Local Enterprise Office Cork North and West

How to create Reels on Instagram

Course Summary

15th October 2026

Prepared by The Marketing Crowd with the help of one of our AI colleagues ☺

Course Overview

What this course covered (and what it didn't)
This course focused specifically on Reels: where they appear, why they matter, the three types of Reels businesses make and how to edit each one step by step in the free Edits app from Instagram.

Evan explained that this is separate from the "How to Use Instagram for Marketing" course, which covers setting up your profile correctly, how search and the feed work, the algorithm, single image posts, carousels and Stories. Keep an eye on the Local Enterprise Office's online booking page or you can also email info@themarketingcrowd.ie to find out where else Evan is delivering it.

Where Reels appear on Instagram
Evan walked through the three places content shows up on Instagram:

The main feed (Home). This is where posts (images) and Reels (videos) from accounts you follow appear. Any video in your main feed is a Reel. The feed is now predominantly Reels, with image posts mixed in, because Instagram shows people more Reels than posts.

The Stories feed. The row of circles at the top of the feed. Images and videos posted here are not Reels. Stories disappear after 24 hours, don't appear on your grid and generally reach fewer people, so people tend to be more relaxed about what they post there. When you post a Reel, you can choose to also share it to your Story as an extra way to reach followers.

The Reels feed. Found in the bottom menu, this shows videos from accounts you don't follow, chosen by the AI based on your interests. Evan's own Reels feed shows him dogs, golf, Premier League, AI and digital marketing; yours will be completely different. Tapping the username on a Reel takes you to that account's profile, where you form an instant impression. Getting into the Reels feed of non followers who are interested in what you offer is very desirable.

Your grid. When someone lands on your profile, they look at the grid of your previous posts and Reels (Evan used Brown Thomas as the example). A small video icon marks a Reel. People form an instant impression of whether your account looks interesting, so always look at your grid through the eyes of a stranger and ask whether it looks visually appealing rather than dull or a mess. Each Reel is represented on the grid by an image called a cover, so covers matter.

Evan also showed how to switch between multiple Instagram accounts by tapping your profile circle at the bottom right, and how to save Reels into Collections (think of them as folders) using the save button, then find them later via your profile, the menu at the top right and Saved.

Why Reels matter: the algorithm

The Instagram algorithm is made up of AI and has two jobs:

1. **Analyse each user** to figure out what they find interesting, so they keep coming back to Instagram rather than TikTok. It notices what you swipe past, what you stop and watch, and especially what you like, comment on, share and save. The longer people stay, the more ads they see and the more money Instagram makes.

2. **Judge whether content is interesting.** From the moment you post, it watches how people react. Did they get beyond the first 3 seconds? How much of the video did they watch? Did they watch to the end or rewatch it? If the first batch of people find it interesting, it's shown to more. If not, it stops being shown.

So the question is never just "what do I want to post?" but "what would people find interesting that also lets me sell?"

Instagram has said people engage more with Reels than with posts, so Reels typically reach more of your followers, can reach non followers through the Reels feed and get more likes, comments and shares.

Video marketing principles

- **The average video view on Instagram, TikTok and Facebook is 9 seconds.** Many people watch only a second or two; some watch to the end.

- **Short is best.** Aim for around 20 seconds. People are far more likely to finish and rewatch a 20 second video than a 60 second one, which signals to the AI that it's interesting.

- **The first 3 seconds are crucial.** Our brains decide within 3 seconds whether something is worth our time. Open with something beautiful or with text that sparks curiosity.

- **Keep the scene changing.** Evan's example: a one minute video of a sunset from a guest house garden gets boring within 5 seconds. Instead, take clips from the garden, an upstairs window, the kitchen window and elsewhere, use a second or two of each and set them to music.

- **Use different camera angles.** Shoot from low down looking up, or from above looking down, not everything at eye level.

- **Remember the environment.** People haven't gone looking for you as they would on your website. You're competing in a congested feed and they'll swipe on the moment it gets boring.

The three types of Reels

1. Lots of little clips set to music. Very common. Examples shown included a shoe shop (seven quick clips alternating between the shoes and the mirror in around 11 or 12 seconds), a boutique (boots, jacket, belt, bag, then the full outfit in about 8 seconds), guest house and tourism Reels, a hair salon showing the process and a garden maintenance business using lots of different angles.

2. Voiceover. Technically the same as the first: you pull clips into an editor, trim them and order them, possibly add music, then tap the microphone button and talk over the video. Useful when music and clips alone don't explain enough. Examples: a Killarney gym explaining an upcoming programme, a beauty coach describing a night cream over clips of her applying it, a business coach, an artist sharing thoughts in her studio and a fashion business promoting a pop up.

3. Talking to the camera. Examples included a knitwear business running through autumn styles, a life coach and a psychologist.

Where your business sits on the spectrum

Evan explained a spectrum that determines what kind of content works:

Visual end: boutiques, jewellers, shoe shops, antiques, artists, photographers, tattoo parlours. Your products are inherently interesting, so photos and videos of them work and people don't mind being sold to. You can sell around 90% of the time with an occasional tip.

Service end: psychologists, mindfulness coaches, life and parenting coaches, financial advisors, solicitors, accountants, digital marketing. You have nothing visual to show and nobody wants a feed full of your workshops and one to ones. It's also not obvious whether you're any good. Aim for **80% interesting, helpful, informative content (tips, advice, news) and 20% sales**. Sharing your expertise brings your service to life, makes people want to follow you and makes them far more receptive when you do mention a workshop.

Middle: hotels, guest houses, yoga, gyms. Some visual content, mixed with tips and advice.

How the three Reel types map to the spectrum:

- **Clips set to music:** ideal for the visual end; only occasional for service businesses (an event, a refurbished office).
- **Voiceover:** handy for everyone.
- **Talking to camera:** optional at the visual end (though great, since studies show people engage more when there's a person in the video), but essential at the service end, because you are the product and people need a sense of you before booking.

Length depends on where you are: at the visual end, 20 seconds is plenty when selling products. At the service end you need to say something substantial, so aim for around 40 seconds and 60 at most. Even then, shorter is better.

Getting the good music: switch to a Creator account

Instagram has two music libraries: the major library (paid for through deals with record labels) and a stock music library.

There are three account types:

- **Personal:** the default for everyone.
- **Business:** for businesses.
- **Creator:** for politicians, musicians, artists, influencers and content creators.

Switching from personal to business or creator is free and gives you much better insights (how many people got past the first 1, 2 or 3 seconds, average watch time, where people drop off, reach), the ability to schedule content and the ability to turn a post or Reel into an ad.

The catch: under the record label agreement, **personal and creator accounts get the major music library, but business accounts only get stock music.** Tens of millions of businesses have switched to creator accounts to get the good music, and Instagram doesn't question it. Evan switched The Marketing Crowd to a creator account around five years ago. You don't lose followers or insights and you can still use Meta Business Suite. You can switch back at any time.

Switching from a personal account:

1. Tap your profile circle (bottom right), then Edit Profile.
2. Scroll down and tap Switch to professional account ("professional" is the umbrella term for business or creator).
3. Tap Next, choose your category honestly (e.g. restaurant), then tap Switch to professional account.
4. Choose Creator, then Next.

Switching from a business account:

1. Tap your profile circle, then the menu at the top right.
2. Scroll to Account type and tools.
3. Tap Account type: Professional, then Switch account type.
4. If it offers business or personal, you're already on creator. If it offers personal or creator, you're on business, so choose Creator.

Finding ideas for your Reels

Search Instagram for your type of business. Use the search bar and type your business type. Results show posts and Reels with those words in the caption, hashtags or spoken audio. Evan's examples: searching "ADHD tips" for a counsellor and "portrait artist Ireland" for a portrait artist. Try different angles and you'll see the three Reel types in action.

Ask ChatGPT. For the best answers, include three things in your prompt:

1. **Context** (the more you give, the more tailored the answer).
2. **Ask it to act like an expert** in that area, which raises the level of the advice.
3. **Be clear about what you want.**

Evan's example prompt: he was a parenting coach in County Cork specialising in teenagers, had been on Instagram a while and wanted to refresh his content; act like an Instagram marketing expert, brainstorm 20 Reel ideas and explain how each would help his marketing. Ideas included three things parents say to teenagers that make arguments worse. He then followed up asking how to structure that idea and which Reel type to use. ChatGPT recommended talking to camera (because people are buying the coach, not just the advice) at 35 to 50 seconds.

Shooting your clips

- **Always shoot portrait, never landscape.** Reels, TikTok, Stories and increasingly LinkedIn videos are all portrait.
- **Get at least 5 or 6 clips** for variety.
- **Keep clips short.** Take 8 to 10 seconds of each rather than a minute or two. Long clips make editing much harder.

Two ways to edit

Option 1: the Instagram app. Tap the plus, choose Reel, select your clips and tap Next. Instagram's AI will automatically put them together with music. Evan always taps **Skip** here, as you can do better yourself. This takes you to the editor where you can add music, text, voiceover, captions and stickers. Swiping up opens a fuller editor. Millions still make Reels this way.

Option 2: the Edits app (Evan's recommendation). Made by Meta, free and available in the App Store or Play Store (search "Edits"). You need an Instagram account to use it and you choose which of your Instagram accounts to use it as. Evan's analogy: editing in Instagram is driving an Audi; Edits is a Ferrari with far more bells and whistles. Everything shown in the course also applies to the Instagram editor.

Advantages of Edits:

- **Your projects are saved.** You can come back later and keep editing. Once you post from the Instagram editor, you can't go back.

- **No watermark.** Videos downloaded from the Instagram editor carry an Instagram watermark (and TikTok's carry a TikTok one), and each platform's algorithm will spot and limit the other's watermarked content. Edits videos have no watermark, so you can share them to TikTok, LinkedIn and YouTube Shorts.

- **More features.**

Will Edits stay free? Meta is moving towards charging for some features through a subscription called Meta One. Examples Evan mentioned: on Facebook, adding links will be limited to two posts or Reels a month (eight with the subscription), and some insights will be restricted unless you subscribe. Meta has announced an Edits+ version within the subscription, which Evan understands will be an enhanced version with AI features. His understanding is that everything shown in the course will remain free, and the Instagram editor won't be taken away.

Edits vs CapCut: CapCut is a separate editing app that costs $16 a month. Edits was launched by Meta to compete with it. The Instagram editor has improved and is a lovely editor; it just doesn't have everything Edits has. If Edits ever starts charging, the Instagram editor would be perfect.

Editing fundamentals (Edits app)

In Edits, tap the plus, choose your gallery, select your clip and tap the tick. The editor layout:

- **Playback screen** at the top, where you watch the video take shape.

- **Play/pause button.**

- **Your clips** on the timeline.

- **The white play line**, which moves when playing and stops when paused. Wherever the white line sits on the timeline is exactly the frame shown on the playback screen. Once you understand this, everything else makes sense.

- **The menu** at the bottom.

To move through the timeline, put your finger on the clips and push right to go back or left to go forward.

The key principle: whatever you want to change, tap on it. Tapping a clip changes the menu to options for that clip: split, volume, speed, effects, delete and more.

Type 1: Clips set to music (the robot lawnmower demo)

Evan pretended to run a garden equipment business promoting a robot lawnmower, using five clips at roughly 3 seconds each (neither number is magic).

Step 1: trim each clip to its best seconds.

1. Move the white line to where you want the clip to start.

2. Tap the clip and choose **Split**.
3. Tap the part before the line and choose **Delete**. (There's an undo button if you delete the wrong bit.)
4. Press play and watch the timer at the top, which counts from the start to the white line. Pause at 3 seconds (or wherever looks right; being precise is optional).
5. Tap the clip, Split, then select the part after the line and Delete.
6. Tap the plus to add more clips. Once comfortable, bring several in at once; you can reorder later.

Evan chose the most visually interesting moments: a close shot so people instantly understand what they're seeing, a front view rather than repeating a side view (as you'd show a car from behind, the side and the front), the mower at night, in the rain (the first seconds where rain was most obvious) and next to a dog to show it's pet friendly. The finished structure was 18 seconds.

Step 2: adjust the audio. Tap a clip, tap **Volume**. Drag to zero to remove background noise (squelching, children, tannoys) or reduce it, e.g. to 50% for waves on a beach or 40% for festival atmosphere. Tap **Apply volume to all videos** to save doing each one.

Step 3: check the order. Press down firmly on a clip (not a gentle tap) and drag it to a new position. If clips briefly disappear from view after moving, that's a display glitch; tap a clip and they reappear.

Step 4: speed. Tap a clip, then **Speed**. 1 is normal. Drag right to speed up (up to 100x) or left to slow down (0.5 is half speed, 0.1 is a tenth). This changes only that clip. Ideas: speed up chopping carrots 3 or 4x, speed up a 20 minute hedge cut 20 or 30x, or slow down bees at a hive entrance to see their wings.

Step 5: transitions. Tap the small line between two clips to choose a transition effect (e.g. Reveal, Zoom bounce), then tick. **Go easy on them**: unexpected ones are nice, but one between every clip becomes gimmicky. Evan added one between clips 1 and 2 and between 4 and 5.

Step 6: add music. Tap **Audio** in the main menu. With a creator account you can search for ABBA, Oasis, Coldplay, Ed Sheeran and more. Tap the square next to a track to preview versions. Tap the **scissors** to choose which section of the song plays by dragging the waveform. Tap the tick. To change it, tap the music, Delete and start again.

Step 7: export. Tap **Next** to export, then **tap Download** so it's saved to your phone. It will be first in your gallery's Recents.

Get feedback from Google Gemini

Gemini is Google's equivalent of ChatGPT, largely free, and it will watch videos up to 5 minutes long, including listening to the music and any speech. Install the Gemini app, log in

with a Google account, tap the plus, attach your video and ask it to act as a video marketing expert, telling you what works and how to improve engagement and reach.

Gemini's feedback on the mower Reel: it praised the clean visuals, the variety of shots and how it showed selling points such as night mowing and all weather use. It suggested adding **bold hook text in the first 2 to 3 seconds** (most people scroll with the sound off), adding text to reinforce points like working at night or in the rain, and **resequencing** to open with a more striking clip such as the headlights at dusk, rain droplets or the dog.

Evan acted on this:

- He moved the night clip to the start.
- He added hook text: **"It mows while you sleep."**

Adding and styling text: tap **Text** in the main menu, type it and tap Done, then drag it into position. To change it, tap the text on the timeline and tap **Edit**. Options include the pencil (edit wording), text style presets (e.g. Super Serious, Starry Night, Spooky), AA for fonts, colours and animations (jump in, pop in, fade in, zoom in). Then export and download again.

Remixing and using other people's videos

A question came up about taking another creator's popular video and adding your own value to it. Evan explained two routes:

- **Remix (allowed):** when posting, creators can choose in the settings to let others include a short part (around 5 or 6 seconds) of their video in a new one. If enabled, a Remix option appears. It's entirely up to the original poster.
- **Downloading someone's video and editing it (not allowed) without their permission.** That's stealing their content. You could contact them first and ask; if they agree, that's fine.

Type 2: Voiceover

Duplicate your project first (optional). In the Edits home screen (the four squares), all your projects are saved. Press down on a project for options: **Rename** (e.g. "Mower Music") and **Duplicate**. Rename the copy (e.g. "Mower VO") and add the voiceover to that, so you keep the music only version too. Like copying a PowerPoint before changing it.

Planning a voiceover:

1. **Decide on a voiceover at the start**, when you're shooting clips.
2. **Write your script and time yourself reading it.** Be ruthless cutting it to length: 20 seconds max for a product like the mower, maybe 40 or 50 seconds for tips and advice.
3. **Match clips to what you say.** If you mention it cutting at night, show it at night; in the rain, show rain; pet friendly, show a dog. For some videos it doesn't matter

(Evan's florist example: any clips of making bouquets suit a script about a big rose delivery).

4. **Build the video** exactly as before, ordering clips in the order you'll talk about them.

5. **Decide whether you want music.**

6. **Rehearse before recording.** Turn the volume down, press play and talk along to get the rhythm and check your words line up with what's on screen. Have two or three goes if needed.

Recording: tap **Voice**, press the red record button and talk. Tap record again to stop. Tap the tick to keep it or the X to delete and start again.

Edits has a built in teleprompter (with settings for text size and speed), but Evan advises against it unless you're skilled: there's a real danger you'll sound like you're reading, and people switch off instantly. A sheet of paper in front of you is fine as a prompt, but keep it conversational.

Balancing music and voice: music almost always drowns out a voiceover. Tap the music, tap Volume and bring it down to zero or very low (Evan settled around 29 to 30% for Ed Sheeran). In a voiceover video the voice is the point, so **avoid music with lyrics** competing with you. Either delete the music completely (several examples shown had none) or use an instrumental section, e.g. the intro of "Lovely Day" by Bill Withers using the scissors, at around 50%.

Type 3: Talking to camera

Evan stressed that nobody should feel pressured into this. If you're not comfortable, stick to voiceover videos.

His demo: a fictional restaurant, The Laughing Horse, promoting lunch specials, filmed on a tripod with a microphone about 5 feet from the camera.

Trimming the start and end precisely:

- When you press record on a phone there's a lag of half a second to a second, so **wait a couple of seconds before speaking** or you may lose your first words.

- That means there's dead time at the start, which can't stay because the first 3 seconds are crucial.

- Edits now shows **audio waveform lines** on the clip. Move the white line to just before the lines start, Split and Delete the part before. (Evan's older trick: opening his hands just before speaking as a visual marker.)

- At the end, play until your last words, pause, Split and Delete everything after.

- **Stand still for a second or two after you finish** so you don't see yourself walking off.

- Avoid the common mistake of showing your finger pressing record. Press record, settle yourself, start talking, smile at the end and simply trim out the finger in the editor.

With this kind of video you need to be precise; with the first two types it didn't matter exactly where you cut.

Overlays (B roll)

Evan's first version, him simply talking about roast beef, Dover sole and pavlova, was not a good marketing video. Firstly, nothing changes on screen, so attention fades. Secondly, the whole point was to showcase the food, but viewers only see him. (His estate agent example: talking about the nicest garden you've ever seen while viewers are still looking at you.)

The fix is to **overlay** videos or images of what you're talking about, known as B roll. It makes the video more visually interesting and showcases your product. Examples shown: a Westmeath bar and restaurant overlaying its cheesecake, a Local Enterprise Office advisor overlaying event footage, a Killarney fitness coach overlaying training sessions and a Brown Thomas beauty advisor overlaying close ups of an advent calendar.

How to add overlays:

1. Plan the B roll clips you need based on what you say (Evan filmed chef John, the roast beef, the Dover sole and the pavlova).
2. Play the video and **pause where you mention the thing** you want to show.
3. Swipe the main menu to **Overlay**, choose from your gallery and tick. It's placed at the white line.
4. Drag to move it and pinch to resize: a small box in a corner, below you or filling the screen.
5. When you stop talking about it, tap the overlay, Split at the white line and Delete the rest.
6. Repeat for each item.

Principle: **if you're talking about X, show X; when you stop talking about X, stop showing it.** And the less people see of you, the more interesting the video tends to be.

To find clips saved in a folder rather than your recent gallery, tap **Recents** to see your phone's folders.

Captions

Around **60% of people watch Instagram with the sound off** (at work, on a bus or train). Captions also pull people along so they watch longer, help the message sink in when read and heard and make videos accessible for people who are hard of hearing.

1. Tap **Captions** in the main menu.
2. Choose the source. Selecting **Video** captions your speech (overlay audio and song lyrics can also be picked up if selected).
3. Tap **Generate captions**.
4. **Proofread:** tap any caption, choose **Edit**, correct typos and remove any “uh” or “um”, then tick.
5. **Style:** tap a caption, choose **Style** and pick a preset, then adjust colour (e.g. the highlight on the word being spoken) and font. Evan chose red highlights and a font called Class.
6. Export and download.

Evan’s advice: practise all three types now while it’s fresh. Make a clips and music video of the beach or your garden, add a voiceover to it, then record yourself talking about something you love (your kids, your dog) and overlay clips of it. Don’t wait until you need a marketing video.

Equipment recommendations

Links are in your course notes.

Microphone (people will tolerate average visuals but swipe away from bad sound):

- **Hollyland Lark 2** (Evan's top pick, down from about €200 to around €120): two tiny magnetic mics the size of a 20 cent coin, attachable under clothing or on a lanyard, receivers for Android, iPhone and computer included, works through the charging port with no app or syncing, range of 350 feet, windbreakers included.

- **Ulanzi** (budget, around €60): two light mics, range of 100 feet, but you buy the iPhone or Android receiver version and there are no windbreakers, so it picks up wind outdoors. Great indoors.

Tripod: around €35 (shop local if you can), plus a phone holder that screws onto the tripod.

Keeping your phone steady when shooting clips: a budget grip holder (around €12 on Amazon) or a **gimbal**, which uses a motorised balance system for very smooth footage, ideal for moving around or going up and down stairs.

Light: a **Neewer** ring light, which works well even when you're standing around 6 feet away. Cheaper desk lights are fine only if they're right in front of you.

Upcoming courses

- **How to use AI to transform your social media:** 21 October

- **What to focus on in your digital marketing:** 10 November

Check the Local Enterprise Office Cork North and West website for details.

This was created with the help of one of our AI colleagues ☺