

The Faceless Channel System

The five-stage AI pipeline behind a finance channel reportedly making \$58K a month, with the full prompts for each stage.

Why I pulled this one apart

There is a faceless finance channel reportedly making over \$58,000 a month. The number is what gets people's attention. The production method is what got mine.

Most people who try a faceless channel open Claude or ChatGPT and type some version of "make me a YouTube video about compound interest." What comes back is correct and completely forgettable. The model has no idea which titles get clicked in that niche, what the thumbnails look like, or how long the opening can run before people leave. So it writes the average of everything it has ever read, and the average does not get watched.

The channel I looked at does the opposite. It does not generate anything until it has studied channels that already pull millions of views and turned those videos into patterns. The pattern is the brief. The script, the storyboard and the visuals all get built to fit it. That reordering is the entire system, and it is the part you can copy into any niche today.

This guide is the five stages in order, the prompt I run at each one, how to set the whole thing up as a reusable skill, and what to do when the output comes back bland anyway.

01

How it actually works

Five stages, and each one hands a specific artifact to the next. Nothing downstream runs on a blank prompt.

1. Study and break down. AI reads channels already pulling millions of views in the niche and separates each video into four things: the topic, the title, the thumbnail and the structure. Run it across five or six videos and the repeated shapes show up on their own.
2. Script. Those patterns become the brief, and Claude researches the topic and writes a documentary-style script against them. Documentary style is the format that works with no presenter, because the narration and the structure carry the video instead of a face.
3. Storyboard and generate. ChatGPT turns the script into a visual storyboard, which is the shot list that says what is on screen for each line, and then AI generates the visuals, the voiceover and the thumbnail from it.

Stages 1 and 2 produce no video at all, and that is normal. They are also the reusable part. Once you have the pattern for a niche, you run stages 3 to 5 per video and leave the research alone until the niche shifts.

02

The one thing almost everyone gets wrong

They skip straight to the script. The research stage looks like unpaid overhead because it does not produce a video, so it gets dropped, and then every video comes out generic and nobody can work out why.

The second version of the same mistake is doing the research but asking for it wrong. If you paste a competitor's video in and ask "why did this do well," you get one blended paragraph of opinion that you cannot build from. You have to force the elements apart. Topic separately. Title separately. Thumbnail separately. Structure separately. Four named buckets, every time, so that when you run the fifth video you can stack the answers and see what repeats.

WATCH OUT

You are extracting a pattern, not cloning a video. If your output could be mistaken for a reupload of the channel you studied, you have gone too far, and YouTube's inauthentic content policy is aimed at exactly that. Copy the shape of what works, then put your own topic and research inside it.

03

The prompts, in full

Four prompts, one per stage. Paste them as they are and replace anything in [BRACKETS].

STAGE 1 AND 2: BREAK A TOP VIDEO INTO PATTERNS

You are analysing a high-performing YouTube video so I can learn the pattern, not copy the video.

Video title: [EXACT TITLE]

Channel: [CHANNEL NAME OR URL]

Transcript: [PASTE TRANSCRIPT]

Thumbnail description: [DESCRIBE WHAT IS ON THE THUMBNAIL]

Break it into exactly four sections. Do not blend them.

1. TOPIC

- The single question or claim the whole video is built on, in one sentence.
- Why that topic has pull in this niche.

2. TITLE

- The exact wording.
- What the title promises.
- What it deliberately withholds to make someone click.
- The reusable shape of it, written as a template with blanks.

3. THUMBNAIL

- The main subject.
- The text on it and the word count.
- The colour contrast and where the eye lands first.
- The emotion it is going for.

4. STRUCTURE

- The hook, quoted from the first 15 seconds.
- The beats in the middle, in order, with roughly where each one starts.
- Where the payoff sits.
- How it closes.

End with one line: the single mechanic this video is relying on most.

STAGE 2B: STACK FIVE BREAKDOWNS INTO ONE PATTERN

Here are [N] breakdowns of top-performing videos in the [NICHE] niche.

[PASTE ALL BREAKDOWNS]

Find what repeats across them. Give me:

- Title shapes that appear more than once, written as fill-in-the-blank templates.
- The three or four topic angles the niche keeps returning to.
- The thumbnail formula, specific enough that I could brief it: subject, text length, colours, emotion.
- The structural pattern: how long the hook runs, how many beats, where the payoff lands.
- Anything that shows up in the winners and is absent everywhere else.

Then write a one-page brief for a new video in this niche that follows the pattern on a topic none of these videos covered. Topic: [MY TOPIC].

STAGE 3: THE DOCUMENTARY SCRIPT (CLAUDE)

Research [TOPIC] and write a documentary-style narration script for a faceless YouTube video.

Build it against this pattern brief: [PASTE THE BRIEF FROM STAGE 2b]

Target length: [N] minutes of narration.

Rules:

- Documentary voice. A narrator telling a story, not a presenter talking to camera. No "hey guys", no "in this video", no direct address.
- Open on the question the video answers, in the first two sentences.
- Every factual claim needs a source named inline. If you cannot source it, cut it.
- Mark anything you are unsure about as [UNVERIFIED] rather than smoothing over it.
- Information arrives in an order that builds. Each section should make the next one make sense.
- Close by paying off the question you opened with.

Output the script in sections with a heading for each, and nothing else. No shot directions yet.

STAGE 4: THE VISUAL STORYBOARD (CHATGPT)

Turn this documentary script into a visual storyboard for a faceless video.

[PASTE SCRIPT]

For every two or three sentences of narration, give me one row:

| Shot | Narration (verbatim) | What is on screen | Image generation prompt |

Rules for the "what is on screen" column: no stock-photo vagueness. Say what the viewer literally sees and why it belongs with that line.

Rules for the image prompt column: self-contained, 16:9, and written so the same visual style holds across every shot. State the style once at the top and then reference it.

Flag any line of narration that has no good visual. Those are the lines to rewrite, not illustrate.

CHANNELS SHOWN IN THE VIDEO

- youtube.com/@CasuallyFinance
<https://www.youtube.com/@CasuallyFinance>
- youtube.com/@darkledger13/videos
<https://www.youtube.com/@darkledger13/videos>

Set it up in Claude Code or Codex

Running these prompts by hand works, and it also means you re-paste the pattern brief every time. Turning the four prompts into one skill is about fifteen minutes and then the whole pipeline is one command.

1. Make the skill folder. In Claude Code that is `~/ .claude/skills/faceless-channel/`. In Codex it is either a folder in the project you work from or `.codex/skills/faceless-channel/` with a line in your `AGENTS.md` pointing at it.
2. Create `SKILL.md` inside it. The folder name and the `name:` field in the file have to match exactly. `faceless-channel` in both. A mismatch is the single most common reason a skill never loads, and it fails silently.
3. Paste the four stage prompts from the previous section into `SKILL.md` as four numbered steps, each one saying what it takes in and what it writes out.
4. Give it a work folder. Add a line telling the skill to write every artifact to `output/[niche]/`: the breakdowns, the pattern brief, the script, the storyboard. Stage 3 reads what stage 2 wrote, so the files are what connect the stages.
5. Make the pattern brief sticky. Add a rule that says if `output/[niche]/pattern-brief.md` already exists, skip stages 1 and 2 and use it. That is what stops you re-running the research for every video.
6. Test it on a niche you already understand. Give it three video transcripts you know are good and check the pattern brief against your own instinct. If it says something you know is wrong about your own niche, the prompts need tightening before you trust them on a niche you do not know.
7. A successful first run leaves you with a `pattern-brief.md` you would actually hand to a writer, and a script whose opening two sentences state the question the video answers. If the script opens with "welcome back," stage 3 did not read the brief.

QUICK TIPS

- Keep one skill folder per niche's output, not per niche's skill. Same skill, different `output/` subfolder.
- Transcripts are the input for stage 1. Grab them from the video's transcript panel on YouTube and paste them in. No API key needed for any part of this.
- Do stage 1 in Claude and stage 4 in ChatGPT if you can. Splitting them keeps each prompt doing one job, which is how the original pipeline is built.

04

The commands I actually run

Once the skill exists, these are the four lines that do the work.

BUILD THE PATTERN FOR A NEW NICHE

Use the `faceless-channel` skill. Run stages 1 and 2 for the `[NICHE]` niche. Here are the transcripts and thumbnail descriptions for `[N]` top videos: `[PASTE]`. Write the result to `output/[NICHE]/pattern-brief.md`.

SCRIPT A VIDEO AGAINST THE EXISTING PATTERN

Use the `faceless-channel` skill, stage 3 only. Read `output/[NICHE]/pattern-brief.md` and write a `[N]`-minute documentary script on `[TOPIC]`. Source every claim inline and mark anything unverified.

STORYBOARD THE SCRIPT

Run stage 4 on output/[NICHE]/[TOPIC]-script.md. Give me the shot table with image prompts, and flag any narration line that has no good visual.

CHECK THE SCRIPT BEFORE IT GETS A VOICEOVER

Read output/[NICHE]/[TOPIC]-script.md against output/[NICHE]/pattern-brief.md. Where does the script break the pattern? Quote the line and say which part of the brief it misses. Be blunt. Do not tell me it is good.

REFRESH A STALE PATTERN

The pattern brief in output/[NICHE]/pattern-brief.md is [N] months old. Here are [N] transcripts of videos that have done well in the niche since: [PASTE]. What has changed in the titles, thumbnails or structure? Update the brief and list what you changed and why.

When it breaks

Everything on this list has happened to me.

ERROR	FIX
The script reads like every other AI script in the niche	Stage 3 did not actually get the brief. Paste the pattern brief into the same message as the script prompt instead of trusting the model to go read the file.
The pattern brief is a list of generic advice ("strong hook, clear value")	You asked one question instead of four. Re-run stage 1 with the four named buckets kept separate, and run it on at least five videos before you ask for the pattern.
The skill never loads in Claude Code	The folder name and the name: field in SKILL.md do not match. They are case sensitive and have to be identical.
The storyboard is a slideshow of unrelated stock images	The image prompt column is missing a shared style line. State the visual style once at the top of the storyboard and make every shot prompt reference it.
The script states things that are not true	Documentary format makes confident wrong facts sound right. Keep the "mark anything unverified" rule in the prompt and check every sourced claim before the voiceover stage, because the voice makes it harder to catch.
The video follows the pattern but gets no views anyway	The pattern is from a channel with an audience and you do not have one yet. Patterns fix the video, not the distribution. Expect the first stretch of videos to be the research.
Stage 4 output is too long to use	Ask for one row per two or three sentences of narration, not per sentence. A ten-minute script should land somewhere near 60 to 80 shots, not 300.
Re-running the whole skill for every video	The pattern brief is meant to be reusable. Add the rule that skips stages 1 and 2 when output/[niche]/pattern-brief.md already exists.

Ready to go deeper?

This playbook is the short version. Inside the hub you get the full build walkthroughs, the prompt library, and the systems I use to ship this in a weekend.

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