

NINE 9 MEDIA - Increasing Retention(Cheat Sheet)

What is retention?

Retention refers to the average percentage of a video that a viewer watches, making it one of the most crucial metrics for achieving viral success.

Many social media videos offering tips and tricks for going viral are misleading. The reality is that every social media algorithm operates on the same fundamental principle:

Higher watch time = More views.

While likes and shares contribute to a small portion of the algorithm and can slightly increase your video's reach, the primary factor you should focus on improving is watch time. In a moment, I'll explain exactly how you can do that.



Why does watch time increase viewers?

As I've outlined in my other cheat sheets, the primary goal of social media platforms and businesses is to generate revenue.

Most social media platforms achieve this by selling advertisements to companies. To maximize their earnings, these platforms must ensure users stay engaged on their apps, which is why they prioritize delivering a personalized experience for each user.



This is where watch time becomes essential. If your video keeps users on the app longer, the algorithm will push it to more people within the same niche to test whether they also remain engaged.

When your content is engaging and achieves high watch times, the algorithm recognizes that users are enjoying it, enhancing their experience on the platform. As a result, your video reaches a wider audience. Conversely, if your content is dull, misleading, or low-quality, viewers will lose interest quickly, and the algorithm will limit its exposure.

What can you do to increase retention

There are two key components of a YouTube video that directly impact retention and watch time:

1. **Video Script**
2. **Visual Animations & Sound Effects**

Structuring Your Video for Maximum Watch Time

To optimize watch time through scripting, your video should be broken down into three essential stages:

- **Stage 1:** Setup/Hook
- **Stage 2:** Problem/Confrontation
- **Stage 3:** Resolution/Solution

These stages are crucial in any niche. When executed properly, they create a psychological pull that captures the viewer's attention and keeps them engaged, eagerly anticipating the next part of the video.

Stage 1: The Hook/Setup

The hook is one of the most critical parts of your video since viewers are most likely to leave within the first 10 seconds. To combat this, you must immediately justify your title and provide a compelling reason for viewers to stay until the end.

This reassures the audience that the title and thumbnail they clicked on accurately reflect what they can expect, reinforcing their decision to watch.

Example:

- **Title:** *I Spent \$1,000,000 on a House!*

- **Hook:** *This is the \$1,000,000 house I just bought—and here's why it was the worst decision I've ever made...*

Stage 2: The Problem/Confrontation

This is the stage that sets your video apart. Here, you dive into your audience's pain points and introduce a compelling storyline that builds tension and intrigue.

The more relatable and engaging the problem, the more questions you introduce that demand answers, the stronger the emotional connection with the viewer. This emotional investment keeps them engaged as they wait to see how the issue unfolds.

Additionally, making your video visually stand out—through creative presentation, design, and animations—enhances engagement and makes your content more memorable.

Stage 3: The Resolution/Solution

The resolution is where you fulfill the expectations you've set for the video by providing answers, insights, or solutions to the questions you've raised.

This stage is crucial for building trust because, at this point, the viewer is benefiting more than you are.

Example:

You've successfully hooked the viewer, addressed their pain points, and created intrigue. Now, in the resolution, you deliver actionable solutions or satisfying conclusions that reward their time investment.

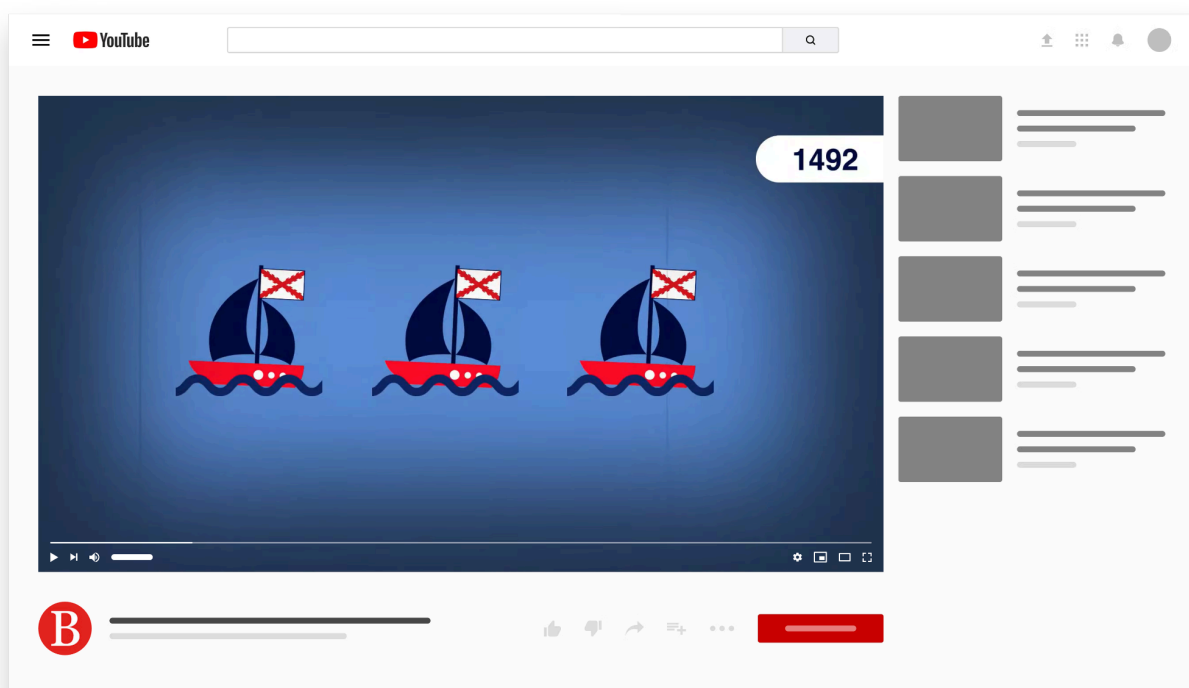
This is also where you close the "curiosity gap" you've built throughout the video. In longer videos, the resolution can be gradually extended to sustain high watch times.

Finally, because this is the moment where trust is established, it's also the perfect opportunity to introduce a clear and compelling **call to action (CTA)**—whether that's subscribing, clicking a link, or making a purchase.

Editing to maximise retention

Editing has the power to completely transform your video and reshape your retention curve. It can mean the difference between keeping a viewer engaged until the end or losing them within the first 20 seconds.

Ensuring that your audience is visually stimulated is key to capturing their attention. One of the most crucial aspects of editing is refining the first 2–3 minutes with dynamic animations that change approximately every 10 seconds, in sync with the video script. Once viewers have made it past this point, the storyline or script should be compelling enough to allow for fewer animations, shifting the focus to direct engagement with the camera.



That said, the “every 10 seconds” rule isn’t a strict requirement—it’s simply a guideline I use to plan animations in my videos. Another critical aspect of visuals is avoiding overstimulation. Your video should flow naturally, and excessive animations can disrupt that. Often, simply talking to the camera is enough, but when key terms and analogies are introduced, animations can significantly enhance engagement.

Different types of content require different editing approaches, and the level and style of editing will vary depending on the format.

However, the key to optimizing your video for maximum watch time is to focus on visuals and sound effects that tell a compelling story. This includes illustrating viewer pain points, providing solutions, and visually mapping out the journey. Bringing these elements to life transforms a video from merely interesting to truly captivating, drawing out emotion and keeping viewers engaged.