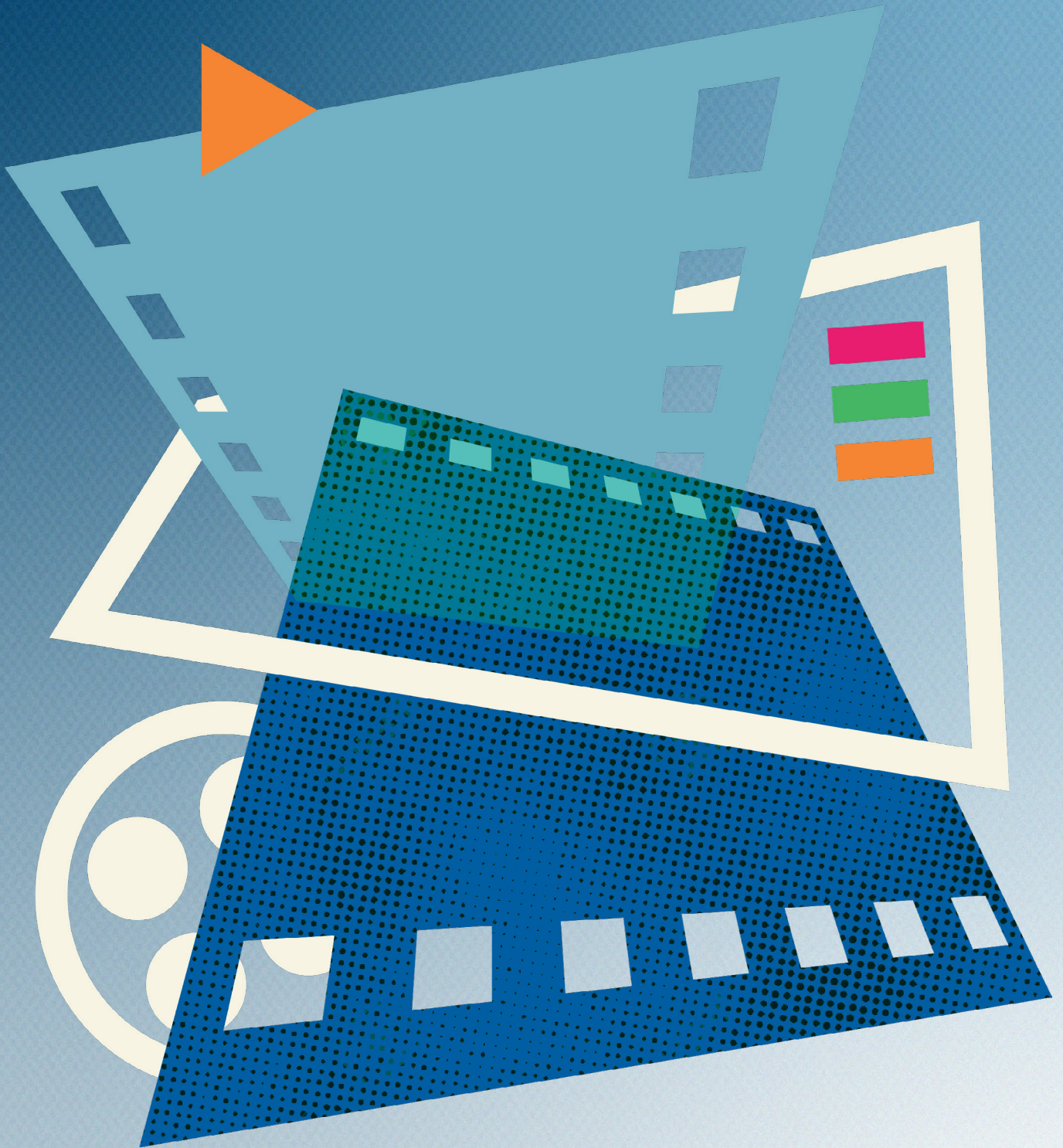


UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF SHORT-FORM VIDEO

A Guide for Creators
Making Content
to Counter Extremism



This guide is intended to help creators producing or thinking about making short-form video content seeking to counter extremism. Our goal is not to tell you what to create; your original content is what makes your channel creative and organic. Instead, we hope to provide you with tools and tips to create stronger content that harnesses evidence from decades of academic research. Creating short-form video content (with expected video length to be 15-60 seconds) that counters extremism (both violent and nonviolent) and promotes positive values is a powerful way to engage with your audience. To help you succeed in this mission, we have compiled a guide that not only inspires creativity but also provides practical tips for further success.

1. Stay local.

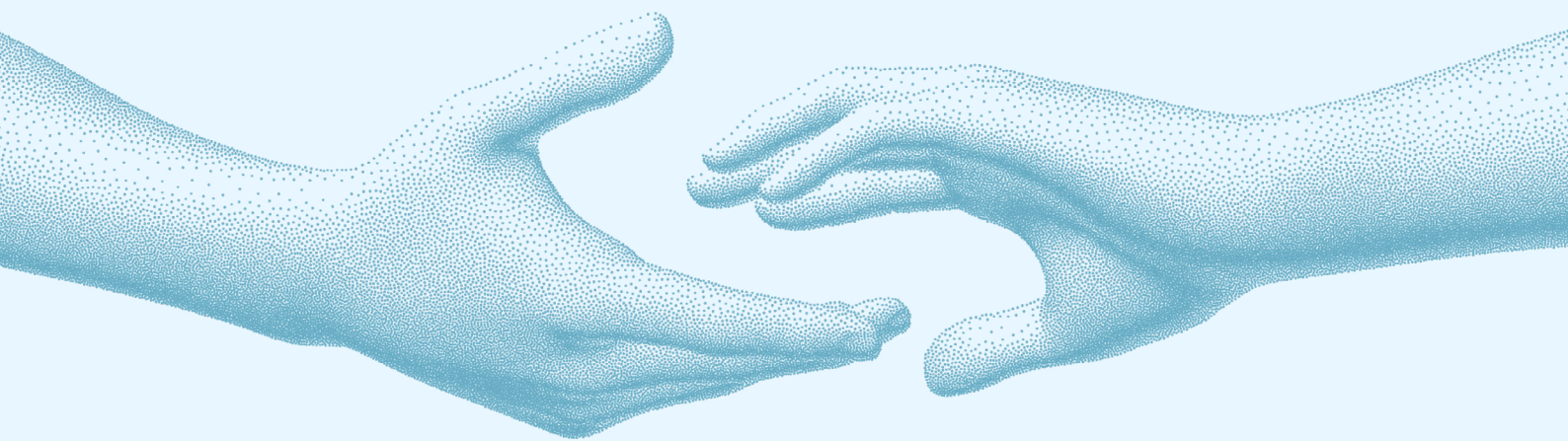


The world is a complex and diverse place. However, you know your own community and the issues they face better than anyone. This understanding is key and very hard for anyone outside your community to fully appreciate, giving you an inherent advantage when it comes to creating tailored content. You can dive into the issues faced by your community - you know them better than anyone else through leveraging detailed analytics from social media platforms to understand your audience's preferences for content provided through their different apps (eg. TikTok, YouTube, BeReal, IG Reels). These insights can be used to analyze what "drives" your audience and what type of content they engage with the most.

2. Define your goals.

Think about what you're trying to achieve. There are several end goals that will impact the type of message you make. Determine your objectives, whether it is countering extremist narratives, fostering dialogue, or providing alternative viewpoints. You might want to disrupt and discredit the narratives put forward by extremist groups. This could include showing how misinformation spreads on social media. Or you might want to help your audience be more resilient to being drawn towards extremist ideas, or foster conversations and understanding between different

groups. Rather than attempting to "counter" extremists' framing of an issue, you may wish to provide an alternative viewpoint. For example, stories showcasing the vast positives of diverse communities can promote values of tolerance and coexistence rather than hatred and division. Whatever message you choose, ensure it is context-specific and relevant to your audience. There are resources available that explain [how to test](#) your messages and content to help understand how your audience might react to them.



3. Build trust.

You are just as important as your message, your credibility and trustworthiness are paramount. It is close to impossible to change someone's mind if you are not seen to be a reliable and authoritative source of information by your audience. To be effective, you need to come across as both credible and sympathetic. Your audience trusts you, something that allows you to candidly engage with them. If you do not think you will be seen as a credible source of information on this topic by your intended audience, it may be time to rethink your strategy.

4. Be authentic.

Audiences aren't naive and they can generally tell if someone has a hidden agenda. You need to have a strong understanding of the topic and your audience to craft messages that resonate. It is important to think carefully about sensitive topics and appropriate tones and how they might be mishandled. This includes considering the most appropriate tone for addressing specific topics with your audience (e.g. joking, serious, reflective). Viewers do not like to feel like they are being lectured, shamed, or manipulated. Try to avoid exaggerating and manipulating the ideas that you're trying to critique, and instead offer an empathetic position and perspectives to those you are trying to persuade.

5. Tell a unique or personal story.

Telling stories through first-hand accounts is one of the most effective ways of delivering messaging on social media, particularly if it engages the audience emotionally. This holds true for short-form video content (15-60 seconds), though careful planning is required to ensure that your key message is delivered in the limited time available.



6. Engage actively with your audience.

Simply sharing alternative or counter-narratives isn't as effective as driving a conversation where you and your audience can interact. Creative uses of stories, production values, music, and other media content can encourage others to engage with your content. If you're comfortable, open the permissions on your video for interactions, such as Shares, Duets, or Comments. Don't forget to react and reply to the comments from your audience with respect to foster positive and constructive engagement. Handling negative comments can be challenging. However, it is still essential for maintaining a positive online presence, here are some tips to effectively managing negative comments: stay calm and professional and avoid responding impulsively or emotionally, maintain a professional tone in your replies even when faced with hostility; assesses the comment to determine if it is constructive criticism or simply a troll looking to provoke a reaction, avoid feeding those,

and decide if the comments warrants a response based on its content and impact; respond with empathy and willingness to understand the commenter's perspective and acknowledge their concerns, include steps to improve and show that you value their feedback; set boundaries in case of excessive rudeness or aggression by politely informing commenter that disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated on your platform; if needed, you may also consider taking the conversation privately through direct messaging or emails allowing for more in-depth, tension free and constructive discussion; consider implementing comment moderation filters for offensive language, document harassment and don't hesitate to seek support from other content creators, social media community during challenging times; and finally focus on the positive comments and use negative comments as an opportunity to learn and improve.

7. Capture attention as time is of the essence.

Successful short-form video content creators understand the importance of an impactful opening "hook" to grab your viewers' attention and beat the skip button. Many viewers do not watch more than a few seconds of videos that are too slow, boring, and repetitive, or even too emotional to them. This can make trying to deliver complex messages via short videos difficult. Look to frontload your most powerful message. Twists or "reveals" can be engaging storytelling techniques but make sure that your viewers are frequently watching your videos to these points. Timing is vitally important, both in the original message, and any follow ups. Aligning your messages to ongoing global events and trends can potentially make or break the success of alternative and counter-narrative if the messaging aligns with current trends.

8. Stay on trend.

Finding trending content for your social media videos is crucial to staying relevant and engaging with your audience. Here are some tips to discover trending topics and ideas in addition to following reputable news sources and media outlets: social media trends and hashtags, try to monitor popular hashtags and trending topics on social media platforms like X, IG, Tik Tok, and YouTube Trends and pay attention to current events, holidays, and cultural

moments that often generate trending discussions. Use trend analysis tools, such as Google Trends, Trendinalia, and BuzzSumo that can help you identify trending keywords and topics. Follow other trending creators, influencers and thought leaders in your niche, analyze content they provide, and you may consider collaborating with and cross-promoting them that can also help tap into their audience and reach.

9. Protect identities.

If in doubt, don't give away too much. When addressing sensitive topics and telling other individuals' stories, it is sometimes necessary to protect their identity – something that requires careful and creative thinking. Close-up shots of the subject's hands or lower face or those taken from behind or in silhouette all provide visually interesting ways to draw attention to their words while keeping their identity hidden. Ask yourself important questions, such as: does the location or background stand out or include landmarks or other features that could be recognized? Rather than using identifiable urban locations, natural settings such as parks, forests, or open outdoor spaces offer interesting but generic backdrops. Many organizations have developed toolkits to avoid potential dangers and harms associated with online activity, such as Facebook's ["How to Stay Safe Online: Everything You Need to Know"](#) and ISD's "Toolbox" section of the Counter-Narrative Handbook on ["How Can I Stay Safe Online."](#)

10. Foster Creativity.

The first step to staying creative is to keep up to date on the latest trends and news related to your topic. This can help you to take a fresh approach. While high production techniques can make your videos stand out, a less polished and spontaneous appearance can also make content authentic, relatable, and easily consumable, so try to keep the balance between both. Audio choices are also important. Videos that include voice overs are also viewed as more personal and persuasive. On the other hand, irritating or inappropriate music choices (overly dramatic or upbeat) can be off-putting in videos focusing on serious issues, so choose your audio wisely to maintain

the tone and authenticity of your content. Popular or 'trending' keywords, hashtags, music, or audio can not only increase the reach of videos but also make content familiar to viewers.

11. Diversify your content approach and dissemination.

Try to create multiple videos on the same content, while exploring different video styles such as explainer videos, tutorials, Q&A sessions, or storytelling, instead of focusing on a single video, consider creating a series of short videos that explore different aspects of the same topic to present diverse perspectives, insights, or angles to provide a well-rounded view. Try to customize your content for different social media platforms: what works for TikTok might not work for Instagram. Repurpose your videos by optimizing them for each platforms' preferred format and audience expectations. Try to repackage your content into stories, reels, or short clips for multiple platforms, this allows you to tell a consistent story across multiple platforms. Maintain analyzing your videos performance regularly on different platforms and you may adjust your content strategy based on audience engagement, comments, and shareability. By diversifying your content approach and dissemination through adaptation to various platforms' uniqueness and audience's expectations, you can maximize your reach and impact.

12. Include a Call to Action

Think about what you want your audience to take away or do after they have seen your content. Guide your audience towards a tangible action such as encouraging joining a safe online community or seeking further information. You can point viewers to places where they can find further information or make them aware of where they can get help if they are worried about certain issues or a friend or family member. Conclude your videos with a clear and specific call to action to drive engagement and help encourage viewers to be more than just passive consumers.

Remember, your short-form videos have the potential to inspire positive change and counter extremism. Embrace creativity, build trust, and engage with your audience to make a meaningful impact. Your creative work is essential in promoting tolerance, understanding and unity in our communities.*

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