

PLATFORM BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

Video Advertising Creative Guidelines — Beats by Dre Creative Strategy Externship

Luca Photopoulos | September 6, 2026 | v1.0

1. Introduction

Purpose

This guide provides evidence-based creative guidelines for Beats by Dre video advertising across TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, for agencies, creative partners, and internal teams developing video content for the brand.

How to Use This Guide

1. Start with Universal Principles — these apply to all video content.
2. Reference Platform-Specific Sections before creative development.
3. Use the Adaptation Framework when repurposing content across platforms.
4. Check Technical Specs before final delivery.

Sources and Methodology

This guide synthesizes official documentation and published research from Google Ads Help / Think with Google (ABCD Framework, built on 17,000+ campaigns validated with Ipsos, Nielsen, and Kantar), TikTok for Business / TikTok Creative Center, and Meta Business Help Center / Meta for Business. Each recommendation traces to a source cited in its section; where sources diverge, that divergence is stated rather than flattened into one rule.

2. Universal Principles

These five principles hold across TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram alike: the non-negotiables for every piece of Beats video content, regardless of platform.

Principle 1: The Hook Decides Everything

Insight: The first 1–5 seconds determine whether someone watches or scrolls — nothing else matters if viewers never see it.

Platform	Evidence
Google	"Attract": earn attention in the first 5 seconds with bold visuals or a direct question, before the skip button appears; built on 17,000+ campaigns, tied to a 30% lift in short-term sales likelihood (Think with Google, ABCD Framework).
TikTok	The first 6 seconds capture 90% of ad recall impact; introduce the value proposition within 3 seconds (TikTok for Business).
Meta	Target a Hook Rate above 30%; on Reels the hook must land in 1–2 seconds since sound-off viewers decide before audio registers (Meta Business Help Center).

Apply for Beats:

- Script and test the hook before the body, never as an afterthought in the edit.
- Open on movement or a human face, never a static logo or slow pan.

Principle 2: Single, Specific Call to Action

Insight: One clear, concrete action outperforms multiple options or vague prompts, on every platform.

Platform	Evidence
Google	"Direct": specific, single-threaded CTAs — "Start your free trial" beats "Learn more" (Think with Google, ABCD Framework).
TikTok	CTA cards at the close drive a 45% lift in recall and 19% increase in likeability vs. interrupting the story (TikTok for Business).
Meta	Match the CTA to the surface — swipe-up for Stories, tap-to-shop for Reels; one action, not several (Meta Business Help Center).

Apply for Beats:

- Define one primary action per campaign objective before scripting begins.
- Pair the CTA with the ad's single proof point so the action feels earned.

Principle 3: Trust Travels Through People, Not Logos

Insight: Audiences trust a real, believable person more than a brand speaking for itself + that trust transfers to the product.

Platform	Evidence
Google	68% agree YouTube creators are more trustworthy than traditional celebrities; viewers are 98% more likely to trust creator recommendations on YouTube than elsewhere (Google/Ipsos via Think with Google).
TikTok	Creator-led Spark Ads preserve visible social proof and outperform brand-produced content on trust; believable use matters more than fame (TikTok for Business; eMarketer).
Meta	Meta recommends testing creator-style content specifically where Reels underperforms — brand-produced ads often lose to genuine organic content (Meta for Business).

Apply for Beats:

- Pair every celebrity- or artist-led hero asset with a shorter, unscripted-feeling companion cut of the same talent: a real, lower-production moment, not just the polished spot.
- Let talent show, not just endorse: visible, active product use builds more trust than a name or likeness used as a branding layer.

Principle 4: Emotion Earns Attention Before Product Does

Insight: Feelings drive engagement more reliably than specs (connect first, then sell.)

Platform	Evidence
Google	"Connect": build emotional resonance from the viewer's perspective before proposing a solution (Think with Google, ABCD Framework).
TikTok	Hooks built on suspense, surprise, or emotion outperform purely informational openers (TikTok for Business).
Meta	Meta's Reels guidance recommends leading with entertainment and relatable storytelling before the sales message (Meta for Business).

Apply for Beats:

- Lead every script with the feeling of using Beats; hold the spec claim until credibility is already earned.
- Use product and spec callouts as the payoff of the story, not the opening premise.

Principle 5: Sound and Polish Are Platform-Dependent Decisions

Insight: Audio strategy and production polish both must flex to the platform's default viewing state (sound-on vs. sound-off, native vs. produced.)

Platform	Evidence
Google	95% of YouTube video is watched with sound on; pre-roll accepts higher production value, though lo-fi can win on direct response (Think with Google).
TikTok	Sound-on is default and audio is structural, not an add-on; "authentic beats perfect" — native content earns 3.3x more engagement than polished ads (TikTok for Business).
Meta	~85% of Facebook video and ~70% of Feed video is watched muted (captions essential); Reels is the exception at 60%+ sound-on and rewards native, creator-style content (Meta Business Help Center).

Apply for Beats:

- Caption every asset by default; on Feed, the visual and text must carry the message alone.
- Build a native-feeling cut for TikTok/Reels and a higher-polish cut for YouTube pre-roll/Feed from the same shoot — never one master file for all placements.

3. TikTok Best Practices

Platform Context

TikTok reaches Beats' core Gen Z and young Millennial audience in a sound-on, entertainment-first environment that penalizes content reading as a traditional ad and rewards native, culturally fluent execution.

Key Insight: "Don't make ads, make TikToks."

Essential Guidelines

Guideline	Rationale
Design for sound-on	Audio is structural, not an afterthought (TikTok for Business).
Hook in first 3 seconds	First 6 seconds capture 90% of ad recall impact.
Shoot native 9:16	Letterboxed or horizontal video reads as non-native and is scrolled past.
Delay heavy branding	Branding in the first 2 seconds signals "this is an ad."
Favor native/lo-fi over polish	Native content earns ~74% better attention than repurposed content.

Beats-Specific Recommendations

- Lead with culture, follow with product — show artists and athletes using Beats in context; never open on a logo.
- Treat music as a competitive advantage — build original audio and artist features rather than generic trending-sound overlays.
- Pair every talent-led hero asset with a shorter, creator-style companion cut of the same talent — a real, lower-production moment.
- Partner with fitness and music creators via Spark Ads; brief on outcomes, not scripts.

What to Avoid

- Repurposing a TV or YouTube spot without a native re-edit.
- Heavy branding or a logo card in the first 2 seconds.
- Sound-off design — it wastes TikTok's core strength.

4. YouTube Best Practices

Platform Context

YouTube is functionally two platforms: Shorts, which behaves like TikTok, and long-form/pre-roll, where viewers have opted in and tolerate a longer story. Brief each differently — never one edit for both.

ABCD Framework for Beats

Element	Definition	Beats Application
A — Attract	Hook in the first 5 seconds.	Open on an athlete or artist in motion, bold color, music energy — never a static product shot.
B — Brand	Integrate the brand naturally, early.	Show product in context on talent within 5 seconds; use Beats' color palette and sonic identity.
C — Connect	Build emotional connection.	Tap into music/sports culture and identity before any spec claim appears.
D — Direct	Give a clear CTA.	Match the CTA to the objective — a spec claim + next step for consideration, a brand statement for awareness.

Shorts vs. Long-Form / Pre-Roll

Aspect	Shorts	Long-Form / Pre-Roll
Format	9:16, TikTok-like behavior.	16:9; higher production value expected.
Hook timing	Discovery-driven — hook is everything.	Must hook before the 5-second skip point.
Branding	Native feel over early logo placement.	Early, prominent branding outperforms branding only at the close.

What to Avoid

- A slow pre-roll opening — the skip button appears at 5 seconds.
- Using the same cut for Shorts and pre-roll; they reward opposite pacing and branding.

5. Instagram Best Practices

Platform Context

Instagram requires placement-specific thinking: Reels behaves like a slightly more polished TikTok, Stories is ephemeral and interactive, and Feed is a traditional, largely sound-off environment.

Format-Specific Guidelines

Aspect	Reels	Stories	Feed
Orientation	9:16	9:16	4:5 / 1:1
Sound	On 60%+ of the time	Mixed — design for both	Off by default (~70% muted)
Hook timing	1–2 seconds	Fast, swipe-through	First frame = static thumbnail
Best for	Discovery, cultural moments	Behind-the-scenes, exclusivity	Awareness, evergreen content

Beats-Specific Recommendations

- Reels for culture, Feed for product — participate in trend moments on Reels; reserve Feed for evergreen brand content.
- Stories for exclusivity — behind-the-scenes prep and pre-release teasers that make followers feel like insiders.
- Never cross-post without editing — remove watermarks, reframe to 4:5, add captions for Feed.

What to Avoid

- Cross-posting TikTok content with a visible watermark — Meta's algorithm deprioritizes it.
- A sound-dependent Feed video with no captions.

6. Content Adaptation Framework

When to Adapt vs. Create Native

Scenario	Recommendation
Hero campaign asset exists	Create native — dedicated TikTok/Reels and sound-off Feed cuts, not a resized hero asset.
Platform trend opportunity	Create native on the primary platform within 24–48 hours; cross-post only if relevant.
Always-on content needs	Create native from the start — a separate brief per platform, not one video for all.
Product launch	Both — a flagship video, then platform-native cuts derived from it.

Adaptation Checklist

- Verify aspect ratio matches the target platform.
- Check hook timing against platform norms.
- Adjust sound strategy for the destination's default (sound-on vs. sound-off).
- Add or adjust captions.
- Review branding placement — early for YouTube pre-roll/Feed, delayed for TikTok/Reels.
- Confirm the CTA uses platform-native language.

7. Technical Specifications Reference

Platform / Format	Aspect Ratio	Optimal	Max	Sound	Resolution
TikTok In-Feed	9:16	9–15s	60s	On	1080×1920
YouTube Shorts	9:16	15–30s	60s	On	1080×1920
YouTube Pre-Roll	16:9	15–30s	Variable	On	1920×1080
IG Reels	9:16	7–30s	90s	On (60%+)	1080×1920
IG Stories	9:16	5–15s/seg.	60s	Mixed	1080×1920
IG Feed	4:5	15s	60s	Off (default)	1080×1350

Sound Strategy Summary

Platform / Format	Sound Default	Recommendation
TikTok	On	Design audio as a lead creative element; caption for the sound-off minority.
YouTube	On	Leverage Beats' music heritage; do not treat sound as optional.
IG Reels	On (60%+)	Treat audio as a primary lever; original or artist audio preferred.
IG Feed	Off (default)	Sound-off mandatory design; captions carry the message.

8. Summary: Do's and Don'ts

DO'S

Do	Why
Design the hook before the body of the ad.	The first 1–5 seconds decide if the rest is ever seen.
Pair celebrity/artist hero content with a real, unscripted companion cut of the same talent.	Trust travels through believable people, not logos.
Build a native cut for TikTok/Reels and a polished cut for pre-roll/Feed from one shoot.	The right production level is platform-specific.
Caption everything by default.	A majority of Feed and Stories video is watched muted.
Use one clear, platform-native CTA per asset.	Specific, single-threaded CTAs outperform multiple prompts.

DON'TS

Don't	Why
Open on a logo or static product shot.	Reads as an ad before the viewer has a reason to stay.
Repurpose a TV/long-form spot onto TikTok or Reels unedited.	Repurposed content earns ~74% less attention than native.
Run the same file across Feed, Reels, and Stories.	Each placement has a different sound default and aspect ratio.
Rely on spoken audio to carry the message outside TikTok/Reels.	Feed and much of Stories are watched muted.
Use a celebrity's name or likeness as a branding layer without showing them active on screen.	Presence and visible action drive engagement, not a name alone.