# Reverse Engineer Any Video Guide

How to break any video down shot by shot with rea-video, plan the remake, and fix the errors you will hit on the way.

## What this is and why you want it

Most people can tell a video worked. Very few can say why. rea-video is a free, open-source tool that answers that question one shot at a time. You give it a video, and for every shot it tells you whether the footage was filmed, AI generated or built in code.

Then it pulls out every caption with its timing, every cut, the music beats and the spot where each sound effect landed. For each shot it writes a full prompt you can use to recreate it, and it gives you a remake plan that says what to film, what to generate and what to code.

The basic way to copy a viral video is to watch it ten times and guess. That fails because you cannot see where the cuts fall or which shots are AI. This guide gets you from zero to a first breakdown, and then to a remake plan with your own topic in it.

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## How it actually works

rea-video is a command line tool and an agent skill. Your agent (Claude Code or Codex) runs it for you, so you mostly talk in plain sentences.

1. You hand it a video. It splits the video into shots and labels each one as filmed, AI generated or built in code.
2. It reads the timing: captions, cuts, music beats and sound effect positions. It writes everything into a VIDEO.md file, an open format made for AI agents, and into a report.html (or PDF) made for people.
3. It writes a recreation prompt for each shot and a remake plan. If you want a remake, it can rebuild the video with your own elements swapped in while keeping the original pacing, effects and transitions.

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## 02 The one thing almost everyone gets wrong

People expect a finished video to come out of the first run. It does not. rea-video is not a renderer. What you get is a shooting plan, prompts or a code approach for each shot.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> The breakdown is the product. The remake is a second, separate step, and it is the step that can use paid models. The README also asks you not to repost other people's footage, music, characters or likeness. Learn the structure, then remake with material you have the rights to.

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## 03 The repo and the prompt to start with

There is no file to copy by hand here. The README's own quick start is a single sentence you give to your agent, and the agent installs the rest.

> **SOURCE CODE**
>
> The full repo, Apache-2.0 licensed:
>
> **https://github.com/JuneYaooo/rea-video**

> **THE README QUICK START**
>
> `Install https://github.com/JuneYaooo/rea-video, then break down this video: /path/to/video.mp4`

**CLAUDE CODE PLUGIN INSTALL**

```
claude plugin marketplace add JuneYaooo/rea-video
claude plugin install rea-video@rea-video
```

**CODEX PLUGIN INSTALL**

```
codex plugin marketplace add JuneYaooo/rea-video
codex plugin add rea-video@rea-video
```

**SWITCH REPORTS TO ENGLISH**

```
rea-video prefs lang en
```

**CHECK THE OUTPUT FOLDER**

```
pip install videomd
videomd check out/ref
```

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## Set it up in Claude Code or Codex

1. Check the two requirements first. You need ffmpeg and Python 3.10 or newer. Ask your agent to check both for you if you are not sure.
2. Pick your route. The simplest is no setup at all: paste the quick start prompt from the section above into Claude Code or Codex with a real video path. The agent installs the command line tool on its own.
3. Or install the plugin. In Claude Code run the two claude plugin commands above. In Codex run the two codex plugin commands. The agent still installs the command line tool the first time it runs a breakdown, so expect the first run to take longer.
4. Optional: clone the repo to read the docs. Run git clone https://github.com/JuneYaooo/rea-video and open docs/en/workflow.md, docs/en/cli.md and docs/en/replicate.md. The README points to all three.
5. Optional: add a video-capable model. A Gemini or Doubao model improves the calls on live, AI and 3D shots and adds a reverse-engineered prompt per shot. Give your agent the endpoint and key, and ask it to save the key in your shell profile. Then open a new terminal so it loads.
6. Run your first test. Use a short clip, around 20 seconds. Ask for a breakdown and wait for it to finish.
7. Know what success looks like. You should find an out/ref/VIDEO.md in the output folder, plus the report.html. Open the report and look at the shot labels.

> 💡 **QUICK TIPS**
>
> - Run rea-video prefs lang en before your first real breakdown if you want English reports. The README says the default is Chinese for the capability tables, the eval results and the skill.
> - Tools-only mode is offline and free. Start there, and add a model only if the shot labels feel unsure.

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## The commands I actually run

Swap the bracketed parts for your own video and topic. Every one of these goes to your agent in plain text.

> **BREAK DOWN A VIDEO**
>
> ```
> Break down this video with rea-video: [PATH TO VIDEO]. Tell me for every shot whether it was filmed, AI generated or built in code.
> ```

> **GET THE TIMING**
>
> ```
> Using the rea-video breakdown of [PATH TO VIDEO], list every caption with its timing, every cut, the music beats and where each sound effect landed.
> ```

> **RECREATION PROMPT PER SHOT**
>
> ```
> For shot [SHOT NUMBER] of the breakdown, write the full prompt I can use to recreate it. If it was filmed, tell me what to shoot instead.
> ```

**REMAKE PLAN WITH MY TOPIC**

```
Write a remake plan for [PATH TO VIDEO] about [MY TOPIC]. Split it into what to film,
what to generate and what to code. Keep the original pacing, effects and transitions.
```

**SWITCH TO ENGLISH**

```
Run rea-video prefs lang en, then regenerate the report for [PATH TO VIDEO] in English.
```

## When it breaks

| ERROR | FIX |
|---|---|
| **The agent says ffmpeg is missing** | Install ffmpeg, then run the breakdown again. rea-video needs it. |
| **The agent says Python is too old** | rea-video needs Python 3.10 or newer. Install a newer version and run it again. |
| **The report is in Chinese** | Run rea-video prefs lang en. The README says it switches reports, command line help and messages to English. |
| **The first run sits for a long time** | Sound separation uses UVR MDX-Net and BandIt v2. Both download on first use and are not part of the repo. Let it finish once. |
| **Shot labels for live, AI or 3D shots feel unsure** | Add a video-capable model (Gemini or Doubao) by giving your agent the endpoint and key. This improves those calls. |
| **You worry a remake will cost money** | Automatic remake generation uses capsule-cinema, which does a free dry run first and only calls paid models after you confirm. |
| **You want to check the output files** | Run pip install videomd, then videomd check out/ref to validate the VIDEO.md folder. |


## Ready to go deeper?

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