blue "Confirm" button is positioned below the input field, and a link "Get a new code" is at the bottom.
3. These are still mapped to my actual phone and emails. I used email.	4. Enter the 6 digit confirmation code you get in your email.

 5. Instagram asks for 2FA challenge which the hacker controls, so tap “Try another way”.	 6. Click on get support in the menu that follows.
--	--

 7. I clicked on the option highlighted .	 8. In this screen, since my instagram profile picture is my mug shot I choose the former. If you choose the latter, you'll be asked to upload your ID to verify your identity.
--	--

	
9. Instagram shows you this video verification feature, which asks you to turn your head left, right, then look straight. Basically, like a mug shot :(Once you comply with turning your head a few times. You've completed this process.	

Verify your identity

If you submitted a support request for an account without photos of you, you should receive an auto-response email from the Support Team at Meta. We'll ask you to help us verify your identity by providing the email address or phone number you signed up with and the type of device you used at the time of sign up (example: iPhone, Android, iPad, other).

If you request support for an account with photos of you, [you'll be asked to take a video selfie](#) of you turning your head in different directions to help us check that you're a real person and confirm your identity.

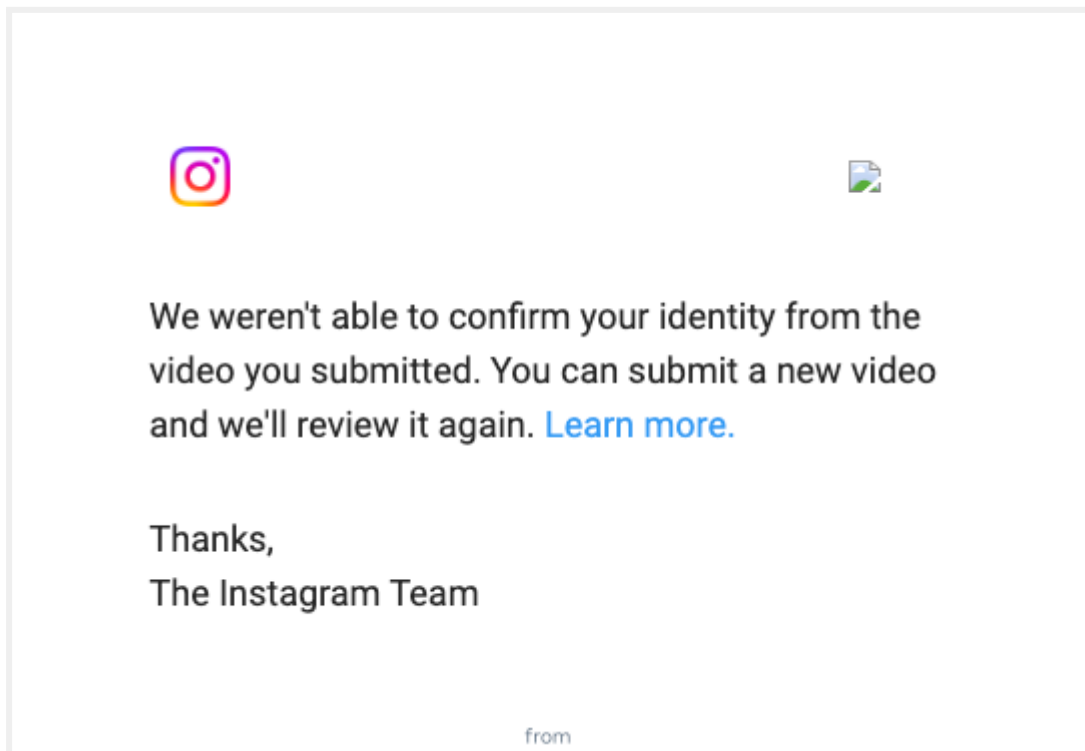
Once you submit the video selfie to help us verify your identity, you'll receive an email from Instagram at the secure email address you provided. We use this video to ensure you are a real person and that you are who you say you are.

Keep in mind that the video you submit will never be visible on Instagram and will be deleted within 30 days.

If we weren't able to confirm your identity from the video you submitted, you can submit a new video and we'll review it again.

Note: Instagram doesn't use facial recognition, and we don't use it in video selfies. We use video selfies to ensure you are a real person and may confirm with human review that you are authorized to access your account.

After an 8 hr delay I got this email from Instagram :(

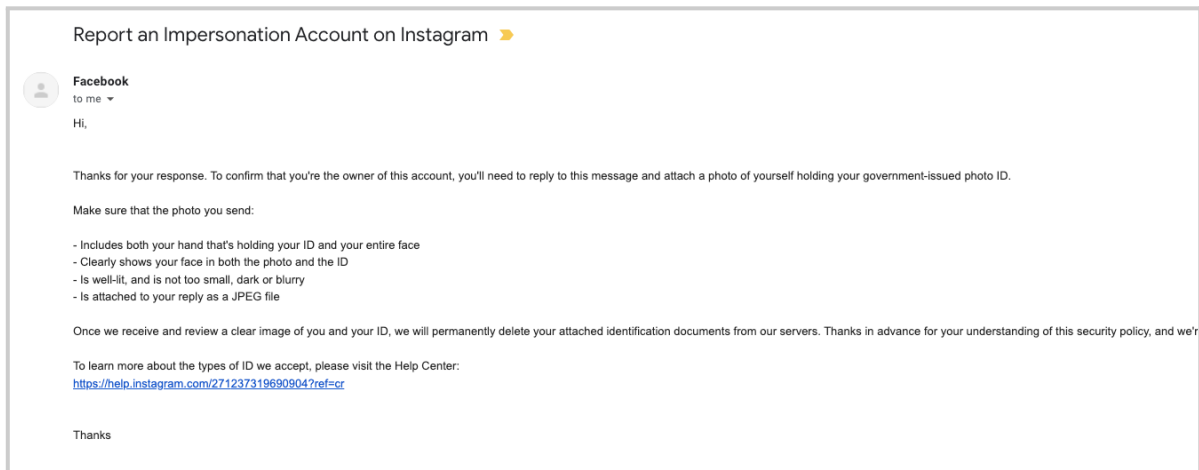


Steps to claim your account: If your account DOES NOT have a photo of you

- Follow Steps 1 to 7 from the previous section. At the step, click on "No, I don't have a photo on my account"
- You'll be requested to upload any state ID. I uploaded my CA drivers license.

Report an impersonation account

You can also request support and claim that your account is being impersonated. You can find the form linked here: <https://help.instagram.com/446663175382270>



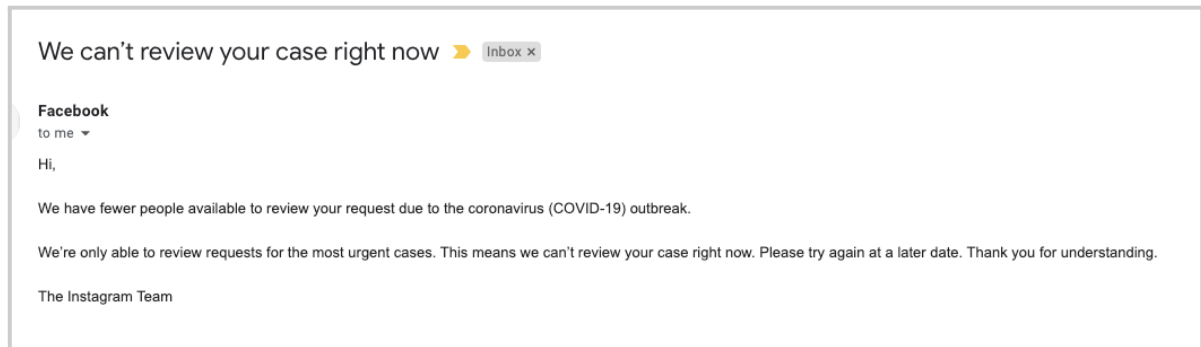
I sent this embarrassing photo of me holding my ID, my face and my two hands in frame. Felt very much like a mug-shot too. This is frankly an embarrassing excuse of a process, and it is audacious that it also applies to folks who don't have instagram but want to report an impersonator.



After sending this over, I got the following email.

Clearly no one reviewed anything, but Facebook collected my face, details, my state ID, my video selfie , (which felt more like Metaverse onboarding) than a security feature, and an embarrassing mugshot with all side and front angles.

I still don't have control of my account and it's been so long that I don't care enough to revive it. Sorry friends!



Personal context and bias

Now, for the most part, I've had a love-hate relationship with Facebook since inception. I gave up Facebook in 2016, and found peace amongst HQ wildlife photos on Instagram. As far as I know, I've not consolidated my identities across both platforms (3 if you count Whatsapp).

There are still open questions. E.g., **How are IG and FB identities connected?**

- First, because of some sort of backend reunification Facebook and Instagram have been pushing me to merge my separate identities on the platform since 2017 or so (IIRC). Some of it was mandatory, some of it optional.
 - I remember seeing a promo to share my stories across both platforms as recently as last month.
- I still have access to my Facebook account, but I don't control my IG anymore. What does that mean? I'm wondering what loophole exists where I lose my Facebook account now and endanger my network on Facebook as well.

A couple of my friends have now fallen prey to this scam now. I'm scared to ask if it was my account that started it for them.

Thanks for reading!