

VIDEO VIEWABILITY GUIDE

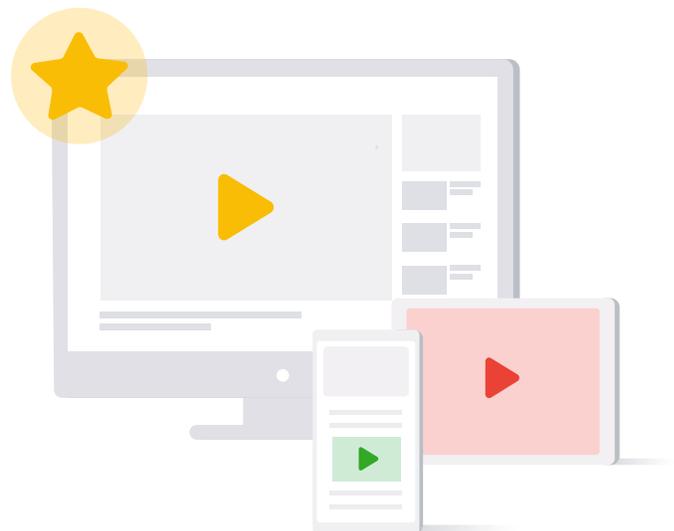
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# Video Viewability Best Practices for Publishers

The 3 P's of Video Viewability: Premium Experiences, Placement, and Player

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Learn how to increase the viewability of your video inventory so you can grow demand, fill rates, and revenue.



# Executive Summary

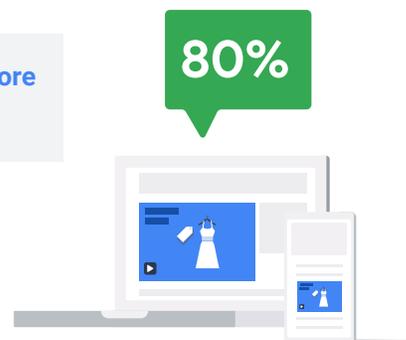
Video is one of the most widely used and engaging content and advertising formats today. As video publishing platforms and ad formats become increasingly sophisticated, brands are frequently taking a video-first approach to their advertising strategies. Viewers are now accustomed to watching video wherever and whenever they want, and being in control of the viewing experience, whether watching a movie or an ad.

But it's surprising how challenging it can still be for people to view video ads due to a number of design or technical reasons that can hinder the experience. Every publisher, content owner, and advertiser knows that in order for consumers to engage with an ad, they have to be able to see it. That's where viewability comes in.

Viewability is the measure of whether an ad had an opportunity to be seen, and delivering viewable video ads is valuable to everyone in the advertising ecosystem — users, advertisers, and publishers.

- **Better viewing experiences for users:** Viewable video ads that play on-screen, load quickly, and offer a responsive design deliver a premium user experience that keeps people engaged and returning to your platform. And when a video ad is actually in view, people can engage with the ad and learn about relevant brands and products.
- **Better results for advertisers:** When ads are viewable and people are able to see and engage with ads, advertisers can drive more value for their brand. Viewability helps marketers understand ad efficiency and allocate spend to the most valuable media.
- **More demand and revenue for publishers:** Because advertisers value viewability, increasing your viewable inventory can significantly improve the quality of your inventory, and increase demand, fill, and overall revenue.

Increasing the viewability of your video ads from 50% to 90% can result in more than 80% revenue uplift (averaged across desktop and mobile sites).<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Google Ad Manager Internal Data, Global, Q4 2018 - Q1 2019.

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We're focused on helping our publisher partners succeed by identifying ways to improve the viewability of their video ads. In our recent [State of Ad Viewability report](#), we found that the average viewability rate for video ads across publisher sites, excluding YouTube, is 66.1%. While this number has improved over previous years, there's still opportunity to increase video viewability even more across all devices, platforms, and content-types.

We've put this guide together to help you increase the viewability of your video ads on your website and apps, based around the 3 P's of viewability: premium experiences, placement, and player. This guide primarily focuses on best practice recommendations for instream video ads, meaning video ads that are delivered directly into a video player's content stream. The step-by-step recommendations cover ways to improve the viewability of your video ad inventory, and in turn drive more value for you, your advertisers, and the people watching your video content.

# Understanding how viewability is measured

In order to understand how viewers engage with video ads, the Media Rating Council (MRC) and the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) defined what viewable means. If 50% of a video ad's pixels appear on-screen for at least 2 consecutive seconds, an ad is deemed viewable.

Google has adopted this industry-wide definition and is partnering with the advertising ecosystem to drive viewability measurement forward. For example, our Active View technology allows publishers and app developers to seamlessly measure viewability at no additional cost in Google Ad Manager, AdSense, and AdMob. Similarly, Active View is available to advertisers in Display & Video 360, allowing them to measure and optimize buys based on viewability thresholds.

Ad Manager is also integrated with [IAB's Open Measurement Software Development Kit](#), which offers publishers a single SDK that can be used to access multiple measurement providers, so they can easily measure in-app viewability. This means advertisers can use a provider of their choice for in-app viewability measurement, which can lead to more confidence, transparency, and flexibility when running ads on mobile app inventory.



# The 3 P's of Viewability

To get started on maximizing the viewability of your video properties, we recommend following the 3 P's of video viewability best practices:



## Premium experiences

Deliver a more premium user experience to your audiences with highly viewable ads that captivate, load quickly, and increase viewer intent.



## Placement

Place your video in an optimal spot to be easily seen, whether it's at the center or top of your page, or another location on your website or app where viewers spend the majority of their time, to increase the likelihood they'll see your ads and content.



## Player

Make your video player the most prominent element on the screen. Typically, the larger the player size the more viewable your ads. A larger player can make your content, and the ads within it, the focus of attention.

Now let's go into each of the 3 P's of viewability to explain how you can make changes to your website or app to increase the viewability of your video ads.



### Premium experiences, no matter where people are watching

Providing a premium video experience not only drives more value for your audiences, but can make your video inventory more sought after by advertisers. If your site or app loads video content quickly, makes it easy to find, and creates captivating viewing experiences across screens, audiences and advertisers will keep returning to your platform.

To deliver a premium viewable experience, you should consider making the following updates:

- **Integrate a dedicated video section**

Building a dedicated video section into your site or app can help drive traffic directly to your videos. And driving traffic directly to your videos can result in more people watching your videos, including the ads within them.

- **Improve your page speed**

Increasing the speed at which your videos load can drastically increase the viewability of your video ad inventory, because when a video loads faster, people are less likely to leave before the video starts playing.

- **Optimize for speed and responsiveness:** Ads load faster and have better viewability rates on speedy and responsive sites and apps. This can be particularly important in emerging markets with slower connection speeds. Sites and apps can be optimized with these tips:
  - **Use Google's [PageSpeed Insights](#)** to analyze the content of a web page, then generate suggestions to reduce latency and make the page load faster. When pages load faster, ads load faster and viewability rates go up.
  - **Use the [AMP format](#)** to ensure your website is fast and user-first. AMP supports the long-term success of your web strategy with distribution across popular platforms and reduced operating and development costs. Additionally, you can use [Progressive Web Apps](#) to offer an app-like experience on mobile web that loads quickly and seamlessly.
  - **Use an analytics solution like [App Speed reports](#)** to measure how fast app pages are loading and how long different requests take to load in your app.

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- **Explore lazy loading for article pages:** This means waiting to load the video and serve an ad until someone scrolls down further on your page. Infinite scroll, which is also a form of lazy loading, happens when the browser scroll bar keeps scrolling but never reaches the bottom of the page, which causes the page to grow with additional content. Lazy loading and infinite scroll can increase the speed of your site, reduce load time and latency, and improve viewability of your video ads.
- **Minimize passbacks:** Ads also tend to load more slowly when ad calls are passed from one ad server to another through a system called passbacks. The fewer passbacks that happen, the faster ads can load, which can increase viewability rates.

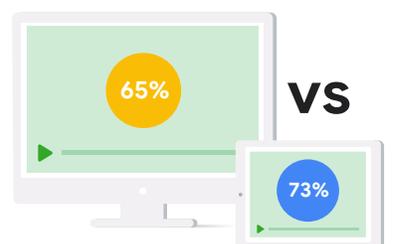
- **Create captivating content**

According to our [State of Ad Viewability report](#), content categories that are known for holding viewers' attention — like Games, Arts & Entertainment, and Shopping — tend to have higher viewability, and suggest a higher interest in ads from these content categories.

- **Optimize across platforms**

Build responsive designs into your site or app to provide a great user experience no matter where someone's watching your content. These [responsive layouts](#) can help you get started by optimally displaying site content on different devices, which can help viewability rates go up. As people spend more time on mobile, it's increasingly important to optimize for the mobile format, and our [report](#) shows that video ad viewability is higher on mobile and tablet than on desktop.

**Video viewability on tablets is the highest at 73% compared to desktop at 65%.<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>2</sup> The State of Ad Viewability, Google Advertising Platforms Data, Global, September 2018.



### Placement — making it easy for people to find and watch your content and ads

Placement is an important factor in improving the viewability of your video ads — if people can't find your videos, they can't watch the content. The more prominently you place videos on your site or app, the easier it will be for viewers to find and watch your video content and ads.

Here are things to consider to make it as easy as possible for people to find your video content:

- **Identify where viewers spend time**

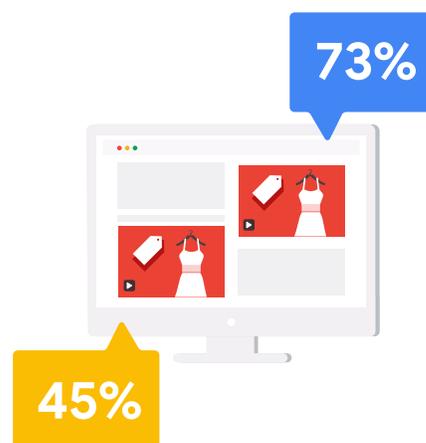
While “top center” is typically the most viewable position on the page, take time to understand user behavior. In general, we recommend moving video players to a higher and more centrally located position on the page. For example, while it's true that above-the-fold videos are more likely to be seen, ad placement below-the-fold shouldn't be ruled out.

**While 73% of video ads above the fold are viewable, 45% of video ads below the fold are viewable.<sup>3</sup>**

Consider identifying where viewers are spending their time on certain pages and placing video players in those locations. To test this, you can also try moving the video player higher on your website and app to understand if the viewability rate changes.

- **Dynamically play when in viewport**

You should only configure a video player to autoplay if the player is in the viewport; otherwise, you should set it to click-to-play.



<sup>3</sup> The State of Ad Viewability, Google Advertising Platforms Data, Global, October 2018.



### Player — the right one for the job

More and more, viewers are used to premium video player experiences. By increasing your video player size and using best practices for click-to-play, autoplay, and sticky players, you can grow the viewability of your video ads.

- **Implement larger video player sizes**

Make the video player the primary focus of the page. Large video players have significantly higher viewability than smaller video players. Typically, the larger the video player size, the more viewable the inventory.

According to the [State of Ad Viewability report](#), a 2560 x 1440 video player has a 95% viewability rate on average whereas a 854 x 480 player size has an 88% viewability rate.<sup>4</sup>

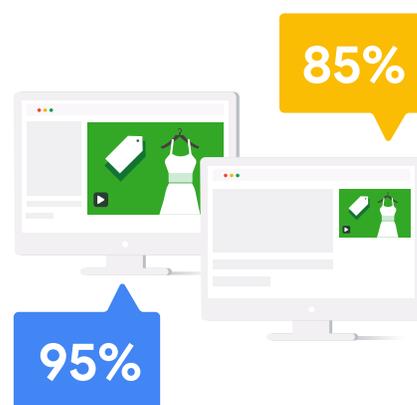
Publishers should evaluate their video ad inventory sizes and move away from smaller video ads that don't deliver the viewability rates desired by advertisers.

- **Implement click-to-play**

Click-to-play ensures higher user engagement and viewability because a person actually has to click the video to play it, showing intent to watch the video and the ad within it.

- **Use autoplay the right way**

Getting autoplay right is critical to the quality of your site or app's experience. According to the [Better Ads Standard](#), autoplaying video ads with sound can be disruptive to the user and lead them to close the website or app immediately. While muted autoplay is allowed, be sure your implementation is in line with the [Chrome autoplay policy](#).



<sup>4</sup> The State of Ad Viewability, Google Advertising Platforms Data, Global, October 2018.

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- **Use sticky players the right way**

Sticky players may not be ideal for all types of websites, such as gaming pages or dynamically evolving pages. You should make sure to thoroughly A/B test sticky ad unit performance before implementing the unit across a site or app. If you utilize a sticky player to improve viewability, the player must first start as a full size instream unit. [Learn more](#) about sticky player policies.

- **Use viewable-friendly ad formats**

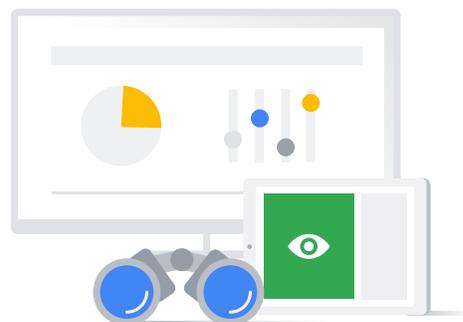
We recommend minimizing the use of iFrames, which is an HTML document embedded inside another HTML document primarily found on sites. Ad tags within some iFrames, such as cross-domain iFrames, can't be measured by any viewability solution while others like friendly iFrames and SafeFrames help better measure viewability. When fewer ads run within cross-domain iFrames, viewability rates increase.

# Charting the future of video viewability

As video continues to grow as a format and people spend more time watching videos across screens, it will become increasingly important to measure viewability so you can understand how people are engaging with video ads. And as people continue to watch more videos on more devices in more places, we'll need to work together across the industry to drive standardization in viewability measurement everywhere.

For example, with the growth of connected TV, we're providing solutions like inferred viewability measurement on connected devices so that publishers and advertisers can get a more complete view of audience activity across every screen. We're also continuing to work with the IAB Tech Lab's Coalition Working Group to identify ways to expand the Open Measurement standard across all environments, including the web, for consistent viewability measurements across all screens in the future.

The importance of video viewability will match this growth, and it's already critical to the advertising ecosystem. The sooner you implement the 3 P's of viewability, the sooner you'll be able to capture a greater share of brand ad spend, boost revenue and fill rates, and find opportunities to open up additional inventory options.



# Putting the 3 P's of viewability into action — step by step

This quick 'getting started guide' with ways to measure and test the viewability of your inventory, and best practices for viewability reporting in Google Ad Manager, will help you put the 3 P's into action.

To start, make sure you have the Google Ad Manager Interactive Media Ads (IMA) SDK implemented on your websites and apps and are leveraging the Open Measurement SDK for mobile apps:

- **Enable viewability measurement tags**

Use the [Google Ad Manager IMA SDK](#) for both client-side and Dynamic Ad Insertion solutions to enable Google's MRC-accredited viewability solution, Active View. This solution helps publishers and app developers understand which of their ads are viewable.

- **Use the Open Measurement SDK for mobile app viewability measurement**

Ad Manager is integrated with [IAB's Open Measurement Software Development Kit](#) for mobile operating systems. This SDK benefits publishers and developers because it minimizes the need to integrate with multiple SDKs from different measurement companies. Multiple SDKs pose several challenges to app developers, requiring them to complete several complex integrations and maintain upgrades, which can result in heavy-weight apps that may slow down performance. Without the need to run multiple SDK verifications, ads and pages load faster, leading to greater engagement among viewers. This, in turn, offers advertisers consolidated viewability measurement of in-app inventory through a measurement provider of their choice.

- **How to use Open Measurement SDK:** Make sure you have updated your apps with a recent version of the IMA SDK (iOS: 3.7.1+, Android: 3.8.4+), or reach out to your Online Video Platform (OVP) to make sure they have integrated and are fully compliant with the Open Measurement SDK.

### Testing tips

Start by creating a new ad unit to help provide fresh results to test the viewability of your inventory. Once created, you may want to try the following:

- **Premium experiences:** Create a dedicated video page to see if more people go to this page with intent to watch videos, which can increase your video viewability.
- **Placement:** Move the player placement to the top of your page or app so that it is front and center and easy for people to see.
- **Player:** Implement a larger player size so that the player is easy to see, and consider implementing click-to-play videos.

You can also consider measuring viewability with A/B testing. For example, Google Ad Manager tags can fire a callback event when an impression becomes viewable during an A/B test to help you compare different layouts and ad placements based on viewability rates.

### Viewability reporting tips

In Google Ad Manager, start by looking at the following [viewability metrics](#):

<b>Active View</b>	Google uses Active View to track viewability. Active View is already enabled on the <a href="#">Google Ad Manager IMA SDK</a> for both client-side and Dynamic Ad Insertion solutions, which means no additional work is needed from you.
<b>Active View Measurable Impression</b>	Not all impressions are measurable by Active View, as some factors may prevent the data from being captured. This metric can help you understand how often your ad appeared in locations measured by Active View.
<b>Active View Viewable Impression</b>	This metric shows the number of times your ad's impressions were considered viewable. An ad is counted as viewable if at least 50% of its area is visible for at least 1 second for display ads, or at least 2 seconds for video ads.
<b>Active View Viewable Rate</b>	This is the viewability rate of your ad. It's the percentage of time when your ad appeared on sites or apps with Active View enabled and was viewable. This percentage estimates how many of your measurable impressions were actually viewable to potential customers.
<b>Active View Measurable Rate</b>	This metric can help you understand how often your ad appeared in places that were able to be measured by Active View technology. Measurable impressions over total impressions represents the percentage of your total impressions that were measured by Active View. Total impressions include both measurable and non-measurable impressions.

### Reporting pro-tips

Use Ad Manager reports to help you better understand your video viewability and ways to optimize the viewability of your video inventory. You can look at different device types, player sizes, ad units, and more.

- **Identify common themes in your video inventory**
  - Different video layout or creative types can impact viewability outcomes. When pulling reports, combine different dimensions to identify potential pockets of inventory for improvement. For example, you can run Ad Manager reports to understand your viewability and filter by dimensions including:
    - “Creative size” to see if one size may be dragging down viewability numbers
    - “Ad unit” to see if certain sections of the site are particularly troublesome
    - “Custom criteria” by separating out above-the-fold (ATF) and below-the-fold (BTF) slots
- **Calculate your video viewability**
  - You can divide Active View Measured Impressions by Active View Viewed Impressions to see the same viewability percentage that buyers target against.

### Reporting deep-dive

The below section covers how to pull a few key Ad Manager historical reports to understand the viewability of your inventory. [Learn more](#) about viewability reporting in Ad Manager.

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### Viewability across inventory report

#### Benefits:

- Leverage the 'Ad Exchange historical' report to understand which inventory segments have low video viewability.
- Use the reporting 'Dimension' that corresponds to how you break out your inventory: 'DFP Ad Units' or 'Sites'

#### How to run the report:

- 1 In Ad Manager, go to Reports → *Queries* → *New Query*
- 2 Under *Report type* select *Ad Exchange historical*
- 3 Click '+ Add new filter' and select *Products* is 'Video'
- 4 Under *Dimensions* select *DFP Ad Units* or *Sites* depending on how you segment your inventory
- 5 Under *Metrics* select *Active view measured impressions* and *Active view viewed impressions*
- 6 Click 'Run!'

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### Viewability across devices report

#### Benefits:

- Leverage the 'Ad Exchange historical' report to understand if viewability is low on mobile, desktop, or both.

#### How to run the report:

- 1 In Ad Manager, go to Reports → *Queries* → *New Query*
- 2 Under *Report type* select *Ad Exchange historical*
- 3 Click '+ Add new filter' and select *Products* is 'Video'
- 4 Under *Dimensions* select *Device categories*
- 5 Under *Metrics* select *Active view measured impressions* and *Active view viewed impressions*
- 6 Click 'Run!'

### Viewability above-the-fold and below-the-fold report

#### Benefits:

- Leverage the 'Ad Exchange historical' report to understand if below-the-fold placements or above-the-fold placements perform better.

#### How to run the report:

- 1 In Ad Manager, go to Reports → *Queries* → *New Query*
- 2 Under *Report type* select *Ad Exchange historical*
- 3 Click '+ Add new filter' and select *Products* is 'Video'
- 4 Under *Dimensions* select *Ad locations*
- 5 Under *Metrics* select *Active view measured impressions* and *Active view viewed impressions*
- 6 Click 'Run!'

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### Viewability by creative size report

#### Benefits:

- As we mentioned earlier, larger creative sizes tend to perform better. Use this report to understand how creative sizes that run in your video ad units perform.

#### How to run the report:

- 1 In Ad Manager, go to Reports → *Queries* → *New Query*
- 2 Under *Report type* select *Ad Exchange historical*
- 3 Click '+ Add new filter' and select *Products* is 'Video'
- 4 Under *Dimensions* select *Creative sizes*
- 5 Under *Metrics* select *Active view measured impressions* and *Active view viewed impressions*
- 6 Click 'Run!'

We hope you find this guide useful and if you want to learn more, be sure to visit the [Ad Manager website](#) or [contact us here](#).