



Cut & Copy



FREE PLAYBOOK · 17 CHAPTERS

The Ad Playbook

How to write Meta ads that sell

For UK pet, health and beauty brands already spending £5k or more a month on Meta.

Every step, from the first review you read to the ad that earns a bigger budget.

Research

The audience cluster

Awareness

The nine beats

Hooks

Formats

The edit

Testing

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How to use this playbook

Read it once in order. Then keep it open while you write.

This is the method I use to make Meta video ads for UK pet, health and beauty brands. It follows the order the work happens in: who's buying, what they say, what you're offering, what the script argues, how it looks on screen and how you test it.

Most advice about ads is about hooks. Hooks matter, but they're the first three seconds of an ad that has to sell for the next sixty. This playbook spends its pages where the selling happens.

How to read it

- **First time:** front to back. Chapters 4 (the cluster) and 8 (the nine beats) are the core.
- **Writing a script:** chapters 8 to 10, then the checklist in chapter 16.
- **Reviewing a script:** the checklist, then the worked example in chapter 17.
- **Planning tests:** chapters 4 and 13.

About the examples

Most examples use one product: Dear Doggo's Daily Probiotic Chews, a UK dog supplement. I researched the category and wrote a spec ad for it. It's an unofficial concept: Dear Doggo hasn't commissioned, approved or endorsed it, and Cut & Copy isn't affiliated with the brand.

Customer quotes are real, copied word for word from public reviews and forums, typos included. Anything else marked as an example is illustrative. This isn't legal advice, and it isn't a swipe file.

Do this first: open your ten most recent live ads. As you read, note who each one speaks to, which of the nine beats it has and which it skips. By chapter 16 you'll have your own teardown.

Nothing new since 1966

The rules of selling were written down decades ago. The feed just made them faster.

Every ad framework you'll find online, including the one in this playbook, is a remix of a handful of old books. Knowing where the ideas come from helps you use them properly instead of copying the shape.

Six books worth knowing

Claude Hopkins, *Scientific Advertising* (1923). Advertising is salesmanship, and it can be measured. Hopkins tracked his ads with coded coupons and dropped whatever didn't pay. His best-known story: touring a brewery client, he watched bottles being cleaned with live steam. Every brewer did the same, but none had said so. He put it in the ads and the brewery owned the claim. A process you think is boring may be your best reason to buy.

Robert Collier, *The Robert Collier Letter Book* (1931). Start where the reader's mind already is. She's having a conversation with herself about her dog, her skin or her energy. Join it on her terms, then steer it towards your product.

John Caples, *Tested Advertising Methods* (1932). A headline's job is to pick out the right reader, and changing a few words in it can change results several times over. His most famous ad, for a music course, opened on a man being laughed at as he sat down at the piano. It sold the embarrassment, not the lessons.

Rosser Reeves, *Reality in Advertising* (1961). The Unique Selling Proposition has three parts: a real proposition (buy this and you get this specific thing), one competitors don't or can't offer, and one strong enough to move a lot of people. Most "USPs" on DTC websites fail at least one.

David Ogilvy, *Confessions of an Advertising Man* (1963). Do your homework. Facts sell, and the more specific the fact, the harder it sells. His best-known car ad sold a quiet ride through one detail about a ticking clock.

Eugene Schwartz, *Breakthrough Advertising* (1966). Copy can't create desire; it can only channel desire that's already there. What you say first depends on how much the buyer knows (awareness) and how much the market has already heard (sophistication). Chapter 3 is built on this book.

Platforms have changed. People haven't.

Frameworks get you to good

The nine beats in chapter 8 won't make anyone a great writer. They stop you making the mistakes that sink most ads: no promise, a product named too early, proof that doesn't match the claim. Use the framework until you know why each beat is there. Then break it on purpose.

The hook doesn't sell. It selects.

Nobody buys a £28 tub of dog chews because of a three-second opening line. There isn't time to persuade anyone of anything. What the opening can do is two things:

- **Select.** Tell the right person “this is about you”, and tell everyone else to keep scrolling.
- **Sell the next line.** Make line two feel impossible to skip.

The persuading happens after that, in the problem, the promise, the mechanism, the proof and the offer.

On Meta this matters even more, because your opening is also your targeting. With broad targeting, Meta leans heavily on the ad itself to decide who sees it. It watches who stops, who keeps watching and who buys, then looks for more people like them. Open with a gimmick that stops everyone and the system learns to find people who stop for gimmicks.

Two things follow:

1. A good hook makes the wrong people scroll past. That's a feature, not a flaw.
2. More hooks on the same body change the door, not the room. You mostly reach the same people again. Reaching new people takes a new concept (chapter 4).

EXAMPLE

Two openers for the same probiotic chew Selects nobody: “Calling all dog lovers!” Selects someone: “You’ve changed his food four times since spring, and you still take three poo bags on a twenty-minute walk.”

The buyer

You can't make anyone want something. You can find what they already want and point it at your product.

Desire already exists. Your job is to channel it.

Most briefs start with the product ("we need ads for our probiotic") and work backwards to a reason anyone should care. That's how you get ads that read like the product page with a hook glued on top. Start from the other end: what does she already want badly enough to type it into Mumsnet at 11pm?

The test I run before writing anything: **can I find the desire outside the brand's own marketing?** In a review, a forum thread, a support email, a comment under a competitor's video. If I can't, I don't have a concept. I have a product description.

A dog probiotic's product page talks about "gut health and immunity". Owners don't. They want a walk they don't have to plan around. One Mumsnet poster summed it up: "It's all been a bit of a shock, my previous dog had a stomach of iron." That's the desire: normal, boring, back to how it should be.

The five levels of awareness

Schwartz sorted buyers by what they already know when your ad reaches them. Each level needs a different first line. Get the level wrong and the right person scrolls past, because the ad starts somewhere she isn't.

LEVEL	WHAT SHE KNOWS	WHAT THE FIRST LINE MUST DO	DOG PROBIOTIC EXAMPLE
Unaware	She doesn't see a problem	Point at something she sees every day and give it a meaning	"Three poo bags for one walk isn't normal."
Problem aware	She knows there's a problem but hasn't looked for a fix	Name it in her words, ideally through what she's changed to cope	"If your kitchen roll lives by the back door, keep watching."
Solution aware	She knows fixes exist and has probably tried some	Say why what she tried didn't work, and hint that something different does	"Stop changing your dog's food."
Product aware	She knows your product but isn't convinced	Answer the doubt that stopped her	"You've seen the ads saying chews are useless. Turn the tub round."
Most aware	She wants it and needs a reason to go now	Lead with the offer and an honest reason to act	"Three tubs, about 72p a day, and the first tub refunded even if it's opened."

Three rules come with the table:

- **There are far more people at the top than at the bottom.** Few people are ready to buy today; many have the problem and don't know it. Colder ads are harder to write and usually longer, but they're where growth comes from. Accounts that only write for the warm end run out of people.
- **Awareness belongs to the whole ad.** If the video speaks to a problem-aware owner, the thumbnail is a packshot for someone who already knows you and the headline says "20% off", you've made three ads at once and none of them lands. Put the awareness level at the top of every brief.
- **One market, every level.** The market sits at one stage of sophistication, but the people in it are spread across all five levels of awareness. That's the cluster in chapter 4.

The five stages of market sophistication

Awareness is about the buyer. Sophistication is about the market: how many similar promises has she already heard?

Stage 1: you're first. A plain statement works, because nobody has made the claim before. "A probiotic your dog thinks is a treat" would have been enough when nobody had seen one. Few UK DTC categories are still here; new formats, such as at-home gut tests for dogs, sometimes are.

Stage 2: bigger claims. Competitors copy you, so everyone shouts louder. "Supports digestion" becomes "the UK's number one" or "20 times more bacteria". In the UK, regulation usually stops the escalation early, which is one reason UK ads can sound timid.

Stage 3: the mechanism. The market has heard every claim and believes none of them. The winners explain *why* their product works: a new reason to believe an old promise. In dog supplements, "itching starts in the gut" was this move.

Stage 4: bigger mechanisms. Everyone has a mechanism, so mechanisms escalate and attack each other. When I coded several hundred long-running dog gut and itch ads from the Meta Ad Library, the category was here globally: chews baked so hot the bacteria die, liquids that absorb better, "it's the skin barrier, not the gut". UK brands were mostly at stage 2 or 3, but those stage-4 arguments were already running in pounds.

Stage 5: identity. The market is tired of mechanisms too. The ads that cut through sell who the buyer is, tied back to what the product does. Face serums are close: every brand quotes percentages, so the winners sell the routine and the kind of person who keeps it.

My rough reading of some UK categories: dog gut and itch supplements, stage 2 to 3 (3 to 4 globally); collagen, stage 4; skincare actives, 4 to 5; protein powder, 5. Check your own.

Find your stage in ten minutes. Search your category in the Ad Library and scroll the first 50 active ads. Most make the same plain claim: stage 2. Most explain how the product works: stage 3. They argue with each other's explanations: stage 4. Few mention how it works at all and they sell a feeling or a kind of person: stage 5.

Why a sophisticated market needs a new mechanism

Once she's heard the promise twenty times, saying it louder does nothing, and in the UK a bigger health claim is usually one you can't make anyway. What brings belief back is a new *reason* the promise is true.

A mechanism isn't a contradiction. "The energy of coffee without the crash" is a promise that still needs a mechanism: whatever makes the crash not happen.

Look for one in an ingredient and its amount, what you left out, how it's made or tested, the format (why a chew, an oil or a powder) or the timing (why it takes as long as it does).

Hopkins' steam-cleaned bottles were a mechanism. So is the line at the centre of the Dear Doggo spec. It claims no new science; it reframes why her food swaps failed: "A new food changes what goes into his stomach. It doesn't change the bacteria in his gut that have to digest it." That turns "probiotic" from a label into an explanation of something she's wondered about for months.

At stage 5 you still need the mechanism underneath. Identity without one is a mood board.

Your market is a cluster

Everyone with the problem is one big group. Inside it are smaller groups who each need a different ad.

This is the most useful idea in the playbook, and the one most accounts are missing.

Most brands picture one customer: “women aged 35 to 55 who love their dogs”. That person doesn’t help you write anything. Instead, picture everyone whose dog has a dodgy tummy as one large set. Inside it sit smaller groups who know different things, believe different things and stop scrolling for different things.

Why one ad can’t reach them all

The owner who thinks loose poos are normal needs to hear that they aren’t. The owner who’s tried four foods knows that already; tell her and you’ve lost her. The sceptic needs proof before she’ll hear a promise. The price-comparer wants the offer up front; the unaware owner would scroll straight past it.

These openings contradict each other. They can’t all be line one, so they can’t all be one ad.

That’s why you need new concepts, not more hooks

A **concept** is four things: a **persona** (which sub-group it’s for), an **angle** (the argument for buying), an **offer** (what she gets, on what terms) and a **format** (how it appears on screen). Change any one and you have a new concept, which gets its own ad set (chapter 13).

A **variation** keeps all four and changes something smaller: the hook line, the opening shot, the length, the captions, the music, the voice.

Variations get more out of a concept that works. Concepts reach people your ads have never spoken to. When a brand says “our ads have stopped working, we need more hooks”, it usually needs more concepts.

EXAMPLE

New concept or variation?

- Same script, new opening line: variation.
- Same script, cut to 30 seconds: variation.
- Same argument, told by a real customer on her phone instead of a voiceover: new concept (format).
- Same video, selling a three-tub bundle instead of one tub: new concept (offer).
- “No more pills in cheese” instead of “stop changing his food”: new concept (angle, and a different sub-group).

A dog probiotic, mapped

Here’s the cluster for a dog probiotic chew, built from the Dear Doggo research. Sizes are my estimates from how often each group turned up in reviews, forums and comments. Use them to prioritise, not as data.

Everyone whose dog has a dodgy tummy



Bigger bubble, bigger group. The warm end is small. Each group needs its own concept, and each concept gets its own ad set.

1. "It's just how he is"

- **What she's thinking:** "He's always had a funny tummy. Some dogs are just like that."
- **Awareness:** unaware.
- **Concept:** angle: what normal looks like, through signs she's stopped noticing. Hook: "Three poo bags for one walk isn't normal. Here's what is." Format: faceless voiceover over POV walk footage, each sign as an on-screen label.

2. "Noticed, not looking yet"

- **What she's thinking:** "It's a pain, but I haven't really done anything about it."
- **Awareness:** problem aware.
- **Concept:** angle: the workarounds she's quietly built into her day. Hook: "If your kitchen roll lives by the back door, keep watching." Format: POV phone footage with a voiceover.

3. “Four foods since spring”

- **What she’s thinking:** “I’ve done everything the vet and the internet told me. I’m sick of fixes that don’t fix anything.”
- **Awareness:** solution aware, and burned.
- **Concept:** angle: the food was never the problem; the bacteria that digest it are. Hook: “Stop changing your dog’s food.” Format: a two-to-three-minute voiceover over POV footage, because the problem beat carries it.

4. “Chews don’t work”

- **What she’s thinking:** “I’ve seen the ads. Half these chews are underdosed and baked to death.”
- **Awareness:** solution aware, and she’s heard the mechanisms argue.
- **Concept:** angle: open the label and show the numbers. Hook: “Before you buy any probiotic chew, turn the tub round.” Format: a label demo, each number as an on-screen card (only if the brand can back what the label implies).

5. “What does the vet say?”

- **What she’s thinking:** “I’m not giving him anything the vet hasn’t okayed.”
- **Awareness:** solution aware; trusts authority.
- **Concept:** angle: a daily chew alongside your vet’s advice, not instead of it. Hook: “A vet nurse on what to try before you change his food again.” Format: a real, named vet or vet nurse to camera, only if one genuinely backs the product. Never an invented “Dr”.

6. “He thinks it’s a treat”

- **What she’s thinking:** “Whatever it is, I’m not hiding another tablet in cheese.”
- **Awareness:** solution to product aware.
- **Concept:** angle: taste and ease. In my competitor research, over a hundred ads mentioned taste and not one led with it. Hook: “No more pills in cheese.” Format: a 15 to 20-second demo of the dog taking the chew from a hand, crunch turned up.

7. “Show me a real dog”

- **What she’s thinking:** “If it looks like a studio ad, I’m gone. Show me someone’s actual dog on an actual walk.”
- **Awareness:** any. She’s defined by what she trusts, not what she knows, so she overlaps every group.
- **Concept:** angle: borrowed from whichever group she overlaps, told by a real owner. Hook: the customer’s own first line, such as (illustrative) “This is Biscuit. In March he needed three bags a walk.” Format: UGC from a real customer’s phone.

8. “Is it on offer?”

- **What she’s thinking:** “I know what it is. It’s been in my basket twice. Is now the time?”
- **Awareness:** product aware to most aware.

- **Concept:** angle: the offer and an honest reason to buy now. Hook: “Three tubs, about 72p a day, and they’ll refund the first tub even if it’s opened.” Format: a clean bundle static with the per-day price and the guarantee.

How to map yours

1. **Write the big set in one line**, about the problem, not the product: “everyone whose dog has a dodgy tummy”, not “people who buy probiotics”.
2. **Tag every quote in your research by what the person is thinking**, not who they are. Age and gender aren’t sub-groups. Beliefs are.
3. **Group the quotes that share a thought**. Name each group with a line she might say herself.
4. **Give each group an awareness level and a size** (S, M or L), based on how often it shows up in your sources.
5. **Write the one belief each group is missing**. That’s the job of its ad.
6. **Draw it**. One big circle, sub-circles inside, overlaps where people belong to two groups.
7. **Write one concept per group**: angle, offer, format and a first hook. That’s the start of your concept roadmap (chapter 13).

Aim for five to eight groups. Fewer usually means you haven’t looked hard enough; more usually means you’re splitting hairs.

Which group to test first

Score each group from 1 to 3 on five things: **size** (how many people?), **proof** (do you hold the proof she needs?), **fit** (does your product’s real strength answer her missing belief?), **gap** (are competitors ignoring her?) and **cost** (can you make it this month?).

Test the highest total first. It’s usually a big group in the middle, problem or solution aware, where you hold the proof and competitors are busy elsewhere. Leave the unaware group until a winner is paying for your tests: unaware ads need more length and more attempts.

For the Dear Doggo spec I started with “Four foods since spring”. The research was richest there, owners’ reviews already answered her main doubt (“I have tried multiple different probiotics and this is finally one that works!”), and the food-swap angle sharpened the crowded “tried everything” argument. Next would be “He thinks it’s a treat”, because almost nobody leads with it.

The one-sub-group trap

Many accounts spend months talking to one or two bubbles without realising. The signs:

- **Lay out your last 20 ads and write a sub-group label next to each**. If more than half share a label, you’re in the trap.
- Every opening starts at the same awareness level, usually product aware (“Meet...”, “Our bestselling...”).
- The same kind of face or voice appears in every ad.

- New ads take spend from your old winner instead of adding to it.
- Cold-audience frequency creeps up while results slide.
- Raising the budget pushes cost per purchase up quickly.
- Hook tests look good for a few days, then fade.
- The comments under every ad ask the same question.

The fix isn't more hooks. It's a new concept for the group next door: one step colder or warmer, or the same level with a different missing belief.

Research

Find the words before you write them.

Writing the words isn't the hard part of an ad. Knowing which words to write is. Do the research properly and much of the script turns up on its own.

Don't ask an AI what your customers think. It gives you an average of everything ever written, which is roughly what your competitors already say. Use it to sort what real people wrote (chapter 14), not to invent it.

Where to look

SOURCE	WHAT IT GIVES YOU THAT NOTHING ELSE DOES
The brand's own reviews (site, Trustpilot, Amazon)	The exact words for the problem and the result
Competitors' reviews, especially 2 to 4 stars (on Amazon, the 3-star ones)	Objections, and what the whole category disappoints on
Brand and competitor websites	The claims, offers and guarantees the market is tired of
Meta Ad Library, longest-running competitor ads first	The angles and formats that survive, and the market's sophistication
Reddit and Mumsnet threads	How people talk before they've heard of any brand: failed fixes, resignation, guilt
Organic Instagram, Facebook and TikTok posts and comments	Live language, the questions people ask, the things they push back on
If the brand shares them: support emails, return reasons, post-purchase surveys, customer calls	Where the product lets people down, and the last doubt before buying

A few notes from doing this a lot:

- **Three-star reviews are the best value.** These people liked it enough to keep it, not enough to rave. Their "but" is your objection, already in their words.
- **Read the Ad Library for angles, not scripts.** A long-running ad proves it works for that brand, with its reviews, name and budget behind it, not that it would work for you. And a long run doesn't always mean big spend.
- **Organic comments are where objections live.** Under a creator's video about dog probiotics, the most-liked comment is often the exact doubt your ad has to answer.
- **Search threads and reviews** for "nearly didn't", "finally", "tried everything", "wish I'd", "worth it" and "is it just me".

What to pull out

From every source, you're hunting for six things:

1. **What she puts up with:** the workaround she's built into her life, usually without admitting it. It becomes the problem beat.
2. **What she tried first**, what it cost her and why she stopped. It becomes the objection beat.
3. **Why she nearly didn't buy.** It shapes the offer and the risk reversal.
4. **Her exact words** for the problem. They become the hook and the language of the whole script.
5. **What she actually wants:** not the product, the outcome, in her words. It becomes the promise.
6. **What made her start looking.** The trigger becomes your honest reason to act now.

Then make two decisions: which awareness level most of these people are at, and which stage of sophistication the market is in (chapter 3).

How long it takes

A good first pass for one product takes me about a working day: two hours on the brand's reviews and three competitors' reviews, an hour in the Ad Library, two hours on Reddit, Mumsnet and organic comments, and an hour sorting it all and making the two decisions.

Only got two hours? Do competitors' 3-star reviews and the Ad Library. No customers yet? Start with forums and competitors' reviews. Refresh the research every quarter, and whenever a concept dies and you don't know why.

Log it in a VOC bank

A voice-of-customer bank is a spreadsheet with one quote per row. My columns: **quote** (word for word, typos and all), **source link**, **date**, **star rating**, **type** (put up with, tried first, nearly didn't, her words, what she wants, trigger), **sub-group**, **awareness level**, **usable in an ad?** (yes, with care, no) and **used in** (which ad).

The rules: never tidy a quote; the moment you rephrase it, it's your words, not hers. Link every line so anyone can check it. Mark compliance as you go. Collect 50 to 100 lines before you write a new script.

Worked example: Dear Doggo

For the Dear Doggo spec I used public sources only: the brand's reviews, Trustpilot, Mumsnet and other UK forums, four competitors' reviews and several hundred competitor ads in the Ad Library. Here's what came out, by type, and where each line ended up.

EXAMPLE

What she puts up with. The brand's reviews said little about workarounds, so the forums did the work.

- "with constant trips to the vet for probiotic paste" (Trustpilot, 5 stars)
- "they were really soft, and squished and smeared when being picked up" (Mumsnet)

These fed the problem section: three poo bags on a walk, kitchen roll by the back door, the long way round so he can't reach the verge.

What she tried first.

- "Vet prescribed probiotics, still no better, so now considering another food change." (Mumsnet)
- "we had been through so many foods and dog was losing a lot of weight" (Mumsnet)

These became the hook ("Stop changing your dog's food") and the objection line about the vet's paste.

Why she nearly didn't.

- "In the first few weeks there was no difference" (Trustpilot, 5 stars)
- "My Jack Russell never refuses food usually not fussy and he s 10 yrs old but he won't eat these" (Trustpilot, 1 star)
- "They seem to be working but hard to tell without stopping them." (a competitor's 4-star review)

These became the offer (buy three tubs, because one stops just before it's had a fair chance) and the taste line (duck flavour, taken straight from your hand).

Her words.

- "stinky sticky poos"
- "No more liquid poos finally!"
- "my previous dog had a stomach of iron"

So the script says "poos". Never "stools", never "digestive upset".

What she wants.

- "gone are the days of matted tails and stinky sticky poos" (Trustpilot, 5 stars)

That became the promise: "Firm, boring, predictable poos."

The trigger was thin in the reviews (mostly "I was recommended by my friend"), so the script uses an honest seasonal one: Christmas, with everyone slipping him bits off their plate.

The two decisions. The strongest voice came from owners who were solution aware and burned. UK ads in the category sat around stage 2 to 3, with stage-4 attacks on chews arriving. So the script

needed a clear mechanism, and an answer to “chews are useless” before the viewer could raise it.

One more finding. Across the category, a large share of one-star reviews were about subscriptions and cancelling, not the product. That’s an offer insight: if cancelling really is easy, the ad should say so.

Red flags

- **Quotes that passed through a summarising tool.** Some research tools paraphrase without telling you. Check every line against the source, word for word.
- **Machine-translated quotes.** Fine for understanding, not for quoting.
- **US quotes in UK ads.** “Diarrhea”, “\$180” and “mom” tell a UK viewer the ad isn’t for her.
- **Review sources that disagree.** If the brand’s site shows 90% five stars and Trustpilot is split down the middle, build objections from the harsher one.
- **Reviews that look templated:** the same length, the same phrasing, oddly formal names, nothing below four stars.
- **Reviewers connected to the business,** such as someone who shares a surname with the director. Leave them out.
- **Outcome quotes that make medical claims.** “I’ve been able to cut her medication” may be true, but once it’s in your ad it’s your claim (chapter 15).
- **A bank full of five-star quotes.** You’ve collected compliments, not research.
- **Old quotes** about an old formula, price or pack.

The foundational doc

One document per brand. Every concept comes out of it.

The VOC bank is raw material. The foundational doc is the decisions you make from it. The writer, the editor and the media buyer all work from the same document, so nobody briefs an ad from memory. Keep it to six to ten pages and rewrite it every quarter.

The template

Copy this and fill it in.

TEMPLATE

- 1. Product truth sheet.** What it is, what's in it (with amounts), price per pack and per day, dose, how long it takes to work, guarantee terms word for word, delivery, subscription terms. What the brand can prove, and how.
- 2. The big set.** One line: "Everyone who..."
- 3. Cluster map.** The diagram, plus one line per sub-group: label, what she's thinking, awareness level, size, the belief she's missing.
- 4. Avatars.** Two to four (see below).
- 5. Pains.** Ranked by how often they appear, each with two or three verbatim quotes and links.
- 6. Desires.** What she actually wants, in her words. Ranked.
- 7. Objections.** Ranked. For each one: the quote, our answer, and the proof we hold for that answer.
- 8. Awareness and sophistication.** Where most of the market sits, the evidence, and what it means for first lines.
- 9. Claims the market is tired of.** The phrases every competitor uses. We don't lead with any of them.
- 10. Mechanisms and proof.** Every mechanism we can explain truthfully, and every piece of proof we hold, from strongest to weakest.
- 11. Offer facts.** Bundles, the price frames we can use, guarantee wording, honest reasons to act now (with dates).
- 12. Belief chain.** What she must believe, in order, before she buys. One chain per main sub-group.
- 13. Words.** Her words we use. Our words we ban. Claims we can't make, and the safe version of each.
- 14. Concept roadmap.** The next six to ten concepts, in test order (chapter 13).

Avatars

An avatar isn't a demographic. "Women 35 to 55" tells a writer nothing. An avatar is a sub-group with a face on it: one specific person, built from many real quotes, so the writer can hear her.

Write each on half a page: a name and situation; what she's put up with and for how long; what she's tried and what it cost her; three things she'd say, copied from the VOC bank; what she wants; what's stopping her; her awareness level and sub-group; and which proof, face and voice she'd trust.

EXAMPLE

Avatar: the burned owner (a composite built from the research, not a real person) Jo, 38, near Leeds, with a two-year-old cockapoo. Four foods since spring, each one about £40 and a fortnight of hope. The vet's paste helped for a few days. She takes three poo bags on a twenty-minute walk and goes the long way round so he can't get to the verge. She's seen ads for probiotic chews and assumed they were nonsense. What she wants: a normal dog and a boring walk. What's stopping her: "I've wasted enough money." Solution aware. She trusts other owners more than brands, and a real dog more than a polished one.

The belief chain

A belief chain is the list of things she must believe, in order, before she'll buy. Each belief rests on the one before. Skip a link and everything after it falls, however good the lines are. The order of the chain is the order of your script: write the chain and the script is half written.

Here's the chain for the burned owner, with the beat and the line from the Dear Doggo spec that delivers each link.

SHE MUST BELIEVE	BEAT	THE LINE THAT DOES IT
1. This is about me and my dog	Hook	"You've done it four times since spring, and you still take three poo bags on a twenty-minute walk."
2. It's worth sorting; it isn't just how he is	Problem	"Another forty quid, another week of crossed fingers, and another week of him feeling rubbish."
3. "Sorted" can look ordinary	Promise	"Firm, boring, predictable poos. Walks you don't have to plan around."
4. The food was never the problem	Mechanism	"A new food changes what goes into his stomach. It doesn't change the bacteria in his gut that have to digest it."
5. A daily chew can actually do this	Mechanism, objection	"Eight billion CFU of probiotics in every two chews." / "The count's printed on the label."
6. My dog will actually eat it	Mechanism	"It's duck flavoured, so he'll take it straight from your hand."
7. It worked for owners like me	Proof	"having been on them for a week I can already see a difference!"
8. Three tubs is the sensible buy	Offer	"Buy one, and you'll stop right before it's had a fair chance."
9. I won't lose out if it doesn't work	Risk reversal	"If you're not happy, they'll refund your first tub. Even opened."
10. Now is a good time	Offer, CTA	"Christmas, with everyone slipping him bits off their plate, is ten weeks away."

Write a chain for each sub-group you plan to test. They start in different places. The unaware owner needs three extra links before she believes it's worth sorting. The price-comparer already believes everything up to link 7.

The offer

The best script in the world can't save an offer nobody wants.

When ads stop working, the instinct is to blame the creative. Often the creative is fine: people watch, click and don't find a good enough reason to buy today.

The offer isn't just the discount. It's the whole deal as she sees it: what she gets, what it costs her, what happens if it doesn't work, why now and how much effort it takes. If one of those is weak, the script can't make up for it.

What makes an offer easy to say yes to

- **She can say what she gets in one breath.** "Three months of chews he thinks are treats", not "a 3-pack of Daily Probiotic Chews".
- **The price is framed against her life,** not against your old price.
- **The risk sits with the brand.** The guarantee covers her real fear.
- **The timing makes sense.** There's an honest reason to start now rather than in March.
- **It's easy.** One chew, no mixing, cancel any time.

Four ways to frame the price

FRAME	EXAMPLE
Per day	"About 72p a day for a dog under 20 kilos."
Against what she's already spending	"Probably less than you've spent on food swaps this year."
Against the cost of not fixing it	"One more new bag of food is forty quid and another fortnight of guessing."
In effort, not money	"One chew from your hand. He'll think it's a treat."

A discount compares you with your old price. These compare you with her life.

Bundles that follow the mechanism

If the product needs time to work, the single-pack buyer is set up to fail. She stops at day 30, sees little change and writes a one-star review. Tie the bundle to how the product works and the bigger pack stops being an upsell; it becomes the honest recommendation.

The Dear Doggo spec does this in three lines: the brand's own guidance says best results come at ninety days, one tub lasts a month, so buy one and you'll stop right before it's had a fair chance.

Guarantees

A strong guarantee names a result (not just “satisfaction”), runs as long as the product takes to work, answers the real fear from your research and matches the brand’s actual terms, word for word.

The real fear is where research pays off. In dog chews, one of the most common doubts is “my dog won’t eat it”. When I did the research, Dear Doggo’s guarantee excluded taste refusal. A guarantee that covered it would answer that objection head on. That’s a business decision, so it goes to the brand as a recommendation, not into the script as a line. Never write a guarantee the terms don’t support.

Honest reasons to act now

Fake urgency is easy to spot, and in the UK it can break consumer law. Real urgency comes with a date or a number:

- **The season:** Christmas leftovers for gut chews, bonfire night for calming chews, the heating going on for dry skin.
- **The batch:** “We make 600 tins a batch. The next one lands on 14 November.”
- **A real price change**, with its date.
- **The mechanism:** if it takes ninety days, every week she waits is a week later she sees a difference.

No real reason? Don’t invent one. Look harder at the season or the problem.

Subscriptions are an objection in this category

In pet and beauty, “I couldn’t cancel” is one of the most common one-star complaints. If the brand really does let people skip, pause or cancel in a couple of clicks, and sends a reminder before each charge, say so. If it doesn’t, that’s a fix for the brand before it’s a line for the ad.

How the offer changes the script

- **The offer decides which beats you can write.** No guarantee, no risk reversal. No bundle, no “get three”.
- **The terms set the limits of the copy.** The ad can’t promise more than the policy delivers.
- **The offer can contradict the mechanism.** A product that needs ninety days, sold as a single month, argues against itself.
- **Exclusions become objections.** If the guarantee excludes taste, expect “what if he won’t eat it?” in the comments.
- **A weak offer can’t be written around.** Fix it first. The changes are often small: promoting a three-pack that already exists, rewording a guarantee, a reminder email before each renewal.

Run the sum before any discount

An illustrative example. A tub sells for £30 and costs £15 all-in to make, pack and ship. On the first order you can spend up to £15 to win a customer and break even, so your break-even ROAS is 2.

Take 25% off. The price drops to £22.50, your costs stay at £15, and you can now afford only £7.50 per customer. Break-even ROAS rises to 3.

If the ROAS a promotion needs isn't realistic, change the offer (a bundle, a gift people actually want, a better guarantee) rather than blaming the ads.

The nine beats

Every ad that sells does these nine things, roughly in this order.

1. **Hook:** selects the right person and sells the next line.
2. **Problem:** names what it's costing her.
3. **Promise:** says what she gets, in her words.
4. **Mechanism:** explains why it works.
5. **Objection:** answers the doubt she brought with her.
6. **Proof:** shows it's true.
7. **Offer:** what she's buying, framed against her life.
8. **Risk reversal:** what happens if it doesn't work.
9. **CTA:** what to do now, and why today.

Not every ad has room for all nine; a 15-second ad might carry three. Cut beats on purpose, and know which ones you've cut. The example lines come from the Dear Doggo spec, printed in full in chapter 17.

1. Hook

Its job: pick out one sub-group and make line two impossible to skip. It doesn't persuade.

How to write it: start from her words in the VOC bank, specific enough that the wrong person scrolls past. Write the visual, the on-screen text and the spoken line together (chapter 10). Write it after the body, so you know what line two is.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ A label instead of a moment ("Calling all dog owners!").
- ✗ Shock that stops everyone and selects no one.
- ✗ A hook that makes no sense next to line two.

Example: "Stop changing your dog's food. You've done it four times since spring, and you still take three poo bags on a twenty-minute walk."

Check: would the wrong person happily scroll past, and the right one feel caught out?

2. Problem

Its job: make her recognise her own life, so the rest of the ad feels like it's about her.

How to write it: name what she's changed to cope, not just the symptom she already knows. "Runny poos" is a symptom; "you take the long way round" is a life she's rearranged. Escalate, so each line costs

her a little more and the last one stings. One person, one problem, no solution yet. Describe, don't pity: one true detail said kindly feels like being understood.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Listing symptoms she already knows.
- ✗ Lines you could shuffle without changing anything. That's a list, not an escalation.
- ✗ Two people with two different problems.
- ✗ Pity: describing her or her dog as a sufferer.

Example: "There's a roll of kitchen roll by the back door that's got nothing to do with spills."

Check: does it name something she's put up with that she's never heard an ad say out loud?

3. Promise

Its job: tell her, in one sentence, what she gets. It's the beat most often missing.

How to write it: the outcome as she'd describe it, at a size you can prove. Put it before the mechanism. People drop off as an ad plays, so give everyone the outcome first and save the explanation for those still watching.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ No promise: straight from the problem into the science.
- ✗ Five promises, so none of them lands.
- ✗ A feature dressed up as a promise ("eight billion CFU" is a feature).
- ✗ A promise bigger than your proof, or bigger than the law allows.

Example: "What you actually want is boring. Firm, boring, predictable poos. Walks you don't have to plan around."

Check: after one listen, could she repeat what she gets in her own words?

4. Mechanism

Its job: give her a reason to believe the promise, and a reason this is different from what she tried.

How to write it: explain the cause first, then bring in the product as the answer to it. In plain words, link what it is, what that means for her and why it works. Keep the core to one idea she could repeat to her partner. Simplify the science; don't hide it.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Jargon before the promise.
- ✗ A contradiction pretending to be a mechanism (“energy without the crash”).
- ✗ Naming the product first, so she files it next to every similar product.
- ✗ A mechanism you can’t back up.

Example: “A new food changes what goes into his stomach. It doesn’t change the bacteria in his gut that have to digest it.”

Check: could she explain in one sentence why this works when the last thing didn’t?

5. Objection

Its job: answer the doubt she brought with her, before she has to raise it.

How to write it: take it from the research: what she tried, why she nearly didn’t buy, what other ads have told her. Put the doubt in her words, then answer it with a reason, not reassurance. Only handle objections people actually have. “Vegan and cruelty-free” answers a question most dog owners weren’t asking.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Answering objections nobody has.
- ✗ “Trust us” instead of a reason.
- ✗ Knocking competitors or vets (chapter 15).

Example: “And yes, you’ll have seen the ads saying chews are useless. Turn the tub round. The count’s printed on the label.”

Check: is this the doubt that turns up most in your 3–star reviews?

6. Proof

Its job: show that the promise is true for people like her.

How to write it: use the strongest proof you actually hold. From strongest to weakest:

- 1. Seeing it happen:** a demonstration on camera.
- 2. Independent evidence:** a lab test, a certification, real press.
- 3. Someone like her, with specifics:** a named customer with the same kind of dog, problem and timeline. In pet and beauty this often beats a big number.
- 4. Volume, with a real figure:** “1,214 reviews” (illustrative) beats “thousands”.
- 5. The mechanism, explained well:** not proof on its own, but it makes the claim believable.
- 6. The brand’s own word:** the weakest, unless the founder is a genuine expert.

Match the proof to the claim. A modest claim with strong proof beats a big claim with weak proof. Put real reviews on screen, word for word.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ “Customers love it.”
- ✗ Paraphrased or invented reviews.
- ✗ Proof from someone she can’t relate to: a US owner in a UK ad, a puppy in an older-dog ad.

Example: “And a Shih Tzu owner put it better than we ever could: ‘gone are the days of matted tails and stinky sticky poos.’”

Check: would a sceptical friend accept this as evidence, or call it marketing?

7. Offer

Its job: tell her exactly what she’s buying and why it’s good value in her terms.

How to write it: name the product here if you haven’t yet. Recommend the pack that fits the mechanism and say why. Frame the price against her life (chapter 7). Keep it short.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ “Shop now” with no offer at all.
- ✗ Every pack size and discount code at once.
- ✗ Terms that don’t match the website.

Example: “Their own guidance is ninety days for the best results. One tub lasts a month. Buy one, and you’ll stop right before it’s had a fair chance.”

Check: does she know what to buy, why that one, and what it costs per day?

8. Risk reversal

Its job: remove the last reason to wait.

How to write it: one line, in plain words that match the real policy. If the guarantee covers something people worry about, such as an opened pack, say so.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ “30-day money-back guarantee”, said the way every brand says it.
- ✗ A guarantee the terms don’t support.

Example: “Give him one every day for thirty days. If you’re not happy, they’ll refund your first tub. Even opened.”

Check: does the risk now sit more with the brand than with her?

9. CTA

Its job: make the next step obvious, small and worth doing today.

How to write it: name the action, say what happens next, make the effort feel small and give a reason for now. Then end on a line about the life she wants, not the button.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ “Learn more” and nothing else.
- ✗ Three different actions at once.
- ✗ A reason for now that isn’t true.

Example: “Tap the link, pick three tubs, and give him his first one tonight. He’ll think it’s a treat. Here’s to one poo bag.”

Check: does she know exactly what to tap, what to pick and when to start?

Bridges: the joins between beats

Every line has one job: get the next line watched. Viewers are mostly lost at the joins, not halfway through a beat. Three joins do most of the damage.

- **Hook to problem.** Teams write twenty hooks and glue every one onto the same body. Each reads well alone; half make no sense next to line two. Read every hook aloud with line two straight after it.
- **Mechanism to product.** People feel the exact moment a video turns into a pitch, and that’s when they leave. Bring the product in as the answer to a cause she now understands. The spec does it like this: “You could buy a probiotic, a prebiotic and a tub of pumpkin powder, and stir them into his dinner every night. Plenty of people do. Or he can have one chew.”
- **Proof to offer.** Jumping from a customer’s words to “Shop now, 20% off” feels like a door slamming. Link them: “And if you’re going to try them, get three tubs.”

A bridge line can look like nothing on paper: “Here’s why the food swaps keep failing.” It earns its place by carrying people across the gap.

The test: cover the hook and read from line two. Does it still make sense? Then check every pair of neighbouring lines: does the second follow from the first?

Write each length on purpose

LENGTH	WHAT FITS (A ROUGH GUIDE)
15 seconds	Hook, one line of problem, CTA. Or a pure demo.
30 seconds	Add a one-line promise and one piece of proof.

LENGTH**WHAT FITS (A ROUGH GUIDE)**

45 to 75 seconds All nine beats, a line or two each.

2 minutes or more The problem becomes a scene, the mechanism gets room, more proof, sometimes a second ask.

Long ads tend to suit colder audiences, who need more links in the belief chain. Write each length as its own script. A three-minute ad chopped to 45 seconds keeps the wrong bridges and loses the right ones.

Writing rules

Write the way she talks. Then read it out loud.

Use her words, not yours

Marketing words make the viewer translate. “Digestive support” has to become “the bag situation on walks” in her head, and most people won’t bother. Her words skip that step. Keep a list of banned words in the foundational doc: the ones on your packaging that nobody says out loud.

Be specific

Adjectives are opinions, and any competitor can use them, so they carry no information. Hopkins made the point a century ago: general claims leave no mark, specific ones get believed. Swap every adjective for one of these:

- a number (“four foods”);
- a time (“since spring”);
- a place or object (“the verge”, “the back door”);
- a name (“a Shih Tzu owner”);
- a physical detail (“straight from your hand”).

One idea per line

A spoken ad is heard once, at the viewer’s speed, not yours. If a line carries two ideas, split it. Short lines also give the editor places to cut.

Read it out loud

Stand up and read the script at the speed you’d say it. Every stumble is a line to fix. Every time you run out of breath, split the sentence. Every line you’d be embarrassed to say to a friend, rewrite. It takes five minutes and finds more than a review meeting.

Cut the throat-clearing

The first sentence you write is usually a warm-up. “As dog owners, we all want the best for our pets” tells her nothing. Delete from the top until removing the next line would lose something.

Small things that make it sound human

- Contractions: “you’ve”, “don’t”, “he’ll”.
- Mixed sentence lengths. All short sounds robotic; all long sounds like a leaflet.
- The word that matters at the end of the line: “Here’s to one poo bag.”

- “You” for most scripts, “I” in the past tense for stories.
- British words and prices: “quid”, “kitchen roll”, “the vet”, £.
- If a bright 12-year-old couldn’t follow it, simplify.

Before and after

BEFORE

~~“Our premium probiotic formula supports optimal digestive health for your furry friend.”~~

AFTER

“One chew a day, made to support a healthy gut. He’ll think it’s a treat.”

BEFORE

~~“As pet parents, we all know how much our dogs mean to us. That’s why we created our range of natural supplements.”~~

AFTER

“He’s eaten grass on every walk this week.”

BEFORE

~~“Struggling with flaky skin? Our lightweight serum deeply nourishes and soothes.”~~

AFTER

“Three drops at night. It’s an oil, so it does its work while you sleep, not while you’re in a meeting.”

BEFORE

~~“Low energy? Our advanced formula supports all-day vitality.”~~

AFTER

“It’s 3pm and you’ve read the same email four times. This has magnesium, which contributes to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue.”

The last one ends on an authorised health claim (chapter 15). The life does the selling; the claim stays modest.

Hooks

Three seconds to find the right person and make her want the next line.

Three layers, one message

A hook isn't just a line. It's three things she takes in at once:

- **What she sees:** the first frame. A visual event (a hand, a mess, a dog mid-act) beats a logo.
- **What she reads:** the on-screen text. Plenty of people watch with the sound off.
- **What she hears:** the spoken line, and the sound underneath it.

All three must make the same point. The first line of the primary text and the headline are hooks too, so keep them on the same message and awareness level.

It's the language, more than the polish, that makes something feel like an ad. A grainy phone video full of marketing words still reads as one. Film three opening shots and write three opening lines, and you have nine hooks from one shoot.

Ten hook types

1. **The workaround.** What she's changed to cope. "If your kitchen roll lives by the back door, keep watching." Beauty: "You've stopped wearing black because of what lands on your shoulders."
2. **The instruction.** Tell her to stop something she's doing. "Stop changing your dog's food."
3. **The tally.** Count what she's tried. "Four foods since spring." Beauty: "Six creams in the drawer. Not one of them finished."
4. **The normal check.** Something she thinks is normal isn't. "Three poo bags for one walk isn't normal." Describe; never diagnose.
5. **The customer's line.** A real review, word for word, on screen: "gone are the days of matted tails and stinky sticky poos", from a Shih Tzu owner. Only with a genuine review you have permission to use.
6. **The number.** "Eight billion. That's the number to look for on the back of the tub."
7. **The sceptic's question.** Say her doubt first. "Do probiotic chews actually do anything? Fair question." Beauty: "It's £23 for a small bottle of oil. Here's why people keep reordering."
8. **The observer.** Someone who sees a lot of cases. "I walk eleven dogs a week. I can tell which ones have a dodgy tummy before we reach the park." Only with a real dog walker, groomer or vet nurse.
9. **The moment.** The day she noticed. "Boxing Day. Someone gave him the turkey skin."
10. **The demo.** No words. Two seconds of the chew snapping, the dog taking it, a drop landing on skin. Then cut to the problem.

Write 20, pick 5

1. Choose the sub-group and reread her quotes.
2. Write at least 20 hooks across at least five types. Don't judge yet.
3. Cut any a competitor could post unchanged, and any that would stop everyone.
4. Read each survivor aloud with line two. Cut any that jump.
5. Cut any opener that's already everywhere in your category's Ad Library.
6. Score the rest from 1 to 3: would she recognise herself? Is it specific? Does it pull into line two? Is it clear in three seconds with the sound off?
7. Keep the top five: one main ad and four variations. That's one ad set (chapter 13).

Pre-test for free. Post hook variations as Instagram trial reels, which go to non-followers first, and read the retention graph. A cliff in the first two seconds means the hook; a slide halfway means the bridge.

One argument, three formats

Write the argument first. Then let the heaviest beat choose the format.

“Let’s do a UGC ad” is a decision made too early. UGC doesn’t sell; the argument inside it does. Write the script, find the beat doing most of the persuading, and pick the format that carries that beat best.

IF THE HEAVIEST BEAT IS ...

BUILD THE AD AROUND ...

Proof	Real customers, or real reviews on screen
Mechanism	A demo, or a simple animation of what a camera can’t film
Problem	POV phone footage with a voiceover
Offer	A clean static or bundle card

Two questions settle most cases. Does this beat need a believable human face? Does it need to show something a camera can’t film? When the format can’t carry the heaviest beat, the ad goes back to the editor three times, and the edit was never the problem.

The Dear Doggo argument, three ways

The argument: four food changes haven’t worked. The food was never the problem; the bacteria that digest it are. One chew a day tops them up, and he’ll eat it. Owners like you saw a difference. Buy three tubs, because it takes ninety days, and the first tub is refundable.

(a) Faceless voiceover over POV phone footage

Heaviest beat: the problem. Her rearranged life is easiest to show from her eye level, and a voice can say things a face would struggle to say on camera. This was the spec’s main format.

- **Voice:** female, British, 30 to 45, warm and a bit dry.
- **Footage:** a muddy verge, three bags tied to the lead, kitchen roll by the back door, half-used food bags, the dog taking a chew from a hand.
- **Mechanism:** one simple animated scene of gut bacteria, because no camera can film that.
- **Proof:** real reviews on white cards, word for word.
- **Length:** two and a half to three minutes, with a 60 to 75-second version written separately.

EXAMPLE

Opening shot list (first 12 seconds)

- 0–2s: Lead in hand, three tied poo bags swinging. Text: 4 FOODS SINCE SPRING.
- 2–4s: Text: STILL 3 POO BAGS A WALK. Voice: “Stop changing your dog’s food.”
- 4–7s: Four food bags on the kitchen floor, crossed off one by one.
- 7–9s: The dog pulling towards a verge, desaturated.
- 9–12s: Kitchen roll on a hook by the back door. Voice: “...that’s got nothing to do with spills.”

(b) A real owner, talking to camera

Heaviest beat: proof. Now the argument rests on a person: her dog, her walks, her result. It’s a new concept (a new format), so it gets its own ad set.

- **Who:** a real customer, or a creator who has genuinely used it with her own dog for weeks. Never an actor presenting someone else’s experience as her own.
- **Brief:** give her the beats and her own words back from the VOC bank, not a script to read. That way it sounds like her.
- **Shape:** first person, past tense, told as a story. A story needs something at stake (the ruined walks, the money wasted), and the product should arrive the way it did in her life, not as a pitch.
- **Opening, as she might say it (illustrative):** “We changed Biscuit’s food four times this year. I was taking three bags on every walk.”
- **Proof:** her dog, on camera, now.

(c) A static, text-led

Statics can’t control what she reads first and can’t use sound, so the image has one job: select her and earn a tap on “See more”. The argument lives in the primary text.

EXAMPLE

Long-copy static for the burned owner Image: a phone photo of a lead hanging by the back door, three poo bags tied to it. Overlay: Four foods since spring. Still three bags a walk. Primary text (opening): “You’ve changed his food four times since spring. Every bag was forty quid and a fortnight of crossed fingers. Here’s the bit nobody tells you: a new food changes what goes into his stomach. It doesn’t change the bacteria that have to digest it...” [continues through the chew, one real review, the three-tub offer and the guarantee] Headline: Why food swaps don’t settle a sensitive tummy

A second static, for the price-comparer, is pure offer: three tubs, “about 72p a day”, “first tub refunded, even opened”, and one real review. Different heaviest beat, different format.

The edit

How the long-running pet ads are cut, and a checklist for yours.

I measured 22 long-running video ads from UK and US pet supplement and food brands, timing every cut with scene-detection software. One caution: long-running doesn't always mean high spend. But these ads have survived, and they share a lot.

What they have in common

- **Pace.** A new shot about every 2.5 seconds (the median across all 22). Long ads keep the pace: the longest, at 172 seconds, had 85 cuts, roughly one every two seconds. The exception is a founder or expert talking to camera, where shots run six or seven seconds because the face is the proof.
- **First frame.** A visual event and big text, together, from the first second.
- **Captions.** The most common style among the voiceover ads: bold capitals, two or three words at a time, white with a dark outline, one keyword highlighted in colour. The other two styles were full sentences in a rounded coloured box, and small white sentences with a shadow.
- **Label cards.** Ingredients and numbers in coloured boxes next to the product.
- **The “tried” list.** Failed fixes appearing one by one, each crossed out.
- **A pinned title** in long ads, so anyone joining late knows what it's about.
- **Emoji and label pop-ups, sparingly.** A couple per ad, used as punctuation.
- **Real reviews on screen,** word for word, usually on a white card with stars.
- **A clear end card:** either the product in hand with a short line, or an advertorial-style card with a headline, a review, the offer and a button.
- **Aspect ratios.** Mostly 9:16, but several of the longest runners were 1:1 or 4:5. Export all three.

Two things I add to every edit:

- **Desaturate the bad moments.** Problem shots go muted, and colour comes back when the fix arrives. Viewers feel the turn without being told.
- **Sound design.** The crunch of the chew, the rustle of a poo bag, room tone under the voice. Music sits low.

When a clip runs long, cut to a punched-in version of the same shot (around 110%) at a sentence break. It reads as a new shot.

CHECKLIST

- ☐ First frame has a visual event and big text.
- ☐ On-screen text and spoken line make the same point.
- ☐ A new shot every 2 to 2.5 seconds (slower only for a face that's carrying proof).

- ☐ Captions show a few words at a time, with one highlighted keyword.
- ☐ Problem shots desaturated; colour returns with the fix.
- ☐ The mechanism is shown, not just said.
- ☐ Real reviews on screen, word for word, with their source.
- ☐ Emoji and pop-ups used no more than a couple of times.
- ☐ Sound design under the voice; music doesn't fight the words.
- ☐ The product appears after the bridge, not in the first seconds.
- ☐ A clear end card with the offer and the action.
- ☐ A disclaimer line where one is needed.
- ☐ Exported in 9:16, 4:5 and 1:1.

Testing and iterating

Nobody can pick winners in advance. Set up tests so every result tells you what to make next.

The structure

- **One testing campaign**, with budgets set at ad set level (ABO), optimised for purchases, broad targeting.
- **One ad set per concept**, each with its own budget, so every concept gets a fair spend. With one campaign budget, Meta often pours the money into one ad set and the others never really get tested.
- **Three to five ads per ad set**. I build five: the main ad and four variations on the hook, the opening and the length.
- **One creative per ad**. Don't bundle several videos into one ad while testing, or you won't know which did the work.
- **Winners graduate** to your main campaign, using the same post so the likes and comments come with them.

HOW A TEST IS SET UP

Testing campaign

ABO · purchases · broad targeting

CONCEPT A

Four foods since spring
Ad set · e.g. £18 a day

CONCEPT B

He thinks it's a treat
Ad set · e.g. £18 a day

CONCEPT C

Is it on offer?
Ad set · e.g. £18 a day

Main ad

Main ad

Main ad

Hook 2

Hook 2

Hook 2

Hook 3

Hook 3

Hook 3

New opening

New opening

New opening

Shorter version

Shorter version

Shorter version

**Main
campaign**
Winners move
here

Budget and kill rule

Give each ad set enough budget to reach its kill line in about a week. A simple formula: daily budget = (3 × target cost per purchase) ÷ 5. With a £30 target, that's about £18 a day.

Agree the kill rule before launch and write it down, so nobody argues with a result they don't like. An example, with a £30 target:

- When a concept has spent three times the target (£90):
- no purchases: switch it off;
- one or two: let it run to five times the target (£150), then decide;
- three or more: it's at or under target, so keep it and start iterating.
- Don't judge on day one. Weekdays and weekends sell differently, and few people buy on their first view.
- Don't edit an ad set mid-test. Edits reset its learning.

Reading results

Judge winners on two things: purchases at or under target over a fair window, and where Meta chooses to spend. Inside an ad set, Meta moves money towards the ad it expects to sell. An ad that keeps winning spend and keeps selling is your main ad. An ad that got almost no spend isn't a loser; it's untested.

Use the other numbers to diagnose, never to crown a winner:

WHAT YOU SEE

WHAT TO CHANGE

Few people get past the first three seconds

The opening: shot, line or sound

A good opening, then a big drop soon after

The bridge from hook to problem

Watched, clicked, didn't buy

The offer or the landing page

Meta won't spend on any ad in the set

Usually the concept, not the edit

Cold frequency above about 2, results sliding

More concepts, not more budget

Iterating a winner

Cheapest first:

1. New hooks, across all three layers.
2. New openings: the first three to five seconds.
3. New lengths, written as new scripts, not chopped.
4. New faces and voices: an older owner, another region, a male voice.
5. New formats: the same argument as UGC, a static or a demo.
6. The group next door: the same angle, adjusted for the neighbouring sub-group on your map.

And check your graveyard. Filter Ads Manager to inactive ads, sort by lifetime spend and relaunch old winners with new hooks.

The concept roadmap

The roadmap is a running list of your next concepts, in order, so the next test is always chosen before the current one ends. My rule: never launch a test without the next two concepts already briefed.

EXAMPLE

Roadmap for the Dear Doggo spec (illustrative)

#	SUB-GROUP	ANGLE	OFFER	FORMAT	FIRST HOOK
1	Four foods since spring	The food was never the problem	3 tubs + guarantee	Voiceover + POV	"Stop changing your dog's food."
2	He thinks it's a treat	No more pills in cheese	1 tub	Demo, 20s	"No more pills in cheese."
3	Show me a real dog	As I, told by a customer	3 tubs	UGC	Her own first line
4	Chews don't work	Turn the tub round	3 tubs	Label demo	"Before you buy any probiotic chew, turn the tub round."
5	Is it on offer?	About 72p a day	3 tubs + guarantee	Static	"Three tubs, about 72p a day."
6	Noticed, not looking yet	The workarounds	1 tub	Voiceover + POV	"If your kitchen roll lives by the back door, keep watching."

How many concepts a month?

It depends on your target cost per purchase and how much of your spend goes on testing. Many brands put between a fifth and a third of spend into testing. Less than that and you stop finding new winners; more and you starve the ones you have. A rough guide, assuming a £25 to £40 target and about a quarter of spend on testing:

MONTHLY META SPEND	NEW CONCEPTS A MONTH	NEW ADS (FIVE PER CONCEPT)
£5k to £10k	2 to 4	10 to 20
£10k to £30k	4 to 8	20 to 40
£30k to £75k	8 to 12	40 to 60
£75k and up	12 or more	60 or more

Iterations on winners come on top. Treat this as a starting point, not a rule. And once a month, hold your live concepts up against the cluster map: which bubbles have you spoken to, and which haven't you?

Using AI without faking anything

AI is a research assistant and a first-draft machine. It is never a customer.

What I use it for

- **Sorting research.** Grouping hundreds of quotes by type and sub-group. I ask it to find and quote, with links, never to imagine what customers might say. Then I check each quote against its source.
- **Checking scripts** against the nine beats and the checklist in chapter 16.
- **Options to choose from:** twenty hook lines, five promise lines.
- **Rewriting a winner** into another person, tense, length or format, with clear instructions on which beats to shorten or stretch.
- **Spotting robotic writing:** no contractions, every sentence the same length, “it’s not this, it’s that” over and over.

Give it your research and your foundational doc, and tell it to use only those. Left alone it drifts towards the average, and if it has no mechanism it will invent one. The judgement stays with you: which of the twenty lines is the one.

What I never use it for

- **Fake customers.** No AI testimonials. No AI faces or voices presented as real customers. No owner stories that didn’t happen.
- **Invented reviews, numbers, studies or vets.**
- **Paraphrased reviews dressed up as quotes.** Real reviews are quoted word for word, with permission where needed.
- **Before-and-after images.**
- **Copying a real person’s face or voice** without their written consent.

If AI-generated scenes are used, for example as background footage in a spec ad, they’re labelled and never passed off as a real customer or a real result. The Dear Doggo spec carried a line on every frame saying it was an unofficial concept, used AI-generated scenes and wasn’t affiliated with the brand.

This matters beyond the rules. Buyers are already suspicious: one skincare review I collected admitted the writer had been “sceptical it was AI crap”. Every fake makes the real proof worth less.

UK rules in one page

Persuasive and compliant aren't opposites. Vivid problem, modest claim, strong proof.

A practical summary, not legal advice. Check the CAP Code at asa.org.uk, and use CAP's free Copy Advice service when you're unsure.

All brands

- The CAP Code covers paid social. Ads mustn't mislead, and you need evidence for any objective claim before the ad runs.
- Testimonials must be genuine and held on file. A claim inside a testimonial counts as your claim.
- Fake reviews, and hiding that reviews were incentivised, are banned under the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024. The CMA can now fine businesses directly.
- "Only 3 left", "ends tonight", "was/now" prices and "free" must all be true.
- Meta's own policy: don't assert or imply that you know the viewer's health or other personal attributes ("Your eczema..."). First-person stories and general statements are safer.

Food supplements

- Only authorised health claims from the GB nutrition and health claims register, worded close to how they're authorised.
- No claims to prevent, treat or cure any disease.

Pet products

- A dog chew is usually sold as a feed. Present it as treating or preventing disease and it's treated as a veterinary medicine, which needs VMD authorisation.
- Stay with "supports" or "maintains" normal function in healthy animals. Adding "may help" doesn't rescue a medicinal claim.
- Don't name diseases, or promise to stop symptoms such as itching.
- Testimonials that make medicinal claims become your claims. Vets on camera aren't exempt.
- No before-and-after images of an animal with a visible health condition.
- Don't present the product as an alternative to a prescription medicine, and don't knock vet treatment.

Beauty and skincare

- Claims need evidence. "Clinically proven" needs a study that proves that claim for that product.
- Before-and-afters must be genuine. The ASA has ruled that filters which exaggerate a product's effect are misleading.

- A cosmetic can't claim to treat a medical condition.

How I handle borderline lines

Every script goes to the brand with a flag table: the line, the risk, a safer version. The brand decides. From the Dear Doggo spec:

LINE	WHY IT'S FLAGGED
"Firm, boring, predictable poos."	A digestive function claim. Needs the brand's evidence.
"Runny poos... Sick on the kitchen floor"	Names symptoms. Fine as a description of her life; never as something the product fixes.
"Ask whoever's telling you that to show you theirs."	Sharp comparative tone. The brand may want it softer.
The reviews in the proof section	Real, but they need the reviewers' permission and the brand's sign-off as claims.

The script review checklist

One page. Yes or no. Every "no" is a line to fix.

CHECKLIST

Before you start

- ☐ The sub-group is named in one line.
- ☐ The awareness level is written at the top of the brief.
- ☐ There's a belief chain, and the script follows its order.

Hook

- ☐ It uses a word or phrase from a real customer.
- ☐ The wrong person would happily scroll past.
- ☐ Read aloud with line two, the jump makes sense.
- ☐ The visual, the on-screen text and the spoken line make the same point.

Problem

- ☐ It names what she's changed or put up with, not just a symptom.
- ☐ It escalates; the lines can't be shuffled.
- ☐ It speaks to one person about one problem.

Promise

- ☐ There's one promise, in her words, before the mechanism.
- ☐ It's no bigger than the proof.

Mechanism

- ☐ She could explain in one sentence why this works when the last thing didn't.
- ☐ The product arrives after the cause is clear.

Objection

- ☐ It answers the doubt that shows up most in the research.

Proof

- ☐ It comes from the top half of the proof list.
- ☐ Every review is real and quoted word for word.

Offer

- ☐ The recommended pack fits how the product works.

- ☐ The price is framed against her life.

Risk reversal

- ☐ It's specific, and the policy says the same thing.

CTA

- ☐ It names the action, what happens next and why today.

Whole script

- ☐ It reads aloud without tripping.
- ☐ Every adjective has been swapped for a specific.
- ☐ Every join between beats flows.
- ☐ It was written for this length, not chopped from a longer one.
- ☐ The video, thumbnail, primary text and headline start at the same awareness level.
- ☐ No AI-generated person is presented as a real customer.
- ☐ Borderline claims are flagged for the brand.

Worked example: the Dear Doggo script

The full spec script, beat by beat, with why each line is there.

NOTE

Unofficial concept. A spec ad written by Cut & Copy for Dear Doggo's Daily Probiotic Chews. It isn't affiliated with, commissioned or approved by Dear Doggo. Product facts and terms come from the brand's public website at the time of writing. Customer quotes come from public reviews, word for word.

Format: faceless voiceover, second person, female British voice. About 470 words, two and a half to three minutes; a 60 to 75-second version is written separately. **Sub-group:** "Four foods since spring". **Awareness:** solution aware. **Heaviest beat:** the problem.

Hook

SCRIPT

Stop changing your dog's food.

You've done it four times since spring, and you still take three poo bags on a twenty-minute walk.

- An instruction that only makes sense to someone who's been changing food. Everyone else scrolls on, which is the point.
- Line two proves we know her with four specifics: four foods, spring, three bags, twenty minutes.

Problem

SCRIPT

Runny poos. A gurgling tummy. Grass on every single walk. Sick on the kitchen floor before you've even put the kettle on. The vet calls it a sensitive stomach.

So you know which verges he'll go for, and you take the long way round.

You've told the neighbours to stop giving him treats.

There's a roll of kitchen roll by the back door that's got nothing to do with spills.

And every new bag of food means another forty quid, another week of crossed fingers, and another week of him feeling rubbish.

- Symptoms fast and in her words (“poos”, not “stools”), then the vet’s label so we know we mean the same thing.
- Then what she’s changed: the route, the neighbours, the kitchen roll. Lines she’s never heard an ad say.
- It ends on money and guilt, the line that stings. Flagged: the symptoms describe her life; nothing later promises to fix them.

Promise

SCRIPT

What you actually want is boring. Firm, boring, predictable poos. Walks you don’t have to plan around.

- Small, in her language, easy to picture. “Boring” is the twist: after months of drama, ordinary is the goal.
- Flagged: a digestive function claim that needs the brand’s evidence.

SCRIPT

Here’s why the food swaps keep failing.

- A bridge that turns frustration into curiosity.

Mechanism

SCRIPT

A new food changes what goes into his stomach. It doesn’t change the bacteria in his gut that have to digest it.

Run short on the good ones, and every bowl is a gamble, whatever’s in it.

So you stop gambling on the bag, and you top up what does the digesting.

- One idea she could repeat to her partner. It explains her failed fixes without blaming her, and the product still hasn’t appeared.

SCRIPT

You could buy a probiotic, a prebiotic and a tub of pumpkin powder, and stir them into his dinner every night. Plenty of people do.

Or he can have one chew.

Eight billion CFU of probiotics in every two chews. FOS, which feeds those bacteria.

Pumpkin and papaya for fibre. And it’s duck flavoured, so he’ll take it straight from your hand. No hiding it in cheese.

- The bridge to the product: the effortful way, then the easy one. All-in-one ads were among the longest-running in my competitor research.
- Label facts, each with a few words on what it does. The taste line answers a top objection before it's raised.

Objection

SCRIPT

And yes, you'll have seen the ads saying chews are useless. Turn the tub round. The count's printed on the label. Ask whoever's telling you that to show you theirs.

If you've tried the probiotic paste from the vet, that's made for a few days. Gut bacteria take weeks to settle in.

- Names the attack on chews and answers it with something she can check herself. The paste line answers "I've already tried probiotics" without knocking the vet.
- Flagged: "show you theirs" is sharp, and the paste line needs substantiation.

Proof

SCRIPT

[Dog taking the chew from a hand, tail going]

A cockapoo owner wrote: "having been on them for a week I can already see a difference!"

And a Shih Tzu owner put it better than we ever could: "gone are the days of matted tails and stinky sticky poos."

- The dog eating it is the proof of taste. Then two real reviews, word for word; the second echoes the promise in her exact language.

Offer

SCRIPT

It's Dear Doggo's Daily Probiotic Chews, and if you're going to try them, get three tubs.

Their own guidance is ninety days for the best results. One tub lasts a month. Buy one, and you'll stop right before it's had a fair chance.

Three tubs is £64.99. For a dog under twenty kilos, that's about 72p a day. Probably less than you've spent on food swaps this year.

And Christmas, with everyone slipping him bits off their plate, is ten weeks away.

- The brand name arrives about two minutes in, once she knows why she'd want it.

- Three tubs because of the mechanism, not a discount. Price per day, then against her food-swap spending, then an honest seasonal reason (true in October; change it for other months).

Risk reversal

SCRIPT

Give him one every day for thirty days. If you're not happy, they'll refund your first tub.
Even opened.

- One line, matching the brand's terms at the time of writing. "Even opened" answers the fear that guarantees only cover sealed tubs.

CTA

SCRIPT

Tap the link, pick three tubs, and give him his first one tonight. He'll think it's a treat.
Here's to one poo bag.

- The action, the choice and the start time in one line, so the effort feels small.
- The last line returns to the hook, from three bags to one, and ends on the life she wants. It's the only place in the edit where an emoji appears.

FREE TEARDOWN

Want me to run this on your ads?

Send me your brand. Within 2 working days you get a 10-minute video and a teardown doc: what your ads are arguing, which groups of buyers they reach, which they miss, and three concepts I'd test next. Free, and yours to keep.

cutandcopy.com/teardown



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