

# Do Not Comment

The only rule the Game could not win. A post asked a comment section for silence. Eight people broke it inside the first minute, and the most liked comment scolds the rest.

|                       |                            |                          |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| THIS IS               | PART OF                    | STATUS                   |
| PAPER 008 · A FINDING | THE GAME · ACT II, ROUND 5 | FILED · V1 · 31 AUG 2026 |
| SOURCE                | 311 21 Apr 2026            |                          |
| COMMENTS              | DATES                      |                          |

IN PLAIN WORDS

On 21 April 2026 a post went up whose entire rule was three words: Do Not Comment. The pass condition was silence, in a comment section, from an audience that had by then spent five weeks learning that the way to play was to comment.

It got 311 comments. Eight arrived inside the first minute. Forty inside ten. The most liked comment, two and a half minutes in, reads **disappointed in yall**, at 392 likes. The second most liked, 36 seconds in, reads **We're not even 4 minutes in**, with three crying faces. The last comment arrived three weeks later.

No second attempt was posted. The operator stopped the round on realising it could not be won. This paper is about why, and about what a crowd does with a rule it cannot keep.

THE QUESTION WE ASKED

The posted rule asked a simple thing and the hypothesis underneath it was not simple: **can a trained crowd withhold the one act it has been trained to perform?** Every earlier round measured what people would do. This one measured whether they could not do it.

WHAT WE DID

- **Instruction:** Do Not Comment.
- **Where:** one Instagram reel, posted 21 April 2026 at 03:08 UTC. The archive holds comments from 03:12 UTC, four minutes later, through 12 May.

- **How we counted:** every comment on the post, from the comment archive, split into top-level comments and replies. Top-level comments with no text (stickers and GIFs, which the archive stores as empty) are counted separately, because a sticker is a comment that says nothing, which is the closest anyone came to obeying.
- **Timing:** top-level comments are placed in four windows measured from the first archived comment: the first ten minutes, ten minutes to an hour, one hour to a day, and after a day.

WHAT HAPPENED

TABLE 1. Comments under a post that asked for none.

| WINDOW                                  | TOP-LEVEL COMMENTS | PEOPLE     |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| First ten minutes                       | 40                 | 40         |
| Ten minutes to one hour                 | 76                 | 30         |
| One hour to one day                     | 111                | 110        |
| After one day                           | 62                 | 61         |
| All top-level comments, plus 22 replies | 289 + 22           | 239 people |

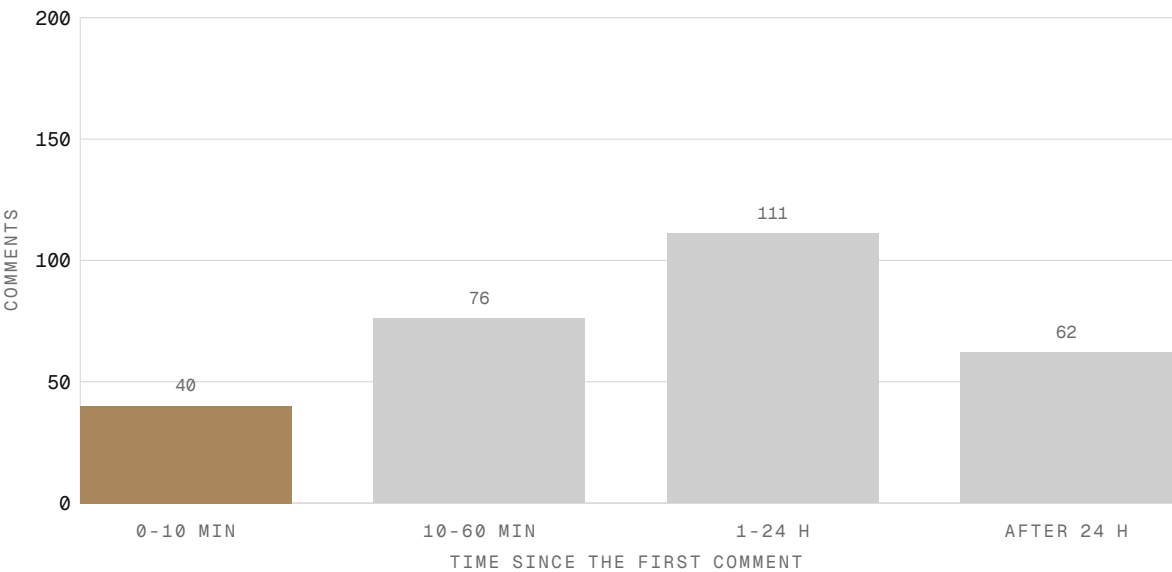


FIGURE 1. Top-level comments by window. The accented bar is the first ten minutes.

The second window is the strange one: 76 comments from 30 people. A handful of people commented over and over in the first hour, and the archive shows what they were doing: replying to the room, scolding it, and scolding the scolders.

Platform numbers are from the Instagram API on 31 August 2026. Comment counts there include replies and everything written since the round, which is why they run above the counts this paper analyses; views and reach are the tallies the platform reports.

TABLE 2. Shares of the 289 top-level comments, with 95 percent intervals.

| MEASURE                      | COUNT | OF  | SHARE | 95% INTERVAL   |
|------------------------------|-------|-----|-------|----------------|
| Inside the first ten minutes | 40    | 289 | 13.8% | 10.3% to 18.3% |
| Inside the first hour        | 116   | 289 | 40.1% | 34.7% to 45.9% |
| Inside the first day         | 227   | 289 | 78.5% | 73.5% to 82.9% |
| Stickers and GIFs, no text   | 53    | 289 | 18.3% | 14.3% to 23.2% |

TABLE 3. The post at platform scale, as of 31 August 2026.

| REEL                     | VIEWS · REACH         | COMMENTS<br>TODAY |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| The post · 21 April 2026 | 45,056 · 26,214 reach | 315               |
| Likes on the reel        | 2,395                 |                   |

WHAT IT MEANS

A comment section cannot hold silence, because the act of enforcing silence is a comment. The rule was broken by the people trying to keep it.

Read the two most liked comments again. Neither breaks the rule for fun. One is disappointment in everyone else, the other is disbelief at how fast everyone else failed. They are the two most liked things on the wall because the room agreed with them, and in agreeing, the room commented. The mechanism the earlier rounds had built, a crowd that polices itself in public, is exactly what made this rule impossible. Policing is speech.

The stickers are the second finding. Fifty-three people commented with no words at all. That is the shape of a person who wants to be present without breaking the rule, and there is no such shape in a comment section; a sticker is counted, sorted and shown like any other comment. The platform has no way to be there quietly.

The round was stopped rather than declared lost. The record keeps the distinction. A rule that cannot be kept is not a failed round. It is a measurement of the medium, and the number it returned was 311.

WHAT THIS DOES NOT SHOW

- **The ledger has no count.** The round record marks the round FAILED with one attempt and no numbers; every figure here is from the comment archive.
- **Silence has no denominator.** We know 239 people commented. We do not know how many saw the post and did not, so the paper cannot say what share of the audience kept the rule.
- **The archive starts four minutes after the post.** The first archived comment is at 03:12 UTC; the post went up at 03:08. Anything in those four minutes is lost, and the second most liked comment, which mentions four minutes, suggests there was something.

- **Stickers are inferred.** Empty text in the archive is read as a sticker or GIF comment. That is how the ingestion stores them, but it is an inference about 53 rows.

WHAT WE WOULD RUN NEXT

The same rule with comments turned off, which is the only way a comment section can obey it, and then a count of how many people came back to comment on the next post about it. That measures the pressure the rule builds, which is the number this round could not reach.

THE WHOLE ROUND

The transmission this paper reads is one post. Its numbers on the platform, and what the comment archive holds of it, are below.

| POST                        | DATE       | VIEWS  | REACH  | COMMENTS | ARCHIVED |
|-----------------------------|------------|--------|--------|----------|----------|
| Attempt 1, the only attempt | 2026-04-21 | 45,056 | 26,214 | 315      | 311      |

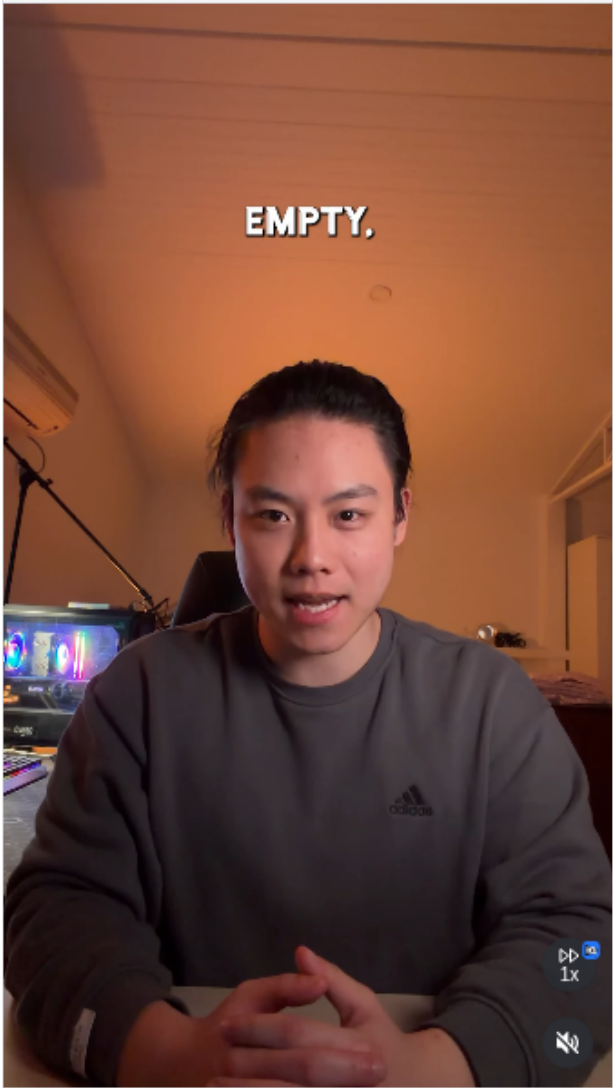
Views, reach and comments are the platform's figures from the Instagram API, snapshot 2026-08-31, and keep growing. The reach total adds each post's reach and overlaps between posts, so it is not a count of distinct people. Archived is the number of comments the archive holds for the post; ingestion is selective, so a gap between the two columns is expected and is stated wherever it changes a count in the paper.

IN THE RECORD

The round has no Chronicle entry; the round record on The Game holds it as FAILED, one attempt, stopped by the operator. The post that shares its date, THE TIME CAPSULE, ◇034, is a different transmission.

THE POSTS, AS ISSUED

The instruction as it went out: the reel frame beside the caption, captured from the operation's own signed-in account. What the paper counts is the answer to exactly this.



**kinggwuu\_** Original audio

**kinggwuu\_** 18w  
ALGORITHM GAME — ACT II  
LEVEL 2 // ROUND 2 // ATTEMPT 1  
\*Do Not Comment\*

THE RECEIPTS

Native captures of the comments this paper leans on, taken from the operation’s own signed-in account on 31 Aug 2026. Handles and like counts are as they stood that day; the numbers in the paper are the round-time count.

**kinggwuu\_** Original audio

**soggyramss** disappointed in yall   
18w 392 likes Reply  
— View replies (3)

**kinggwuu\_** Original audio

**typicalofuri** We're not even 4 minutes in 🤔🤔🤔   
18w 192 likes Reply  
— View replies (1)

## METHOD NOTE

- **Source of truth:** the comment archive, all comments on the post, re-counted on 31 August 2026; the round ledger (Act II, Round 5) for the rule, the date and the decision to stop.
- **No outside baseline is cited.** We do not know of a comparable count of comments under an instruction not to comment.

## SOURCES, BY LINK

01 Attempt 1, the only attempt · 2026-04-21 · <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DXYMfkIiYAw/>

## WHERE THE NUMBERS COME FROM

## POST-LEVEL COUNTS

Views, reach, comments, likes, shares and saves per post come from the Instagram Graph API (Meta), read with the operation's own access token for its own business account. Each paper states the date of the snapshot it uses. These are the platform's counts of events, not of people: one person can view a reel twice and comment ten times, and the counts keep growing after a round closes.

## COMMENT TEXT

The comment archive is the operation's own database of public comments on its own posts, pulled through the Instagram Graph API comments endpoint and stored with the comment id, username, text, like count, timestamp and whether it is a reply. Ingestion is selective: the most engaged posts were backfilled and recent posts are pulled daily, so some posts are held whole and others only in part. Every paper states how much of each post the archive holds. Every count that reads text (exact matches, categories, keyword themes) is run as a read-only script against this archive, and the scripts are in the repository beside the paper data.

## THE ROUND LEDGER

For Act II rounds, the counts filed on The Game's round record at the time each round closed. Where a paper uses a ledger figure it says so, and where the archive re-count differs from the ledger both numbers are shown.

## RECEIPTS

Every comment and post shown as evidence is a native capture from the operation's own signed-in Instagram session, taken by opening the exact permalink, with the source URL, a description, the rights basis and a file hash recorded in a manifest that is checked on every build of the site. Nothing shown is recreated, retyped or edited beyond cropping to the post header and the comment.

## STATISTICS

Shares carry Wilson 95 percent intervals: the range the share would land in 19 times out of 20 if the same count were taken on a fresh crowd of the same size. Differences between two shares carry a Wald

interval. Where a study is cited as a baseline, its own reported figure and sample size are used.

#### WHAT NONE OF THIS CAN SEE

No demographics beyond what people typed. No view durations. No private messages. No comments that were deleted before the archive pulled them. No way to verify that a self-report is true. Every paper's limits section names the specific things its count cannot show.