



YOUTUBE OPTIMIZATION TIPS

Best practices for getting the most out of your videos

WHY YOUTUBE?

YouTube is the third most visited website and the second largest search engine by volume. Ranking well in YouTube will not only help place your video in Google's Travel Guides, it also has direct impact on web search as a whole.

HOW DOES YOUTUBE CONTENT RANK?

Similar to web pages, there are a variety of factors to keep in mind when optimizing YouTube content.

THREE STRONGEST RANKING FACTORS:

- Keyword relevance in title
- Age of account
- Number of channel subscribers

Other ranking factors include: user comments, length of video (five minutes or longer does better), total views, video quality and time watched. As of 2015, Google patented an algorithm that uses "watch time" as ranking signal.

USER EXPERIENCE IS KEY:

Unlike Google – which uses backlinks to evaluate content quality – YouTube utilizes "User Experience" signals. The more users interact with your video, the better the YouTube experience signals and the higher you'll rank. These signals include social shares, comments, favorites, thumbs up/thumbs down and audience retention (the percentage of your video people tend to watch).

Step #1: Planning Your Video

Ready to create a video? Here are some tips to get you started.

- Research video keywords for content ideas. Use Google's Keyword Planner to identify relevant keywords with at least 300 searches a month. You can also use YouTube search behavior. For YouTube specific trend data, [click here](#).
- Look at what competitors are doing in the searches in which you want to rank.
- Avoid using long intro or outro segments that aren't part of the video itself. These could affect watch time.





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Step #2: Uploading and Optimizing Your Video

Here are some best practices for making the most of YouTube's metadata.

Title and description:

- Include relevant keywords in your title AND your description. Focus more on topical relevance than exact-match. Push high-value keywords toward the front of the title.
- Avoid using misleading, clickbait or sensational titles.
- Make your description 200+ words long. Include your keyword 3-4 times.
- Include links in your description to relevant content on your website.
- Avoid "tag-stuffing" in your description. This may cause your video to be removed.
- Use hashtags in video titles or descriptions to ensure viewers find your video when they search for a specific hashtag. Be sure all hashtags meet YouTube's [Community Guidelines](#).

Tags:

- Be sure to tag your video to the appropriate category.
- Use your keyword as your first tag and then add a few related tags.
- Use your competitors' channel names as a tag. This is a strategic way to get listed as a "related video" in the sidebar.

Other settings:

- Upload a custom thumbnail to make your video appealing in search and related video spots. (Optimal specs: 640x360px, 16:9 aspect ratio).
- Use end cards with links to other videos from your channel to retain users longer.
- Add closed caption files to your video. This text is read and indexed by Google and YouTube.
- Use CTAs in videos driving people to comment/subscribe, etc. as that may produce an incremental increase in overall user engagement.
- Use cards, annotations and other CTAs to push users to other relevant content in your channel and/or on your website.





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Step #3: Getting Views

Now that you've created and uploaded your video, here are some tips for receiving high-value, high-retention views.

- Embed your video on your website with relevant content. This is the equivalent of off-page factors in web search and it'll also help increase your total video views.
- When sharing your video on social media, consider sharing it directly from YouTube (using the share functionality). This can be a stronger signal than just sharing the link since it's tracked within YouTube analytics.
- Share your video via other owned channels like email to help increase views, shares and engagement.
- Mention your video on Quora, Reddit, Trip Advisor and other topically relevant Q&A forum sites. Your video often will answer a question someone has.

Step #4: Optimizing Your Channel

Optimizing your channel is just as important as optimizing your video.

- Use targeted channel keywords that are topically relevant.
- Create a robust, topically relevant channel description that uses targeted keywords where possible (without being spammy).
- Publish videos consistently to help build your subscriber base.
- Create relevant channel playlists to group videos about similar topics/places.
- YouTube has a feature called "Featured Video," which is essentially just a graphic that shows up when people watch your videos. This graphic is a great way to promote more engagement with other videos on your channel. From your dashboard select Channel settings > In-video programming. Choose a video and start time, and then hit update.
- Claim a vanity URL. You can do this once your channel has reached a minimum threshold. This can help reinforce your brand on your channel and make it more user-friendly. In order to qualify for a vanity URL, your channel will need to have 500 or more subscribers, be at least 30 days old and have a channel icon or channel art.

