Driving performance with YouTube - The full Practitioner Guide

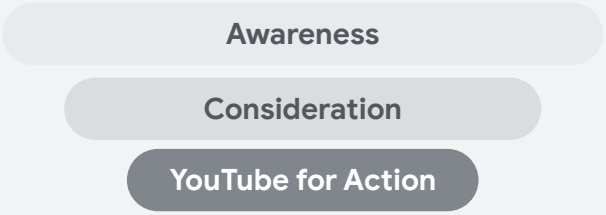
What if you could reach audiences on YouTube that just searched Google for what you offer

with a video ad that explains and **shows off your business**, and gives viewers a way to **take action**

on a platform where people are really paying attention and taking action?

YouTube for Action is a set of solutions that help you drive conversions on YouTube

YouTube has a big set of solutions that help advertisers achieve their marketing goals, while YouTube for Action focuses specifically on the lower segment of this funnel.



In this guide, we'll teach you how to build your YouTube activity, using this framework:



Reach people based on their intent
with intent signals directly from Google



Make it easy for them to take action
with new ad formats that drive viewers to take action



Prove it works & optimize to a target CPA
with cross device measurement + Smart Bidding



Tailor your creative to work for direct-response
with new guidelines for direct-response video

Agenda

- **Section 1**
  Setup for success before starting
- **Section 2**
  Reach people based on their intent
- **Section 3**
  Make it easy for them to take action
- **Section 4**
  Prove it works & optimize
- **Section 5**
  Tailor your creative work for direct response
- **Appendix**
  Set up checklist/troubleshooting Q&A/misconceptions

Setup for success before starting

Before you start building your YouTube for Action campaigns, make sure that:

YouTube for Action is a good fit for your goals

- You care about conversions and performance KPIs
- You're already maximizing your search activity
- You're looking to grow by reaching new customers
- You're willing to test and learn in the short-term to realize long-term gains

You are all set up with your measurement

- **Make sure to use Google Ads conversion tracking for your YouTube for Action activity and not Google Analytics**; Google Analytics counts conversions that originated in a click on the YouTube ad. It does not count conversions that originated in an ad view, which means that you will only have a partial conversion measurement with Google Analytics.
- **Update your tracking if you haven't done so recently;**
  Google has updated its conversion tracking on August 2018.
  Update your site tagging with Google Global site tag or with Google Tag Manager.

Pro tip

Setup YouTube campaigns in the same account as Search and Display.
This will prevent conversions from being double counted, and save you some extra tagging work.

Account structure

Search campaign | Display campaign | Video campaign

You are willing to create video assets or to optimize existing ones

- Creative is very important to campaign success, but we can help!

- **Make sure you have a video asset;**
  We can help direct you to YouTube-approved video production partners that can create the right video ad for you. See more on youtube.com/yt/advertise/making-a-video-ad.
- **Follow our guide to design & edit TrueView for action video ads;**
  See more in section #5 (page 11).

Reach people based on their intent

Key pillars for successful audience strategy

Use high-intent & action-based audience types

Use "lower funnel" audiences like Custom intent or Remarketing, when launching YouTube for Action campaigns.

Don't layer audiences or demographics

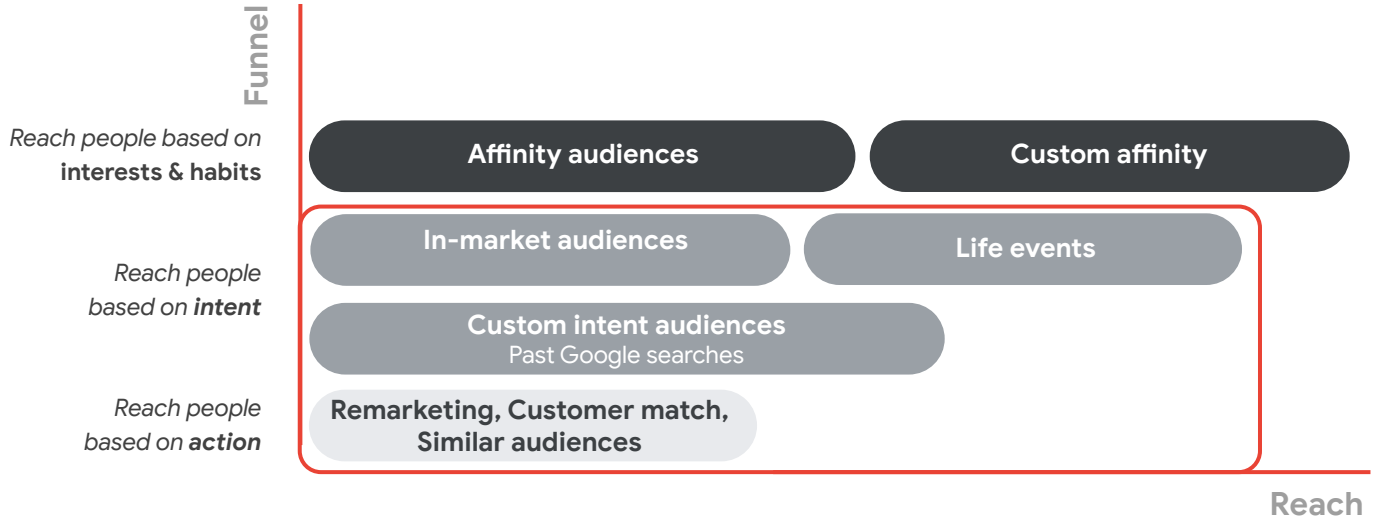
Layering audiences in the same ad group will limit your reach to relevant audiences. For example, don't combine demographic targeting with Custom intent audiences.

Follow the best practices in this guide

For example, use the Custom intent audiences recommendations on this page.

Choose the right audiences

Since YouTube for Action is a performance solution, we recommend using lower funnel audiences that are based on intent or action.



Learn more about Custom intent audiences

Custom intent is a new audience type that allows you to reach people with video ads on YouTube after they've searched specific keywords on Google.

In Search campaigns, you're usually only able to reach customers that chose to click on your ad. With Custom audiences You can reach users who searched for your products or services, but haven't been to your website.



TrueView for action campaigns that use **Custom intent audiences** generate

30%

higher conversion rates than TrueView for action campaigns that use other audiences.*

*On average, TrueView for action campaigns that use Custom intent audiences generate 30% higher conversion rates compared to TrueView for action campaigns that use other targeting. YouTube Internal Data, Global, June 2018 - July 2018

Use Custom intent best practices

Planning your campaign

- Understand volume potential by using the Keyword Planner (read more about the Keyword Planner).
- 1M monthly searches is a healthy size (about 300-500 keywords). **don't forget to define the country and languages.*

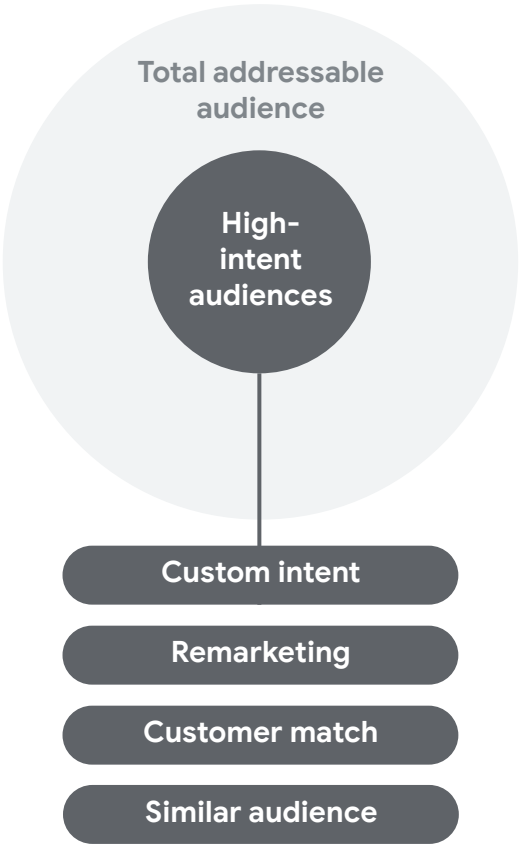
Building your campaign

- Start with your **most converting keywords** on Search.
- Separate ad groups to **brand / generic / competitors** and by **keyword themes**.
- **Don't use URLs & apps** as inputs.
- **Don't overlay** audiences in the same ad group.

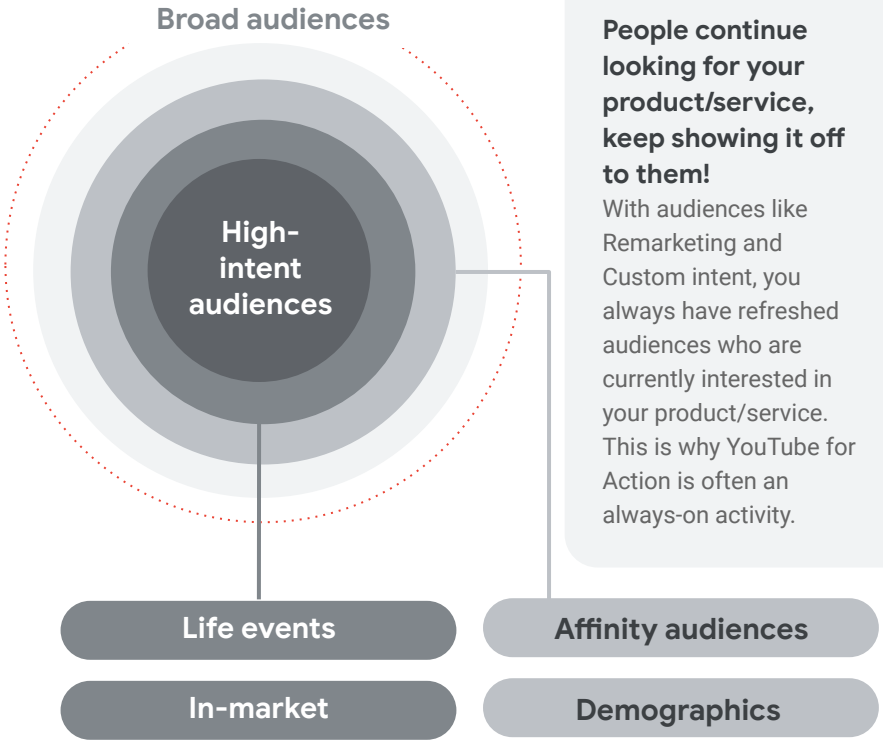
Use the right audience strategy when launching YouTube for Action

When testing YouTube for Action, start with the highest intent audiences that are most likely to convert, and then expand over time to broader audience types.

1. Launch



2. Expand



Pro tip

People continue looking for your product/service, keep showing it off to them!

With audiences like Remarketing and Custom intent, you always have refreshed audiences who are currently interested in your product/service. This is why YouTube for Action is often an always-on activity.

Create one campaign per audience type

So you'll be able to shift budgets from one audience type to another, and build separate campaigns for separate audience types.

Set-up Best Practice

Campaign 1: **Custom intent**	[budget $X]
Campaign 2: **Remarketing**	[budget $X]
Campaign 3: **Life events**	[budget $X]
Campaign 4: **In-market**	[budget $X]
Campaign 5: **Affinities**	[budget $X]

Note:
If you choose to put multiple audience types in the same campaign for any reason, make sure NOT to put them in the same ad group -- this will 'over-layer' audiences and significantly reduce volume.

Benefits of separating campaigns for each audience type:

- Budget control
- Ease of optimization

Pro tip

Implement your ad viewers list in your Search campaigns
After building your campaign, implement your ad viewers list in your Search campaigns, and define it on "Observation" mode. This will allow you to later report on the number of conversions in Search that were assisted by your YouTube campaign. Watch this video to learn how to implement audience lists in Search.

Make it easy for viewers to take action

Key pillars for building a TrueView for action campaign and ad

- **Learn how to create a TrueView for action campaign** - Choose "leads" or "website traffic" campaign goals to enable a TrueView for action ad format.
- **Choose the right bidding strategy and daily budget -** Learn to choose between target CPA and Maximize conversions, and set the right budget for each strategy.
- **Define towards which conversions to optimize -** Make sure to define the right conversions in the "Conversions column".

Create a TrueView for action campaign

To build a TrueView for action campaign, make sure to:

- Build a new campaign and define its goal as either "Leads" or "Website traffic". These campaign goals come as a default with a "Drive conversions" sub type campaign, and will enable the TrueView for action ad format.
- **Select the Video campaign type.**
  For full instructions on how to create a TrueView for action campaign, see our Help Center article.

Pro tip

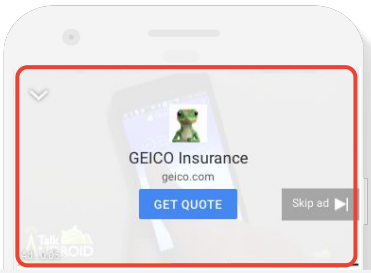
Sorry! We don't actually call the campaign type "TrueView for action" in Google Ads!

Create a TrueView for action ad

To create your TrueView for action ad format, you will have to:

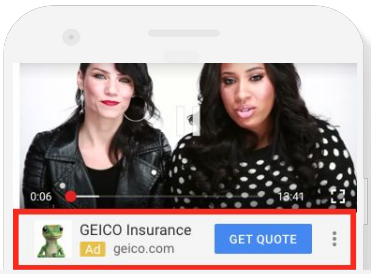
- Enter the final URL, which is the landing page you want people to reach when they click your ad.
- Enter a 10-character CTA, which should be compelling and direct people to the website specified in the final URL.
- Enter your 15-character headline, which will appear as the primary line of text that promotes your product or service.

End card



- Will appear in both portrait and landscape modes.
- Will remain on the screen for 5 seconds after the video. Will not show if the ad is skipped.
- On desktop, end card will appear for 7 seconds.

Companion banner



- Will persist even when the ad is finished.
- On landscape mode will look like a call-to-action overlay (expands for 5 seconds and then collapses).
- Desktop layout will include both CTA overlay and a companion banner on the side.

*These dynamic elements will be auto-generated, and will include your ad input (call-to-action text and headline)

Pro tip

If you care about store traffic, use the Location extension on YouTube
Location extensions help show business information alongside video ads. It's available on bumpers and TrueView in-stream, but not on TrueView for action. Read more about Location extensions.

Coming soon - Form ads in TrueView for action campaigns!
We are currently working on a new ad format that allows viewers to submit their email directly within YouTube.

Define the right bidding strategy

In YouTube, only TrueView for action campaigns work with Smart Bidding. The idea behind this is that you should use the TrueView for action format if you care about conversions. In this case, it's important that you optimize towards conversions and not towards views.

There are 2 Smart Bidding strategies available in TrueView for action:

- **Target CPA**
- **Maximize conversions**

Did you know?
Google's Smart Bidding technology uses machine learning across **70 million signals** to get you the most conversions for your chosen objective.

It's pretty simple to decide between these 2 bidding options:

Use Target CPA

Already know your tCPA
AND
Have at least 50 conversions per week

Automatically optimizes your bids to help achieve your goal CPA over time as your campaign runs

Use Maximize conversions

Don't know your tCPA yet
OR
Running "burst" campaigns (between 7-14 days)

Automatically optimizes your bids to maximize conversion volume at your daily budget

Set the right target CPA

If you're choosing to go with Target CPA, you will need to define it while building your TrueView for action campaign. Base your decision on YouTube historical data, or in the event you've never run a YouTube campaign, on your Search & Display CPAs.

New to video?	Set a conservative CPA target (higher than Search & similar to Display) and slowly decrease it.
Already running video?	Start with existing video CPA and slowly decrease it.

Define the conversions you will be optimizing towards

The Smart Bidding algorithm will optimize towards the conversions that are defined to appear in the "Conversions" column. This requires you to think about your main conversions, and which ones should be taken into account through bidding. Examples: purchase, sign up, lead, etc...

- Include your main conversions in the "Conversions" column. For instructions, please see this Help Center article.
- Make sure your other conversions are opted out from the "Conversions" column. These other conversions will still appear in the "All Conversions" column, so you can keep tracking them, but the Smart Bidding algorithm won't take them into account for bidding.

Set your campaign daily budget

If you're using target CPA	Make sure your budget is **at least 20X your target CPA**, to allow enough daily conversions for the smart bidding algorithm to learn.
If you're using Maximize conversions	Make sure your budget is **at least 10X your video CPA**, to allow enough daily conversions for the smart bidding algorithm to learn.

Prove it works and optimize

Key pillars for an extensive measurement

- **Core setup is key -** Implement Google Ads site-wide tag, and include your main conversions in the "Conversions" column.
- **Understand how conversions are measured in YouTube -** Read our guide to understand how conversions are measured in the "Conversions" column.
- **Track all the relevant conversions -** Go beyond your primary conversions, and track others like Micro-conversions or View-through conversions.

Learn how conversions are measured in TrueView for action campaigns

Conversions on YouTube campaigns are counted in the "Conversions" column in 2 cases:

- **A Click-through conversion -** An ad viewer is clicking one of the dynamic ad elements and then converts.
- **An Engaged view conversion -** An ad viewer watches 10+ seconds or the entire video (whichever comes first) and then converts.

Did you know?

We recently changed the conversion attribution in TrueView for action campaigns.

- An **Engaged view** is now counted after 10 seconds of watching, opposed to 30 seconds in the past. Advertisers still pay for the view after 30 seconds.
- A **conversion window default (**for a View based conversion) is now up to 3 days since the engagement, opposed to 30 days in the past.

Measure the full value of YouTube

YouTube for Action is designed to drive conversions. You will be able to measure these conversions in the "Conversions" column.

- We know YouTube has more impact than just the conversions measured in the "Conversions" column. To measure the full value of your YouTube for Action activity, you can go beyond your primary conversions, and measure Cross-platform and View based conversions.

Use this framework to measure all relevant conversions and metrics:

What you get	What it means	Why you should care
Conversions (Primary!)	Report main conversions in the "Conversions" column.	Understand Last-interaction based campaign performance.
View-through conversions	Report conversions that occur after an ad impression (the user views less than 10 seconds, and then converts within a day). Read more about View-through conversions. We also recommend creating a custom column that includes Conversions + View-through conversions. Learn more about creating custom columns.	Understand the impact of an ad exposure. Especially relevant for advertisers that invest in other platforms that include View-through conversions by default.
Micro - conversions	Report conversions that occur slightly further up the funnel (e.g: basket views, on-site searches, product detail page, etc) that have a shorter time to conversion and are expected to come in larger numbers.	Understand and highlight the performance of conversions that have shorter conversion lags to provide a snapshot of the full performance value of video.
Assisted conversions	Search conversions assisted by video campaign engagements through video RLSA. To do this, implement your ad viewers list in your Search campaigns.	Understand how video ads are assisting to drive conversions for Search campaigns.

Pro tip

Use a Data Studio template to measure your core conversions
If you need a fast, easy way to show your core metrics results, use our automatic YouTube for Action Data Studio report.

Key pillars for successful optimization

- **Setup is key -** A good campaign setup is the key to succeed with a TrueView for action campaign! Use best practices from this guide for defining your audience, your campaigns structure, and your conversions.
- **Follow target CPA best practices** - Be realistic, give the algorithm time to adjust and don't decrease target CPA too fast (wait 7-14 days).
- **Measure the full value of your YouTube campaigns before making decisions** - Follow the full value framework (above) before making optimization decisions.

Optimize performance with Target CPA

Set a realistic target CPA - If you've run YouTube campaigns before, use your YouTube CPA. If you haven't, define a conservative target CPA, higher than Search and similar to Display.

Be patient and get enough conversion data - Allow 7-14 days for the algorithm to learn and adjust before adjusting your target CPA.

Use small increments to adjust your target CPA -To optimize towards a lower CPA, decrease your target CPA, but not more than 10%. Wait at least 5 days each time you change it.

Optimize Performance with Maximize Conversions

- **Start with Maximize conversions, move to Target CPA** - After running successful TrueView for action campaigns with at least 50 conversions a week, you should already know your CPA. At this stage change your bidding strategy to Target CPA with your historical average CPA, and start optimizing from there.

Tailor your creative to work for direct response

Key pillars for a successful creative

- **Use the story arc -** Capture viewer's attention by starting with a bang, and by introducing/explaining/demonstrating your product or service (see the story arc, page 12).
- **Always have a call-to-action -** Consider having your call-to-action in the video creative too, and not only on the call-to-action button.
- **Design for mobile -** Faster cuts, closer cropping, and big graphics will help your capture the attention of mobile viewers.

Pro tip

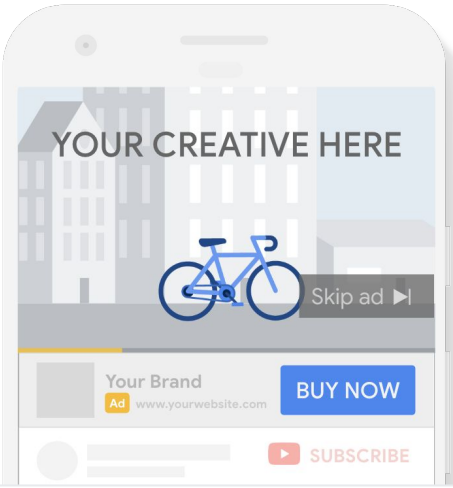
You can still impact creative, even if creative is not your job!

We've collected the best practices for you. Aspire to design and produce an effective Direct-response ad on YouTube, by insisting on these best practices and influencing the final outcome.

Creative that drives campaign performance

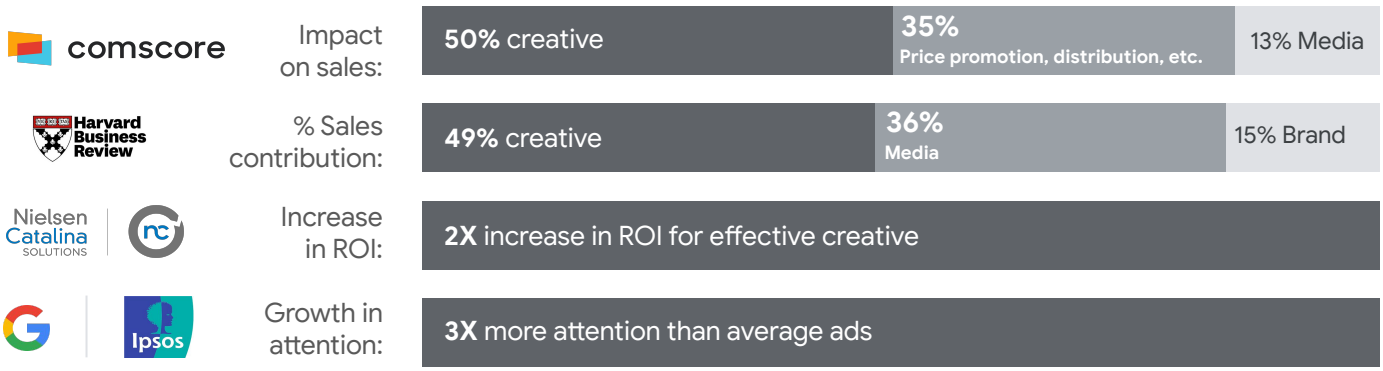
The TrueView for action format is a creative canvas to show off your business and drive action. Here's what you already know about this format:

- **Viewers have a skip button -** This means the ad can be any length and viewers can choose to skip after 5 seconds. Ads that hook attention at this time are rewarded.
- **Viewers can tan take action immediately -** TrueView for action ads have a customizable button that lets viewers click and take action, so have a clear call-to-action!
- **Viewers have intent to buy -** With signals from across Google Search, Maps, and, more, you can reach audiences on YouTube who are already searching for what you sell or are likely to buy.
- **Viewers have sight and sound - 95%** of YouTube video ads play in-view; **95%** play with sound on.



Did you know?

Several research studies show that creative drives campaign performance*



comScore ARS Global Validation Summary, comScore, October 2010 | Creativity in Advertising: When It Works and When It Doesn't, Harvard Business Review, June 2013 | Nielsen Catalina Solutions. Nearly 500 campaigns across all media platforms, Period 2016-Q1 2017

Follow this simple story arc

We watched hundreds of video ads and learned that ads that drive clicks follow a simple story arc: **they introduce or explain the product, and they invite action.**



Your new ad doesn't have to follow the story arc exactly, use the arc as a helpful checklist for capturing the most important elements.

Use these questions to build your story with the story arc:

- **1.** Who's your target audience for this ad?
- **1.** What problem/need does your product/service solve for this audience?
- **1.** What's the rationale for what you're promoting?
- **2.** What key language should be used to introduce/explain/summarize your product/service?
- **3.** What are the key benefits/features of your product/service?
- **4.** Are you offering a deal, discount, sale, or coupon?
- **4.** List your desired call-to-action. What should viewers do next after seeing your ad?

Story arc examples

Many ads introduce the product rationally by **explaining how it solves a need (i.e: Lemonade)**

Start high

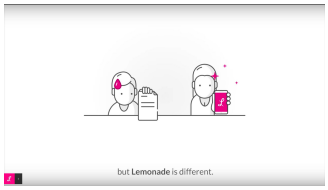
Establish problem or need



"Old insurance kinda sucks"

Climax/Big reveal

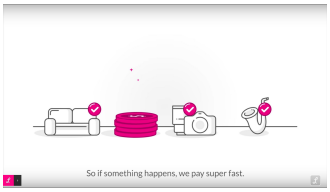
Introduce my product as solution



"But Lemonade is different..."

Maintain connection

Explain features + benefits



"Low premiums, fast claims, powered by A.I."

Offer/Resolution

Offer / call - to - action



"Get Lemonade today..."

Other ads skip the problem statement and **focus on showing off the product benefits (i.e: Kiwico)**

Start high

Establish problem or need

Climax/Big reveal

Introduce my product



Heroic product shot
"We are Kiwico"

Maintain connection

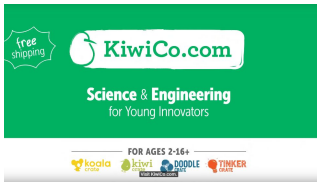
Explain features + benefits



"Fun", "Creative"

Maintain connection

Offer / call - to - action



"Get Free Shipping"
"Visit Kiwico.com"

Pro tip

It's recommended to have a call-to-action in the video creative itself
and not only in the call-to-action button

Design for Mobile

It's important to edit your ad to pop on phone screens

Did you know?
More than 70% of YouTube watchtime happens on mobile devices*

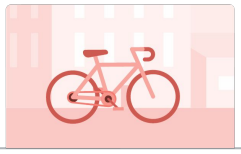
Use **close cropping** around faces/elements

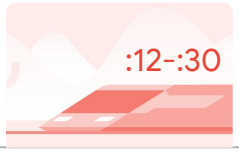
Use **fast cuts/pacing/ length** to hold attention

Use **bright footage** for dim screens

Use **big text/graphics** for small screens

TRY THIS

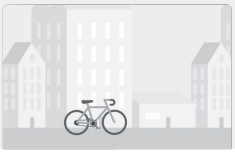


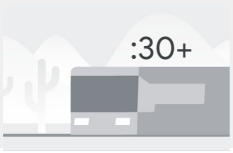




Hey, want more?

INSTEAD OF THIS







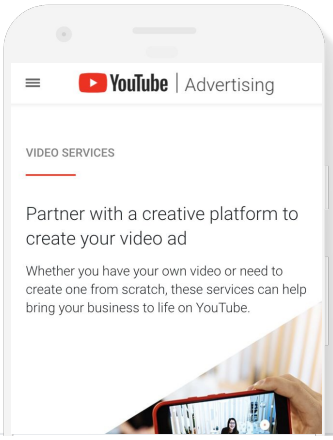
Hey, want more?

Allow us to help!

If you currently don't have a creative, we can help direct you to YouTube-trained video production partners that can create the right video ad for you.

Some partners will handle the entire video creation process from conception to scripting to filming to editing, and post-production. Other partners provide templates and software to create your own ad on the spot. Whatever your budget and timeline, we have options to help.

Search for creative partners in our new Creative Directory at
youtube.com/yt/advertise/making-a-video-ad



Do you already have an existing creative?

Evaluate if it's ready for TrueView for action with this ScoreCard:

1 Creative introduces/explains the product & invites action

- Establishes the need, rationale, or use case for the product
- [Critical] Introduces the product heroically and shows off its features & benefits
- [Critical] Has a specific, direct offer/deal/ promotion, and/or call-to-action

2 Creative is optimized to stand out on mobile:

- [Critical] Wins attention in the first 5 seconds
- Fast pacing/cuts; short and sweet
- [Critical] Close cropping & bright footage
- Supergraphics/text/logos are big and well-positioned in the frame

*YouTube Internal Data, Global, April 2017 - March 2018

Appendix | Setup checklist

Activity set-up:

- [ ] **Google Ads conversion tracking pixel** is the best conversion tracking pixel to use for YouTube. Using Google Analytics for tracking your YouTube campaigns is not recommended, as it doesn't track View-based conversions.
- [ ] (Recommended!) Setup YouTube in the **same account or MCC as Search + Display**.
- [ ] Set your core conversions to appear to **appear in the 'Conversions' column**. The Smart Bidding algorithm will bid towards these conversions. Set your other conversions so they don't appear in the 'Conversions' column. They will show in "All Conversions" column instead.

TrueView for action campaign setting:

- [ ] Choose a video campaign with campaign **goals of "Leads" or "website traffic"** to allow the Trueview for action ad format to be used.
- [ ] **Define the right bidding strategy:** use Max conversions in case you don't know your target CPA or if you're running a "burst" campaign (7-14 days). In all other cases use target CPA.
- [ ] Set your **daily budget** to allow the smart bidding algorithm to adjust and learn:
  - If you're using target CPA, set the daily budget to 20 times your target CPA.
  - If you're using Maximize conversions, set your daily budget to 10 times your reported CPA.

Audience targeting:

- [ ] **Separate audience type per campaign**
- [ ] **Don't layer audiences** in the same ad groups..
- [ ] **Start with 2 campaigns:** A campaign for **Remarketing** and a campaign for **Custom intent,** and expand to other audience types after

Custom intent:

- [ ] Use Keyword Planner to understand potential reach.
- [ ] 1M monthly searched is a healthy size.
- [ ] Separate ad groups to brand/generic/competitors and keyword themes, so you can check their performance by ad groups.
- [ ] Don't use URLs & Apps as keywords.
- [ ] Don't layer with other audiences.

Target CPA setting & optimization:

- [ ] Define **the right target CPA**
  - If you've run YouTube campaigns before, use your YouTube target CPA.
  - If you've never ran a YouTube campaign, define a target CPA higher than Search CPA and similar to Display CPA.
- [ ] **Allow 7-14 days** for the algorithm to learn and adjust, **before adjusting your target CPA.**
- [ ] To achieve a lower CPA, **decrease your target CPA by less than 10%**, and wait at least 5 days each time you change it.

Measurement

- [ ] Set your core conversions to appear to **appear in the 'Conversions' column**. The Smart Bidding algorithm will bid towards these conversions. Set your other conversions to not appear in the 'Conversions' column. They will appear in "All Conversions" column instead.
- [ ] Be aware of **conversion lags** on YouTube. Sometimes conversions on YouTube have a bigger conversion lag than on Search. Make sure to analyze your activity without including the past week.
- [ ] To measure the full value of YouTube, **go beyond the "conversions" column:**

  - Report View-through conversions that occur after an ad impression (if the viewer watches less than 10 seconds and then converts within a day). Consider creating a new custom column that includes "conversions" + "View-through conversion" columns. Learn here about creating custom columns.
  - Report Micro-conversions that occur slightly further up the funnel (e.g: basket views, on-site searches, product detail page, etc) that take a shorter time to convert and are expected to come in larger numbers.
  - Report Assisted conversions on Search, by implementing your ad viewers list in your Search campaigns and checking the number of conversions on this list in the Audience tab.

Appendix | Troubleshooting Q&A

What should I do if my campaign is hitting my Target CPA, but under-spending?

1. **Expand targeting**
   If you've started by layering on different audience targeting you can reach more users and get more conversions by adding new audience segments.
2. **Optimize creatives**
   Try different ad variants changing up text (headline, CTA) or the video itself with the aim of increasing CVR.
3. **Increase CPA bid**
   Depending on the advertiser, another way to improve delivery is to increase the CPA bid.

What should I do if my campaign is under-spending and NOT hitting my Target CPA?

1. **Change targeting**
   If you've started by layering on different audience targeting it's possible those audiences are less likely to convert, which is impacting delivery. Test different targeting to see if you're able to manually find higher value users more.
2. **Optimize creatives**
   Try different ad variants by changing up text (headline, CTA) or the video itself with the aim of increasing CVR.
3. **Decrease CPA bid**
   Another way to improve delivery is to decrease the target CPA. Decrease it by less than 10% increments and wait for 5 days between each change.

What should I do if my campaign IS spending its budget, but NOT hitting my Target CPA?

1. **Conversion lag**
   Did you allow 14 or more days for conversions to come in? (they are attributed back to the day of the ad view).
2. **Optimize creatives**
   Try different ad variants changing up text (headline, CTA) or the video itself with the aim of increasing CVR.
3. **Decrease CPA bid**
   Another way to improve delivery is to decrease the target CPA. Decrease it by less than 10% increments and wait for 5 days between each change.

Common misconceptions

- ***"YouTube for action should give me the same CPA as Search"***

Think about it: Despite the fact that YouTube for Action is a performance tool, its CPA still might be higher than Search since:

- The user is not actively looking for your product/service at the precise moment of seeing your video ad (they searched for it in the past 7 days, but right now they're watching a video, not actively searching for it).
- There might be a bigger conversion lag in YouTube comparing to Search.
- In some aspects, video provides more value than text ads. It's a deeper experience, involving motion and sound. YouTube for Action uses the precision of Search with the power of video, to influence new customers and grow your business.

- ***"Conversions only come from clicks"***

Conversions on TrueView are counted based on 3 different events:

"Conversions" column		"View-through Conversions" column
· Click-through (user click)	· Video engagement (10s watch time; unique to TrueView for action campaigns)	· View-through (less than 10 seconds impression - viewer skips ad before a video engagement is counted)

- ***"Conversions is what I care about the most, but I still want to use Cost-Per-View (CPV) (so I will use TrueView in-stream campaigns and not TrueView for action)".***

Think about it: If conversions is your primary metric, you should bid and optimize towards conversions, not views, and in that case use the TrueView for action campaign type. Only in cases where views are your primary objective and conversions are secondary in their importance, use TrueView in-stream.

- ***"I'm fine using TrueView in-stream and not TrueView for action to drive conversions. I'll just use the call-to-action (CTA) extension."***

Think about it: The CTA extension only includes the banner element of the ad, not the end screen. Also, If conversions is your primary metric, you should bid and optimize towards conversions and not views, and in that case, use the TrueView for action campaign type. Only in cases where views are your primary objective and conversions are secondary in their importance, use TrueView in-stream.

- ***"View-through conversions result from Paid Views"***

FACT: Video ad View-through conversions are impression based, which means you're not paying for them.