Video & Scriptwriting / YouTube Scripts

Predict where viewers drop off based on script structure and suggest retention fixes — prevents early drop-off.
Difficulty: Advanced
Model: GPT-4 / Claude / Gemini
Use Case: Retention Optimization, Drop-off Prevention
Updated: May 2026
Why This Prompt Exists
Most creators look at retention analytics after publishing — when it’s too late to fix. Predictive retention analysis identifies drop-off points before you film.

You get:

- first 30-second cliff (50-80% drop) — preventable with better hook
- mid-roll drop-off (viewers bored, no retention mechanism)
- pattern of small drops (death by a thousand cuts, each fixable)
- late-video drop (CTA too early or too late)
- no understanding of why viewers leave at specific timestamps

But retention patterns are predictable:

- hook zone (0-30s): drop-off from poor hook or misleading title
- intro zone (30-90s): drop-off from slow pacing or no value promise
- value zone (90s-5min): drop-off from irrelevant tangents or poor explanations

- retention zone (5min+): drop-off from fatigue, no pattern breaks
- closing zone (last 60s): drop-off from CTA too early, content already ended

Without predictive analysis, you fix problems after the video fails.

This prompt analyzes scripts for retention drop-off points.

The Prompt

```
Assume the role of a YouTube retention analyst who predicts drop-off points.

Your task is to analyze a script and identify where viewers will leave.

Generate:

1. SCRIPT TIMESTAMP BREAKDOWN

| Timestamp | Section | Content Type | Predicted Retention | Risk Level |
|-----------|---------|--------------|---------------------|------------|
| 0:00-0:30 | Hook | [type] | [X%] | High/Med/Low |
| 0:30-1:30 | Intro | [type] | [X%] | High/Med/Low |
| 1:30-3:00 | Value 1 | [type] | [X%] | High/Med/Low |
| 3:00-5:00 | Value 2 | [type] | [X%] | High/Med/Low |
| 5:00-7:00 | Value 3 | [type] | [X%] | High/Med/Low |
| 7:00-8:00 | Closing | CTA | [X%] | High/Med/Low |
```

2. DROP-OFF PREDICTIONS BY ZONE

Zone	Typical Drop	Your Script Risk	Fix
0-30s (Hook)	50-80%	High/Med/Low	[specific hook fix]
30-90s (Intro)	10-20%	High/Med/Low	[pacing or promise fix]
90s-5min (Value)	5-15%	High/Med/Low	[tangent or clarity fix]
5min+ (Retention)	2-10%	High/Med/Low	[pattern break or payoff fix]
Last 60s (Closing)	5-15%	High/Med/Low	[CTA timing fix]

3. RETENTION MECHANISMS MISSING

Mechanism	Description	Your Script Has?	Add Where
Preview of value	Tell them what they'll get	Yes/No	[timestamp]
Pattern breaks	Change visuals, pacing, topic	Yes/No	[timestamp]
Tease upcoming	"Stick around for X"	Yes/No	[timestamp]
Micro-hooks	Small questions every 30-60s	Yes/No	[timestamp]
Stakes reminder	Why this matters	Yes/No	[timestamp]

4. PREDICTED RETENTION CURVE

Start: 100%
0:30: [X]%
1:30: [X]%
3:00: [X]%

5:00: [X]%
7:00: [X]%
8:00: [X]%

Estimated AVD (Average View Duration): [X:XX] / [total length]
Estimated VVSA (Viewer Value Score): [X/10]

5. FIX PRIORITIES (highest impact first)

Priority	Timestamp	Issue	Fix	Expected Retention Gain
1	0:00-0:15	Weak hook	[specific fix]	+15-25%
2	0:30-1:00	Slow pacing	[specific fix]	+10-15%
3	2:00-2:30	Tangent	[specific fix]	+5-10%

6. POST-PUBLISH VERIFICATION

After publishing, check actual retention against predictions:
- Actual 30s retention: [X%] (vs. predicted [X%])
- Actual 60s retention: [X%] (vs. predicted [X%])
- Highest drop-off point: [timestamp]
- Compare to fix predictions to improve future scripts

INPUTS:

Script (full or detailed section descriptions):
[PASTE SCRIPT OR DESCRIBE SECTIONS WITH TIMESTAMPS]

Video length:

```
[E.G., "8 minutes"]

Content type:
[TUTORIAL / COMMENTARY / STORYTELLING / REVIEW / EDUCATIONAL]

Channel average retention (if known):
[E.G., "45% at 30 seconds, 30% average view duration"]

RULES:
- First 30 seconds determine 50%+ of retention (prioritize here)
- Every 30 seconds needs a micro-hook (question, transition, tease)
- Tangents kill retention (if it doesn't serve the value promise, cut it)
- Pattern breaks (visual changes, pacing shifts) reset attention
- Previewing the value early increases retention (tell them what they'll get)
- CTAs should come after the value, not before (don't ask before giving)
- Test retention predictions against actual data to improve your model
```

How To Use It

- First 30 seconds determine 50%+ of retention — prioritize this zone above all else.
- Every 30 seconds needs a micro-hook — a question, transition, or tease to keep attention.
- Tangents kill retention — if a section doesn’t serve the value promise, cut it.
- Pattern breaks (visual changes, pacing shifts, topic transitions) reset viewer attention.
- Previewing the value early increases retention — tell them what they’ll get upfront.
- CTAs should come after the value, not before — don’t ask for engagement before delivering.

- Test retention predictions against actual data to improve your predictive model.

Example Input

Script:
“0:00-0:20: Hey guys, welcome back to the channel. Today we’re talking about camera gear. 0:20-1:30: So I’ve been testing this new lens for three weeks… [detailed specs]. 1:30-3:00: Let me show you some sample footage… 3:00-5:00: Here’s how it compares to the previous model… 5:00-6:00: Should you buy it? My verdict… 6:00-6:30: Don’t forget to like and subscribe!”

Video length:
“6.5 minutes”

Content type:
“PRODUCT REVIEW”

Channel average retention:
“55% at 30 seconds, 35% average view duration”

Why It Works
Most creators discover retention problems after publishing — when the video is already live and underperforming.

This framework improves outcomes by forcing:

- timestamp breakdown (where retention drops by zone)
- drop-off prediction (identifying risks before filming)
- retention mechanism audit (what’s missing from the script)
- predicted retention curve (estimating AVD and VVSA)
- fix prioritization (highest impact first)

Failure modes this prevents:

- First 30-second cliff that could have been fixed with a better hook
- Mid-roll boredom from no retention mechanisms
- Death by a thousand small drops (each fixable individually)
- CTA too early or too late (missed engagement opportunity)

This improves on: Post-publish retention analysis. Predictive analysis fixes problems before filming.

Related to: YT-01 (Hook) for opening retention; YT-03 (Structure) for pacing.

Build Better AI Systems

Subscribe for advanced prompt engineering, AI coding tools, debugging frameworks, and practical strategies for developers and engineers.

Carefully engineered prompts for people doing real work.