

A B C D

A playbook for building effective creative on YouTube

Good creative is good for business

Consumer habits are changing. Audiences are evolving. Video content is being viewed any time, anywhere. To keep pace, brands and marketers must rethink and adapt their creative strategy accordingly. But where to start? The answer is simple: ABCD.

Attract. Brand. Connect. Direct.

Four small words with serious impact. Using simple, data-backed guidelines — formed in collaboration with our research partner Ipsos and reviewed by Nielsen Neuro and Kantar — this playbook will look at what makes ABCD so important. It will also explain how to harness its power for full funnel results.

When thinking about building effective video ads for YouTube, ABCD is a great place to start.

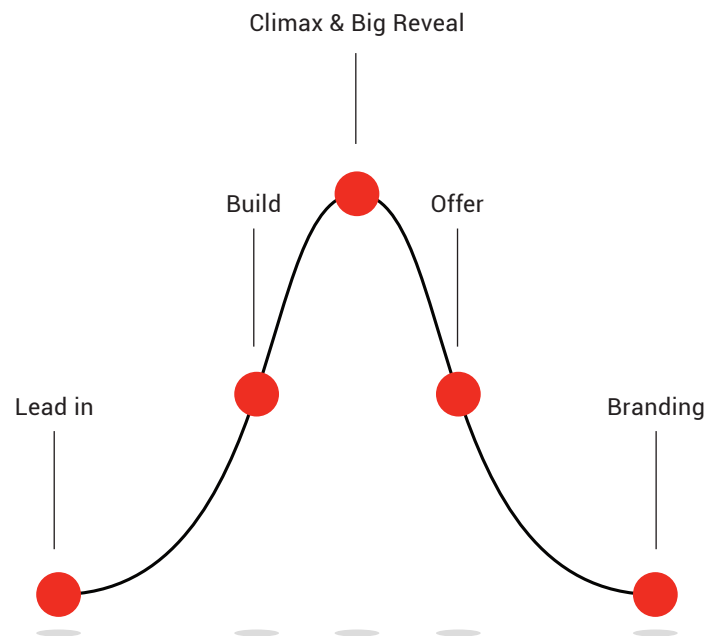
The fundamentals

Your essential need-to-knows for creating video for YouTube



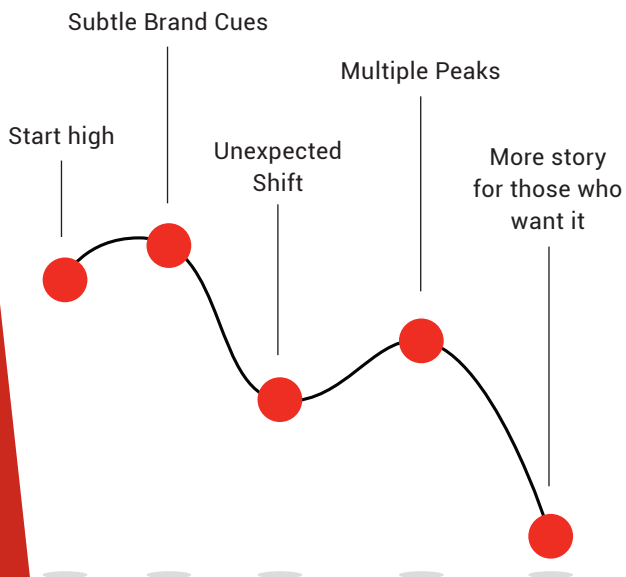
01 Build for attention

Using an emerging story arc is key to hooking viewers in an ad's opening moments. Start fast and keep an upbeat pace to your story to capture and retain your audience's attention.



↑ Traditional story arc

The well-established narrative, familiar to advertisers building creative for TV: A lead in, a build, a climax, and a reveal, followed by offers and branding.



← Emerging story arc

The heartbeat narrative structure, much more effective for creating ads for YouTube: A strong cue followed by multiple peaks, unexpected shifts and brand cues throughout.

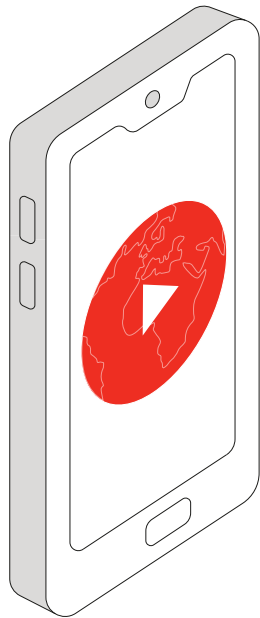


02 Build for mobile

Use tighter framing, faster pacing, large-type supers, brightness and contrast to make sure that your ad is visible on a small screen.

70%

The amount of global watch time that happens on mobile devices.¹



03 Build for sound on

Leverage the power of audio elements – such as music, dialogue, and sound effects – to complement and reinforce what is happening on screen.

95%

The amount of video watched on YouTube that is played with sound on.²



The definition of success

A

Attract

Hook consumers' attention and get them to tune in.

B

Brand

Help consumers to see and/or hear your brand.

C

Connect

Make consumers think/feel something about your brand.

D

Direct

Encourage consumers to take action.

A



Attract

There are four key elements that are important to include in an ad's opening moments to hook your audience from the start. Make sure your next ad follows these four rules:



Frame

The rule: Use tight framing on the subject, whether it's a product or a person.

The reason: Clearly showing the person or product and using non-obscure angles makes it easier for the brain to process and sustain engagement.³



Pace

The rule: Aim for two or more shots in the first five seconds.

The reason: Having multiple shots in the first five seconds is a positive factor for Ad Recall and Consideration.⁴



Humanize

The rule: If people appear in your video, open with them on screen. And if it fits with your storyline, have them address your audience directly.

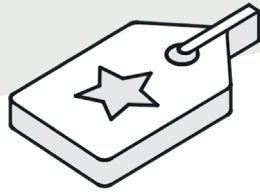
The reason: Faces attract immediate attention, heighten emotional motivation, and increase engagement.³



Surprise

The rule: Use stunning, delightful, unexpected, or otherwise memorable imagery.

The reason: Visual imagery that makes consumers think or feel in the first five seconds links to longer view times on YouTube,³ and is a positive factor across the marketing funnel.⁴



Brand

Naturally integrated products, logos and audio cues are particularly important elements to land your brand. For best results, remember these four simple rules:



Introduce

The rule: Introduce your product or brand in the first five seconds.

The reason: Integrating your brand or product early helps orient the viewer and enables more fluid processing, which helps increase engagement.³



Mention

The rule: If people appear in your video, have them mention your brand.

The reason: Audio mentions of your brand by people on screen are associated with better results for Ad Recall and Consideration than audio mentions by voiceover.⁴



Reinforce

The rule: Let your objective determine the most effective logo placement for your ad.

The reason: For Ad Recall, integrate your logo into the story or feature it on the product itself.⁴ For Consideration, integrate it as a super, text overlay, or persistent watermark.⁴

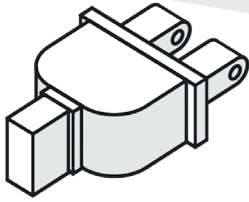


Differentiate

The rule: Show visuals and colors unique to your brand.

The reason: Brand assets – such as emblems, logos, spokespeople, characters, taglines, colors, and jingles – are powerful drivers of brand associations and competitor differentiation.³

B



Connect

Storytelling style, message, and people are all key to keep viewers watching and to make them think or feel something about your brand. Want to connect? Follow these three rules:



Integrate

The rule: Use function and emotion as levers that work together – or independently – to engage viewers.

The reason: A functional message that also conveys the emotion evoked by using the brand is associated with better upper- and mid-funnel metrics.⁴



Engage

The rule: Use emotional levers like action, humor, or intrigue when it works for your brand.

The reason: Humor improves ad receptivity more than any other creative element.⁵ Meanwhile, patterns of tension and release in storytelling can help foster strong emotional motivation.³



Associate

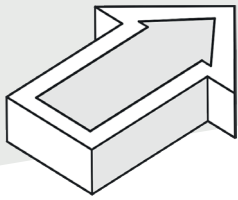
The rule: Make people core to the story, whether they're celebrities, influencers, or everyday "people like me".

The reason: People help hook viewers in an ad's opening moments, facilitate connection, and are associated with better results across all brand metrics.⁴

FYI

Functional messages within ads are a positive factor for all brand metrics⁴





Direct

Audio and visuals are key elements to reinforce your message and to encourage your viewers to act. Build these three rules into your creative to drive consumers to take action:



Prompt

The rule: Show offers and calls-to-action through text cards, simple animation or voiceover.

The reason: Doing this has been shown to correlate positively with Ad Recall, Consideration and Purchase Intent.⁴



Inspire

The rule: Use offers that inspire a sense of urgency – for example, a limited timeframe or limited units available.

The reason: Creating a sense of scarcity, or limited time offers, tends to pique interest and increase perceived value.³



Compel

The rule: Use specific calls-to-action or include a Search bar.

The reason: Using specific calls-to-action (for example, Visit site, Sign up, Buy now) or including a Search bar are tactics that correlate positively with all brand metrics.⁴

FYI

Integrating brand cues like font, taglines and colors into an ad can help drive brand association³



What matters and when

With ABCD as the foundation, use this helpful timeline to plan for your next campaign, from brief stage through to post-production.

Brief stage

- Plan for an emerging story arc, and if inspiring action is your core objective, plan for your message to focus on the offer and/or CTA.
- Plan for mobile-first and sound on.
- Consider your subject(s), and how you'll use emotional and functional levers in the storyline.

Pre-production

- Plan for tightly-framed shots of your subject.
- Integrate your brand's logo into the story or on product, and include visuals unique to your brand.
- Consider who's saying what. Remember, audio mentions of your brand are more impactful by people featured on screen.⁴

Post-production

- Ensure that the video's pacing is fast and opens with people on screen.
- Introduce your product/brand in the first five seconds.
- Place your logo as a super, text overlay or persistent watermark.
- Convey offers and specific CTAs with text cards, simple animation or VO.



A tick list for creative effectiveness

Guidelines to remember when you're creating your next piece of video content.



Attract

- Use tight framing on the subject.
- Aim for 2+ shots in the first 5 seconds.
- If people appear in your video, open with them on screen.
- Use stunning, delightful, or otherwise memorable imagery.



Brand

- Introduce your brand or product in the first 5 seconds.
- Optimize logo placement for your marketing objective.
- Show visuals unique to your brand.
- Use on-screen actors for brand audio mentions.



Connect

- Use functional and/or emotional messages.
- Lean into emotional levers like action, humor and intrigue.
- Make people core to the story.



Direct

- Prompt action via text cards, simple animation or voiceover.
- Make offers inspire a sense of urgency.
- Use specific CTAs or include a search bar.



To discover more about driving engagement through online video, visit yt.be/advertisers/abcd-playbook

Sources

- 1 Google Internal Data, Global, April-June 2018, mobile includes mobile devices and tablets.
2 Google Internal Data, Global, Sept. 2018. 3 Nielsen Neuro database, Global, 2013-2016 (n=6,000 ads).
4 Google/Ipsos, Global, Creative Drivers Analysis, Oct-Dec 2018 (n=5,000 TrueView ads from 11 verticals). 5 Kantar, Global, Google Attention Research Findings 2018, Database Meta Analysis, Source: MB Link Database (>15,000 ads), database contains facial coding results for all ads considered.