Production Guide
for Effective Ads on YouTube

CREATED BY

Creative Works
Pre-Production Guide

Captivate

- **Hook viewers in the first 5 seconds** to drive attention before the skip
- **Surprise** in opening scenes with stunning, delightful, unexpected or memorable imagery
- **Human focus** on hero characters: their emotions, reactions, and personalities

Break the 4th Wall to connect with audience directly

Use enticing language — e.g. “Guess what?”; “Can you believe [x]?”

Fast pacing & tight framing — 2+ shots in the first 5 seconds work best

Leverage Audio Early

- **Attract with audio**, 95% of YouTube videos have sound on
- **Use VO or on-screen talent audio early**
- **Augment the experience** through environmental sounds/SFX/foley to add an extra level of professional polish

Make It Pop on Mobile

- **Select set design, wardrobe & props** to create color contrast between each other
- **Plan for tight shots** of talent and product
- **Ensure set, product, and talent are well lit** — especially night scenes; remember most views will appear on dim 5in. screens

Brand with Intention

- **Shoot product/service in use** to integrate the brand naturally into your story
- **Capture talent while mentioning the brand audibly** for additional repetition
- **Brand colors & identity** can inform props, set, and wardrobe

Account for Flexibility

- **Schedule time to capture extra footage**
  - Behind the scenes
  - Unscripted moments
  - Different ‘Calls-to-Action’
- **Capture a variety of close-ups of characters and products** to enable creative A/B testing on YouTube

Compel Viewers to Take Action

- **Capture takes of talent demonstrating how to take action.** E.g. if the goal is to drive online purchases on external site, include footage of talent visiting the site
- **Capture talent/VO telling the viewer what to do next**, e.g. Learn more; Order now
- **To drive clicks, capture talent/VO saying “Hit the blue button to [Your Call-To-Action].”** This brings users’ attention to the clickable blue button below the video

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On-Set Guide

**Director & Producer**

Capture viewers attention in the first 5 seconds, or risk losing them forever.

- **Surprise** in opening scenes with stunning, delightful, unexpected or memorable imagery
- **Human focus** right from the beginning to get the viewer’s attention and connect
- **Integrate product/brand naturally,** with purpose in the scene & story
- **Record audio mentions of product / brand** —ideally capture with on-screen talent (vs. VO)

**Camera & Light**

Optimize for small screen viewing experience.

- **Get tightly-framed shots** of your subject, especially humans to read their emotions
- **Set up (color) contrast** between the subject and background
- **Ensure overall imagery and especially your subject is well lit/exposed**
- **Frame & block** with YouTube elements & larger supers in mind

**Set & Costume**

Make it pop with bright & contrasting colors!

- **Use wardrobe to create color contrast** between subjects and sets / background
- **Choose colors in costumes and set design** that are **associated with the brand**

**Recomm. Encoding Output**

- **Container:** MP4
- **Audio codec:** AAC-LC (96 or 48khz)
- **Video codec:** H.264 (no interlacing)
- **Frame rate:** Standard or High (up to 60 fps)
- **Bitrate:** 35-45 Mbps for 4K 30 SDR
  - 8 Mbps for 1080p 30 SDR
- **Aspect Ratio:** 16:9 - vertical and square possible, player adapts
VIDEO AD PRODUCTION GUIDE

Post-Production Guide

Edit for the Platform

Construct with audio in mind. 95% of YouTube videos have sound on; ask yourself how can audio help capture more viewer attention

Use VO or on-screen talent audio early; get the most out of your talent, consider if adding VO might enhance the narrative you’re building

Augment the experience through environmental sounds/SFX/foley to add an extra level of professional polish

Tight cropping and larger supers makes people, products, and the story more clear to the viewer

Increase brightness to account for different viewing environments; remember most views will appear on dim 5in. screens

Speed up the pacing to capture the audience's attention so they don't skip. Aim for 2+ shots in first 5 secs

Follow Emerging vs Traditional Story Arc

Start High
Build
Lead In
Brand Cues
More story for those who want it
Multiple Peaks
Offer
Unexpected Shifts
Branding

Feature product in use & audibly in the first 5 seconds and integrate the brand naturally into your story

Include a logo at all times if goal is to increase awareness or recall

Add specific Call-to-Action at the end to drive more clicks/actions

Brand & Action

Helpful Tools

Test your video—load a rough cut on a mobile device or use the Preview tool in Google Ads to see how your ad will look as it appears on YouTube, in fullscreen, desktop, or mobile formats

Inspiration—check out the Think with Google for inspiration for YouTube that are pushing the boundaries

Try Experimenting with Formats

Listicle
Music Video
Explainer
Challenges
Commentary
Reaction
Interview
Narrative

MASTER TIP: Create multiple versions, strengthening supers to pair messaging to specific audience (if in scope). Talk to Creative Works to understand the audience.