HOW TO GET VIEWS ON YOUTUBE: THE 7 RULES

20 LONG INTERVIEWS AND TALKS	**21** HOURS	**418** PIECES OF ADVICE	**7** RULES, RANKED

Ranked by how much they move views: rule 1 matters most.

MATTERS MOST

1 WON BEFORE YOU FILM: THE IDEA
Pick the idea first, and drop it if there's no title and thumbnail for it.

2 A PROMISE YOU KEEP: TITLE AND THUMBNAIL
Make that title and thumbnail a promise you can keep.

3 THE FIRST 30 SECONDS
Prove the promise in the first seconds.

4 EARN EVERY MINUTE
Earn every minute, and pay it off.

5 MANY, THEN FEWER
Make many while you learn, then fewer, and better.

6 A SHOW THEY COME BACK TO
Build a show they come back to.

7 WHAT COMES LAST
The like, the subscribe, the tags, the upload time.

LAST

START WITH THE IDEA.

THE RULES IN DETAIL ON PAGES 2 AND 3 ▶

THE 7 RULES IN DETAIL

Much of a video's fate is decided before anyone watches a second of it. Derek Muller changed one image and 38 characters on a video that was on course for 1.5 million views. It reached 14 million. He never touched the video.

The advice comes from 20 long interviews and talks, 21 hours, 418 pieces of advice, checked against what still holds in 2026.

Ranked by how much they move views: rule 1 matters most, rule 7 least.

MATTERS MOST

RULE 1

1 WON BEFORE YOU FILM: THE IDEA

Pick the idea first, and drop it if there's no title and thumbnail for it.

- Before filming anything, test the idea against a title and a thumbnail. If there is no title and picture someone would click, drop the idea, however good the video would have been.
- A better idea can triple the views for half the work; a better camera or better editing cannot (**MrBeast**).
- YouTube is a click-and-watch platform: nobody starts by watching, they pick from a page of other videos, and what they pick is the idea (**Paddy Galloway**).
- **MrBeast** sketches the thumbnail before an idea goes on the calendar; before he had a sketch artist, he drew stick figures. It needs no budget.
- Ideas come from time: the typical creator spends 1 of 40 working hours on the idea. **Galloway**'s client went from 5% to 30% of his time on idea, title and thumbnail, and got 270 times his average views.
- Many ideas, then a filter: **MrBeast** kept about a thousand; **Jenny Hoyos** keeps a thousand and films about ten.
- **Mark Rober**'s filter: explain it in one to three sentences. If the listener doesn't say "that's a cool idea", it's out.

RULE 2

2 A PROMISE YOU KEEP: TITLE AND THUMBNAIL

Make the title and thumbnail the biggest promise the video can keep.

- Making the title and thumbnail is at least half the job (**Derek Muller**). If a good video stalls, change them and watch the graph; Muller did that three times.
- Write thirty titles for one video, most of them small variations, to find one (**Galloway**).
- Write for someone who has never heard of the topic: "The Simplest Math Problem No One Can Solve", not "the Collatz conjecture" (**Muller**).
- The thumbnail: one subject, understood in a glance. What is in the picture matters far more than how well it is designed (**Galloway**).
- A more extreme promise gets more clicks, and only helps if the video pays it off (**MrBeast**). A thumbnail that no longer represents the video makes retention fall off a cliff (**Rene Ritchie, YouTube**).
- YouTube lets you test up to three thumbnails and titles. The winner is the one people watch longest, not the one that gets most clicks.

RULE 3

3 THE FIRST 30 SECONDS

Prove the promise in the first seconds.

- Videos can autoplay on the home page, so the first seconds are a second thumbnail (**MrBeast**). Since August 2026 a view counts from the first frame.
- Deliver on the promise immediately, visually or verbally (**Galloway**); then you have "permission to slow down" (**MrBeast**).
- Confirm the click in the first five seconds, establish the video by seven, open a new question by thirty (**Colin and Samir**).
- Confirm the promise, don't spend it: don't sink the Titanic in the first five minutes (**Peter McKinnon**).
- Why it is rule three and not one: a better intro rarely gets 270 times the views; a better idea can (**Galloway**).

RULES 4 TO 7 ON PAGE 3 ▶

4 RULE 4
EARN EVERY MINUTE

Earn every minute, and pay off what you promised.

- Not all watch time is equal: YouTube surveys viewers on whether a video was worth their time (**Todd Beaupré, YouTube**). The job is not to hold people but to make them glad they stayed.
- Give the video a reason to reach its end, a mechanism, such as "there are three steps". Make every beat change something: "but" and "therefore", not "and then" (**Jenny Hoyos**).
- Keep the outcome in doubt at all times (**MrBeast**).
- When it's over, stop. **Hoyos** cut the last second off a Short and retention went from 83% to 88%.
- Nobody shares a video they didn't finish; people have to feel something (**Mark Rober**).

5 RULE 5
MANY, THEN FEWER

Get the repetitions in, improve one thing each time, then raise the bar.

- Make 100 videos and improve one nameable thing every time (**MrBeast**). A hundred videos is a hundred small experiments.
- Growth is a slope, not a breakthrough (**Marques Brownlee**). Channels took off around video 91, 100-something, 300 (**Ali Abdaal**'s count).
- Once you can make a good video, post fewer and better: one video with ten million views is easier than a hundred with a hundred thousand each (**MrBeast**). Better to miss a week than post a bad video that loses viewers (**Galloway**).
- Honest note: these are the people it worked for. Mark Rober kept his job until about ten million subscribers.

6 RULE 6
A SHOW THEY COME BACK TO

Build a show they can come back to.

- A format, one kind of video you can make again and again, changed **Colin and Samir**'s channel after five years of 500 to 2,500 views.
- Repeatable, satisfying segments, so the viewer always knows where they are (**Ryan Trahan**).
- Viewers remember the feeling a video gave them, and click the next one that promises the same feeling (**Rene Ritchie**).
- End a video by pointing to another of your own. Not a like, not a subscribe: another video.
- A format is not a cage (Mark Rober has none), but if nothing ties the videos together, every upload starts from zero.

7 RULE 7
WHAT COMES LAST

LAST

Likes, subscribes, tags, upload time: none of it is wrong; it just moves very little.

- Asking for likes and subscribes "doesn't really move the needle" (**Rene Ritchie**). A like costs the viewer nothing, so YouTube reads little into it; watching another of your videos is a strong signal.
- Subscribers scroll past nine times out of ten in the subscriptions feed; they find you in recommendations like everyone else. A small channel does not need subscribers to be found: even in a video's first hour it reaches people who have never watched the channel (**Todd Beaupré**).
- Asking for the subscribe early cost Arun Maini about 20% of viewers.
- Tags play a minimal role (YouTube's help page). Upload time: swap "algorithm" for "audience" and ask if the audience cares (**Ritchie**).

START WITH THE IDEA.

ALL 7 RULES IN ONE LIST: PAGE 1 ▶