

THE COMPLETE PROMPT SYSTEM

ViralStack

The exact hook, script, retention, title, thumbnail and algorithm framework top creators use — engineered into AI prompts so every video you make starts with an unfair advantage.

BUILT FOR

Creators who are done guessing why their videos die at 15 seconds.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Why Most Videos **Die** — And How This Fixes It

20% of viewers leave in the first 10 seconds. On many channels it's 40%. That's not bad luck — it's a predictable, fixable pattern. ViralStack hands you the exact prompts that engineer around every one of those drop-off points, from the first frame to the final second.

HOW THIS IS DIFFERENT

This is not a template pack. Templates go stale — the same fill-in-the-blank structure, reused a hundred times, starts to feel copied. Every system in this book is a **prompt**, not a script. Feed it into your AI tool and it generates a fresh, custom result every single time, built around your topic, your niche, your voice.

How To Use This Book

Work through the modules in order — they follow the exact sequence you'd use to make a real video, from choosing a topic to publishing it. Copy each prompt exactly as written into ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or any capable AI model. Fill in the bracketed placeholders with your own details. That's it.

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- 02

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Bonus — for creators building a recognizable channel

AN HONEST NOTE

What This Book Will **Not** Promise You

Every part of this system is built on real, verifiable data about how hooks, retention, titles, thumbnails and the algorithm actually work in 2026. That data can shift the odds enormously in your favour. It cannot override reality.

BE WARY OF ANYONE WHO SAYS OTHERWISE

No system — this one included — can guarantee a specific view count. Anyone who promises "guaranteed millions of views" is selling you a fantasy. What ViralStack gives you instead is the exact structural, psychological and technical framework that the highest-performing creators use, repeatedly, at scale. It removes guesswork. It does not remove the need to actually apply it, video after video.

WHAT ACTUALLY MOVES THE NEEDLE

A weak hook loses 20-40% of viewers in the first 10 seconds before anything else even matters. Fix that one variable alone, using the exact systems in Module 02, and your ceiling for every video you make afterward changes permanently.

MODULE 01

Viral Topic Ideation

Before a single word of script gets written, the topic itself has to be one people already want. This module gives you a prompt that mines demand, competition gaps and viral potential — so you're never guessing what to make a video about.

-
- Understand why topic selection decides 50% of a video's ceiling before you even open your camera
 - Get a repeatable prompt that generates ranked, demand-tested topic ideas for your niche
 - Learn the 3 signals that separate a topic worth making from one that will flop regardless of execution

MODULE 01 · TOPIC IDEATION

Why Topic Choice Comes **Before** Everything Else

The best hook, script and thumbnail in the world cannot save a video nobody wanted to watch in the first place. Topic selection sets the ceiling — everything downstream just decides how close you get to it.

THE 3 SIGNALS OF A STRONG TOPIC

Demand — people are actively searching for or curious about this. **Gap** — existing videos on it are outdated, incomplete, or poorly made. **Angle** — you can frame it in a way that hasn't been done, even if the core topic has.

TOPIC IDEATION PROMPT

You are a YouTube content strategist who specializes in finding video topics with high viral potential and low competition saturation.

My niche is: [YOUR NICHE, e.g. "personal finance for people in their 20s"]

My channel currently makes: [SHORT-FORM / LONG-FORM / BOTH]

My current subscriber range is: [e.g. "under 1,000" / "1K-10K" / "10K+"]

Generate 15 video topic ideas for this niche. For each one, give me:

1. The core topic in one line
2. Why it has demand right now (a specific reason, not a generic guess)
3. What's wrong or missing in the videos that already exist on this topic
4. A unique angle I could take that most creators in this niche haven't used
5. Whether this fits better as a Short/Reel or a long-form video, and why

Rank the final list from highest to lowest viral potential. Do not suggest generic, overused topics unless you can give me a genuinely fresh angle on them. Prioritize topics where the gap between "what people want to know" and "what currently exists" is largest.

Fill in your niche and subscriber range honestly — the more specific the input, the sharper the topic ideas.

MODULE 02

The Hook Engine

20% of viewers leave in the first 10 seconds. On many channels, it's 40%. The hook is the single biggest gatekeeper between a view and a bounce — and it runs on precise psychology, not volume or drama.

-
- Learn the exact 3-phase timing structure behind every high-retention hook
 - Understand the curiosity-gap mechanism that actually keeps people watching
 - Get a single prompt that generates niche-specific, platform-specific hooks on demand

MODULE 02 · HOOKS

The Science Of The First 15 Seconds

20-40%
of viewers leave in the first 10 seconds if
the hook fails

3 Phases
make up every hook that actually holds
attention

0 Sec
of dead time a strong hook can afford to
waste

A hook isn't a loud opener or a dramatic clip — it's a carefully timed psychological gap between what the viewer knows and what they want to know. The timings below come from long-form data (where a 15-second hook is a small fraction of runtime) — treat them as a proportion, not a fixed countdown. On a 40-second Short, this entire hook should compress to roughly 4-7 seconds; on a 15-minute video, it can reasonably stretch past 15 seconds. Scale the three jobs below to whatever slice of your actual runtime makes sense.

JOB (IN ORDER)	WHAT IT DOES	WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU SKIP IT
First	Confirm the viewer is in the right place — match the promise of the title/thumbnail	Viewer feels misled, bounces instantly
Then	Deliver a small, real taste of the value to come	No proof this video is worth their time — they leave
Then	Open a curiosity gap strong enough to justify staying	Video plateaus at "nice but forgettable"

COMMON MISTAKE

Logos, slow fades, and animated intros are dead time. Even 2 seconds of it, at the very start, measurably increases early drop-off. Action needs to start at frame one.

MODULE 02 · HOOKS

The Hook Generation Prompt

This single prompt replaces dozens of hook "templates." It generates fresh, psychologically distinct hook options every time, correctly timed for whichever format you're making.

HOOK GENERATION PROMPT

You are a viral video scriptwriter who specializes in writing high-retention opening hooks based on real audience drop-off data.

My video topic is: [YOUR TOPIC]

My target audience is: [WHO WATCHES THIS, e.g. "college students trying to save money"]

This video is for: [YOUTUBE LONG-FORM / YOUTUBE SHORTS / INSTAGRAM REELS]

The core promise/payoff of this video is: [WHAT THEY GET BY WATCHING]

Write 5 different hook options for the first 15 seconds of this video, using 5 different psychological angles (choose from: curiosity gap, pattern interrupt, bold claim + proof tease, relatable problem, ticking-clock urgency).

For each hook, structure it exactly like this:

- 0-3 sec line: confirms the viewer is in the right place
- 3-8 sec line: delivers a small real taste of the value
- 8-15 sec line: opens a curiosity gap that demands they keep watching

Do not use generic phrases like "in this video" or "let's get started."

Do not front-load the payoff — the gap must stay open past 15 seconds.

Rank the 5 hooks by which is likely to have the lowest early drop-off, and explain why in one line each.

Run this once per video idea — even for the same topic, different audiences need different psychological angles.

MODULE 03

Title Formula Vault

A title's only job is to make the curiosity gap so specific that the viewer cannot resolve it without clicking. This module covers the exact mechanics of high-CTR titles, and a prompt that generates dozens of them on demand.

-
- Learn why specific, odd numbers consistently outperform round ones
 - Understand the power-word effect and why it correlates with a measurable click lift
 - Get a title-generation prompt tuned for curiosity, not clickbait

MODULE 03 · TITLES

What Actually Makes A Title Get Clicked

+34%

more clicks with strong power words like
proven, ultimate, complete

<90

characters — titles longer than this get
penalized in display and CTR

7, 13, 23

odd/specific numbers consistently beat
round numbers like 10, 20, 50

THE CORE MECHANISM

A good title is short and specific enough that the viewer **cannot mentally resolve the curiosity gap without clicking**. Vague titles fail not because they're boring, but because the viewer already feels like they know the answer.

Proven Formulas

FORMULA	BEST FOR
"How to [Specific Outcome] Like [Differentiator]"	Tutorials, search-intent traffic
"Why [Negative Curiosity Statement]"	Commentary, myth-busting, warnings
"[Number] [Things] That [Specific Consequence]"	Listicle-style videos, comparisons
"I [Did Specific Thing] For [Specific Time/Constraint]"	Challenge, experiment, story-driven videos

MODULE 03 · TITLES

The Title Generation Prompt

TITLE GENERATION PROMPT

You are a YouTube title strategist who writes titles based on curiosity-gap psychology and documented CTR data, not clickbait.

My video topic is: [YOUR TOPIC]

The main outcome/payoff of the video is: [WHAT VIEWER GETS]

My target audience is: [WHO THIS IS FOR]

Generate 12 title options for this video, using at least 4 different formulas:

1. "How to [outcome] Like [differentiator]"
2. "Why [negative curiosity statement]"
3. "[Odd number] [things] that [specific consequence]"
4. "I [did specific thing] for [specific constraint]"

Rules for every title:

- Under 60 characters where possible, never over 90
- Use at least one specific, odd number where relevant (not round numbers)
- Include at least 3 titles using a proven power word (proven, ultimate, complete, essential, real)
- The title must create a gap the viewer cannot resolve without clicking
- The title must accurately represent the video content — do not overpromise something the video doesn't deliver

Rank all 12 by predicted CTR and explain your top 3 picks in one line each.

Always cross-check: does the winning title actually match what the video delivers? A mismatch here kills retention even if the click rate is high.

MODULE 04

The Full-Retention Script Engine

This is the most important module in this entire system. A hook only earns the click — this is what keeps a viewer from skipping away at any point between second 16 and the final frame.

-
- Master the 6 narrative structures that produce the flattest retention curves
 - Understand open loops — the single technique proven to lift average view duration 40-60%
 - Get one master prompt that builds retention mechanics into every script it writes, automatically

MODULE 04 · SCRIPT & RETENTION

Why Most Scripts Lose Viewers In The Middle

A hook gets someone to stay past second 15. What happens after that is decided by structure, not luck. Three mechanics do almost all of the work.

1. Pattern Interrupts

A pattern interrupt — a shift in visual, tone, pacing or camera angle — measurably lifts average view duration by 15-25% in longer videos. The 60-90 second spacing below is an average taken from long-form content — it's a reference point, not a fixed rule. A 40-second Short doesn't have room for this at all, and shouldn't force one in. Scale this to your actual runtime: short videos may need zero pattern interrupts, longer videos need several, spaced by dividing the runtime into natural segments rather than applying the number mechanically.

2. The Mid-Point Retention Hook

Right around the 50% mark of a video, a second, smaller hook is needed — a new question, a twist, or a reason the second half matters more than the first. This is the point where most viewers who were "on the fence" decide whether to finish or leave.

3. Open Loops

+40-60%

average view duration lift when open loops fit the content

1-3

open loops, only where the topic genuinely supports curiosity

An open loop is an unresolved question or incomplete thought, deliberately left hanging. The unresolved tension creates a real cognitive pull to keep watching until it's closed. This only works when the content genuinely supports it — a mystery, a reveal, a countdown. Forcing a loop onto a straightforward how-to or factual explainer backfires: viewers who just want a clear answer feel like the video is stalling for time, and that reads as manipulative rather than compelling.

MODULE 04 · SCRIPT & RETENTION

The 6 Narrative Structures

Different content types hold attention through different mechanics. Using the wrong structure for your topic is one of the most common (and invisible) reasons a script under-performs.

STRUCTURE	BEST FOR	WHY IT RETAINS
Curiosity Loop	Mystery, investigation, "what really happened" content	Flattest drop-off curve — roughly 1.2%/min vs a 2.8%/min average, because the mystery stays open
Transformation Arc	Before/after, personal change, glow-ups	Signals "change is possible" — drives up to 4x higher share rate
Problem Stack	Listicles, "mistakes you're making" content	Each problem is its own mini-hook, resetting attention repeatedly
Expert Contrast	Myth-busting, "what they don't tell you"	Tension between common belief and real answer keeps viewers engaged
Ticking Clock	Challenges, deadlines, time-based content	Built-in urgency mechanic, viewer wants to see the resolution before time runs out
Reveal Ladder	Rankings, countdowns, "here's what's #1"	Escalating stakes toward a final payoff, viewer commits to reach the top

PACING, NOT JUST DENSITY

The instinct to add "something new every few seconds" is a useful check against dead, wasted time — but it isn't a rule to apply mechanically. Cramming a new fact or beat into every few seconds regardless of the topic produces a rushed, exhausting script. Match the pace to how a person actually absorbs that specific content: an unfamiliar concept needs room to land, a fast list doesn't. Clarity beats forced pace every time.

MODULE 04 · SCRIPT & RETENTION

Two Mistakes That Undo Everything Above

OVER-SCRIPTING

Most creators write 20-30% more script than the video needs. Every extra line is a chance for attention to drift. A tighter, shorter script consistently outperforms a longer one covering the same ground.

DEAD AIR

Small verbal pauses, hesitations, and empty moments during delivery are one of the most under-rated retention killers. Every single second on screen needs a reason to exist — this gets fixed in editing (Module 05), but it starts with how the script itself is written and read.

"Hook → Problem → Solution → CTA" is not a theory — it's the structural backbone behind creators who've scaled to hundreds of millions of subscribers.

MODULE 04 · SCRIPT & RETENTION

The Master Script Prompt

This is the single most important prompt in ViralStack. It forces every retention mechanic above into the output automatically — regardless of topic — and makes the AI self-check its own work before handing it to you.

FULL-RETENTION SCRIPT GENERATION PROMPT

You are an expert YouTube scriptwriter. Write a script for the video below that holds attention naturally — never by forcing a technique that doesn't fit the topic, the runtime, or how a real person would actually talk.

VIDEO DETAILS

Topic: [YOUR TOPIC]

Target length: [e.g. "40 seconds" / "60 seconds" / "8 minutes" / "15 minutes"]

Format: [YOUTUBE SHORTS / YOUTUBE LONG-FORM / INSTAGRAM REELS]

Target audience: [WHO THIS IS FOR]

Core payoff (what viewer walks away with): [THE OUTCOME]

Tone: [e.g. "energetic and fast" / "calm and authoritative" / "funny and casual"]

STEP 1 — SCALE EVERYTHING TO THE ACTUAL RUNTIME

Do not apply long-form pacing rules to a short video, or short-form pacing to a long one. Work out the structure proportionally:

- Hook length should be roughly 10-20% of total runtime, not a fixed number of seconds. A 40-second Short needs a 4-7 second hook, not a rigid 15-second one — a 15-second hook on a 40-second video eats over a third of the runtime and will feel broken.
- Only include a mid-point re-engagement beat and pattern shifts if the runtime is long enough to need them. A video under roughly 90 seconds is often one continuous beat — do not force an artificial "pattern interrupt" into a video too short to have one. For longer videos, place pattern shifts by dividing the runtime into natural segments instead of mechanically applying a fixed "every 60-90 seconds" rule regardless of length.

STEP 2 — CHOOSE A STRUCTURE THAT ACTUALLY FITS THIS TOPIC

Do not default to suspense or "curiosity loops" for every topic — a tutorial or factual explainer that hides its own answer to manufacture tension will feel manipulative and frustrate viewers who just want the answer. Pick whichever of these genuinely fits the content, and say why:

- Mystery / investigation / "what really happened" → Curiosity Loop
- Science, tech, or any concept people commonly misunderstand → Concept → Common Misconception → Real Explanation → Concrete Example → Payoff
- Personal change, before/after, glow-ups → Transformation Arc
- Lists, mistakes, tips → Problem Stack
- Myth-busting, contrarian takes → Expert Contrast
- Challenges, deadlines, time-based content → Ticking Clock
- Rankings, countdowns → Reveal Ladder

You may blend two structures if the topic genuinely calls for it. If none of these fit well, say so and use a plain, clear explanatory structure instead — a straightforward answer delivered well beats a forced twist.

STEP 3 — USE OPEN LOOPS ONLY WHERE THEY BELONG

If the structure and topic support genuine curiosity (mystery, reveal, countdown), you may open 1-3 real open loops and must close every one of them before the video ends. If the topic is a direct how-to, factual explainer, or anything where viewers want a plain answer, do not force artificial suspense — deliver value directly and let curiosity arise naturally from the content itself, not from withholding information.

STEP 4 — PACE FOR CLARITY, NOT FOR DENSITY

Do not cram a "new beat" into every 3-5 seconds by rule — that produces a rushed, exhausting script. Instead, match pacing to how a person actually absorbs this specific topic: technical or unfamiliar concepts need more room to land; fast-moving entertainment or list content can move quicker. Cut anything that doesn't earn its place, but never sacrifice clarity for artificial pace.

STEP 5 — FACTUAL ACCURACY (NON-NEGOTIABLE)

If this script includes any fact, statistic, study, historical detail, or scientific claim, only include information you are genuinely confident is accurate. Do not invent precise numbers, studies, or quotes to sound more credible. If you are not fully certain about a specific detail, phrase it more generally instead of stating a fabricated precise figure, and mark it clearly with [VERIFY: reason] so the creator knows to check it before filming. Never present a fabricated fact as settled truth.

STEP 6 — SOUND LIKE A PERSON, NOT LIKE AI

Write the way this specific creator would actually talk on camera. Avoid generic filler like "in today's video," "without further ado," "let's dive in," or overly uniform sentence rhythm. Vary sentence length. Use natural speech, contractions, and the tone specified above — this should read like someone talking to a friend, not like a template being filled in.

CTA: Close with one clear, natural call-to-action tied to the content itself, not a generic "like and subscribe."

OUTPUT FORMAT

1. The full script, broken into labeled sections (Hook / Body / Close), written the way it would actually be spoken aloud.
2. A short section titled "Why This Script Is Built This Way" — in plain, simple language, explain: which structure you chose and why it fits this specific topic, how you scaled the hook and pacing to this exact runtime, whether you used open loops and why (or why you deliberately didn't), and a list of any [VERIFY] flags the creator should double-check before filming.

Before finalizing, re-read your own script and check: does this sound like a real person talking, or like a checklist being read out? If it sounds robotic or forced anywhere, rewrite that section.

This prompt adapts to any topic and any length — it will not force a 15-second hook onto a 40-second Short, or manufacture suspense in a tutorial that just needs to give a clear answer.

MODULE 04 · RECAP

Locked In

Before moving to editing, make sure this module has actually landed.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON — VERIFY

- ☐ I understand why the hook alone cannot save a video with a weak middle.
- ☐ I know the 6 narrative structures and can pick the right one for my content type.
- ☐ I have the master script prompt ready to use for my next video.

MODULE 05

Editing & Delivery Guide

A perfect script can still lose viewers in the edit. This module covers the principles that separate a tight, high-retention cut from one that quietly bleeds attention — no specific tool required.

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- Understand why dead air is one of the most under-rated retention killers
 - Learn where pattern-interrupt cuts should physically happen in the edit
 - Get a practical checklist to run before you consider any edit finished

MODULE 05 • EDITING

Editing Is Where Retention Is Won Or Lost

This is a principles guide, not a tool tutorial — it works whether you edit in CapCut, Premiere, Descript, or anything else.

The Core Principles

- 1 Cut every pause that doesn't serve the sentence.** Verbal hesitations and dead air are one of the most common, most invisible reasons a video under-performs. Every second on screen should carry a reason to exist.
- 2 Place your hardest cuts at pattern-interrupt points.** Roughly every 60-90 seconds, force a visual change — a new angle, a zoom, a text overlay, a location shift. This is where the edit should physically work hardest.
- 3 Use bold, dynamic captions.** A large share of viewers watch with sound off. Word-by-word or phrase-by-phrase animated captions keep eyes locked on screen and prevent silent scrolling away.
- 4 Don't let AI auto-cut unsupervised.** Automated silence-removal and auto-cut tools are useful for a rough pass, but the best cuts land on emotional or narrative beats, not fixed time intervals. Always do one manual review pass after any automated edit.
- 5 Match pacing to content type.** Fast-cut, high-energy pacing suits entertainment and Shorts. Slower, more deliberate pacing suits tutorials and explainers — matching the wrong pace to the wrong content reads as either exhausting or boring.

MODULE 05 • EDITING

Pre-Publish Editing Checklist

- ☐ Every verbal pause longer than a natural breath has been trimmed
- ☐ A visual or pacing change happens at least once every 60-90 seconds
- ☐ Captions are bold, readable at a glance, and synced tightly to speech
- ☐ The video was watched once, fully, with sound off — does it still make sense?
- ☐ The video was watched once, fully, with sound on, purely for pacing — does any section drag?
- ☐ No AI auto-cut was accepted without at least one manual review pass

WHY THIS MATTERS MORE THAN IT SEEMS

Two videos with an identical script can perform completely differently based on the edit alone. A dragging middle section, invisible in the raw script, becomes obvious the moment it's watched back with fresh eyes.

MODULE 06

Realistic Thumbnail Prompt System

Custom thumbnails are used on 90% of top-performing videos — but an obviously AI-generated thumbnail can hurt more than it helps. This module covers thumbnail psychology and a prompt system built specifically to avoid the 'AI look.'

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- Learn the exact visual factors that drive click-through rate
 - Understand why thumbnail-title mismatch is an algorithmic trust killer, not just a viewer complaint
 - Get a cinematographer-style prompt system that avoids the telltale signs of AI-generated images

MODULE 06 · THUMBNAILS

The Psychology Of A Click-Worthy Thumbnail

90%

of top-performing videos use a custom thumbnail

+20-30%

CTR lift from a single expressive human face vs a text-heavy design

-23%

CTR drop when a thumbnail has more than 3 distinct visual elements

FACTOR	RULE
Focal point	One large, clear subject — never more than 3 visual elements total
Emotion	A genuine, expressive human face reads instantly, even at small size
Contrast	High contrast, bold colors that hold up in both light and dark mode
Match	The thumbnail must represent what's actually in the video — a mismatch tanks retention even after the click lands

THE 2026 SHIFT

Over-designed, exaggerated clickbait thumbnails are losing ground. Simpler, more authentic-looking thumbnails are increasingly outperforming heavily edited ones — which is also exactly why looking obviously AI-generated is now a real liability, not a neutral one.

MODULE 06 · THUMBNAILS

Why AI Thumbnails Get Spotted — And How To Avoid It

Most AI-generated images get flagged instantly by viewers: unnaturally smooth skin, malformed hands, flat or unnatural lighting, an almost plastic sheen. The fix isn't a better tool — it's a better prompt.

THE CORE TECHNIQUE

Prompt like a cinematographer, not a search query. Specifying a real camera model, lens, lighting condition, and natural imperfections (film grain, visible skin texture, slight chromatic aberration) forces the model away from the smooth "AI look" and toward a photographic one.

MODULE 06 · THUMBNAILS

The Realistic Thumbnail Prompt

REALISTIC THUMBNAIL GENERATION PROMPT

Create a photorealistic thumbnail image, shot as if captured on a professional mirrorless camera (Sony A7IV, 85mm f/1.4 lens).

Subject: [DESCRIBE THE PERSON/SUBJECT, e.g. "a young man in his 20s, shocked expression, mouth slightly open, eyebrows raised"]

Setting/background: [WHERE THIS IS HAPPENING, keep it simple - one setting]

Emotion to convey: [e.g. "genuine shock" / "excited curiosity" / "concern"]

Key visual object (if any): [ONE supporting object/prop, no more than one]

Lighting: natural late-afternoon window light from the left side, soft shadows, slight warm color temperature.

Technical details to include: visible natural skin texture with realistic pores, subtle film grain, slight depth-of-field blur in the background, naturally imperfect hair strands, realistic asymmetry in facial features.

Avoid: perfectly smooth skin, overly symmetrical features, glossy or plastic-looking surfaces, unnatural lighting, extra or malformed fingers.

Composition: single clear focal point, no more than 2-3 total visual elements in frame, subject positioned off-center using rule-of-thirds, high contrast between subject and background so it reads clearly at small (mobile) size.

Aspect ratio: 16:9 for YouTube long-form and Shorts-style cover art, or 9:16 vertical if this is specifically for a Reel/Short cover.

Output should look like an unedited photograph, not a digital illustration or render.

Always generate 2-3 variations and pick the one where the face and hands look most natural — even a strong prompt occasionally produces one off result.

MODULE 07

SEO & Description Engine

A great video still needs to be found. This short but critical module covers exactly what YouTube's search and suggestion system actually reads from your description and tags.

- Learn why the first 40 characters of a description matter disproportionately
- Understand why hashtag-stuffing is a wasted effort in 2026
- Get a prompt that writes a fully optimized description and tag set in one pass

MODULE 07 · SEO

What The Algorithm Actually Reads

THE FIRST 40 CHARACTERS

Your target keyword needs to appear within the first 40 characters of the description — this is what shows before "show more" on mobile, and it's a strong early signal for indexing.

TAGS

5-8 accurate, specific tags are enough. Keyword-stuffing tags provides no additional benefit and can dilute relevance signals.

THE HASHTAG MYTH

Almost nobody browses Shorts by typing a hashtag. Generic tags like #viral or #fyp do essentially nothing for discovery — hashtags mainly help with search and playlist grouping, not general feed placement. Use 2-3 specific, relevant hashtags instead of a wall of generic ones.

SEO & DESCRIPTION PROMPT

You are a YouTube SEO specialist. Write an optimized video description and tag set for the following video.

Video topic: [YOUR TOPIC]

Target keyword/phrase: [MAIN SEARCH TERM VIEWERS WOULD USE]

Video title (final): [YOUR CHOSEN TITLE]

Key points covered in the video: [2-3 BULLET POINTS OF CONTENT]

Write:

1. A description where the target keyword appears naturally within the first 40 characters, followed by a 2-3 sentence natural-language summary of the video (not keyword-stuffed)
2. 5-8 specific, relevant tags (no generic filler tags)
3. 2-3 specific hashtags only (skip generic ones like #viral or #fyp)
4. One pinned-comment suggestion designed to invite replies in the first hour

Post this pinned comment and reply to the first 15-20 real comments yourself — early engagement signals are read by the algorithm as a positive quality signal.

MODULE 08

Cross-Platform Adaptation

The same core idea performs differently on YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, and long-form YouTube. This module gives you one prompt that correctly reshapes a single idea for each platform's actual mechanics.

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- Understand the real differences between YouTube and Instagram ranking signals
 - Learn ideal length and completion-rate targets for short-form video
 - Get a single prompt that adapts one video idea across all three formats correctly

MODULE 08 · CROSS-PLATFORM

One Idea, Three Different Games

PLATFORM	WHAT IT REWARDS MOST	PRACTICAL NOTE
YouTube Shorts	Completion rate above raw view count	A 30-second Short at 85% completion beats a 60-second Short at 50% completion
Instagram Reels	Engagement (comments, shares, saves) alongside early retention	Save and share rate matter more relatively than on YouTube
YouTube Long-Form	Session watch time — total time a viewer spends on YouTube after your video	A video that leads viewers into more YouTube content gets pushed harder in suggestions

73%

average Shorts retention vs ~52% for long-form

70-80%+

target 'Viewed' vs 'Swiped Away' ratio in the first 3 seconds

3 min

maximum Shorts length as of the 2024 extension

A COMMON MISTAKE

Posting the exact same length and pacing across all three platforms. Sub-15-second Shorts have seen collapsing reach because they can't clear the absolute watch-time bar even at 100% completion — the 25-60 second range is currently the safer target zone.

MODULE 08 · CROSS-PLATFORM

The Platform-Adaptation Prompt

PLATFORM ADAPTATION PROMPT

You are a cross-platform content strategist who understands the distinct ranking mechanics of YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, and YouTube long-form.

Original video idea/script: [PASTE YOUR SCRIPT OR IDEA HERE]

Adapt this single idea into three separate versions:

1. YOUTUBE SHORTS VERSION (25-60 seconds): prioritize completion rate. Trim to the single strongest angle. Ensure the ending loops back to or references the opening for a rewatch effect.
2. INSTAGRAM REELS VERSION (similar length, but): add one explicit moment designed to prompt a comment, share, or save (e.g. "save this for later" or a direct question to the audience), since Reels weighs engagement signals more heavily than YouTube does.
3. LONG-FORM YOUTUBE VERSION (if applicable): expand with additional context, examples, or depth, and end with a suggestion or transition that could lead a viewer into another one of my videos, to increase session watch time.

For each version, note the ideal length and one platform-specific reason for the changes you made.

Never just re-upload the identical cut to all three platforms — the differences above are measurable, not cosmetic.

MODULE 09

Retention Diagnosis System

Publishing isn't the end of the process — it's the start of feedback. This module teaches you to read your own retention graph like a professional editor, and gives you a prompt to diagnose exactly where and why viewers left.

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- Learn to distinguish a normal retention curve from a broken one
 - Understand what different drop-off shapes actually mean
 - Get a prompt that turns your raw analytics into a specific, actionable fix list

MODULE 09 · RETENTION DIAGNOSIS

Reading The Retention Graph

WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS
Sharp drop in the first 10-15 seconds	The hook failed to confirm expectation or open a strong enough gap
Steady, gradual decline with no sharp cliffs	Normal — check if a pattern interrupt schedule was missing
Sharp drop around the midpoint	Missing or weak mid-point retention hook
Sudden spike back up mid-video	A specific moment (often a clip or reveal) is being rewatched — study and replicate it
High early retention, low completion	Often a pacing or "over-scripting" issue in the back half

RETENTION DIAGNOSIS PROMPT

You are a YouTube analytics consultant who specializes in diagnosing retention problems from audience retention graph data.

Here is my video's retention behavior:

- Video length: [LENGTH]
- Retention at 15 seconds: [%]
- Retention at 50% mark: [%]
- Retention at completion: [%]
- Describe any sharp drops you noticed and roughly where: [DESCRIBE, e.g. "sharp drop around the 0:45 mark"]
- Describe any spikes (rewatched sections) and roughly where: [DESCRIBE]

Based on this data:

1. Diagnose the most likely cause of each drop-off point, referencing hook timing, pattern interrupts, mid-point hooks, or pacing issues
2. Identify what likely caused any spike/rewatch moment, and how to intentionally replicate that in future scripts
3. Give me 3 specific, concrete changes to make in my next script based on this exact data — not generic advice

Do this after every video for the first 10-15 uploads. The patterns you'll spot in your own content are more useful than any general rule in this book.

MODULE 10

The 2026 Algorithm Playbook

Everything in ViralStack ultimately feeds into one system: what YouTube decides to recommend. This module explains what actually drives that decision in 2026 — and what to stop worrying about.

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- Understand the shift toward satisfaction-weighted watch time
 - Learn what 'session watch time' really means and why it matters more than raw duration
 - Know which common 'algorithm hacks' are myths not worth your time

MODULE 10 · ALGORITHM

What The Algorithm Actually Optimizes For

THE CORE 2026 SHIFT

YouTube optimizes for **satisfaction-weighted watch time relative to category norms** — not raw duration and not absolute watch time. A 10-minute educational video at 65% retention can outperform a 60-minute video at 20% retention, because it's judged against what's normal for its category, not against longer videos in general.

SESSION WATCH TIME

The total time a viewer spends on YouTube **after** watching your video may be the single most misunderstood ranking signal. Videos that lead viewers into more YouTube content — through end screens, related topics, or simply strong satisfaction — get pushed harder into suggested feeds.

MYTHS TO STOP WORRYING ABOUT

Upload frequency and exact posting time are explicitly not treated as crucial ranking factors by YouTube. Quality and retention consistently outweigh how often or exactly when you post. The idea that the first 24-48 hours "decide everything" is also overstated — search and browse features can surface evergreen videos weeks or months later.

- ☐ I'm judging my retention against my own category norms, not a generic benchmark
- ☐ I understand session watch time and use end screens/suggestions to extend it
- ☐ I've stopped obsessing over exact upload time and post consistently instead

MODULE 11

Copyright Safety Guide

A viral video that gets struck or demonetized over avoidable copyright mistakes is a wasted video. This short bonus guide clears up the most common misunderstandings.

- Learn why most 'safe use' rules creators repeat are actually false
- Know the one genuinely reliable source for background music
- Avoid the mistakes that lead to strikes and demonetization

MODULE 11 • BONUS

The Copyright Myths That Get Creators Struck

THESE "SAFE RULES" ARE FALSE

"Using less than 30 seconds of a song is fine" — false, Content ID can match audio in a fraction of a second. "Crediting the artist makes it legal" — false, credit is not a license. "It's free because I downloaded it from a free site" — false, "free download" does not mean royalty-free or licensed for use.

THE ONE RELIABLE SOURCE

Music sourced directly from YouTube's own Audio Library is the one genuinely, consistently copyright-safe option for background music. When in doubt, use it.

- ☐ Any background music is sourced from YouTube Audio Library or a licensed music service
- ☐ No copyrighted clips, film footage, or full songs are used without explicit permission or license
- ☐ I understand that credit alone never equals legal permission

MODULE 12

Brand Consistency Prompt

Not every video needs a brand system — a one-off video or casual channel doesn't require this. But for creators building a channel people recognize at a glance, consistent visual

branding is a proven, measurable factor.

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- See real data on why top channels maintain consistent visual branding
 - Understand which elements of branding actually matter for recognizability
 - Get a prompt that keeps every thumbnail and title generated in ViralStack on-brand

MODULE 12 • BONUS

Should You Even Bother With Branding?

If you're making one video, or a handful of unrelated videos, skip this module entirely — it won't move the needle. If you're building a channel you want people to recognize instantly, the data below is worth applying.

WHAT TOP CHANNELS ACTUALLY DO

Channels like MrBeast use bold, deliberately consistent colors and thumbnail styling across every upload, making their content instantly recognizable in a crowded feed. Tech-review channels like MKBHD apply the same consistency to visuals and framing — this recognizability compounds impressions over time rather than resetting with every video.

THE MEASURABLE EFFECT

Consistent branding — a repeated color palette, font choice, and thumbnail layout style — can lift click-through rate by up to 30%, because returning viewers recognize your content before they've even read the title.

BRAND CONSISTENCY PROMPT

You are a brand-consistency consultant for YouTube channels.

My channel's core color palette is: [2-3 COLORS, e.g. "navy, gold, white"]

My channel's font style/personality is: [e.g. "bold sans-serif, high energy" or "clean minimal serif, calm and trustworthy"]

My niche is: [YOUR NICHE]

Using this brand system, generate a thumbnail concept and title pairing for the following video that stays visually and tonally consistent with my existing brand: [DESCRIBE YOUR VIDEO TOPIC]

Describe:

1. The exact color combination to use in this specific thumbnail
2. Where the main subject/face should be positioned for consistency with a recognizable channel layout
3. A title that matches the tone of my brand voice

Keep every element consistent with a channel identity a repeat viewer would recognize within half a second of seeing it in their feed.

Only worth using once you have at least 10-15 videos and want a cohesive channel identity — not needed for a single standalone video.

BEFORE YOU HIT PUBLISH

The Master Pre-Upload Checklist

Run through this in order, every single time, before a video goes live.

- ☐ Topic passed the demand / gap / angle test (Module 01)
- ☐ Hook is timed correctly across 0-3, 3-8, and 8-15 seconds (Module 02)
- ☐ Title uses a proven formula and matches the actual video content (Module 03)
- ☐ Script includes open loops, pattern interrupts, and a mid-point hook, and has been self-checked (Module 04)
- ☐ Dead air has been cut and pacing has been reviewed with sound on and off (Module 05)
- ☐ Thumbnail has one clear focal point, strong contrast, and doesn't look AI-generated (Module 06)
- ☐ Description has the keyword in the first 40 characters, 5-8 tags, and 2-3 specific hashtags (Module 07)
- ☐ Version adapted correctly for the platform it's going on (Module 08)
- ☐ A plan is in place to check the retention graph within 24-48 hours (Module 09)
- ☐ Posting is on a consistent schedule — not obsessing over the 'perfect' exact time (Module 10)
- ☐ All music/audio is from a verified, licensed, or Audio Library source (Module 11)
- ☐ First 15-20 comments will be replied to within the first hour of posting

You Have The System.

Twelve modules, one continuous system — from the moment you pick a topic to the moment you read your own retention graph and improve the next one. Nothing here promises a number. It gives you the exact structure the highest-performing creators run on, every time, on purpose.

12 10+ ∞

SYSTEMSREADY PROMPTSFRESH OUTPUTS, EVERY VIDEO

Apply it once, honestly, on your very next video — then apply it again on the one after that. This is a system built for repetition, not a one-time trick.