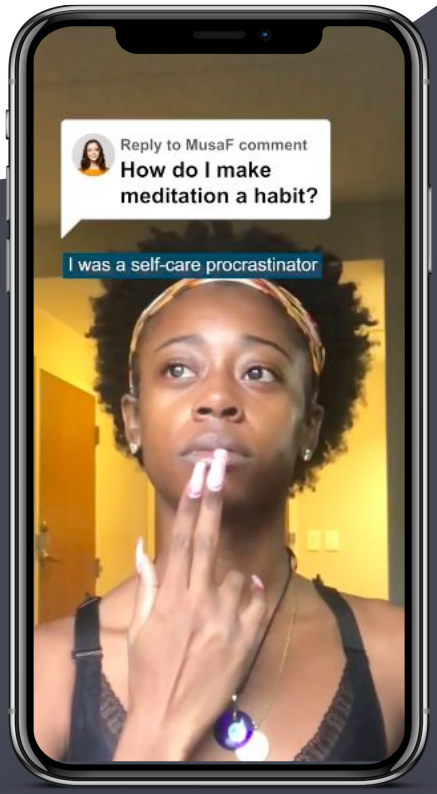
ROCKETSHIP HQ
Growth. Accelerated.

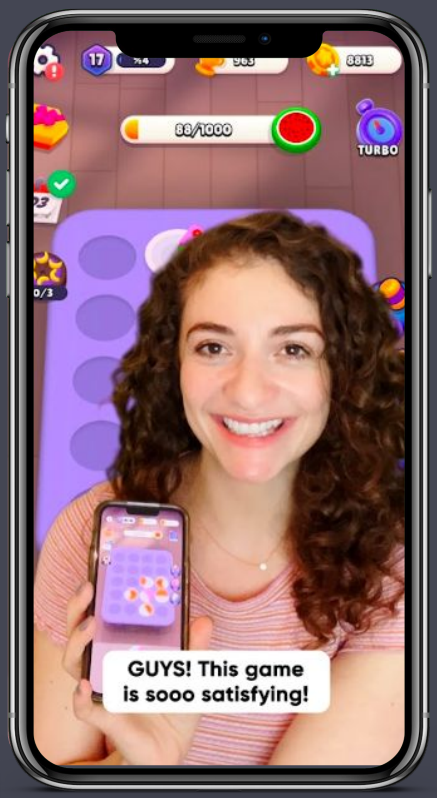
THE MOBILE USER ACQUISITION SHOW

The Ultimate Guide to UGC/live action videos for mobile user acquisition

Everything you need to build UGCs for ROAS, performance and scale.

Updated for using Generative AI tools in your UGC production workflow.





INTRODUCTION

Over the last couple of years, UGC videos have become a crucial aspect of successful performance marketing campaigns.

After making thousands of UGC ads that have driven performance and working with hundreds of creators, we're pulling back the curtains on everything we've learned: what works, what doesn't, common pitfalls, best practices and more.

Allow us to present **The Definitive Guide to UGC videos for Performance Marketing**, a labor of love born of many weeks of synthesizing our knowledge and learnings from thousands of UGCs.

In this book, we will delve into the essential elements of UGC, including **hooks, overlays, sound, and safe zones**. Additionally, we walk you through the processes that lie behind a successful UGC campaign - right from planning and directing a UGC shoot to structuring the content of the UGC briefs, so you can 'plug-and-play' our processes on your own team.

That's not all, we also share free templates that you can swipe and use immediately - and also ways to incorporate AI tools in your production process.

About RocketShip HQ

RocketShip HQ is a full-service growth marketing agency that has managed over $100mm in ad spend, and made over 10000 ads for over 100 brands. We've worked with games like Project Makeover, Wordscapes, and Highrise, as well as apps like BetterMe, Lingokids, and FitMind (among many other others). We are a Meta Business Partner, Google Partner and a part of the TikTok Creative Exchange.,

For more details, you can check out:

RocketshipHQ.com

MobileUserAcquisitionShow.com

Gaming apps

Subscription apps

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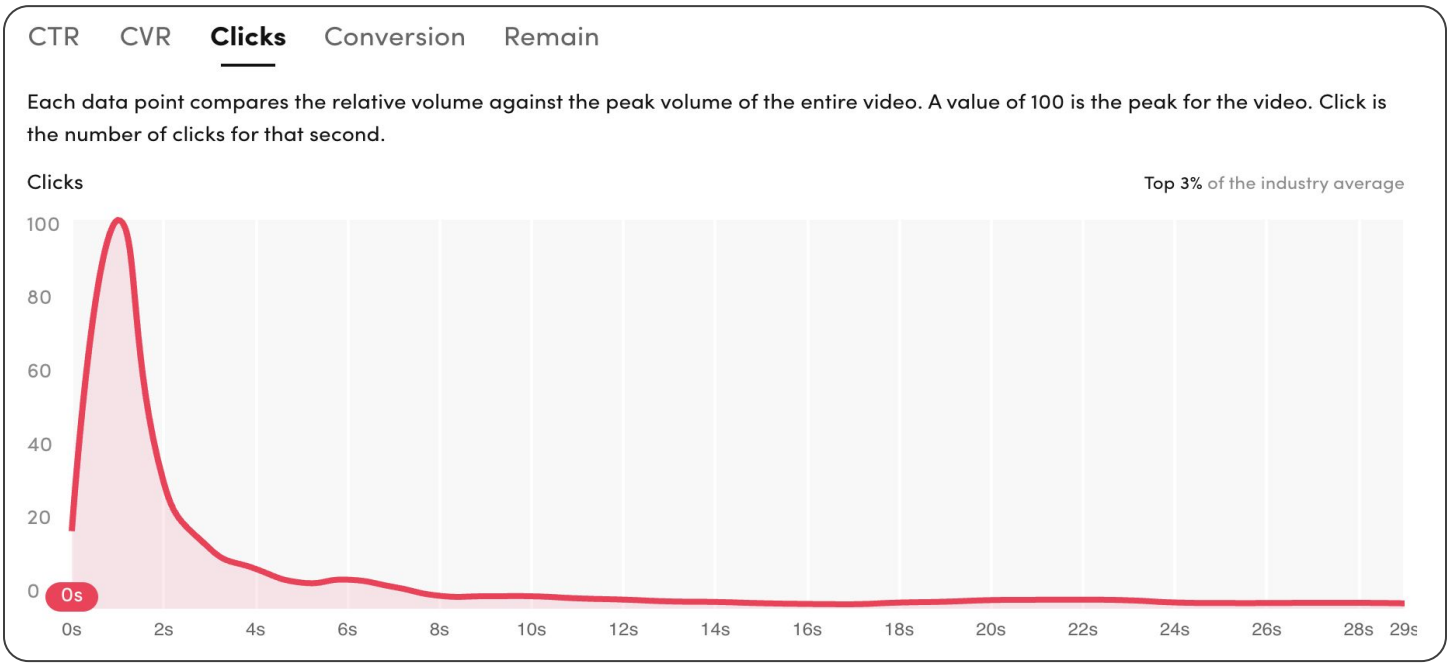
CHAPTER 1:
CREATE COMPELLING HOOKS

An effective hook, or the video experience in the first 3 seconds, grabs the audience's attention. This is particularly crucial in short-form videos, where viewers typically determine whether to keep watching, click or abandon the content within the first three seconds.

This screenshot of an ad from the TikTok Creative Center tells all - and this behavior is common across nearly all short form videos that we've worked with.



Before You Work On Your Hook, Research Your Audience.

Understand your audience's needs and interests, and craft your hook accordingly. The hook should be relevant and appealing to your target audience.

As a starting point for this, we analyze user reviews and sentiment to understand the users of an app and who they are, so that we can structure our messaging intelligently. This is the first and foremost step we take while working on any creative format.

We look at user reviews along these dimensions:

- User personas
- Pain points
- Alternatives
- Benefits
- Features

User Personas	Pain Points	Alternatives	Benefits	Features
Who the users of your app/ product/service	What problems our users experience that they are seeking solutions to.	What other solutions our users have sought out.	What are the results (emotional or tangible life changes) users experience as a result of using the app/product/service.	What elements within the app/ product/ service they've found most useful and impactful.

By following this simple process, you can gain valuable insights about users and their preferences, and form a clear understanding of the kind of messaging that will resonate with them.

With this understanding, you can start to frame your hook. Here are a few key elements that make for effective hooks.

1 Use Emotion

Use emotional language to evoke a response from your audience. You can use humor, empathy, curiosity, or urgency to create an emotional connection with your audience.

Example 1: Are you worried about tracking finances?

Example 2: Do you struggle to fall asleep at night?

2 Start With A Question

Asking a thought-provoking question can stimulate the audience's curiosity and encourage them to keep listening or reading. Make sure the question is relevant and interesting to your audience.

Example 1: Have you tried this fitness challenge?

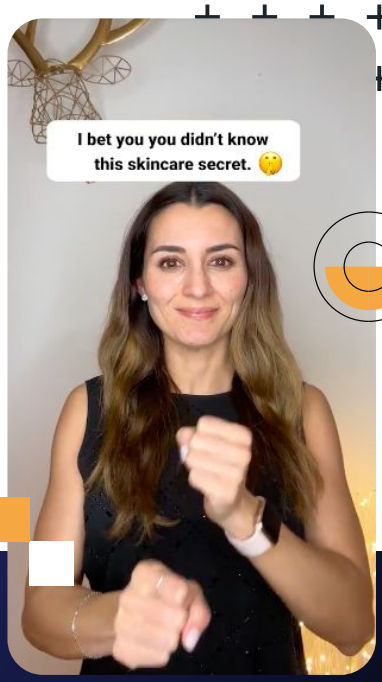
Example 2: Do you know this secret hack?

3 Use A Shocking Or Surprising Statement

Use a surprising or shocking statement to grab the audience's attention. This can be a statistic, a fact, or a personal anecdote that challenges the audience's assumptions or beliefs.

Example 1: If you are worried about your love life, then watch this....

Example 2: The ultimate hack for getting a job in 2023.



4 Visual Hooks

Show a visual prop that is intriguing or surprising. For instance, show satisfying/ASMR footage - or show a prop associated with the product or audience.

And of course you can have our friend ChatGPT help you with inspiration.

Sure, here are five hooks for the app that may be more suitable for a TikTok audience:

1. Turn your child into a bookworm with this fun reading app for kids!
2. Make learning to read a blast with this app for kids aged 4 to 8!
3. Say goodbye to boring reading lessons and hello to fun with this app for kids!
4. Get your kids excited about reading with this app that makes learning an adventure!
5. Say hello to stress-free screen time with this app that helps kids learn to read while having fun!

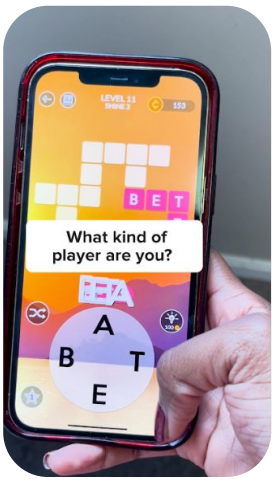
give me 5 hooks that are shorter and punchier

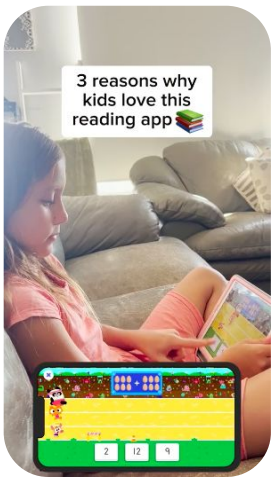
Sure, here are 5 shorter and punchier hooks for the app:

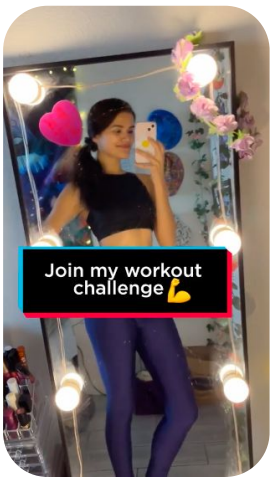
1. Turn reading into playtime with our fun-filled app!
2. Unlock the world of reading and adventure with our app!
3. Give your child the gift of reading, with a little help from our app!
4. Your child will love learning to read with our interactive app!
5. Let your child's imagination run wild with our app that makes reading fun!

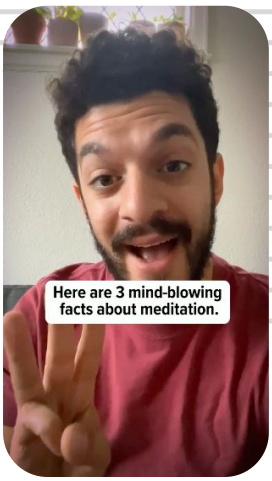
Below are some examples of hooks.

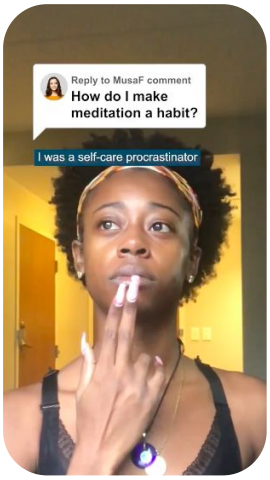
You can also check out our Notion resource here for a list of sample hooks.

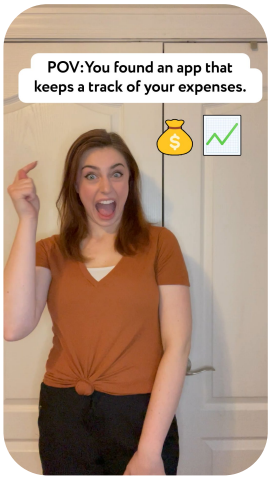


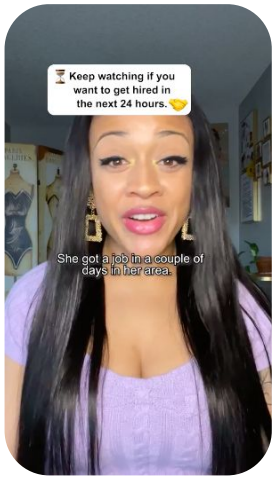


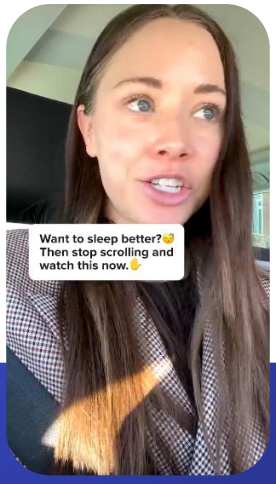


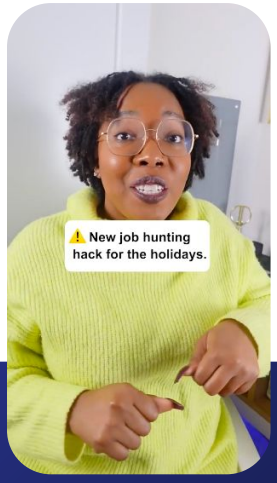


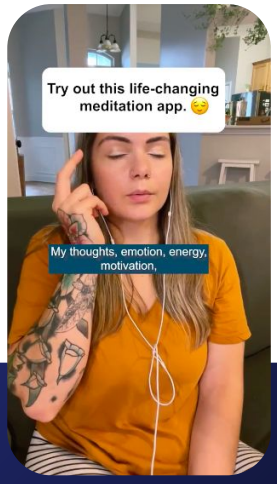


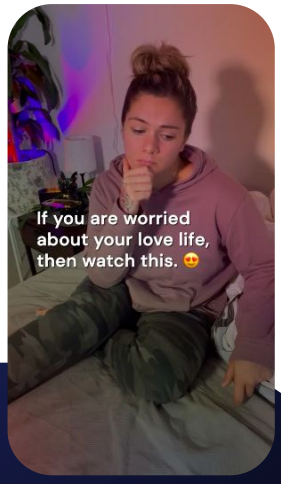










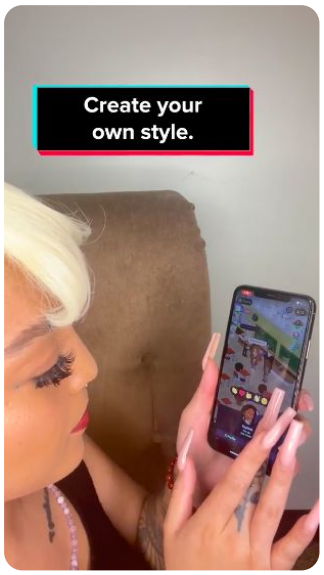


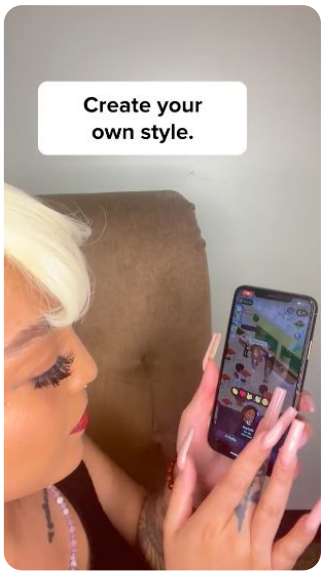
CHAPTER 2:
ADD MEANINGFUL VISUAL ELEMENTS

Now that you know how to understand your audience and generate ideas for hooks, the next step is to present these in a way that is on-trend and compelling. We incorporate multiple elements in our creatives such as text overlays, text-to-speech, emojis, animations and more.

1 Text Overlays

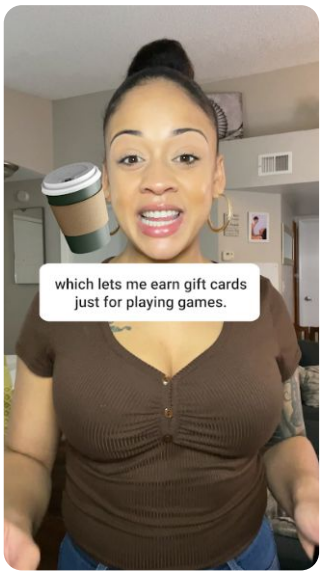
Adding text to a TikTok video can help to emphasize a message or add context to the content. Text overlays can be used to display quotes, captions, or other important information.

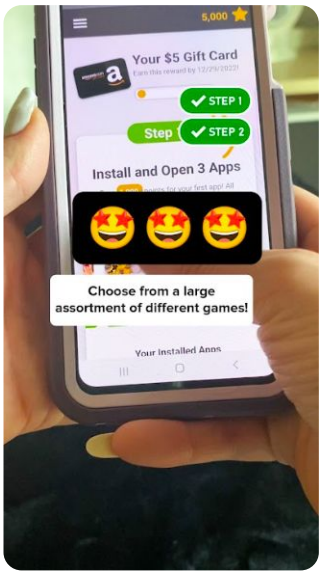




2 Stickers And Emojis

Adding stickers or emojis to a TikTok video can help to make the content more fun and engaging. Stickers and emojis can be used to express emotions, add humor, or convey a specific theme.





3 Gifs, Images And Graphics

Adding GIFs, images or graphics to a TikTok video can help to enhance the visual impact of the content. These can be used to add context and provide additional information, such as showing an app or a website preview in the scene to make the users visually see how it actually looks like.

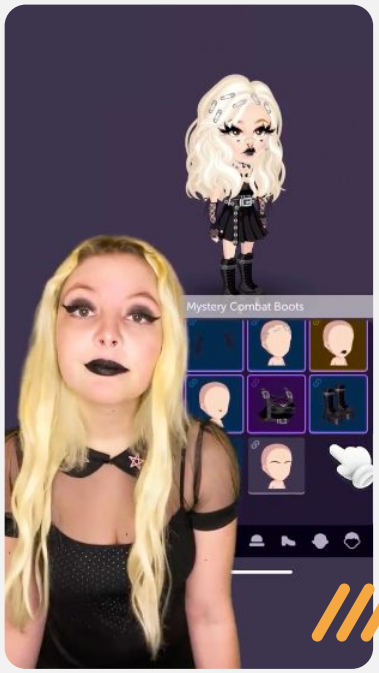
4 Animations/AR Effects/Green Screen

Adding special effects to a TikTok video can help to create a unique and visually engaging experience for viewers. These can be used to highlight specific elements of the content or to create a specific visual effect.

We sometimes ask our creators to use a green screen in their background. We then edit the videos during the post-production process, and replace the background with a different video that typically shows gameplay or the app walkthrough, or any other special effects.

This example shows the effects we have added on a green screen.

✂️ Raw footage



🔄 After edits & post-production

5 Text-to-speech (TTS) Voice

These computer-generated voices can read text aloud without requiring human actors. These can be customized to sound like different genders, ages, accents, and languages. So choose the one that best fits your video.

Click here to check out our sample files we have for your reference.

Child (Female) VO Sample.m...

Child (Male) VO Sample.mp3

Female VO Sample.mp3

Male VO Sample.mp3

CHAPTER 3:
AFTER THE HOOK: MAKING A KILLER SCRIPT

While the hook gets them, well, hooked, you still do need to reel 'em in. Once you've gotten their attention, you've got to keep it - and also persuade the users to convert.

You have to frame the rest of your messaging for conversion. Thankfully, there are proven frameworks from decades of direct response copywriting experience to draw upon. And there is ChatGPT to make all of this easily accessible.

Here is an example of how you might generate scripts for your UGCs. As with all things AI-driven, you'll still need to edit and tweak these - but these frameworks always provide great starting points for UGC scripts.

please give me a script for a ugc ad for an app for kids aged 4 to 8 that helps them read while making learning fun. please pick 3 different copywriting frameworks - and make 3 different scripts accordingly.

1. Problem-Agitate-Solve Framework:

Attention: [Opening shot of a parent struggling to get their child to read]
Voiceover: Is your child struggling with reading?

Interest: [Child looks bored and disinterested while holding a book]
Voiceover: Do they find it boring and unengaging?

Desire: [Child picks up a tablet with the app open and starts smiling and laughing while reading]
Voiceover: Our app is designed to make learning to read fun and interactive for kids. With engaging games and stories, your child will be excited to read and learn.

Action: [Call to action with app name and download instructions]
Voiceover: Download our app now and watch your child's love for reading grow!

2. Before-After-Bridge Framework:

Attention: [Opening shot of a child looking bored and frustrated while reading]
Voiceover: Does your child struggle with reading and find it boring?

Interest: [Child puts down book and starts playing with a toy]
Voiceover: What if there was a way to make learning to read fun and exciting for kids?

Desire: [Child picks up a tablet with the app open and starts smiling and laughing while reading]
Voiceover: With our app, your child can improve their reading skills while having fun. Our interactive games and stories will transform reading from a chore to a joy.

Action: [Call to action with app name and download instructions]
Voiceover: Download our app now and start your child's journey towards becoming a confident reader.

3. AIDA Framework:

Attention: [Opening shot of a child looking bored while holding a book]
Voiceover: Is your child struggling with reading and finding it unengaging?

Interest: [Child puts down book and starts playing with a toy]
Voiceover: What if there was a way to make learning to read fun and interactive for kids?

Desire: [Child picks up a tablet with the app open and starts smiling and laughing while reading]
Voiceover: With our app, your child will not only learn to read, but they will enjoy doing it! Our app is designed to engage and excite young minds with interactive games and stories.

Action: [Call to action with app name and download instructions]
Voiceover: Download our app now and help your child develop a love for reading!

While these scripts may not be in a ready-to-shoot form, these provide great starting points for you to refine and fine tune your final scripts.

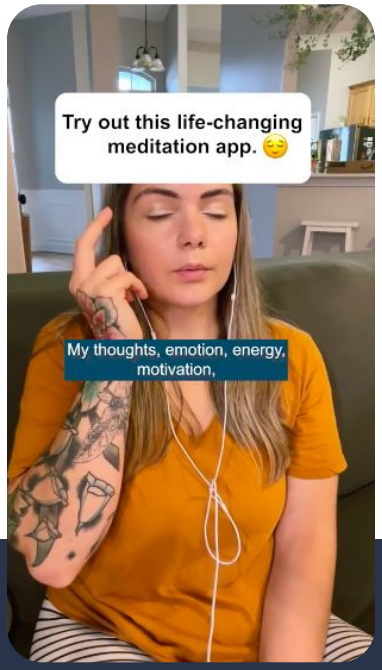
CHAPTER 4:
CRAFTING ITERATIONS FOR UGC

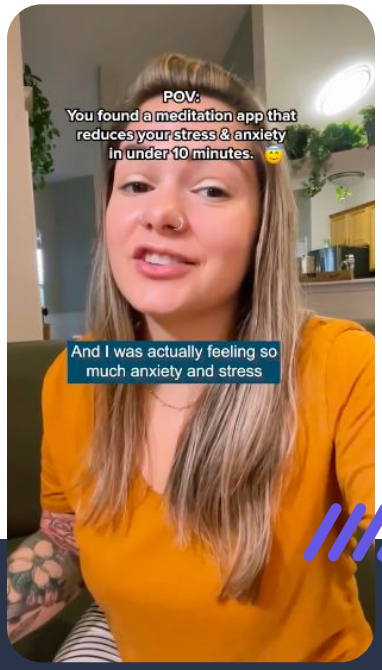
It's often far better (and easier) to improve on what is working than to make a completely new creative, so we do think a lot about making iterations for UGCs.

These are some of the iterations we generally test for UGCs:

1 Messaging

Test different messaging/hooks in the form of text overlays, user comments, questions, etc.





2 Background colors

Test different background colors in the overlay text.

3 Duration

Test different duration for the videos such as: 10 sec, 15 sec, 30 sec and so on.

4 Music

Test different background music.

5 Voice over

Test AI generated text-to-speech voice vs. Original creator's voice vs. No voice over.
Click here to check out our sample files we have for your reference.

AI VO (Sample).mp3

Original VO (Sample).mp3

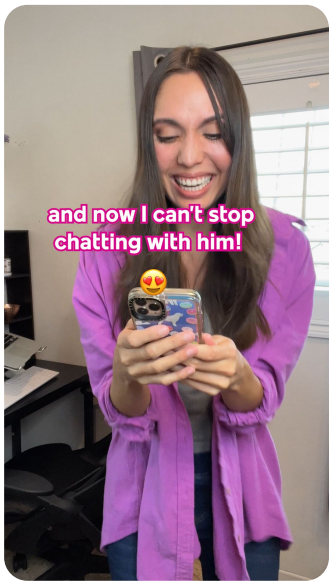
6 Animation

Use transitional effects, stickers, animations, etc.

7 Scenes

Test the scenes in a different order or show the creator in a different setting (we ask our creators to send multiple takes so we can reuse those in our iterations).

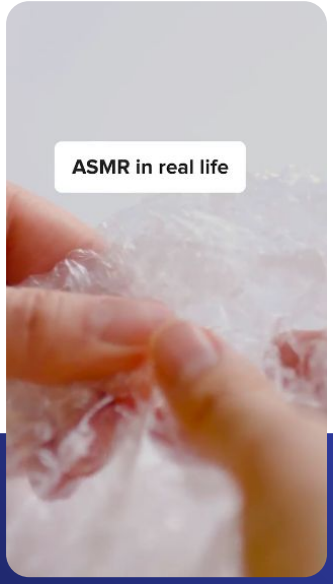
Merge and combine videos of a similar concept from different creators.



8 Different visual hooks

You can replace and test different visual hooks - to test different imagery showing other visual props or satisfying footage.

By using some of these ideas in your next creative iteration, you can test multiple creative iterations for your UGC and optimize your marketing campaigns for maximum engagement and conversions



And yes: our friend ChatGPT can be of assistance here too.

take the above script. give me 5 alternative hooks for the 'attention' phase while keeping script content for interest, desire and action the same.

Sure, here are five alternative hooks for the attention phase of the script:

1. [Opening shot of a child running around in circles]
   Voiceover: Is your child easily distracted?
2. [Opening shot of a child playing video games]
   Voiceover: Are you tired of your child spending hours on mindless games?
3. [Opening shot of a child scrolling through social media]
   Voiceover: Is your child spending too much time on their phone without learning anything new?
4. [Opening shot of a child staring blankly at a wall]
   Voiceover: Are you struggling to find ways to engage your child's mind?
5. [Opening shot of a child looking frustrated while holding a book]
   Voiceover: Do you feel like you're fighting an uphill battle trying to get your child to read?

for the above script, give me 5 visual props that we could show in the ad during the hook in the attention phase of the script.

Sure, here are 5 visual props that could be used in the ad during the attention phase of the script:

1. A stack of books on a shelf that are untouched, with a child's hand reaching out to touch one
2. A bored child sitting in front of a book, looking at the camera with a frown
3. A parent trying to coax a child to read by offering a reward, while the child looks uninterested
4. A child playing on a tablet or phone, while a book sits untouched next to them
5. A child holding a book upside down or struggling to read the words, while looking frustrated or bored

These visual props could help to emphasize the problem of getting children to engage with reading and capture the attention of the viewer.

And guess what?

You can feed these into a tool like Midjourney to get visual inspiration that you can send to your creators.

CHAPTER 5:
UGC SAFE ZONES

Although we discussed many ideas for hooks and overlay placements, it is crucial to ensure that the logo, overlays or other such crucial elements are within the safe zone designated by the advertising platforms (both TikTok and Instagram have different guidelines for the safe zones). Anything that appears out of the safe zone might be covered or cropped.

What Are Safe Zones?

'Safe zones' are specific sections within a video that should not overlap with any user interface (UI) elements of the platform. These UI elements can include organic calls-to-action (CTAs) such as like, comment, and share buttons, account handles, captions, and more.

To prevent content from straying outside the safe spaces, we recommend following these best practices during the strategy and design phase:

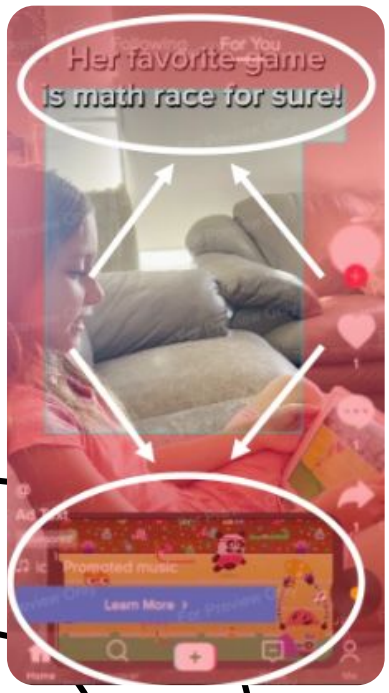
Strategy: While creating the concept brief, make sure that you consider the size and placement of the text and any other elements that may overlap with it. This will help you avoid potential issues before you even start creating the video.

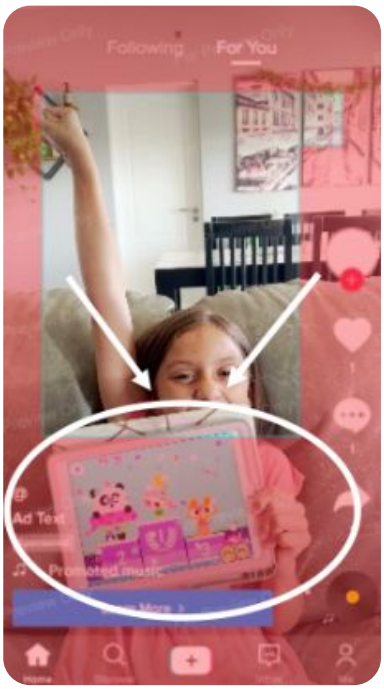
Design: Choose an appropriate font size for your text so that it fits within the safe zone. If your font size is too large, it may overlap with other elements on the screen. Consider adjusting the font size and any additional elements to ensure you are within the safe zone.

Some of the other points to consider:

- The safe zone size may vary based on the dimensions of the video and the length of the caption. We recommend using 1080x1920 for optimal delivery of the ad placements.
- Ensure that the video is in high resolution, and is not stretched or compressed.

Here is an example of the content that falls outside of the safe zone on TikTok:





Free-to-use Safe Zone Templates

You can use these free downloadable templates here to help serve as a guide for the placement of text and other crucial elements within your video. Here are three easy steps to follow:

- Import your preferred template for TikTok, Instagram Story or Reel.
- Scale it to 1080x1920.
- Position the text within the safe zones.

And voila! You're all set.

Instagram Story
Dimensions

Instagram Reel
Dimensions

TikTok
Dimensions

CHAPTER 6:
PLANNING AND DIRECTING A REMOTE SHOOT

You don't need elaborate sets or camera crews to shoot a great UGC video - we've developed a playbook to execute remote shoots smoothly and seamlessly.

Here are some steps to follow when planning and guiding creators for a remote shoot - we've categorized this into 3 phases - pre-shoot, shoot and post-shoot:

A | PRE-SHOOT PLANNING

1 Select The Location

Pick and be clear about the location for the shoot - this could be a natural setting (in their living room, kitchen, outdoor, etc.), or with a virtual background.

2 Plan The Shot List

Create a shot list detailing the camera angles, shots, and compositions needed for each scene. This will help you stay organized and focused during the shoot. We cover this aspect in the content brief so everyone involved during the shoot is aware of the requirements.

3 Pick The Right Creator(s)

Often having a creator with good camera presence coupled with a great script can easily create a winning video. Sometimes though, having two actors in one UGC video also works very well, especially when you can use their contrasting personas to drive home the point of the ad.

If you work with two creators, here are a few elements to consider.

- Distribute screen time between the actors. For instance, one actor acts out the hook / pain point – which is about 10-15% of the video – while the other actor performs the remaining part of the video (process, solution, walkthrough, payoffs etc).
- Bear in mind: **your creators do NOT have to be in the same physical space.** They can shoot asynchronously - and you can use post-production edits to stitch their footage together into one video.
- **Sometimes the same actor can play both the roles.** This generally has a humorous effect, especially if the dialogue goes back-and-forth between the roles. This is definitely a very effective trend on platforms like TikTok. However, it does require some proficient acting and intelligent editing.
- **Balance your actors' energy**. If you have more than one actor, ensure that they complement each other well, even if they're never in the same frame. You certainly don't want a pleasant, composed actor following a high-energy, aggressive actor, however good they both might be!
- You can also send your script to both and have them act out both parts. Then you can immediately create two video variants to test – one video with one actor in the first part and the other actor in the second, and another video with the actors reversing roles.

4 Recruit Creators

If you're working with influencers, you can directly approach them via their social channels or via their agents, or using aggregator marketplaces like GRIN or Modash. Since influencers are already very experienced in creating content, you don't have to worry about the quality and production value of your UGC. The challenge is that you have very little control over the final output – as influencers typically want creative freedom and license to shoot as they want to.

This is why we generally use micro-influencers, actors, or creators which allows us for more creative and editorial control. The outreach is mostly done via email, except when we do this via self-contained platforms like Billo.

One of the ways we find new creators is by putting out a casting call on a site like Backstage and tailoring the creative brief to find the exact actor required for a particular script. You can reference and use our free templates for initial outreach communication.

5 Conduct A Look Test

Some concepts may require the creators to look or dress up a certain way. In this case, to avoid any possible confusion or delays, ensure that you conduct a look test by asking for photos or video clips before their shoots.

6 Get Agreements In Place

Understand the legal and ethical considerations of shooting UGC videos, including obtaining consent and respecting participants' privacy and rights. We send a Talent Release Agreement (TRA) to our creators when they confirm to work with us. Check out our free Sample Talent Release Agreement.

7 Prepare Your Brief

Make sure your brief includes housekeeping items like budget, orientation, green screen needs, and reference videos in the script brief. You can use our template here for reference to simplify the process.

Further, break down the script into shots with details on B-roll shots, camera angles, and actor instructions, and include cues to emote or emphasize. We also include our creative best practices for shooting in the brief, that helps ensure a quality output and minimal back and forth with the creators.

Here are a few key considerations for your brief:

Ensure the script flows smoothly

Before sending the script to the user, read it aloud yourself. Does it sound like someone speaking naturally? Or does it sound like writing being read aloud?

When you're speaking aloud, time yourself. It's unhelpful — both to yourself and to your subject — and also very common to write something that appears brief, but actually takes longer to read than the desired duration of your video.

Ensure instructions are clear to creators.

To eliminate as much of the unexpected as possible, **give clear directions** in the script. Do you want the actor to point or wave or just gesture to your product on screen? Should the product be to their left or right or in front? If your script requires them to move out of the frame, should they exit left or right?

Make sure the brief contains enough cues for clarity. For example, if you want them to stress on a word, keep it IN ALL CAPS, or make it bold or something similar. Also, ensure that in the directions for the script, you mention that the user emotes on emotive words, like "boring" or "stressed" or "amazing", etc.

Have clear CTAs

There has to be some form of call to action, because at the end of the day you're creating a direct response ad.

This CTA can be of multiple types:

- A line of dialogue. For example, "I'll put a link in the description below".
- A text overlay while the actor is speaking towards the end of the video.
- A regular CTA button or app store buttons in the end card.

But remember, this is supposed to look like a video created by a user. So it's important to ensure that the CTA isn't pushy. For example, try to avoid slapping a CTA text overlay that persists throughout the video – or an actor speaking in a way that comes across as pushy, sales-y or disingenuous.

B | DURING THE SHOOT

Great so you've planned your shoot, recruited creators - and are ready to roll. For the actual shoot, here are a few considerations to keep in mind that are helpful to communicate to your creators.

1 Logistical Guidelines

- Ensure that video is shot with a current smartphone and at least 1080p resolution. Pretty much all mid- to high-end smartphones manufactured in the last 3-4 years can shoot at 1080p. Not only will shooting at this resolution give you sharper, non-grainy footage, it will also give you more options to play with later during the editing process, in case the footage needs to be cropped or zoomed into.

- Decide whether to **shoot selfie-style or via a friend**: Based on the desired video, the creator may at times need a friend to shoot the video – and you may need to specify this for them.

- Ensure that the video is shot in portrait orientation. Most platforms on which UGC ads are the most common – like TikTok, Facebook and Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts – use the 9:16 aspect ratio, i.e., portrait mode. Moreover, should you want to use the same video in other formats, like Instagram posts for instance, editing the portrait video into a square format will be a breeze.
  Note: If you're planning to publish the video on YouTube as a regular video and not YT Shorts, use landscape orientation.

- Ensure that multiple clips are shot. This is the current trend, where **different clips for different lines of dialogue are used instead of a single continuous shot**. The actor can shoot the entire video in multiple clips, and this can be stitched together in post production.

2 Devices

This might seem obvious, but if you're planning on creating a UGC commercial with a walkthrough of an app, remember to specify the device that will be seen. Also remember, not all users may have exactly the device you want, so you may need to get a little picky here.

- Should it be a phone, tablet, laptop or desktop? iOS/MacOS or Windows/Android or others?
- Should it be an iPhone or an Android phone?
- For iPhones, would you prefer a specific generation or iOS version?
- For Android phones, would you prefer the brand of the phone to be visible or not? If yes, what phone sizes would you prefer and what is the Android version you want?

Tip: If you need an Android device to be shown, you might find that not a lot of creators might have the model you need - in these cases, given that Android devices aren't that expensive, it's sometimes easiest to order a device online to be sent to them.

3 Lighting

This might seem obvious, but if you're planning on creating a UGC commercial with a walkthrough of an app, remember to specify the device that will be seen. Also remember, not all users may have exactly the device you want, so you may need to get a little picky here.

- **Front:** The subject has to **face the primary light source**. So, if the shoot is indoors, the light has to be behind the camera. For outdoor shoots, the subject must face towards the sun. The light shouldn't be harsh and directed straight on the face.
- **Back:** There must be **no light source behind the subject**, i.e., facing the camera. If there is, the camera will try to adjust the overall frame, and the subject will become too dark. If you still manually focus the camera on the subject, then the light will wash out the entire background. For indoor shoots, ensure that no lamps or bulbs are behind the subject. For outdoor shoots, the subject should position themselves in such a way that the bright sky isn't visible behind them, and even if it is, it should be minimally visible.
- Often, a light behind the subject can add to the overall composition of the shot, but as a thumb rule, it should be soft, diffused (if possible) and dimmer than the primary light source.
- If a screen (desktop, laptop, TV, tablet, etc) is a must behind the subject — its brightness must be dimmed.

4 Device Screens

- **Keep the brightness of the screen being recorded at low or medium.** Otherwise as before, the camera lens will focus on the bright screen and darken everything else in the frame. In that case, the screen will be mostly white with the onscreen content barely visible. An easy way to work around this is to look at the screen of the phone that is recording, choose the part of the screen that is being shot that has medium brightness and focus on that.
- **Ensure that the phone screen is clearly visible.** This might seem obvious, but you'd be surprised at the number of UGC videos we've worked on where the screen was either tilted too far away from the camera, or sometimes not even in the frame properly! It is best to sit down while doing this — on a couch, chair or table — so that the hand is stable and keeps the screen in the shot.
- Ensure that the phone doing the recording isn't reflected in the screen being recorded. An easy way to do this is to turn off the second screen, look at the reflection of the recording phone and move it away so that it's no longer visible.
- Sometimes, you may see stripes on the screen when you see it through the recording phone. There are usually two ways to fix this: **change the shutter speed and move slightly away or closer to the screen.**

5 Getting Stable, Clear Footage

Unstable, shaky footage is the bane of video editors everywhere. The post processing involved in reducing shaky footage is tedious, and a couple of basic things can help make everyone's lives easier:

- Many of current gen phones, including the last couple of iPhone variants, have image stabilization, so even if the phone is held in the hand, the footage doesn't shake so much that it becomes unusable. If your phone doesn't have that, then ensure use of a tripod. Simple. Propping the recording phone against something may also work, but there's always the danger of it slipping and getting damaged.
- Again, remember to have bright light. Inadequate light nearly always results in shaky and grainy footage.

6 Sound

Getting perfect, movie quality audio while shooting with a smartphone is nearly impossible. But we can come close by keeping the following points in mind:

- **No background noise.** Before shooting, the creator should check their surroundings to ensure they are in a quiet spot. So no cars passing by, no dogs barking, no background chatter, no noisy air conditioners/heaters or music.
- **The creator should not be in an empty room**, otherwise there will be reverb in the dialogue sound. Having enough furniture or a carpet around muffles the reverb and makes the sound natural.
- During the shoot, the phone should be on flight mode or at least on silent without vibration. This will ensure that the video being shot is uninterrupted.

7 The Frame

Creators are, well, creative people, and not necessarily as aware of the business context as marketers are. So it is important that you describe the desired frame properly for them. The frame includes everything that can be seen, i.e., the actor, the background, and all items and elements that are visible.

- **Be specific about the background.** For instance, a housekeeping service can have a messy room, a laundry delivery service can have piles of dirty laundry lying around, etc.
- Is it alright to have pets or household appliances visible in the frame?
- Specify if other brands being visible is acceptable. For instance, a hot beverage company might be fine with a Gucci bag in the background, but not with a Starbucks cup. Or a brand focusing on budget items might not want a 65 inch luxury TV to be visible!

8 While Recording Footage

- **The actor *must* look into the camera when speaking.** This is again easier said than done. Thanks to the innumerable video calls we make these days, I'm sure you know that we tend to look at ourselves on the screen when we speak, and not at the camera. This is a non-issue for users who are experienced and comfortable with shooting videos, but in case you find someone inexperienced, you may have to go through a few takes with them until you get what you need.
- Many creators tend to keep the script written somewhere on the screen or just behind the camera, similar to a teleprompter. Unless the user is a really good actor, this usually makes it very obvious that the subject is reading and not speaking. So, the best thing to do is to **get them to memorize the script before shooting**.
- Encourage the creator to move their hands and their heads. It makes the performance natural.

C | POST-PRODUCTION

The shoot is done - and now it's time for your designers to work their magic. Here are the key stages of the post-production process - and key considerations to nail it.

1 Review

Once the actor has sent their footage in, review it immediately. You may find reasons to request for a reshoot then and there – a video might be grainy, or a line of dialogue wasn't spoken properly, their device's screen wasn't clearly visible, audio was muffled, and so on and so forth.

2 Prep Designers' Briefs

Depending on the kind of video editors you work with, you can either simply send the designers/video editors your original creative brief and the footage - and they can create the UGC ad on their own.

However, on the whole, we advise that you **create a separate brief for your video editors/ designers**. Prepare a storyboard for your video, explain which shot should go after which, what treatment you'd like to be given to each shot, whether you'd like abrupt cuts or zoom and pans, what kind of background music you want (in case you hadn't already decided at the creative brief stage), and the like.

3 Consider Quick Cuts

This is a trend that works well for UGC videos that are intended to be humorous or energetic. This is as simple as cutting every line of dialogue into multiple clips and stitching them together in post-production. But most importantly, **the cuts must seem abrupt and obvious** (but don't cut off the actor while they're still talking)!

Even if an actor sends in their footage as a single clip in a single take, try to cut out their lines of dialogue in different clips. Then zoom in on one, tilt another, keep another as is and mix and match until they all look like they're from different takes.

Another easy way is to ask actors to send in multiple takes of their dialogues. Often, you'll find that their delivery of a particular line is good in one take, but the next line isn't as good as it is in a different take. This automatically leads to stitching different shots together, leading to multiple cuts.

4 Background music

Background music is essential for UGC ads, especially on platforms like TikTok. It definitely helps to have some form of a music track running unobtrusively underneath the dialogue, especially if you have a few seconds here and there when there is no dialogue. In such cases, the music can help mask the space between actions or dialogue.

There are broadly a few kinds of music you can use.

- **Royalty-free music available for commercial use**. This is available on platforms like TikTok (using their commercial music library) and Instagram (Stories, music sticker).
- **Stock music**. You can get stock music from multiple platforms like Envato or Epidemic Sound, but remember, they do tend to be easily identifiable as stock music. Keep the volume low and don't let it overshadow the dialogue.
- **Copyrighted songs by artists**. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram Stories are filled with videos that have easily recognizable tracks by musicians and artists. You'll mostly be alright if you **source them from the platform's library of music intended for commercial purposes**, but if you want to use anything outside of those, be sure to obtain the necessary copyrights and permissions.

5 End with a high

You know how a lot of game ads end with a 'fail' state? That might be great for comic relief in game ads, but when we're making UGC ads we always see that the strongest creatives end on a high note.

This could be the actor achieving their desired outcome, or experiencing an emotional high point. Some folks we know describe this as the 'win state' or 'I did it' experience. Since this typically follows an app walkthrough, this can be very effective in showcasing how using the app led to the high or 'win state' – and thus prompting an install and engagement. Make sure the 'high' is reinforced by music and by an end card.

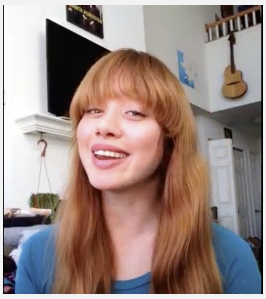
🎁 Bonus Content #1: Free UGC Best Practices

🔍

Please ensure there's **adequate lighting**.

Please face the light, and please ensure there's no light behind you. `

Do's (examples)



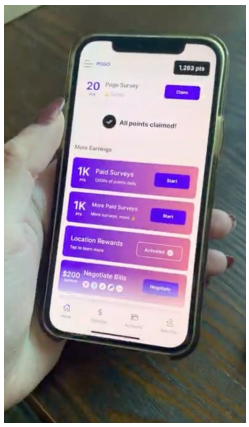
Link

Don'ts (examples)

🚕

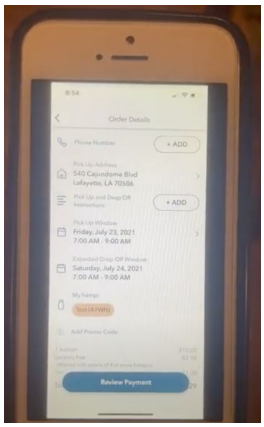
For shooting phone screens, Please ensure the **phone screen is clearly visible.**

Do's (examples)



Link

Don'ts (examples)



Please ensure the **camera is stable** (not shaking).

Not applicable for handheld selfie-style videos.

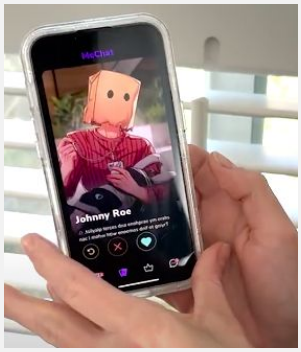
Do's (examples)

Link

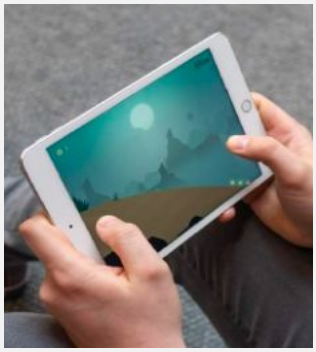
Don'ts (examples)

Please **don't use an iPad or Tablet unless specified.**

Do's (examples)



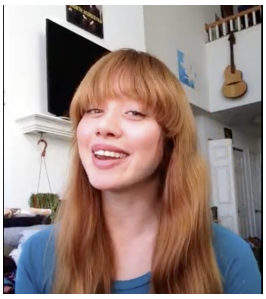
Don'ts (examples)



Please shoot in high-resolution, at least 1080p.

Quality matters! We cannot use grainy videos.

Do's (examples)

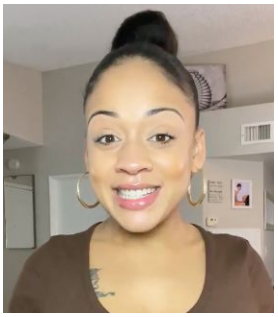


Link

Don'ts (examples)

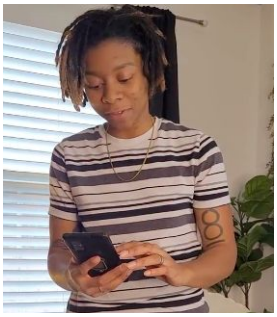
Please ensure the video doesn't look staged/scripted, and that you maintain eye contact with the camera. It should not appear as if you are reading from a paper or a screen in front.

Do's (examples)



Link

Don'ts (examples)



Link

It's ok to shoot a video in multiple short clips (especially if you have different settings/scenes). Our team can edit and put these together. It is not essential to shoot your video as one unbroken segment.

Do's (examples)

Link

🎁 Bonus Content #2: Free UGC Brief Template

Video title: UGC - <CLIENT NAME> - <CONCEPT> - <DATE>

Budget for this project:
$XXX

Project deadline:
mm/dd/yyyy

About the video:
The video is for our client <NAME> <add a brief description>. You can find the app on the App Store or Play Store <add links>

The video you will shoot will be an ad for the apps and will be used on Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and other platforms. The video is to be shot on a good quality smartphone.

Some points before you get started:

- Please shoot videos in PORTRAIT format.
  Note: You can just send us the raw video files, there is no need for you to edit any of them).
- Video is expected to be between 20 and 30 seconds - and completing the shoot is likely to take no longer than a few minutes.
- Please make sure there is minimal background noise or loud sounds around you.
- If you have multiple takes, please feel free to share them all. We'll take care of selecting the best shots during editing.
- Please feel free to record lines in separate clips. We will combine them together during editing.
- We will review the footage once received, and may request reshoots in case the output quality is not good. Please have a look at some best practices and guidelines to avoid this.
- We encourage you to download and use the app beforehand to help the video.

Sharing the videos:
Please upload videos to Google Drive in a single folder. You can also share via file transfer websites like WeTransfer, if that's convenient for you.

Please try to give meaningful file names, for example - BRoll-1.mp4, Shot1-Line1.mp4, Shot3-Line4.mp4, etc.

Payment:
We will process payment at the end of each month. In case you have worked with us on more than one project in the month, we will process all payments together.

SCRIPT

B-Roll 1

Please take 3-4 different shots of you doing .....

Please shoot these in at least 2 different locations, with different camera angles. Please feel free to use any (unbranded) prop you like if they help you express these emotions.

Shot 1

Please shoot the following lines while .....

Dialogue

LINE 1: .....

Shot 2

Please shoot the following lines while .....

Dialogue

LINE 2: .....

LINE 3: .....

Shot 3

Please shoot the following lines while .....

Dialogue

LINE 4: .....

LINE 5: .....

LINE 6: .....

Shot 4

Please shoot the following lines while .....

Dialogue

LINE 7: .....

LINE 8: .....

🎁 Bonus Content #3: Free UGC Brief Template for Creator Outreach

Cold Outreach Email To Creators

Hi <FIRST NAME>,

I am XYZ from ABC company. We are a <type of company>, and we design ad creatives for some of the fastest-growing mobile games and apps out there today.

You have some great content on <NAME OF THE SOCIAL PLATFORM(S)>, and we would love to explore an opportunity to collaborate with you.

We have frequent requirements for multiple short videos featuring live creators/influencers for our clients. These are typically short shoot-at-home videos that can be made in a few minutes via a smartphone, and we do not expect you to promote these on your socials (we will use these on our socials).

Please let us know if you are interested, and we can acquaint you with the next steps.

<YOUR SIGN-OFF>

First Contact Via DM With Creators Who Apply To Your Casting Call

Hi <FIRST NAME>,

Thank you for expressing interest in our production. <IF THE ACTOR CUSTOMIZES THEIR APPLICATION TO YOUR CASTING CALL, ADD A LINE HERE REFERRING TO IT. IGNORE OTHERWISE.>

The video will be a UGC-style video for <NAME + ONE-LINE DESCRIPTION OF YOUR APP>. You can find them on the App Store and Google Play Store.

The footage for this video needs to be taken with a camera phone by a friend or using a tripod.

We are looking for a natural video that has a candid, unscripted look like you see on Instagram or TikTok. The entire shoot should take no more than a few minutes of your time. You do not have to edit the video or promote on your socials.

If you're interested in producing this video, please send your confirmation to <YOUR EMAIL> by <DATE – PREFERABLY 2-3 DAYS LATER>. The earlier the better!

Once we receive your confirmation, we will send you additional details on producing the video.

Please note: We produce UGC ads on a regular basis. Please consider this as a (compensated) audition for future projects.

Thank you!

<YOUR SIGN-OFF>

Email With Brief

Hi <FIRST NAME>,

Thank you for reaching out to us, and for your interest in our production.

We're looking to produce a UGC-style video for <NAME + URL + ONE-LINE DESCRIPTION OF YOUR APP>. You can find them on the App Store <ADD URL> and Google Play Store <ADD URL>.

Here is the brief for the video <ADD THE LINK TO YOUR SCRIPT BRIEF DOCUMENT>. All the necessary details – including budget, script, guidelines, etc – are included in the linked document.

The video requires very little preparation and only your smartphone, and the shoot should take no more than a few minutes. Also, please note that you won't have to edit the videos or promote them in any way.

Timeline: we would like to get the raw footage for the videos by <DATE – PREFERABLY ALLOWING AT LEAST 4-5 DAYS TO SHOOT>. The earlier the better, of course!

Can you please confirm if the above details, i.e., budget, timeline, etc, work for you?

Please let me know if you have any questions – I'll be happy to clarify.

<YOUR SIGN-OFF>

Negotiation Email (If Creators Ask To Revise Compensation)

Hi <FIRST NAME>,

Thank you for sharing what you're looking for.

I understand that there is a gap with your expected compensation, and I did want to underscore that:

- 💎 The video is expected to be brief and will only take you a few minutes to prepare and shoot.
- 💻 You don't have to edit it yourself – simply send us the footage and we will do the rest.
- 🎯 We do not expect for you to promote the video on your socials.
- ⏳ We expect to have multiple ongoing projects after this one.

Given the above, our experience has been that our compensation is in line with the time and effort involved in a project like this. Please let me know if you have any flexibility on your expected fees, especially since we are keen on longer term ongoing partnerships.

However, if the current compensation is really challenging, I can discuss with our team to see if there is any wiggle room.

<YOUR SIGN-OFF>

Conclusion Email

Hi <FIRST NAME>,

Thank you very much for sharing the footage! It looks great, and we've added it to our production pipeline.

Here are the next steps per our process – we need a couple of things:

- Talent Release Agreement (TRA)

  As an overview, this is essentially a document with which you give us permission to use your footage on socials and other platforms. Please visit this link <ADD TRA FORM LINK - Sample Talent Release Agreement> to sign the TRA.

- PayPal details

  Please share your PayPal details so we can transfer the payment. Please note that we process payment for all our creators at the end of each month.

<YOUR SIGN-OFF>

CONCLUSION

Whether you're just starting to incorporate UGC into your marketing strategy or looking to optimize your existing campaigns, we hope this book will provide valuable insights and best practices for success.

Want to read more playbooks like this from the cutting edge of creative and performance marketing for mobile? Check out our playbooks section here: rocketshiphq.com/playbooks.

If you have any questions or if you're interested in engaging us to produce high-performance creative for your own games and apps, reach out to us at hi@rocketshiphq.com.
Also check out details of how we work:

- UGC Production
- Ad Creative Production

Tune in to our podcast, the Mobile User Acquisition Show. Each episode features strategies, tips and pointers from the leading edge of mobile user acquisition that help you unlock tremendous growth for mobile apps in a sustainable and capital-efficient manner.

Want us to manage your user acquisition execution to unlock profitability, ROAS and scale?

Check out our services for:

- Gaming User Acquisition
- Subscription Apps User Acquisition

You might also want to check out The Daily Ad, our weekly newsletter full of creative inspiration based on the best ads on the internet.

If you're spending over $20k a month, you may be eligible for free UGC creative courtesy our friends at TikTok (as we're a TikTok Creative Exchange partner - and they pay us to produce UGC creative for select advertisers, so you get creatives for free). If you're interested, send a note to hi@rocketshiphq.com and we'll acquaint you with the process of getting you into the program.