

LEARNING WITH SDP

Short-Form Video Reference Guide

BookTok, Reels & Short Video: Do You Really Have To?

Participant Handout | September 21, 2026 | Presenter: Jolene MacFadden

Keep this guide next to your phone. It collects the ideas, specs, tools, and outreach tips from today's session so you can look things up when you sit down to make a video, or decide not to. Everything that can change (specs, prices, free tiers) is dated and linked to a source so you can check it yourself.

1. Fifteen No-Face Video Ideas

None of these require you to show your face or speak on camera. Pick one or two that suit your book and repeat them; a steady format is easier to make and easier for viewers to recognize.

#	Idea	How to do it	Best for
1	Book pan	Prop your book among a few objects from the story. Move your phone slowly across the scene. Add one line of text.	Any genre
2	POV text over clips	Stock or phone footage with one line: "POV: you just met the villain you'll root for."	Fiction
3	Trope list	"If you like [trope], [trope], and [trope]..." over your cover or shelf.	Genre fiction
4	Voiceover passage	Read 20 to 30 seconds of a scene over photos or footage.	Fiction, memoir
5	Mood board slideshow	5 to 8 photos of setting, era, food, or clothing, set to music.	Fiction, historical
6	One-tip lesson (hands only)	Demonstrate one tip on paper, a screen, or with objects.	Nonfiction, how-to
7	Screen recording	Record your screen: a research find, an old map, a step in a process.	Nonfiction, historical
8	Things in my book	Quick cuts of real objects that appear in your story.	Any genre
9	Setting tour	Film public places that inspired the book. Text names the scene.	Any, memoir, travel
10	Page flip	Slow flip through illustrations or interior pages.	Children's, cookbooks, gift books
11	Real reader quote	A genuine reader quote on screen over your cover. Ask permission; never invent one.	Any published book
12	Writing desk time-lapse	Phone propped up, hands typing or writing in a notebook.	Writing life, all authors
13	For fans of...	"For fans of [well-known book or show]" with your cover.	Genre fiction
14	Unboxing author copies	Hands open the box of your books. Text: "They're here."	Launch day, any genre
15	Countdown or quote card	Text-only video: a countdown to launch, or one great line from the book.	Any genre

2. Hook Formulas (Fill in the Blanks)

The first three seconds decide whether someone keeps watching. Put your hook on screen as text so it works with the sound off.

- POV: you started [trope or premise] at 9 p.m. and now it's 2 a.m.
- If you love [thing] and [thing], this one's for you.
- Books that feel like [season, place, or mood].
- Things you'll find in my book: [item], [item], [item].
- The first line of my book is: "[line]"
- I wrote this book because [one true reason].
- Nonfiction: One thing most [audience] get wrong about [topic].

3. Platform Specs Cheat Sheet (as of September 2026)

Film vertical (9:16) and you can use the same clean file on every platform. Specs change often; check the upload screen or the source before you post.

Platform	Shape and size	Length	Notes
TikTok	Vertical 9:16, 1080 x 1920	Record in app up to 10 min; upload up to 60 min (third-party guide, Mar 2026)	U.S. app run by TikTok USDS Joint Venture since Jan 22, 2026; still operating. Home of BookTok.
Instagram Reels	Vertical 9:16, 1080 x 1920. Keep text out of the top 15% and bottom 10%.	Longer uploads allowed; 3 min and under recommended for reach to new viewers	Limit of 5 hashtags per post since December 2025.
YouTube Shorts	Square or vertical	Up to 3 minutes (official YouTube Help)	Wider (16:9) videos are treated as regular videos, not Shorts.
Facebook Reels	Vertical 9:16, 1080 x 1920	Since mid-2025, all Facebook videos are shared as Reels	Reaches friends, groups, and followers you already have.

Universal Tips for Every Platform

Hook in the first 3 seconds, as on-screen text.
Add captions or text; many people scroll with the sound off.
Save your clean original file. Don't repost a video with another app's logo on it.
Point viewers somewhere useful: your book page, newsletter signup, or website.

4. Free Video Editing Apps Compared

App	Cost	Free version includes	Watch out for
CapCut	Free; paid plans about \$10/mo (Standard) and \$20/mo (Pro)	Mobile exports without a visible watermark; templates and effects	Free tier trimmed in 2026. Terms of service grant broad rights over uploaded content; read them first.
Canva	Free; Pro is paid	Video editor, vertical templates, text, free stock	Crown-marked items are Pro. Stick to free items on the free plan.
InShot	Free; Pro about \$3.99/mo, \$17.99/yr, or about \$39.99 once (varies by region)	Trim, cut, text, transitions, music library	Free exports carry an InShot watermark unless you watch an ad or upgrade. Ads while editing.

Pexels Videos	Free	Stock footage; attribution not required	Don't imply people shown endorse your book. Don't show identifiable people in a bad light.
Built-in editors (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook)	Free	Trim, text, captions, music	Often all you need to start. Make three videos before paying for anything.

Pricing and free-tier details were checked in September 2026 from the sources listed at the end. CapCut and InShot prices come from third-party reviews, not the companies themselves. Verify in the app store before you pay.

5. Working with BookTokers

Many camera-shy authors find this the most comfortable way to benefit from video. Think relationship, not transaction.

- ☐ Search your genre plus "booktok," or search a trope. List 5 to 10 creators who read books like yours.
- ☐ Follow and engage honestly for a few weeks before asking for anything.
- ☐ Offer a free copy with no strings attached. A video or review is the creator's choice.
- ☐ Keep your message short and personal. Mention a specific video you enjoyed.
- ☐ Never argue with, or ask anyone to change, a review.
- ☐ Say thank you publicly by commenting on or sharing their video.

The FTC Disclosure Rule (plain-language summary, not legal advice)

The FTC says creators must disclose a "material connection" to a brand, and that includes getting a free product. A free book counts.

Disclosures should be in the video itself (on screen and ideally said aloud), not only in the caption or profile. Clear words work: "ad," "sponsored," or "Thanks to the author for the free copy." Vague tags like "sp" or "collab" are not enough.

Source: FTC, Disclosures 101 for Social Media Influencers (link in Sources below).

6. Sources (checked September 2026)

- TikTok USDS Joint Venture: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TikTok_USDS and newsroom.tiktok.com
- YouTube Help, three-minute Shorts: support.google.com/youtube/answer/15424877
- Instagram 5-hashtag limit: Social Media Today, "Instagram Implements New Limits on Hashtag Use"
- Instagram Reels specs: postfa.st/sizes/instagram/reels (updated July 2026)
- Facebook videos becoming Reels: techtimes.com (June 17, 2025); postfa.st/sizes/facebook/reels
- TikTok length limits: sociality.io/blog/tiktok-video-length (March 2026)
- CapCut plans and terms: fluxnote.io/guides/capcut-questions-answered (June 2026)
- InShot free limits: pdfchef.com/video-fix/inshot-free-plan-limitations
- Pexels license: pexels.com/license
- FTC Disclosures 101: ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/disclosures-101-social-media-influencers
- 2021 print sales and BookTok: Forbes, "How TikTok Helped Fuel the Best-Selling Year for Print Books" (Jan 28, 2022)
- BookTok in Europe: TikTok Newsroom, "#BookTok community helps sell more than 50 million books across Europe" (Mar 19, 2026)