

Course 2, Lesson 1: Decoding the 2025 Viral Algorithm

1. Core Concept & Learning Objective

Concept: "The algorithm" isn't a mystery; it's a mirror. It reflects human psychology. In 2025, TikTok, Reels, and Shorts don't reward high-production; they reward high *emotion* and *utility*. You will learn that the "algorithm" is just a machine designed to measure human behavior (watch time, shares, comments) and that your job isn't to "hack" it, but to *serve* the human on the other side of the screen.

Learning Objective: By the end of this lesson, you will **analyze** the core psychological triggers that drive shares and engagement. You will **deconstruct** 3 viral videos in your niche to **identify** the specific patterns (hooks, sounds, formats) that led to their success, and **create** a "Viral Principles" checklist for your own content.

2. Interactive Content Activities (3 Activities)

Activity 1: The "Why Did I Stop?" Self-Audit (Strategic Exercise)

- **Description:** You are a content consumer. It's time to analyze your *own* behavior. For the next 15 minutes, you will become a "detective" of your own attention.
- **Instructions:**
 1. Open your preferred platform (TikTok or Instagram).
 2. Set a timer for 15 minutes and scroll your "For You" or "Reels" feed.
 3. Every time you stop scrolling for more than 3 seconds, take a screenshot.
 4. At the end of 15 minutes, review your 5-10 screenshots. Ask for each one:
 - What *specifically* made me stop? (The visual? The first 3 words of text? The sound?)
 - What *emotion* did it trigger? (Curiosity, shock, humor, "Oh, that's me!")
 - What "job" did this video do for me? (Teach, entertain, inspire?)

- **Expected Outcome:** A new self-awareness of what *actually* works, and a list of 5-10 proven "scroll-stopping" patterns.

Activity 2: The "Viral Teardown" (Case Study Analysis)

- **Description:** We're going to be a "Girl Boss Drill Sergeant" for 3 *other* people's viral videos. You'll analyze 3 viral videos (100k+ views) from creators *in your niche* to find the formula.
- **Instructions:**
 1. Find 3 viral videos (Reels or TikToks) in your niche.
 2. For each video, analyze and document:
 - **The Hook (0-3s):** What was the exact visual or verbal hook?
 - **The Format:** (e.g., Talking head, text-on-screen, tutorial, trend).
 - **The "Payoff":** What was the *value* for the viewer? (A laugh, a saved tip, a "mind-blown" moment).
 - **The "Share Trigger":** *Why* would someone share this? (To show their friends, to save for later, to state their identity).
- **Expected Outcome:** A "Viral Teardown" document that deconstructs 3 videos, revealing the repeatable *systems* behind their success (not just "luck").

Activity 3: The 2025 "Algorithm Principles" (Creative Development)

- **Description:** Based on your analysis, you will create your own "Viral Principles" checklist. This is your new "Drill Sergeant" rulebook for creating content.
- **Instructions:**
 1. Create a "My Viral Principles" checklist.
 2. Start with these 5 proven 2025 principles and add 3-5 of your own from your analysis:
 - Principle 1: Hook in 3 seconds, or die.
 - Principle 2: Serve one person, not everyone.
 - Principle 3: Emotion > Information.
 - Principle 4: High Utility (Save-worthy) or High Identity (Share-worthy).
 - Principle 5: Simple > Complex. (Clarity is key).

- **Expected Outcome:** A 1-page "Viral Principles" checklist that you will use to "score" every piece of content you create for the rest of this course.

3. Assignment & Project Milestone (Portfolio Deliverable)

Assignment: The "Viral Analysis" Brief (1-Page Doc)

- **Description:** This document is your foundational intelligence report. It proves you understand the "battlefield" of short-form video. It will be the strategic guide for all the content you create.
- **Step-by-Step Instructions:**
 1. Create a new document titled "[Your Niche] - Viral Analysis Brief."
 2. **Section 1: My "Stop-Scroll" Triggers:**
 - List the top 3-5 patterns you discovered in Activity 1.
 3. **Section 2: "Viral Teardown" Key Learnings:**
 - Summarize the 3 videos you analyzed (Activity 2).
 - Write 1 paragraph on the *biggest "Aha!" moment* you had (e.g., "I realized all 3 viral videos in my niche were not 'trends,' they were 'tutorials' that solved one tiny problem.").
 4. **Section 3: My "Viral Principles" Checklist:**
 - Paste your completed 8-10 point checklist from Activity 3.
- **Evaluation Criteria:**
 - *Excellent:* The brief shows deep, specific analysis. The student identifies nuanced patterns, not just "it was funny." The principles are actionable.
 - *Adequate:* The brief is superficial. "It was a trend" or "It had a good sound" is the only analysis. The principles are generic.
- **Connection to Final Project:** This "Viral Analysis" Brief is **Section 1: The Audience & Algorithm** of your **Viral Velocity Strategy & Portfolio**. This is your "compass." You will use this checklist in every future lesson to build your hooks (L3), ideas (L4), and scripts (L7).

4. End-of-Lesson Assessment (7 Questions)

1. (MC) According to this lesson, the 2025 "algorithm" primarily rewards:
 - A) High-budget, cinematic production.
 - B) High emotion and high utility (e.g., save-worthy tips).
 - C) Using at least 30 hashtags.
 - D) Posting 10 times a day.
2. (MC) The "Viral Teardown" activity requires you to analyze:
 - A) The creator's follower count and brand deals.
 - B) The hook, format, payoff, and share trigger of a video.
 - C) The camera and lighting equipment used.
 - D) How many "likes" the video got.
3. (MC) What is the *purpose* of the "Why Did I Stop?" self-audit?
 - A) To feel bad about how much time you spend on your phone.
 - B) To find 10 new people to follow.
 - C) To use your own behavior as data to understand what commands attention.
 - D) To copy other people's videos exactly.
4. (SA) What is a "Share Trigger"? (From Activity 2).
5. (SA) What is the difference between "High Utility" and "High Identity"? (From Activity 3).
6. (SA) Name 2 of the 5 "Algorithm Principles" for 2025.
7. (Scenario) A student says, "I'm just going to find a trending dance and do that. That's the algorithm, right?" Based on this lesson, what "Drill Sergeant" feedback would you give them?

Correct Answers: 1(B), 2(B), 3(C) 4. (Example) The specific psychological reason why someone would hit the "share" button (e.g., "This represents my belief," "My friend needs to see this," "I want to save this for later"). 5. (Example) "High Utility" is a post you save (e.g., "5 tips to..."). "High Identity" is a post you share (e.g., "This is so me..."). 6. (Example) 1. Hook in 3 seconds, or die. 2. Simple > Complex. 7. (Example) "That's a 'hope and pray' tactic, not a strategy. The algorithm measures human interest. If

your niche (e.g., 'female retail owners') doesn't care about that dance, the video will die. You need to serve your audience, not just follow a random trend."