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7 hook formulas from 186 viral reels

I pulled 186 reels from AI and business creators, matched every transcript to its view count, and read the openings of the top 60. These are the patterns that kept winning, with real examples and a fill-in-the-blank line for each.

186
reels analysed

1.5M–17M
views each, top 60

3 sec
to earn the next 30

THE RULE UNDERNEATH ALL OF THEM

In the first 3 seconds, the viewer has to know what they get, and feel a gap they can only close by watching.

Almost every winner names something concrete in the opening line: a number, a tool, a dollar amount, a person. Then it holds back the "how" for later. Vague openers like "today I want to talk about..." don't appear once in the top 60.

Four things show up again and again:

1. **Specific numbers beat adjectives.** "$40 a month", "12 interviews in 24 hours", "0% AI". Never "cheap" or "a lot".
2. **A name people know stops the scroll.** ChatGPT, Claude, YouTube, Google. A familiar name beats a niche tool in the first line.
3. **Proof comes fast.** "I tried this and..." in the first sentence turns a claim into a story.
4. **The hook is on screen, not only spoken.** Most of these reels put the hook in big text so it works with the sound off.

The top accounts also reuse a hook that works dozens of times and only swap the topic. One creator used the same "What happens when..." opener on more than a dozen reels in the top 60. When one of yours works, run it again.

FORMULA 1 · 15 OF THE TOP 60

"What happens when..." + proof

> What happens when you ask [AI tool] to [bold task]? I tried this and [specific result].

12.1M views: "What happens when you ask Claude to find every photo of you that exists on the internet?"

FORMULA 2

Breaking news / shock

> [Big name] just [launched / killed / crushed] [thing].

17.4M views: "Chinese AI Kimi just had a massive update..." · **2.4M:** "Claude just killed website designers."

FORMULA 3

Numbered secrets

> Here are [N] secret [codes / tools / skills] for [thing].

4.4M views: "10 secret codes for ChatGPT."

FORMULA 4

Negative command

> Don't [common thing]. Do this instead.

2.9M views: "Don't get a part-time job, do this instead." · **2.1M:** "Do not post your Reels through the plus button."

FORMULA 5

Money proof

> Watch this. [Thing] pays [$X]. Here's how.

3.6M views: "Watch this. Go to YouTube, find a successful kids' channel… here's how much YouTube pays for one million views." Three other accounts copied it.

FORMULA 6

Cost contrast

> You can now replace [expensive thing] with [cheap thing].

5.7M views: "You can now replace your marketing team with a tool that costs $40 a month."

FORMULA 7

Identity callout

> You're going to be [who they want to be]. How do I know? [You haven't skipped this video.]

2.6M views: "You're going to be the first millionaire in your family."

USE IT TODAY

Before you record, write your first line in one of these shapes

"What happens when you ask Claude to ___? I tried it and ___."

"___ just launched ___." (anything new this week)

"Here are 3 ___ that ___."

"Don't ___. Do this instead."

"I made $___ by ___."

One more thing I learned from my own footage: the best line is usually 10 to 20 seconds into the story. Say the result first, then tell the story.

I post what I'm testing with AI every day. Follow **@othmantmoulikai** to see which of these work for me.