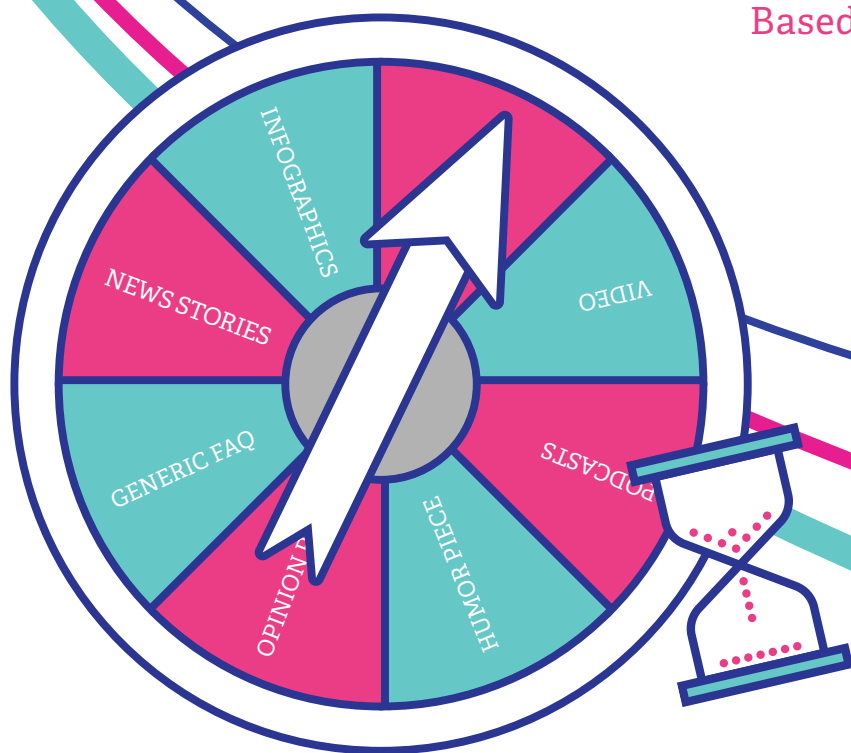


how to pick the right

Content type

Based on the popular online game,
Elevate Your Content

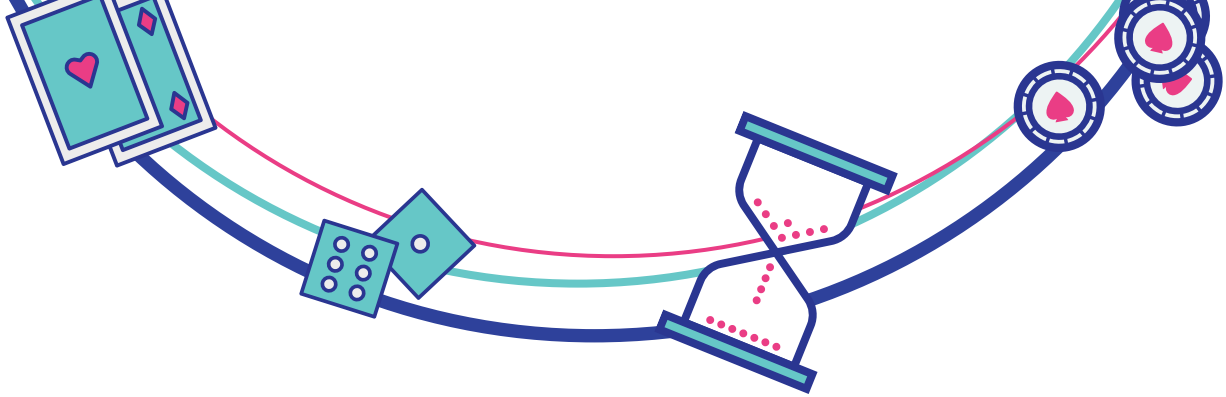
Created by Ahava Leibtag
and Katie Carrus



All great content marketers want to create winning content. Picking the right content type will make your ideas clearer, more powerful and more effective.



ahamediagroup.com



Like any strategic player, content marketers need to understand the rules of engagement, what your players want from the game and how to play. Sometimes it's difficult to decide which **content types will be most successful for your business objectives and your audiences.**

We designed this content ebook to help you pick the best content type for every campaign, project and strategy.

First launched as an easy-to-use tool on [our website](#), these awesome content types will transform how you choose to focus your content marketing energies. Whether it's a quick game, or a long afternoon of play, these content types will take the guesswork out of execution and give you a roadmap for content success.



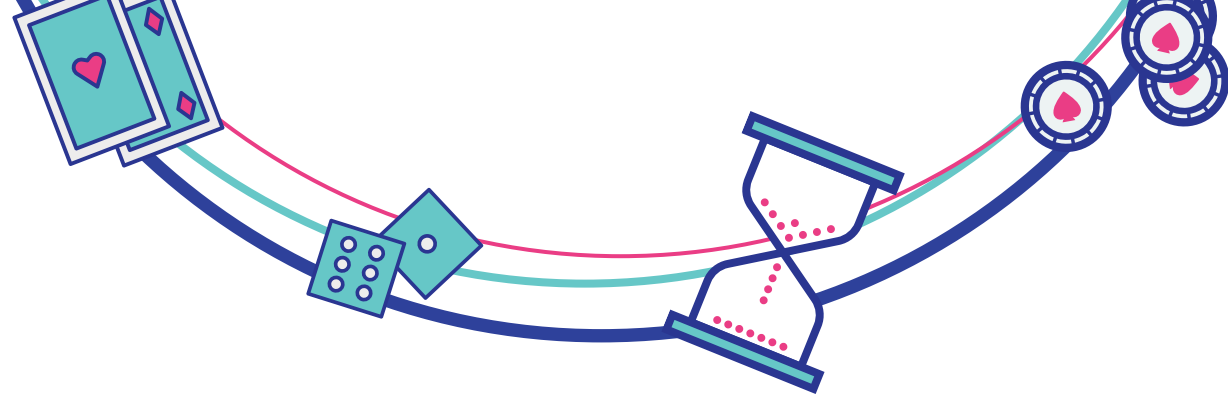
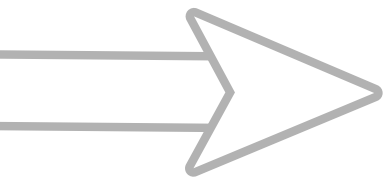


TABLE OF CONTENTS

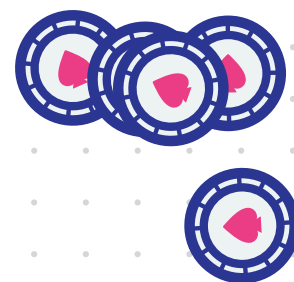
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EXPERT Q/A

(WRITTEN OR VIDEO)



GOOD FOR

- Building a personal connection and relationship
- Giving someone a new perspective on an already well-tread topic
- Establishing your brand's authority
- Simple to moderately complex topics
- Thought leadership
- User-generated content/audience participation

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- Very complex topics
- Very common topics (like preparing for surgery, where you don't need an expert to explain it. In cases like this, a short tip sheet would work.)

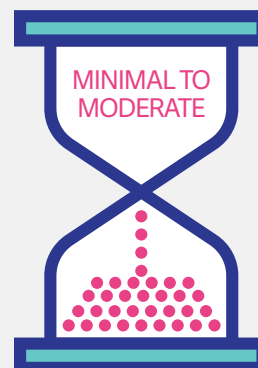
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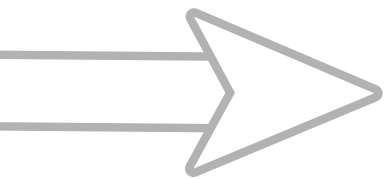
- Only used when you have a real expert who can speak to a topic
- Short to moderate in length (300 words or 60 seconds for a video)

INSIDER SECRET

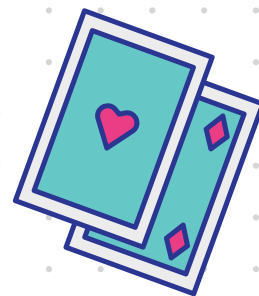
There's endless opportunity with this content type, and it's very intuitive. You can solicit questions from your online audience or pose them yourself. Chances are, if you've wondered about a certain facet of your industry, your readers have, too. Go for it!

TIME INVESTMENT





GENERIC FAQ



GOOD FOR

- Quick answers
- Saving you time
- Breaking down a complex idea
- Building a relationship by speaking your audience's language; FAQs say a lot about a company's attitudes toward its customers.

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- **All of your content:** Reserve FAQs for areas that generate a lot of questions. (However, discussing a topic everyone else has glossed over can add value; i.e., "Everything about X you were afraid to ask.")

SHOULD BE

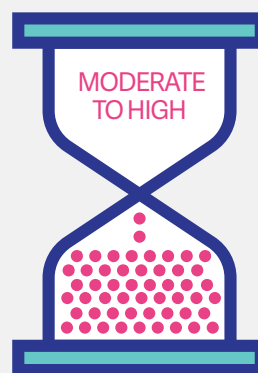
- **User-driven:** Think as a user when you craft your questions and responses. Instead of ideas about your brand, include information your audience needs. (No matter how silly the question might seem to you). Use data from call centers or employees' insights. Write questions in ways your customers would ask them.
- **Moderate to long:** Don't send readers to a list of 3 items.
- **Written in plain language:** Get to the point. There are better places to talk about your company's philosophy or founding. Place links in the answers for readers to decide if they want to dig deeper.

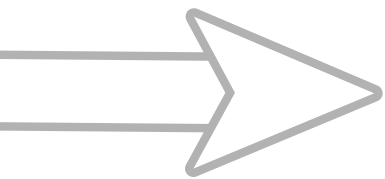
INSIDER SECRET

If you're using an FAQ as a way to support a customer service experience, do recognize the limits of online content, the power of personal connection and that some people will always prefer to just pick up the phone.

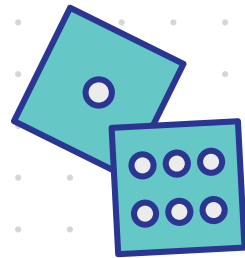
Make it easy for your audience to opt out of searching for answers on your site. Just give them a number to call so they can talk to someone. Of course, in many cases, the more thought and care you put into your FAQs, the better you can answer your customers' questions without ever picking up the phone. Proceed thoughtfully.

TIME INVESTMENT





HUMOR PIECE



GOOD FOR

- Entertaining
- Demonstrating brand personality, smarts and depth
- Adding a fresh perspective
- **Building personal relationships:** Truly funny content can be a “wink” to your audience. A shared joke indicates to us that that we’re “in” on the secret.

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- **Very serious subjects:** Of course there are always exceptions, and there are valid ways to treat grave topics with levity and

heart. A few brands even delve into dark humor and succeed because they make a point about society at large. But in most cases, for most brands, choosing a serious topic isn’t worth the risk.

- **News:** It’s OK if your brand’s voice is more ironic/jokey and often infuses news with humor, but always make it clear to audiences what’s satire and what’s not.

SHOULD BE

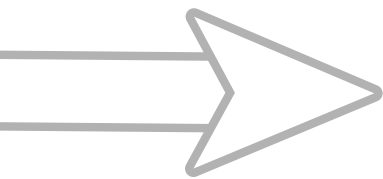
- On the shorter side, usually
- Built around a shared truth, something the audience will also find ironic or humorous

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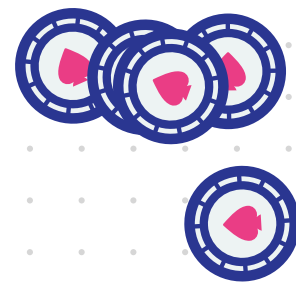
It might go without saying, but humor pieces have to actually be funny in order to work. The old adage that comedy is harder to do than tragedy remains true. You don’t have to be stand-up-comedian-funny to publish a humor piece, but it doesn’t hurt. At the very least, be extraordinarily witty, and never put others down for a laugh. Once it’s on the Internet, it lives forever.

TIME INVESTMENT





INFOGRAPHICS



GOOD FOR

- Data, data, data
- Translating complex ideas
- Showing flow and movement
- Illustrating processes, relationships

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- Ideas that are already pretty simple (save some time and just use a graphic for those)

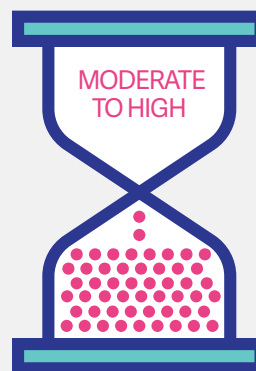
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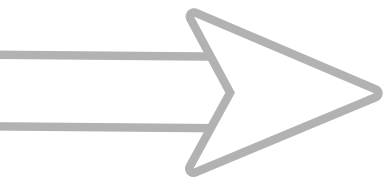
- Laser-focused with curated ideas (don't try to explain everything about your topic)
- Used sparingly
- Cleanly designed
- Immediately understandable
- Strongly driven by story and copy

INSIDER SECRET

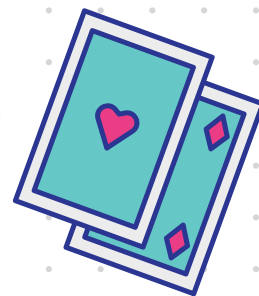
You have to learn a complex subject inside and out before you can distill it into something simple.

TIME INVESTMENT





LISTICLES



GOOD FOR

- How-to articles (steps)
- Lighter and simpler topics
- Entertaining

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- Very serious or complex topics

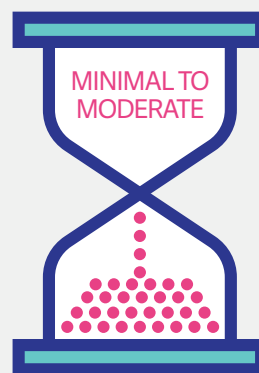
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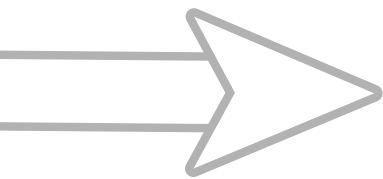
- Paired with images
- 10 items or less, unless it's ironic/intentional
- Limited to 30 words for each item description

INSIDER SECRET

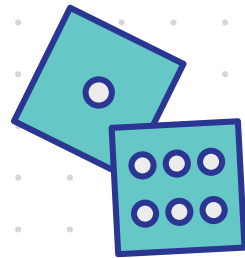
Everyone's doing listicles these days. They're great, but make yours stand out by applying a unique spin to a common topic.

TIME INVESTMENT





LONG-FORM NARRATIVES



GOOD FOR

- Audience immersion
- Thought leadership
- Complex topics with lots of layers
- Showing a unique POV
- Immersive storytelling

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- Topics that are very news-oriented or overly simple
- How-to articles
- Topics with an immediate call to action

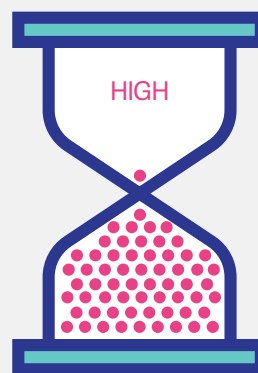
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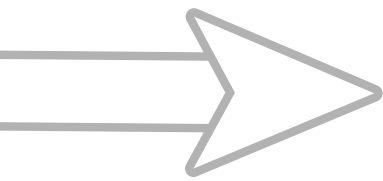
- About 1,500-2,000 words
- Paired with images (though the copy should be able to stand on its own)

INSIDER SECRET

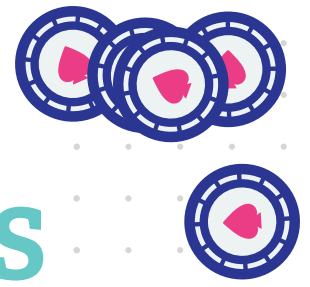
People still read long-form! Choose multidimensional topics where you have something new to say.

TIME INVESTMENT





MEMES AND SHARE GRAPHICS



GOOD FOR

- Educating
- Entertaining
- Inspiring
- Succinctly communicating a single message

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- Not so good for
- Telling a really complex story
- Answering questions

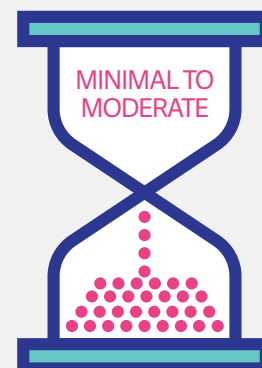
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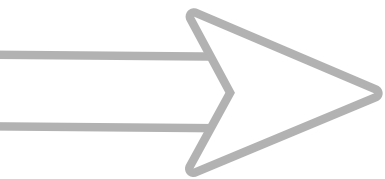
- Compelling both visually and verbally
- Easy to understand and fast
- Brand-appropriate
- Created with good quality images, at least with share graphics
- Shareable! Make them interesting, compelling, funny, powerful or beautiful. Just make them memorable.

INSIDER SECRET

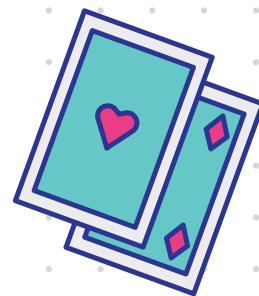
1. Memes are often delivered via share graphics, but they show up in various formats beyond share graphics. Likewise, not all share graphics depict memes. In fact, most don't. Most share graphics are just one-time, non-viral images with a few words or sentences of copy overlaid on top.
2. Creating a widely shared meme is about as easy creating a "viral" video. If you start out with "viral" as the goal, you may as well not start. Instead, focus on what's funny or compelling to your core audience. If they appreciate it, you've succeeded. If everyone else appreciates it, congratulations. You've won the Internet/won't you please come work for us?
3. Get the credit you deserve—don't forget to brand your meme!

TIME INVESTMENT





NEWS STORIES



GOOD FOR

- Driving immediate action
- Brands with a unique voice and POV on the news
- Building SEO if the topic is current and relevant

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- Immersing the audience
- Complex topics
- Building a relationship

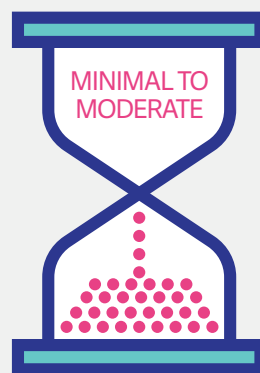
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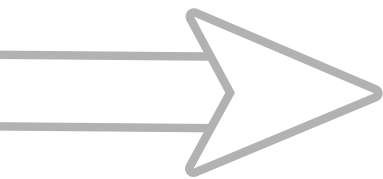
- Used judiciously
- 350-500 words

INSIDER SECRET

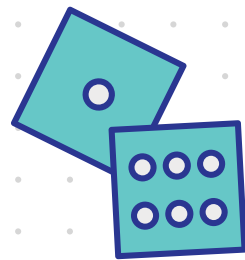
There's no shortage of places to get the news online these days. Unless your brand is also a major news outlet, only choose the short-form news story if you're certain that your telling of the news will add real value to the space. If you don't have news to add to the conversation, it may actually be an opinion piece.

TIME INVESTMENT





OPINION PIECE



GOOD FOR

- Adding depth to your coverage of a topic
- Establishing your thought leadership
- Showcasing your personality
- Creating personal connections
- Extending the news cycle on a popular story

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- Demonstrating authority in isolation (i.e., most brands cannot exist on opinion pieces alone)
- **New topic:** Publish opinions on topics your audience has an opinion on, too.

- However, don't publish opinions that don't surprise at all. If your opinion is the same as everyone else's, do you have interesting/funny reasons for feeling that way?
- Timely or newsy events where readers just want facts

SHOULD BE

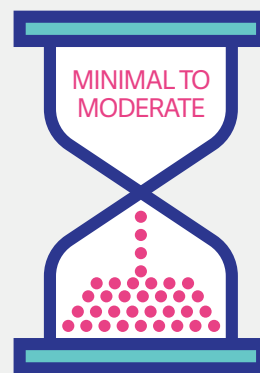
- Well-written with a strong voice
- Short enough to maintain interest and long enough to make a point. Avoid stream-of-consciousness "rants," though some publications can get away with them if they're intentional.
- Thoughtful and backed up with confirmable facts
- In-sync with your voice and hopefully that of the audience

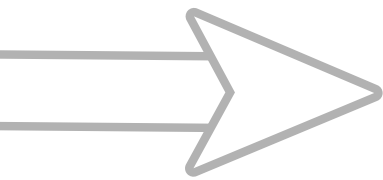
INSIDER SECRET

If your publication/brand often deals in news and resources-type content, clearly disclose opinion pieces so readers can make informed choices about how to consume this type of content. Show readers that not only do you have interesting opinions, but you've got loads of integrity, too.

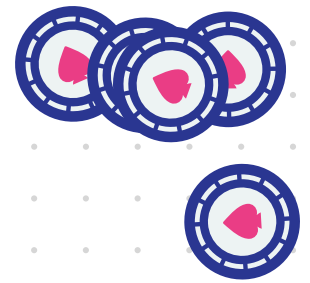
TIME INVESTMENT

Depends entirely on the topic and writer





PODCASTS



GOOD FOR

- Subjects that can be serialized (no pun intended, [“Serial” podcast!](#))
- Brands whose audiences (or at least a sizeable segment of them) may spend a lot of time commuting
- Building a relationship and facilitating an ongoing conversation
- A variety of topics and styles (from serious to light)

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- One-off topics that don’t fit into an overall editorial theme

- Untested topics (you should have already established your audience’s interests)
- Heavily self-promotional material (no one wants to listen to one long ad disguised as a radio show)

SHOULD BE

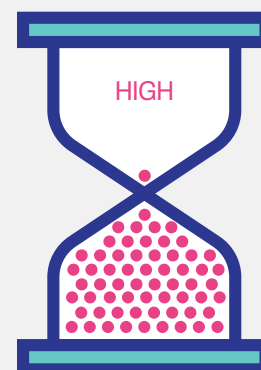
- Hosted by articulate individuals with strong and/or interesting public personas (or the potential to develop them)
- As professionally produced as possible: Invest in the best equipment you can afford, and hire an audio producer if you can, at least to get you going.

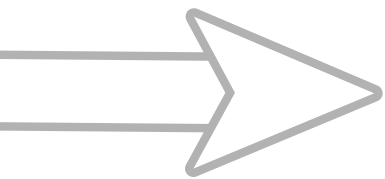
INSIDER SECRET

Take the decision to get into podcasting as seriously as you would weigh the choice to establish your brand’s presence on any new platform. It’s something you have to commit to for the long haul, and it will take up lots of your time to do it well. Plan to plan: for what you’ll talk about, when and how; as well as when and how you’ll promote your new broadcast.

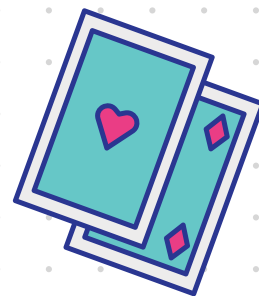
As with any content, know before you hit go.

TIME INVESTMENT





POLLS



GOOD FOR

- Adding on to an already complete piece of content
- Engagement/driving a conversation
- Taking your audience's "temperature" on a topic
- Open-ended and ongoing topics

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- Topics where there's little controversy or room for opinions—don't ask questions if the answers aren't interesting

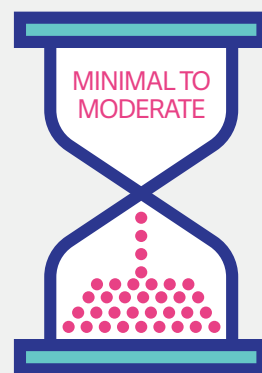
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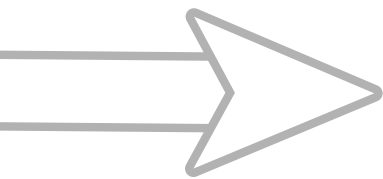
- Brief (one to a few short questions that are highly relevant to the content topic)
- Used sparingly

INSIDER SECRET

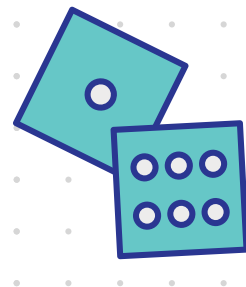
Polls should be a low-bar ask. One of their main objectives is to provide immediate gratification and a sense of community/ camaraderie with other users. Give people poll results right away. Don't make them click somewhere else or sign in to take the poll or see where they stand in comparison to others.

TIME INVESTMENT





QUIZZES



GOOD FOR

- Light engagement
- Entertainment
- Novel topics

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- Very serious, complex or mundane/ academic topics
- Caveat: Successful quizzes on serious topics do exist, like those designed to give people actionable information. For example, you could take a quiz that tells

you whether you might be depressed and should consider seeking medical advice. The recommendations here, however, focus on entertainment-oriented quizzes.

SHOULD BE

- Paired with images
- Capped at 10 questions
- Legitimately fun for most of your audience (it's a quiz, not a test— don't try to school anyone)

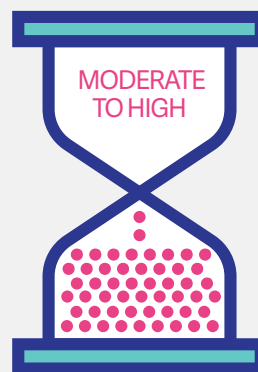
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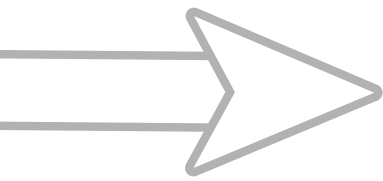
The best quizzes tell us something about ourselves in the context of the brand. And it's usually positive, even when it's not. "[Seventeen](#)" [magazine](#) told girls what kind of friend they were (hint: no matter what her answers were, the quiz taker was still awesome). And [BuzzFeed](#) routinely tells you how well you remember the '90s or the secrets of your [Netflix](#) binge habits.

All of these let the reader "spend time" with topics that matter to them (whether that's nostalgia for their favorite decade or a current pastime). Remember that taking a quiz is a higher-bar online action. A poorly thought-out quiz can come off as click-bait or cheap engagement, leaving the reader feel like she wasted her time.

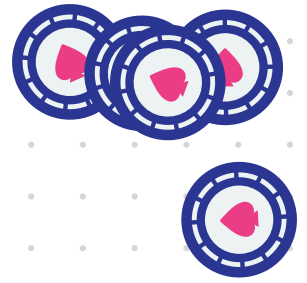
TIME INVESTMENT

Depending on technological complexity





SHORT CONTENT/ ARTICLE



GOOD FOR

- Explaining something quickly
- Content that's not quite opinion but not news either
- Educating
- Giving someone quick answers
- Succinctly communicating a single message

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- Complex decision making
- Telling a complex story (but it can lay the groundwork for deeper content that does)
- Introducing ideas that take multiple steps

SHOULD BE

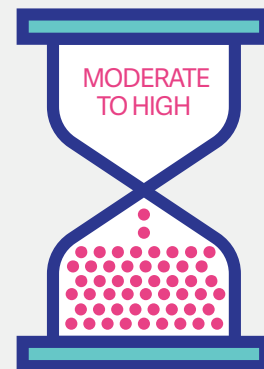
- 200-500 words
- Concise
- Helpful in introducing deeper content

INSIDER SECRET

Short articles are best for quick thinking, impressing a simple idea on the user or giving information quickly.

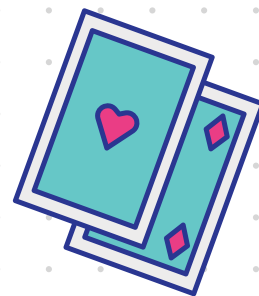
TIME INVESTMENT

(Sometimes it takes longer to write something short!)





VIDEO



GOOD FOR

- **All forms:** When topics demand visuals, motion
- **Long-form:** Immersing the audience; creating personal connection; telling a great story; simplifying complex subjects (like whiteboard videos)
- **Short-form:** Driving immediate action; entertaining (like [Instagram](#) clips); building a relationship (like [Snapchat](#) stories); giving someone answers; immersing the audience (like [Facebook Canvas](#) or live videos)
- All platforms (web, social media, email)

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- **All forms:** Stories where other media are already doing a great job
- **Long-form:** Driving immediate action; newsy topics; how-to; thought pieces. In the case of whiteboard videos, avoid topics that are already fairly clear, where there's no mystery or need for "unpacking."
- **Short-form:** Particularly weighty

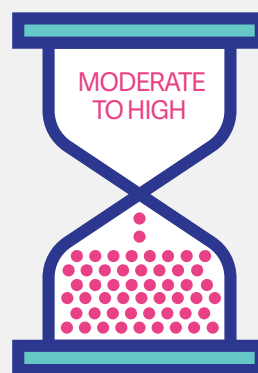
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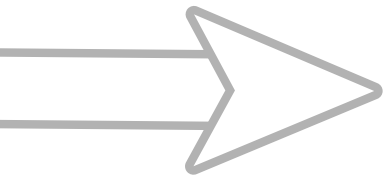
- **All forms:** Strategically used to add different information to a story or able to stand alone
- **Long-form:** 60 seconds—5 minutes
- **Short-form:** 30-60 seconds
- **Clip:** 5-15 seconds

INSIDER SECRET

There are so many ways to use video these days, and everyone's a producer. But just because it's ubiquitous doesn't mean it's easy to get right. Resist the urge to start planning content around the motivation: "We want to do a video." Instead, decide what you want the content to do, then decide if video's the best way to deliver your message. Last, remember that video should always add distinct value to a story package or be able to stand alone as the story.

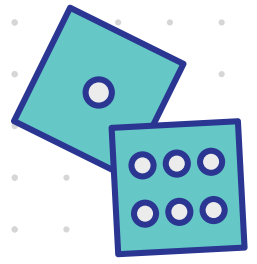
TIME INVESTMENT





VISUAL JOURNALISM:

PHOTO ESSAYS AND SLIDESHOWS



GOOD FOR

- Immersive storytelling Building a relationship
- Powerful, serious topics (can work for both hopeful and grim)
- Provoking thought
- Evoking feelings, depth and/or a sense of place and personality
- Illustrating size, scope, relationships, contrast
- The web and social media (even [Instagram](#) images can be immersive)

NOT SO GOOD FOR

- Immediate calls to action
- Straight news

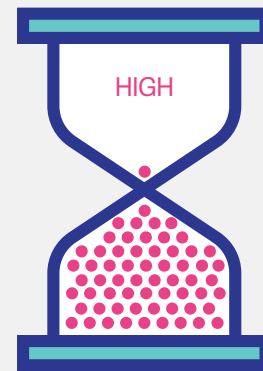
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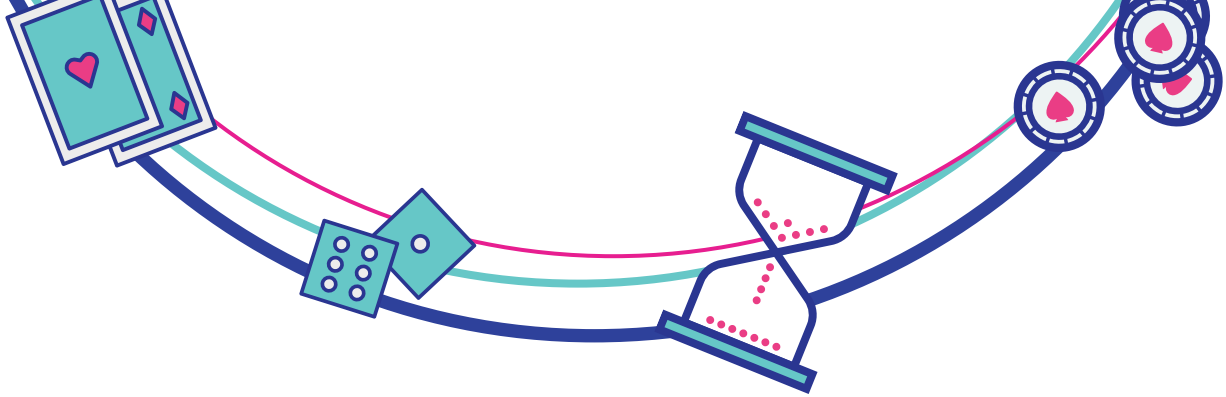
- Composed of high-quality images, ideally shot expressly for this purpose: While repurposing content is wonderful when it serves the goal, retrofitting images into a narrative often leads to putting the medium before the message.
- Heavier on imagery than copy

INSIDER SECRET

There are a number of interesting formats for visual journalism, from full-screen images that scroll, to traditional slideshows, to [Instagram](#) mini publications, to stories that incorporate short audio and video clips. If you choose to add audio and/or looping video to a web piece, be sure to select ambient, nonintrusive clips, and consider giving users the option to turn them on and off so you don't interrupt their experience. See the [New York Times](#) for excellent executions of this content type.

TIME INVESTMENT





Producing unbeatable content isn't easy. But with strong guidelines for how to do so, you can find that great content becomes easier and more delightful to create.

Aha Media Group is a content marketing and content strategy consultancy. With more than a decade of experience in writing, content strategy and content marketing, we've learned that **the secret to great content is understanding your audience, business goals and resources**. A little fun mixed with a focused strategy means we've got the winning formula for your next awesome content project.

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