

Video Thumbnail Design & Channel Art — Workbook

This workbook translates every module of the course into hands-on exercises, structured worksheets, and actionable checklists you complete alongside your own YouTube channel. Work through each section after the corresponding module — by the end you will have audited your existing thumbnails, designed a locked template, and built a complete channel art suite ready to upload.

The Psychology of the Click

Apply eye-tracking theory, emotional triggers, and curiosity-gap formulas to your own content before designing a single pixel.

Exercise: The Squint Test Audit

Choose 10 of your existing thumbnails (or 10 thumbnails from your top three competitors if you are just starting out). For each one, set a 3-second timer and record only the **FIRST** thing your eye lands on. Then compare that to the video's actual topic.

- For each thumbnail, write down: (a) what your eye landed on first, (b) what the video is actually about, and (c) whether they match (yes/no).

- What is your current squint-test hit rate (number of matches / 10)? What does this tell you about your current thumbnail focal-point strategy?

- Pick the two lowest-scoring thumbnails. Sketch (or describe in writing) a revised version that moves the most important element into the top-left or center zone.

- Which one emotional trigger (surprise, happiness, concern, etc.) dominates your best-performing thumbnails? Is that intentional or accidental?

Worksheet: CTR Benchmark Tracker

Pull 90 days of YouTube Analytics data. For every video published in that period, record the following fields. Use this worksheet as the baseline before any thumbnail changes.

Video Title

Publish Date

72-Hour CTR (%)

Overall CTR (%)

Average View Duration (%)

Impressions (90 days)

Thumbnail Score (0-10, from rubric)

Re-thumbnail Priority (High / Medium / Low)

Checklist: Curiosity Gap Copy Checklist

- Write 3 thumbnail text variants using the Reveal formula ('I finally tried X') for your next video
- Write 3 variants using the Contrast formula ('[A] vs [B]') for the same video
- Test each variant against the clickbait check: does your video actually deliver the specific thing the text implies within the first 2 minutes?
- Remove any variant that fails the clickbait check before using it
- Select the single variant with the strongest curiosity gap and add it to your next A/B test queue
- Verify the chosen text is 5 words or fewer

Color, Contrast, and Typography Systems

Define and lock your brand color palette and type system so every thumbnail you design from this point forward reinforces channel recognition.

Exercise: Competitor Color Audit

Screenshot the top 20 YouTube search results for your primary keyword. Tile them in a grid (Canva collage, Google Slides, or printed). Analyze the color dominance across the grid.

- List the three most common background colors (use HEX codes if possible, or color names) in the competitor grid. These are the colors you should avoid as your primary.
- Identify the one color that appears in fewer than 3 of the 20 thumbnails. This is your differentiation color. Does it align with your niche's emotional tone (energy/trust/warmth/authority)?
- Use Colors.co to build a 5-color palette starting from your differentiation color. Write down each HEX code and assign it a role: Primary, Secondary, Accent, Light Neutral, Dark Neutral.
- Check each text-on-background combination using WebAIM's contrast checker. Record the contrast ratio for each combination. Which pairs pass 4.5:1?

Worksheet: Brand Color and Type System Card

Complete this card once and keep it pinned above your design workstation. Share it with anyone who creates thumbnails for your channel.

Primary Color — HEX Code

Primary Color — Role (e.g., headline background overlay)

Secondary Color — HEX Code

Secondary Color — Role

Accent/Pop Color — HEX Code

Accent Color — Role (e.g., text stroke, arrow, number callout)

Light Neutral — HEX Code

Dark Neutral — HEX Code

Display Font Name

Display Font Weight

Display Font Size (in 1280x720 canvas, in points)

Supporting Font Name

Supporting Font Weight

Supporting Font Size (in 1280x720 canvas, in points)

Text Stroke Color and Width

Text Drop Shadow Settings (angle, distance, opacity)

Checklist: Font and Color Lock Checklist

- [] Add all 5 brand HEX codes to Canva Brand Kit or Photoshop Swatch Library
- [] Download and install your display font to your local machine AND upload it to Canva as a Brand Font
- [] Download and install your supporting font to your local machine AND upload it to Canva as a Brand Font
- [] Create a 1280x720 'Color Reference' design in Canva showing all 5 colors as labeled swatches — save as PNG
- [] Test your type sizes at 210x118 zoom level in Canva (16% view) to confirm legibility
- [] Verify all text-on-background contrast ratios pass 4.5:1 using WebAIM checker — record results in Brand System Card

Building Your Thumbnail Template

Build, test, and document a locked thumbnail template and a repeatable batch production workflow.

Exercise: Template Build Sprint

Set a 90-minute timer. Build your complete 4-layer thumbnail template in Canva or Photoshop by following the layer structure from the course. At the end of the sprint, produce 3 sample thumbnails from the template using placeholder faces and headline copy.

- After the sprint, review the 3 sample thumbnails at 210x118 zoom. Does each pass the squint test (single focal point visible in 3 seconds)? Note what needs adjustment.

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- Score each sample thumbnail using the 10-point rubric from Module 4. What is the average score? What common issues appear across all 3?

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- List every layer in your completed template by name. Mark each one as LOCKED or EDITABLE. Does your locked list match the spec (background fill, graphic decorations, font styles) while keeping only image and

text content editable?

Worksheet: A/B Test Log

Use one row per A/B test. Record both variants' metrics at 72 hours post-publish. After 20 tests, sort by CTR lift to identify which design variables drive the most improvement on YOUR channel.

Video ID

Test Start Date

Variant A — Description (what design element)

Variant A — 72hr CTR (%)

Variant A — Average View Duration (%)

Variant B — Description

Variant B — 72hr CTR (%)

Variant B — Average View Duration (%)

Winner (A or B)

CTR Lift (Winner CTR minus Loser CTR)

Hypothesis (why you expected this variant to win)

Was Hypothesis Correct? (yes/no)

Key Learning

Checklist: Template and Batch Workflow Readiness Checklist

- Completed 4-layer template exists in Canva (saved as Template) or Photoshop (smart objects set up)
- All brand layers are locked — cannot be accidentally moved or recolored
- Template produces an export-ready 1280x720 PNG in under 10 minutes per video
- Naming schema defined and documented: [YYYY-MM-DD]_[series-code]_[video-number]_thumbnail.png
- Dedicated thumbnail storage folder created in Google Drive or Dropbox
- Photo shoot batch system scheduled: at least one 30-minute face-shot session this month
- Face photo library folder created with at least 10 background-removed subject photos ready to use
- First A/B test queued with a specific hypothesis written down before launch

Channel Art: Banner, Icon, and Brand Cohesion

Design and upload your complete channel art suite and establish a quarterly audit process to keep the brand sharp as your channel grows.

Exercise: Channel Art Safe Zone Design Exercise

Build your 2560x1440 channel banner in Canva. Before placing any content, add the three safe zone guide rectangles (2560x423 desktop, 1855x423 tablet, 1546x423 mobile) as semi-transparent overlays. Design all critical content within the 1546x423 mobile safe zone. Then view the banner preview at all three device sizes using Canva's Preview feature or YouTube Studio's banner preview.

- List the three pieces of information your banner communicates within the 1546x423 mobile safe zone. Are all three visible and readable in the YouTube Studio banner preview on mobile?

- Does your banner background color match or harmonize with your thumbnail primary color? If not, adjust it now and note what you changed.

- View your channel page as a logged-out user. Do the first 12 thumbnails in your grid look like a cohesive brand portfolio? Write down 2-3 specific things that are visually consistent and 1-2 things that are inconsistent.

Worksheet: Quarterly Channel Brand Audit

Complete this worksheet every 90 days. Pull current data from YouTube Analytics before filling it out.

Audit Date

Total Videos Audited

Top 5 Videos by CTR — Video Titles

Top 5 Videos by CTR — CTR Values (%)

Top 5 Videos — Common Design Element (face type, color, text placement)

Bottom 5 Videos by CTR — Video Titles

Bottom 5 Videos by CTR — CTR Values (%)

Bottom 5 Videos — Common Design Problem

Re-thumbnail Priority List (top 3 videos to update first)

Expected CTR Improvement per Re-thumbnail (%)

Channel Grid Cohesion Score (1-5, 5 = fully consistent)

Brand Element Updated This Quarter (font, color, template, icon, banner)

Next Audit Scheduled Date

Checklist: Complete Channel Art Launch Checklist

- Channel banner (2560x1440 PNG) designed with all critical content in the 1546x423 mobile safe zone
- Banner includes: niche/topic statement, one-line proof of credibility, upload schedule
- Banner uploaded in YouTube Studio under Customization > Branding > Banner Image
- Profile icon (800x800 PNG) passes the 50x50 pixel legibility test
- Profile icon uploaded in YouTube Studio under Customization > Branding > Profile Picture
- Video watermark (150x150 PNG with transparent background) designed at 60-70% opacity
- Watermark uploaded in YouTube Studio under Customization > Branding > Video Watermark
- Profile icon exported at correct sizes for all active social platforms (400x400 Instagram, 200x200 Twitter, 180x180 Facebook)
- All platform profile icons updated to match YouTube icon in a single session
- Brand Asset Kit folder created with: source files, all export sizes, HEX codes, font files
- Quarterly brand audit scheduled as a recurring calendar event every 90 days

Your Action Plan

1. Complete the Squint Test Audit on 10 existing thumbnails this week and record your baseline hit rate
2. Run the Competitor Color Audit for your primary keyword — screenshot 20 thumbnails, identify your differentiation color
3. Build your Brand Color and Type System Card with 5 HEX codes and 2 font selections, verify all contrast ratios
4. Add brand colors and fonts to Canva Brand Kit or Photoshop Swatch Library and lock them
5. Build your 4-layer thumbnail template in a 90-minute sprint, test it on 3 sample thumbnails
6. Schedule a 30-minute batch photo shoot to build a library of at least 10 background-removed face photos
7. Design and upload your channel banner using the three safe zone guide method
8. Design and upload your profile icon — test it at 50x50 pixels before uploading
9. Design and upload your video watermark at 60-70% opacity
10. Queue your first A/B test with a written hypothesis before publishing your next video
11. Score your bottom 10 CTR videos with the 10-point rubric and re-thumbnail the lowest 3 within 30 days
12. Schedule your quarterly brand audit as a recurring calendar event

