

YouTube SEO Deep Dive — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a working system for your own channel. You will baseline your Analytics, build a scored keyword backlog, package real videos, and stand up a weekly optimisation routine. Work through one section per module, then keep the templates open as living documents you update every week.

How YouTube Search and Suggested Actually Work

Establish where your views come from today and set the one metric every future change will be judged against.

Worksheet: Channel baseline snapshot

Open YouTube Studio, set the date range to the last 28 days, and record each figure exactly as shown. This is the line you are trying to beat.

Channel name

Date range used (start to end)

Channel average CTR (%)

Average view duration (mm:ss)

Average percentage viewed (%)

Average views per video, first 28 days

Largest traffic source (search / suggested / browse / external)

Second-largest traffic source

Current subscriber count

Exercise: Diagnose your weakest lever

Using your baseline numbers, work through the prompts to decide whether packaging or content is your bigger problem right now.

- Is your CTR below 4 percent, between 4 and 6, or above 6? What does that say about your thumbnails and titles?

- Is your average percentage viewed below 30, between 30 and 50, or above 50? What does that say about your hook and pacing?
-
- If both are low, why does the course recommend fixing packaging first?
-
- Write one sentence naming the single lever you will focus on this quarter and why.
-

Checklist: Goal-setting before you optimise

- [] Chosen one north-star metric (recommended: average views per video in first 28 days)
- [] Recorded all four baseline numbers in the worksheet above
- [] Written a specific 90-day target (e.g. CTR from 4% to 6%)
- [] Identified your current largest and smallest traffic sources
- [] Decided which single lever (packaging or retention) you will prioritise

Keyword and Topic Research That Finds Demand

Build a scored backlog of winnable video topics from autosuggest, the paid tools, and competitor outliers.

Exercise: Mine ten keywords from autosuggest

Pick one seed topic for your channel. Use only YouTube's search bar and Google Trends to complete the prompts before opening any paid tool.

- Type your seed phrase into YouTube search and list the first eight autosuggest results.
-
- Add a letter to the seed (seed a, seed b, seed c) and capture five more long-tail phrases.
-
- Filter Google Trends to YouTube search for your top three phrases — which are rising and which are fading?
-
- Circle the three phrases that best match what your channel can credibly deliver.
-

Worksheet: Search intent classifier

For each candidate keyword, fill in the intent and the format it demands. A format mismatch will sink retention regardless of SEO.

Keyword phrase

Intent (how-to / comparison / review / entertainment)

Best format for that intent

Top-3 results: average view count

Top-3 results: average age (months)

Top-3 results: thumbnail quality (weak / ok / strong)

Winnable? (yes / no / maybe)

Checklist: Keyword research is complete when

- Collected at least 20 candidate keywords from autosuggest and tools
- Recorded estimated volume and competition for each (TubeBuddy or VidIQ)
- Checked the live results page for the top three keywords
- Audited at least five competitor channels for outlier videos
- Assigned a high / medium / low priority to every candidate
- Selected the first three videos to film from the high-priority, winnable set

Packaging: Titles, Thumbnails, and Metadata

Package a real upload end to end — title variants, a thumbnail that passes the squint test, and complete metadata.

Exercise: Write five title variants

Choose one video from your backlog. Using the title formulas from the course, draft five variants and pick a winner.

- Write your front-loaded keyword phrase exactly as a viewer would search it.
- Draft five titles using different formulas (how-to, number list, result-in-timeframe, why-belief-is-wrong, for-beginners).
- Check each is under 60 characters for the important words; mark any that get truncated.
- Pick the strongest and note whether you will A/B test it with YouTube title experiments.

Worksheet: Thumbnail design brief and squint test

Plan the thumbnail before you design it, then verify it shrinks well. Fill in the result after the squint test.

Video title

One idea the thumbnail must communicate

Main subject (face / object / scene)

Background colour and contrast plan

On-screen text (max 3 words)

Emotion shown (if a face)

Exported at 1280x720, under 2MB? (yes / no)

Squint test passed at phone size? (yes / no)

Tool used (Canva / Photopea / Photoshop / other)

Checklist: Upload metadata pre-flight

- Keyword phrase appears naturally in the first two lines of the description
- Description includes a clear summary, timestamps, and relevant links
- Chapters added: first timestamp is 0:00, three or more, each 10+ seconds
- Chapter labels are descriptive and searchable, not 'Part 2'
- 5 to 15 relevant tags plus a couple of common misspellings
- 1 to 3 precise hashtags in the description
- Category, language, and captions/transcript set correctly
- Thumbnail and title complement each other rather than repeat

Retention, Session Watch Time, and Reading Analytics

Read your retention graph, route viewers onward, and lock in a weekly routine that compounds growth.

Exercise: Read one retention graph

Open the Engagement tab for one published video and study its audience retention curve, then answer the prompts.

- Describe the shape of your first 30 seconds — cliff, gentle slope, or flat? What does that imply about your hook?

- Find the biggest mid-video dip and note its timestamp — what was happening on screen there?

- Find any spike or plateau — what moment got re-watched or shared, and how could you do more of it?

- Write two concrete edits you will make in your next video to lift retention.

Worksheet: End-screen and next-video plan

Plan the onward journey for one finished video so it extends the viewing session instead of ending it.
Source video title

Most relevant next video to promote (not your newest)

Why this next video suits this specific viewer

End-screen elements used (video / playlist / subscribe)

Playlist this video belongs to

Pinned-comment next step

Suggested-from-this-video winner (check back later and record)

Exercise: Run your first thumbnail experiment

Pick one older video with high impressions but low CTR and run YouTube's Test and Compare feature.

- Which older video has high impressions but a below-average CTR?

- Design two alternative thumbnails that each lead with a different idea.

- Launch Test and Compare with all three and note the start date.

-
- After the test concludes, record the winning thumbnail and the CTR lift.
-

Checklist: Weekly optimisation routine (30 minutes)

- Reviewed impressions and CTR for the week's videos
- Reviewed average view duration and percentage viewed
- Checked traffic sources for any topic the algorithm is pushing
- Picked one old high-impression, low-CTR video and redesigned its thumbnail
- Updated titles or descriptions on one evergreen video to match current search terms
- Added or fixed chapters and end screens where missing
- Logged every change and its result in the optimisation log

Your Action Plan

1. Record your 28-day baseline (CTR, average view duration, percentage viewed, 28-day views) and write one 90-day target.
2. Build a backlog of 20 keyword candidates using autosuggest, TubeBuddy or VidIQ, and Google Trends.
3. Audit five competitor channels for outlier videos and add the best angles to your backlog.
4. Score every candidate by demand and winnability and pick your first three videos to film.
5. For each video, write five title variants and choose a winner before filming.
6. Design a thumbnail that passes the squint test at phone size and export it at 1280x720.
7. Complete the metadata pre-flight (description, chapters, tags, hashtags, captions) on every upload.
8. Add end screens and a pinned next-step, and place each video in a relevant playlist.
9. Run one Test and Compare thumbnail experiment on an older high-impression video.
10. Block 30 minutes weekly for the optimisation routine and log each change and its result.

