

Worth Watching

How to Make Videos People Stop For,
Stay For and Share

RAY S



WORTH WATCHING / FREE PREVIEW

A look inside

Selected original pages from the 686-page complete ebook.
Everything after this page is reproduced from the final edition.

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Welcome and Choose Your Path / PDF pages 8-14

Seven-Day Quick Start / PDF pages 19-20

Chapter 1: The First Seconds / PDF pages 50-54

Chapter 12: Hooks / PDF pages 117-122

The full book includes 77 chapters, 35 templates, three guided reading paths, worked examples, checklists, and a searchable creator toolkit.

FULL DIGITAL EDITION

686 pages | EPUB + PDF included | \$12.99

WORTH WATCHING - RAY S

A Note from Ray

Hi, I'm Ray.

You might be wondering if I'm some big creator, or if I work in film or marketing. I'm none of the above. The truth is, I'm just a regular guy who runs a small online shop and a small YouTube and TikTok channel.

I never had any intention of writing a book. I started putting this together because I wanted to learn how to make better content. But I also work a full-time job, and between that, my store and my channel, I don't have much free time. It would have taken me months to read a book on every subject I needed to learn, and I wanted to improve my content right away.

So I started asking AI (Claude and ChatGPT) what each part of the creation process is and how I could actually do it. What it wrote helped me more than any video, course or book I'd ever read. I wasn't just blindly following instructions. I was starting to understand what my videos needed to improve, why, and how to actually do it. I'm still not even close to a pro, but I'm getting better with every video.

And then it hit me: there are probably a lot of creators out there with the same problem I had, and people who want to be creators but just don't know how to start. So I took the 150 pages that were tailored to my channel and niche and started making it for everyone. It just kept getting bigger as I added everything I thought would help as many people as possible. Many late nights, countless prompts and a ridiculous number of revisions later, here we are at almost 700 pages.

I'm not claiming to have mastered every subject in this book. I'm still learning. But you shouldn't have to wait until I've mastered it all to benefit from it.

If there's something you think could be better, something that needs to be added or a question you have, please email me at worthwatchingbook@gmail.com. And if this book helped you, I'd love to hear about it!

Now let's make some content!

Ray

Welcome

This book is about making videos and posts that people actually stop for, watch to the end and remember. It covers the whole job: the idea, the hook, the story, filming, sound, editing, making video with AI, posting, reading your numbers and turning attention into something real.

It's written for two kinds of people:

- **If you're just starting**, everything is explained in plain words. No jargon, no guessing.
- **If you already post**, every chapter ends with deeper material, and some chapters (story structure, editing, sound, fair testing, long videos) go further than most creator books do.

If a part feels too basic, skip to its "Level up" section. If it feels hard, slow down and do the exercise. You'll get it.

What "content" means here

Mostly short vertical video: TikTok, Reels, Shorts and the like. Short video uses every skill there is (writing, filming, sound, editing), so it's the best place to learn. But the ideas carry over to photo carousels, long YouTube videos, podcasts and lives. People decide fast whether to pay attention, they stay for a promise, they remember stories and they trust honesty. That's true everywhere. Chapter 69 covers longer videos on their own.

How the book is laid out

It follows the order you actually work in.

Part	What's in it	The question it answers
Quick Start	Choosing a platform, your first good video in seven days and a roadmap for your first ten	"What do I do right now?"
Part 1: Attention	How attention works, how the feed works, who you're talking to, who you are	"Why would anyone stop?"
Part 2: Ideas That Stick	Finding ideas, sharpening them, hooks	"What am I saying, and why will they care?"
Part 3: Story	How stories work, from 30 seconds to a whole series	"How do I hold them to the end?"

Part	What's in it	The question it answers
Part 4: Planning and Shooting	Planning, framing, staging, movement, light, your phone, being on camera	"How do I capture it?"
Part 5: Sound	Mics, recording, sound effects, music, mixing	"How do I make it sound right?"
Part 6: Editing	Cuts, pacing, captions, color, workflow, endings	"How do I put it together?"
Part 7: Making Video With AI	How AI tools work; AI images, motion, voices and music; a complete AI video; mixing real and AI; publishing responsibly	"How do I use AI well, and honestly?"
Part 8: Publishing and Growing	Getting found (including in AI answers), reading numbers, fair tests, going viral, community, money, selling in the app, long videos, every screen from phone to TV	"How do I learn and grow?"
Part 9: Doing It Right	Honesty, copyright, privacy, protecting your account, AI principles, the business side, not burning out	"How do I last?"
The Toolkit	Worked examples, before-and-afters, checklists, a decision guide, an accessibility guide, a practice plan, templates, a question index, glossary, notes	"What do I grab when I'm working?"

How each chapter works

- **The big idea:** the whole chapter in a couple of sentences.
- **The chapter itself:** what the idea is and why it works, with examples.
- **Do this:** numbered steps you can use today.
- **Level up:** deeper stuff for people who already post.
- **The AI Workflow** (in some chapters): how AI can help with that chapter's job, step by step, with example prompts, what to check and when to skip it, just before "Do this."
- **Common questions** (in some chapters): short answers to the side questions creators ask most, just before "Try it."
- **Try it:** one short exercise. Do it. Reading about video is not the same as making it.

You'll also see:

- **Real-world cases.** Shaded boxes with true stories about real creators, brands, studios and court cases, each with a source. They show the ideas working (and failing) in the real world.
- **Figures.** Diagrams for the things that are easier to see than to read about.
- **Notes.** A small raised number, like this, ¹ means there's a source for that fact in "Notes and Sources" at the back. You never need the notes to follow the book. They're there so you can check the facts for yourself.

Words in **bold** are terms worth knowing. Each one is explained the first time it shows up, and they're all in the glossary.

Facts that change

Apps change their features, rules and payment programs all the time. Whenever this book describes a platform rule, it says "at the time of writing" (late 2026) and gives a dated source. Treat those bits as a snapshot and check the app's help pages before you rely on them. The craft (attention, story, sound, editing) barely changes. The buttons and rules change constantly.

The same goes for anything legal, financial or tax-related. This book explains how things generally work so you can ask better questions. It can't know your situation, so check the rules where you live and get qualified help for big decisions. And no example here is a promise: the made-up results show how a method works, not what will happen for you.

How to read it

You don't have to read every chapter, or read them in order. The next section, "Choose Your Path," gives you three short routes through the book: **Start Creating** for beginners, **Grow & Improve** for people who already post and **Create With AI** for anyone using AI tools. Pick one, follow its core chapters and use the rest as a reference.

Choose Your Path

This is a big book, and you're not supposed to read it front to back like a novel. It works two ways: as a course you follow in a sensible order, and as a reference you dip into when something goes wrong. The three reading paths below are the course part. Each one is a short route through the chapters that matter most for where you are right now.

	Path 1: Start Creating 🐣	Path 2: Grow & Improve 📈	Path 3: Create With AI ✨
For you if	You're new, or you've posted a few things without a plan	You already post and want better results, or something stopped working	You want to use AI to help with your videos, or to make videos mostly with AI
You'll learn to	Plan, film, record, edit and post a short video that keeps its promise	Find the weak step in your videos, fix it and build steady growth and income	Brief, generate, check and fix AI work, then publish it honestly
Start with	The Quick Start	Chapter 59, Reading Your Numbers	"Working With AI: The Six-Step Loop"
You're done when	You've posted ten videos and can explain why your best one worked	You can diagnose a weak video and run a fair test on your fix	You've finished one short AI video you'd be proud to label as AI

How the paths show up in the book. Every chapter opening lists its paths with the icon and the name, and the same icons sit in the top corner of every page in that chapter. A few sections carry their own icon when they belong to a path the rest of the chapter doesn't, like the purple sparkles on every AI Workflow box. Each path has its own shape as well as its own color, so the icons still work in black and white.

The paths overlap on purpose. Some chapters belong to two paths, and three belong to all three: Chapter 71, Honesty and Trust, because every kind of creator needs it, and Chapters 40 and 48, because every finished video needs a clean sound mix and consistent color. Every chapter is on at least one path. Pages with no icon, like the Templates, the checklists and the Glossary, are reference tools you'll use on any path.

Bold stops are the core. Read those in order. The others are worth reading when the topic matters to you. Skipping one won't leave you lost.

Path 1: Start Creating 🐣

The destination: you can take an idea from your head to a posted video that's clear, sounds clean and keeps its promise, and you've done it ten times.

Stage	Read	What you'll be able to do
1. Begin	The One Rule, the Quick Start, Chapters 1 to 3, Chapter 4	Make your first video this week, and know who it's for
2. Ideas and hooks	Chapters 5, 6 and 12, Chapters 7, 8 and 11	Pick an idea worth making and open it in a way that earns attention honestly
3. Story and script	Chapters 14, 16 and 20	Turn the idea into a 30-second story with a beginning, middle and end
4. Filming	Chapters 22, 29 and 30, Chapters 24, 28 and 31	Plan your shots and film them well on a phone
5. Sound	Chapters 32, 35 and 36, Chapters 34 and 39	Record a voice people can hear clearly, and use music safely
6. Editing	Chapters 41, 42, 47 and 49, Chapters 40, 43, 48 and 50	Cut a clear, captioned video with an ending that works, then finish its sound and color
7. Posting safely	Chapters 57 and 58, Chapters 71 and 74, Chapters 72 and 73	Package and post it, stay honest and keep your account safe

In the Toolkit: Worked Example 1 (a whole tutorial, start to finish), the Beginner Decision Guide and the Accessibility Guide.

Where to go next: once you've posted ten videos, start Path 2 with Chapter 59. If you're curious about AI, Path 3 starts from the craft you just learned.

Path 2: Grow & Improve

The destination: you can look at a video that underperformed, find which step broke, fix it, test the fix fairly and turn the results into steady growth and, if you want it, income.

Stage	Read	What you'll be able to do
1. Diagnose	Chapters 59, 60 and 61, Chapter 2	Read your numbers, run fair tests and find the step that broke
2. A sharper promise	Chapters 9, 10 and 13, Chapters 3, 5, 12 and 57	Make claims people believe, give them a reason to care and refresh tired hooks
3. Holding attention	Chapters 17, 42 and 46, Chapters 15, 18, 19, 44 and 45	Keep people watching through the middle with structure, cuts and rhythm
4. Polish	Chapters 23, 25 to 27, 33, 37, 38, 40 and 48	Raise the quality of your picture, sound and color where it shows
5. Growth	Chapters 21, 62, 63 and 68, Chapters 58, 64, 69 and 70	Build formats and series, handle a spike, grow a community and post across platforms and screens
6. Results and money	Chapters 65 and 66, Chapters 67 and 76	Turn attention into sales, deals and income, and run it like a small business
7. Lasting	Chapters 71, 72, 74 and 77	Stay honest, legal and secure, and keep going without burning out

In the Toolkit: Before and After, Worked Examples 2 and 3, and A Month of Deliberate Practice.

Where to go next: use Chapter 61's diagnosis whenever your numbers change. If AI could save you time, Path 3's first stop shows how to use it without losing your voice.

Path 3: Create With AI ✨

The destination: you can brief an AI tool, judge what comes back, fix what's wrong and finish a short video, whether AI helped with a few steps or made most of it, and publish it with honest labels.

Stage	Read	What you'll be able to do
1. How it works	"Working With AI," Chapters 51 and 75	Know what AI tools can and can't do, and follow the six-step loop
2. AI as a helper	The AI Workflow boxes in Chapters 3, 5, 20, 22, 29, 40, 49, 57, 59, 60, 63 and 66, Worked Example 4	Use AI to speed up a normal, filmed video without losing what makes it yours
3. The words to direct with	Chapters 24 and 27	Describe shot sizes, angles and camera moves so tools give you what you meant
4. Making it	Chapters 52, 53 and 54	Direct AI images, motion, voices and music, and fix the common failures
5. A whole video	Chapters 55 and 56, Chapters 40 and 48	Plan and finish a complete AI or hybrid video, on budget, with a clean mix and matched color
6. Publishing honestly	Chapter 56's publishing section, Chapter 71	Label it correctly, check the rights and keep your audience's trust

In the Toolkit: the AI checklists, the "Should I use AI for this?" decision guide and Templates 27 to 31.

Where to go next: an AI video still has to work as a video. If yours looks good but people don't stay, Path 1's story and editing chapters (14, 16, 42 and 46) and Path 2's diagnosis chapters (59 and 61) are where the fix usually is.

Moving between paths

You don't have to finish one path before starting another. Three common moves:

- **New creator who wants AI help:** do the Quick Start first, then Path 3's first two stages. Learn the craft by hand once, so you can tell when AI gets it wrong.
- **Experienced creator adding AI:** jump straight to Path 3. You already know the craft. Chapter 51 and the six-step loop are what's new.

- **Stuck at any level:** go to Chapter 61 ("Diagnose, Revise, Learn"). It sends you back to whichever chapter fixes your weakest step, on any path.
-

Using the book as a reference

When you have a specific problem, skip the paths:

- **"Creator Questions Answered"** in the Toolkit lists more than 350 questions creators ask, grouped by subject, each linking to the answer.
- **The Beginner Decision Guide** turns common worries ("I'm getting no views," "my AI video looks fake") into next steps.
- **The Master Checklists** cover each stage of making a video, for when you just need the list.
- **The Glossary** explains every bold term.

Quick Start: Your First Good Video in Seven Days

START CREATING

This part is for when you want to make something *now*, not after reading 77 chapters.

Over the next seven days, you'll make one short video from start to finish: idea, hook, script, shoot, sound, edit, post and learn. Each day takes about 30 to 60 minutes. You'll use a phone, a window, a quiet corner and whatever's lying around your home. No new gear.

The goal isn't a viral hit. The goal is **one good, honest, finished video**, plus a way of working you can repeat. Your first video teaches you more than any book, including this one. This part just makes sure it teaches you the right things.

Every step points to the chapter that goes deeper, so you can come back later. For now, don't. Just follow the days.

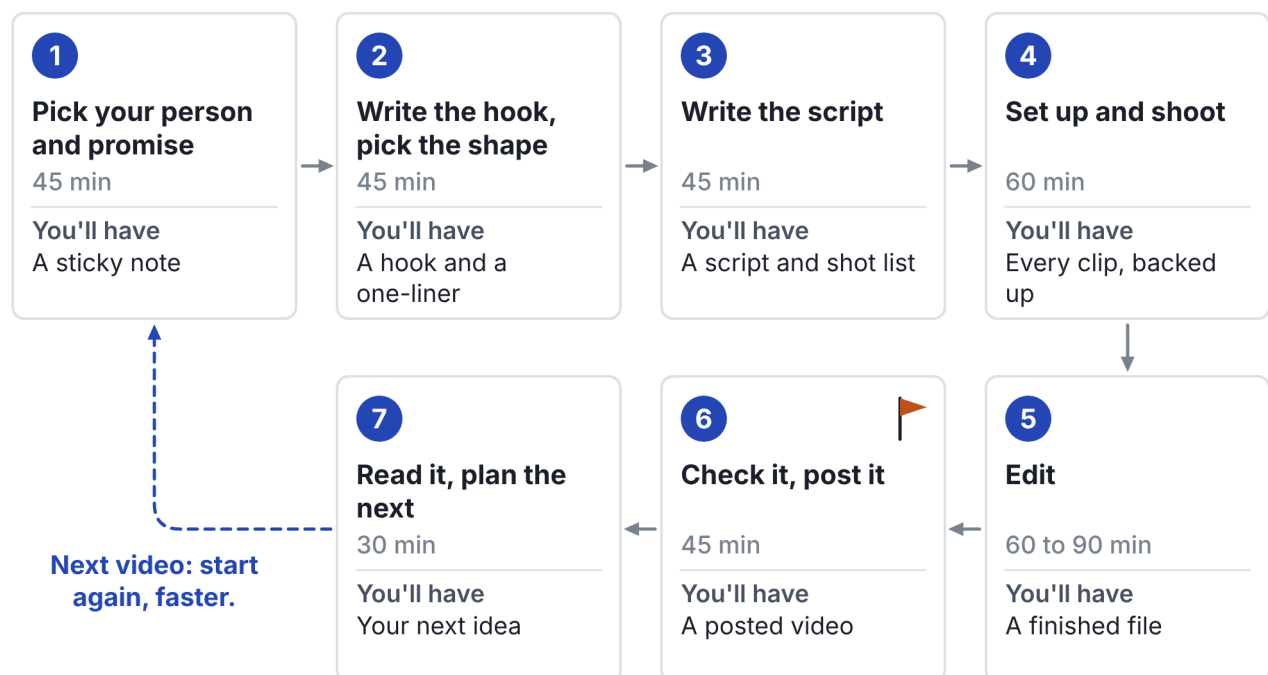


Figure QS-1. The seven-day Quick Start roadmap: seven tiles from "Pick your person and promise" to "Read it and plan the next one," each with its time estimate and what you'll have at the end of the day

The deal

Three promises before we start:

1. **Done beats perfect.** You'll post on Day 6 even if it isn't perfect. Especially if it isn't. Nobody's first video is.
2. **One video, all the way through.** Don't start three. Finish one.
3. **Honest only.** Everything you show as real is real. That's the one rule from the start of the book: the first seconds make a promise, and the rest of the video keeps it.

What you need

Thing	Why	If you don't have it
A phone with a camera	Your camera, mic and editor	Borrow one for the shoot day
A soft cloth	Wiping the lens	A clean cotton T-shirt
Something to hold the phone still	Steady shots	A stack of books, a mug, tape on a shelf
A window	Free, soft light	A lamp or LED light bounced off a white wall or ceiling
A quiet spot	Clean sound	A closet full of clothes
An editing app	Putting it together	Most phones have a free one built in, and the big social apps have editors too
A notebook or notes app	Planning	Back of an envelope works

Optional but nice: a cheap clip-on mic, a small tripod and a piece of white cardboard. If you've got them, great. If not, this week works without them.

Our example

To keep it concrete, we'll follow **Sam** (from the made-up crew) through the whole week. Sam runs a small candle shop and wants one video that helps people without feeling like an ad. You'll do each step for your topic right after you see Sam do it.

Before Day 1: Get your account ready (15 minutes)

If you already post, skip this. If you're brand new, do it today so it doesn't get in the way later.

CHAPTER 1

The First Seconds: How Attention Works

 START CREATING**THE BIG IDEA**

Attention isn't one decision, it's three. People notice something, choose whether it looks worth their time, then keep deciding whether to stay. Your opening has to win the first two fast. The rest of the video has to keep winning the third.

You're not competing with your niche

Think about how you scroll. A dog. Swipe. A news clip. Swipe. Your cousin's vacation. Swipe. A cooking video. You stop, or you don't.

That cooking video wasn't up against other cooking videos. It was up against the dog, the news and your cousin. And the person watching wasn't looking for a recipe. They were just scrolling.

That's the big thing to get about social media: **most of your viewers didn't come looking for you.** The app dropped you in front of them. Your opening has to work on a stranger who didn't care about your topic one second ago.

How fast do people decide?

Really fast. Facebook's own data from 2016 found people spent about 1.7 seconds on a piece of content in the mobile feed, versus 2.5 seconds on a computer.¹ It also pointed to research showing people could remember feed content after seeing it for just a quarter of a second.²

You'll hear "you've got three seconds" a lot. It's a handy target, and this book uses it. But it's not a law of nature. Some people decide in under a second. Someone who searched for your tutorial might give you much longer. Treat three seconds as a goal to design for, not a stopwatch.

Three decisions

Here's how attention actually works:

1. **Notice.** Does something break through? Movement, contrast, a face, a sound, words on screen, a situation they recognize.
2. **Choose.** Does this look worth it? Useful, funny, surprising, moving or beautiful?
3. **Stay.** Is the video getting somewhere? This one gets decided again every few seconds until the end.

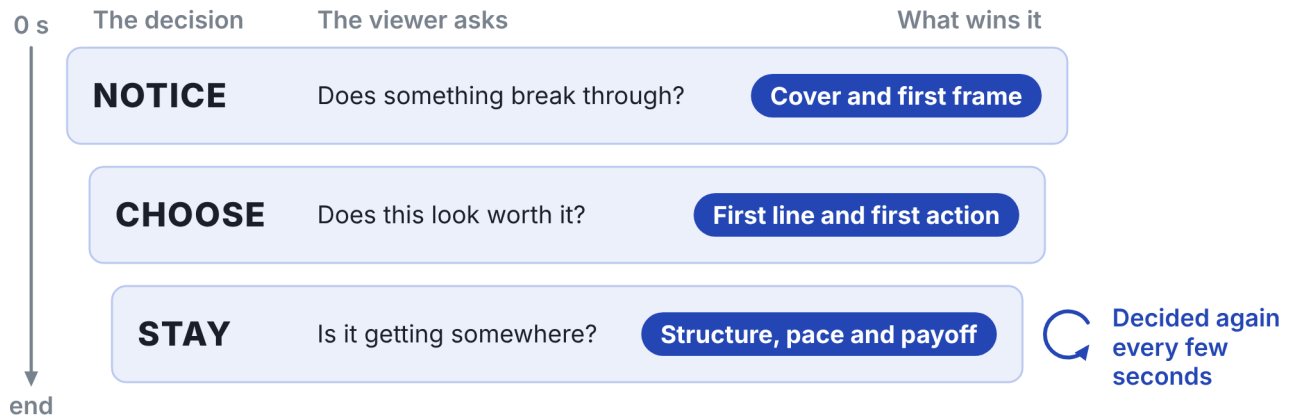


Figure 1-1. The three attention decisions and which parts of a video serve each one

Your cover and first frame handle "notice." Your first line and first action handle "choose." Your structure, pacing and payoff handle "stay." A great opening with a weak middle wins two and loses the third. That's a broken promise, and people feel it.

Quick example. One gardening video opens: "Here are five tips for healthy plants." Another opens on a wilted plant next to an identical healthy one: "Same water. Why did only one survive?" The second one asks a specific question *and* shows you there's an answer coming. No shouting, no countdown needed.

The first seconds do two jobs

They win over the **viewer**, who decides whether to stay. And they help with the **app**, which pays close attention to how long people watch (Chapter 2).

The point of the opening isn't to tell the whole story. It's to earn the next ten, twenty or sixty seconds so you can tell the rest.

In those seconds, people want two answers: **What is this?** (A recipe? A joke? A test?) And **what's it going to be like?** (Fast and funny? Calm and clear?) Answer both clearly and you've made your promise. Leave them confused and they're gone.

Pick the feeling first

Before you film anything, decide what you want the viewer to feel. Not what you want to say. What you want them to *feel*.

Feeling	What the viewer thinks	Example
Smart	"Huh, I didn't know that."	Maya cuts onions without crying
Relatable	"That is SO me."	Maya's sad fridge at the end of the month
Satisfying	"That was weirdly perfect."	Sam pours wax into a row of jars in one smooth take
Funny	"Ha!"	Jordan's friend falls into a bush, edited like a comedy bit
Surprising	"Wait, what?"	Jordan lands a "you can't do that" trick on a cheap board
Inspiring	"I could do that."	Maya's first loaf, then her hundredth

Pick one. Then make every choice serve it: pace, music, words, framing, length. Satisfying needs calm and smooth. Funny needs timing. Smart needs clarity. Try to be all of them and you end up being none.

Show the good part early

Movies save the big moment for the end. Feeds don't give you that luxury. If you've got a reveal, a punchline or a great result, show it (or a piece of it) early, then spend the video on how or why.

It feels backward. "If I show the finished cake first, why would they stay?" Because now they want to know *how*. Showing the result is a promise: "You can make this. Stick around."

Keep it easy to follow

Every unfamiliar word, fast cut, graphic or extra sound makes the viewer's brain work. Pile on too much and even interested people lose the thread (Chapter 6 gets into this).

So keep the opening clean: a clear subject, good light, a pace that isn't dead slow or a blur. One pattern works over and over: **a still frame, something enters, something happens**. An empty cutting board. A hand sets down a tomato. A knife slices it in one clean motion. Three beats, two seconds, and they're watching.

Loud isn't the same as interesting. Flashing colors and yelling grab the eye but don't make anyone curious. Curiosity, the "wait, what's this?" feeling, is what holds people (Chapter 7).

Start with them, not you

"Hi, I'm Sam, welcome to my candle shop!" is like meeting someone who only talks about themselves. Strangers don't care about you yet. They care about their own problems and interests. So start there:

- Not "Welcome back to my channel." Try "If your rice always turns out mushy, here's why."
- Not "Our new collection is here." Try "This candle smells exactly like a rainy day."
- Not "Today I'm trying a new trick." Try "Everyone at the park said I couldn't land this."

Your name and brand can come later. Once people care about what you're showing, they'll want to know who you are.

Attention isn't the same as satisfaction

A shocking sound or a misleading title can win a second of attention and lose the viewer's trust. A useful result, a real laugh or an honest demo can be less flashy and worth a lot more.

So judge an opening by what happens *after* it. Did people keep watching? Do the comments show they got it? Do they come back? Here's a simple chain that ties the two together:

Recognize → question → progress → payoff → meaning.



Figure 1-2. The chain from attention to satisfaction: recognize, question, progress, payoff, meaning

The viewer recognizes what this is, gets a question worth answering, sees progress toward the answer, gets the payoff and connects it to their own life. Not every step needs words. Sometimes it all happens in pictures.

Good news for small creators

Fame doesn't guarantee views. Big names post flops, and nobodies reach millions. On recommendation feeds, the idea, the opening, the pace and the feeling matter a ton (Chapter 2 explains why follower count isn't the whole story). A small creator with a great opening can beat a big brand with a lazy one.

Do this

1. **Audition your opening.** Watch only the first three seconds, once muted and once with sound. Would you stop? If not, re-cut it.
2. **Write the one-sentence pitch.** One sentence that would make a stranger curious. Can't write it? The idea isn't ready.
3. **Pick the feeling** and write it at the top of your script.
4. **Lead with the viewer.** Cross out openings that start with you, your brand or "today."
5. **Move the best part forward.** Can you show it in the first five seconds? Usually, yes.
6. **Use the three-beat opening:** still frame, something enters, something happens.
7. **Mark the first payoff**, the first moment the viewer gets something real, and move it as early as you can.

Skip "Hey guys," logos, title cards and five seconds of sitting down and saying "So..."

Level up

- **Your first frame is a poster.** Lots of people see it as a still before the video plays. Make it clear and readable on its own.
- **Design for sound on and sound off.** Plenty of people scroll muted (Chapter 47 has numbers). The best openings tell the story in pictures and text, and the sound adds energy for everyone else.
- **Cold opens usually beat intros.** A **cold open** starts right in the action, no greeting. Want a branded intro? Put it after the hook and keep it under a second.
- **Don't start so deep that people are lost.** Walk in too far into the middle and viewers feel like they showed up 20 minutes late to a movie. Set the scene in one beat, then hit the question.
- **Slow middles cost more than you think.** A dull stretch can lose many of the people who were still deciding.

Try it

Scroll your app for five minutes. Every time you stop, write down why: a face, a question, movement, a sound, text? Now look at your last five videos. Would you stop? For one of them, write three new openings: one that shows the result, one that shows a problem happening and one that shows a contradiction. Keep the one that best matches what the video actually delivers.

CHAPTER 12

Hooks: Winning the First Seconds

 START CREATING

 GROW & IMPROVE

THE BIG IDEA

A hook is whatever makes someone stop in the first seconds: words, a picture, a sound, a format or a personality. The best ones are specific, easy to get on mute and honest about what's coming. Write a lot of them, then pick.

A hook isn't just a sentence

People think a hook is the first line. It can be a lot more than that:¹

Hook	What it is	Example
A line	Something you say or put on screen	"You're cooking pasta wrong, and it's not your fault."
A picture	A striking image or action	A candle shaped exactly like a croissant, sliced in half
A sound	A noise that makes people look	A skateboard cracking in two
A game	A familiar setup people want to play	"Rate my meal before you know what it cost"
A person	How you talk or act	A deadpan chef who reviews dishes like a strict judge
The thing itself	Something so interesting it needs no words	A dessert that's clear like glass

The strongest hooks often pair a striking picture with a few sharp words.

REAL-WORLD CASE

A hook with no words at all

In June 2022, Khaby Lame passed Charli D'Amelio to become TikTok's most-followed creator.² His whole style is wordless: he watches an over-complicated "life hack," then silently does the same thing the obvious way and holds out his hands, palms up, with a shrug.³ No language needed, so it works in any country and on mute. The face and the shrug *are* the hook.

Start with two questions

Before writing any hooks, answer:

1. **What problem does my viewer have?**
2. **What result do they want but haven't gotten?**

Nearly every strong hook either pokes at the problem ("Your rice is mushy because...") or promises the result ("Takeout-style fried rice at home in ten minutes"). Know both and the hooks start writing themselves.

Six ways to open

Opening	What you show first	Example
The result	The finished thing, then how	The perfect loaf: "Here's how."
The problem	The failure happening	Flat dough sitting in the bowl
The contradiction	Two things that shouldn't both be true	"Same water. Only one plant survived."
The question	A specific thing they'll want answered	"Which of these candles costs \$8?"
The test	A challenge with a clear finish line	"Can I learn this in 60 minutes?"
The person	Someone in a situation they recognize	"If you've only got one pan..."

No pattern fits everything. A calm process video might need a beautiful first image, not a question. A search tutorial should give the answer right away. A joke might hold its punchline. Use what fits what the viewer came for.

Be specific

Vague hooks sound like everyone else. Specific ones make a promise.

- Vague: "Some tips for better cooking." Specific: **"Five ingredients. Ten minutes. Better than takeout."**
- Vague: "Learn to skate faster." Specific: **"I learned to ollie in 7 days. Here's the exact routine."**
- Vague: "Check out our candles." Specific: **"This candle smells exactly like a bookstore."**

The test: **"Could anyone else say this?"** If yes, get more specific.

Often the hook is one surprising, true detail that makes a familiar thing different. Maya's pasta isn't just pasta, it's "pasta cooked in one pan with no draining." Jordan's trick is "a kickflip on a board I made from a dresser drawer." Sam's candle is "made from the leftover wax of 30 candles people mailed me." Find that detail for every video.

Flip something people believe

"Practice doesn't make perfect." "Expensive candles aren't better." Flipping a belief works because it breaks an expectation (Chapter 7). Three rules:

- **The flip has to land on something true.** "Practice doesn't make perfect" is fine if your point is "practice makes *permanent*, so practice right."
- **Don't be contrary just to get a rise.** It gets old fast.
- **Aim at an idea, never a named person or brand.** "Most candle advice is wrong" is fine. "[Brand] is a scam" can get you sued and makes you look bitter (Chapter 18).

REAL-WORLD CASE

"Don't Buy This Jacket"

On Black Friday 2011, the biggest shopping day of the American year, the outdoor clothing company Patagonia ran a full-page ad in The New York Times with a photo of one of its own jackets and the headline "Don't Buy This Jacket." The ad explained the environmental cost of making clothes and asked people to buy less, repair what they had and reuse.⁴ It was impossible to scroll past because it flipped what every other ad that day was saying, and the flip *was* the company's real point.

Familiar plus new

Mixing something familiar with something new makes things feel fresh. "Lasagna in a mug." "A trick tutorial taught by a grandma." Sometimes the idea isn't new at all, only the framing.

Name the problem perfectly

When you describe someone's problem better than they could, they feel understood and want your answer.

- "You follow the recipe exactly. It still comes out wrong. And you have no idea why."
- "You can ride fine. But the second you try to pop, your back foot freezes."
- "Your candle smells amazing for ten minutes, then you can't smell it at all."

Admit what's going on

Sometimes honesty is the hook. Sam: "Yes, this is about my candles. But stick around ten seconds, because the trick works on any candle." Honesty is rare on social media, so it stands out.

The hook check

Run every hook through five quick checks:

1. **Mute test.** Could a stranger get it in about three seconds with the sound off?
2. **Specific?** Could only you say this, about this video?
3. **Open question?** Does it make them want something?
4. **Kept?** Does the video deliver exactly this, and is every word true?
5. **You?** Does it fit your voice and your channel?

Five yeses: post it. Any no: rewrite.

Write lots, then choose

Great hooks rarely show up first. The obvious ones come out first, and the good ones are hiding behind them. So:

1. **Collect.** Save openings that stop you, from videos, headlines, book titles, ads, packaging. The big platforms run public ad libraries where you can see real ads running right now. Rewrite each for your topic as practice (never post copies).
2. **Write a pile.** At least 20 for one video. Fifty if it matters.
3. **Cut to three.** Run them through the hook check.
4. **Sleep on it,** then pick one and write a few versions of it.
5. **Test.** Read them to people and watch their faces. Then compare openings across real posts (Chapter 60 shows how to do that fairly).

On-screen text: the silent hook

Lots of people watch muted (Chapter 47), so the text in your first frame is often the first thing they read.

Weak: "Wait for it..." "You won't believe this" "Watch till the end." These ask the viewer to do work.

Strong: "The one-pan pasta trick." "Why your board keeps slipping out." "This candle smells like a bookstore." These give value or real curiosity.

- **Five to eight words** is a good target.
- **Keep the key phrase whole.** Highlight "Never rinse your rice," not just "rinse."
- **Break lines where you'd pause** if you said it out loud.
- **Give people time to read** before you talk over it.
- **Keep it in the safe zone** so the app's buttons don't cover it (Chapter 24).

- **Support your words**, don't just repeat them.

Hooks for calm and wordless videos

Most hook advice assumes someone talking fast. Plenty of good videos don't work that way: meditation and sleep videos, crafts and miniature builds, slow cooking, nature, documentaries, process videos where nobody speaks. They still need a hook. It just looks different.

- **Open on your best image, not your setup.** The finished diorama, the steam rising off the bowl, first light on the lake. Calm viewers stop for beauty or curiosity, not shouting.
- **Show where it's going.** A second of the finished result, or a hand placing the very first tiny piece, tells people there's a payoff. After that, you can take your time.
- **Let sound do the talking.** A crisp cut, a pour, rain on a window. In a wordless video, the first sound is often the hook (Chapter 32).
- **Add one line of text if it helps.** "A whole tiny bakery from cardboard scraps." "Ten minutes to slow down." Calm words for a calm video.
- **Match the feeling from the first frame.** Fake excitement, sudden zooms and alarm sounds bring in the wrong viewers and push the right ones away. If the video is soothing, the opening should be too (Chapter 1).
- **Documentaries still open on a question.** A strange image, a place, a person in a situation. The pace can be slow. The question can't be vague.

Covers work the same way. A calm, beautiful frame with a few quiet words beats a shocked face (Chapter 57).

Do this

1. **Answer the two questions:** what's the problem, what's the result they want?
2. **Pick an opening** from the six.
3. **Find the one specific detail.**
4. **Write 20 hooks.**
5. **Run the hook check** and cut to three.
6. **Sleep on it**, pick one and write on-screen text for it.

Level up

- **The feed mock-up.** Screenshot the feed or search results for your topic. Paste your first frame and text in. Does it stand out or blend in?

- **Try a version with no words.** Some of the best hooks are just a perfect slice, an impossible trick or a strange object.
 - **Your name can be a hook.** Creators known as "the one-pan cook" or "the candle scientist" have a hook built in. Ask people outside your topic what they think you do.
 - **Don't force funny.** A clear promise beats a forced pun.
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Try it

Pick one video idea. Set a timer for 20 minutes and write 50 hooks without judging them. Circle five. Run the hook check. Pick one and write ten versions of it. Pick again.