

TikTok Mini Drama Launch

Checklist: From Brief to Episode 1

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This checklist runs in sequence. Complete each gate before moving to the next. Skipping ahead—especially to production or media spend—before the strategy and platform checks are done is how brands waste budget on a series that was never set up to perform.

How to Use This Checklist

Work through the 12 gates in order. Each section has a **Status** column: mark it Complete, In Progress, or Blocked. Don't move money until gates 1–5 are fully checked. Don't launch until gates 1–11 are complete.

Gate 1: Strategy Gate

Rule: No production spend until every item in this gate is confirmed in writing.

This is the decision filter that saves you from committing budget to an ill-defined concept. If you can't answer each question cleanly, the concept isn't ready.

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
1.1	Narrative concept is documented in a single paragraph: premise, lead character(s), central conflict	Not a tagline—an actual story premise	
1.2	Minimum episode count confirmed at 5 or more	Fewer than 5 episodes doesn't build story momentum	
1.3	Target episode count (5–8 for a pilot) is agreed across marketing and creative stakeholders		
1.4			

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
	Primary conversion objective is named and specific	Examples: TikTok Shop purchases, app installs, in-app ad revenue, Minis Center payment unlocks	
1.5	Conversion objective maps to a measurable signal Growth Max can optimize toward	Vague awareness goals won't feed the optimization algorithm	
1.6	Stakeholder sign-off on concept exists before any production vendor is briefed		

Gate 2: Audience & Market Check

Rule: Know your distribution path before you write episode one. Drama Center and Minis Center behave differently, and market eligibility determines which monetization model is available to you.

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
2.1	Confirmed your core TikTok audience is active on the platform (not primarily on other channels)	Check TikTok audience insights and organic account data	
2.2	Confirmed your target market(s) for this series	List every country you're targeting	
2.3	Verified whether your primary market qualifies for Minis Center	Qualifying markets: US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Brazil, Mexico	
2.4	If outside qualifying markets: confirmed Drama Center is your distribution path	Drama Center is available globally on brand TikTok accounts	
2.5	If inside qualifying markets: decided whether in-app purchases (Minis		

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
	Center) or ad-gated access (Drama Center) better matches your conversion objective	This decision affects your entire monetization structure	
2.6	Documented which distribution path you're using and why		

Quick Reference: Market Eligibility

Distribution Path	Markets	Monetization Model
Drama Center	Global (all markets)	In-app ad revenue; organic For You discovery
Minis Center	US, Canada, AU, NZ, Indonesia, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Brazil, Mexico	In-app ad revenue + in-app purchases (viewer payment unlock)

Gate 3: Brand Fit Scoring

Rule: Score honestly. A total below 10 means stop here and revisit when the gaps are closed.

Rate each criterion 0–5. Add your scores. Use the threshold guide at the bottom.

Criterion	What You're Evaluating	Your Score (0–5)
Narrative fit	Do you have a genuine story angle—character, conflict, lifestyle arc—that holds across 5+ episodes without becoming a product demo? Force-fit connections score 0–1.	
Production capacity	Can you produce episodic content (scripting, consistent casting, episode continuity) in-house or	

Criterion	What You're Evaluating	Your Score (0-5)
	through a confirmed partner? Single-asset teams without help score 0-2.	
Conversion path clarity	Is there a measurable event Growth Max can optimize toward, already connected to TikTok signals? Off-platform conversions with no tracking score 0-2.	
Audience match	Is your core customer TikTok-native and in a category with proven traction (beauty, apparel, F&B, consumer electronics, entertainment)? Older audiences primarily elsewhere score 0-2.	
Test budget	Can you fund a pilot (5+ episodes + Growth Max spend) without requiring the first series to be profitable? Score 0 if every format must prove ROI before you commit.	
TOTAL		

Score thresholds:

- **18-25:** Proceed to a 5-8 episode pilot
- **10-17:** Test and learn; co-produce to cover a gap before full commitment
- **Below 10:** Pause. Return when narrative fit, production capacity, or budget gaps are addressed

Gate 4: Production Setup

Rule: Don't script a single episode until your production structure is confirmed. Narrative continuity breaks when ownership is unclear.

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
4.1	Production path decided: in-house team, episodic production partner, or creator co-production	Co-production with an established drama creator is the lower-risk path for a first series	

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
4.2	Episodic production partner or creator collaborator identified and briefed	Not just contacted—actually briefed on brand voice and concept	
4.3	Scriptwriting lead confirmed	This person owns narrative voice across all episodes	
4.4	Casting confirmed or casting process underway	Character consistency across episodes is non-negotiable	
4.5	Episode-continuity lead named	One person tracks plot, character details, and visual consistency episode to episode	
4.6	Brand voice guardrails documented and shared with the production team	What the brand will and won't say; tone parameters; product integration rules	
4.7	Production timeline mapped with episode delivery dates	Confirm episodes can be delivered on your publishing cadence before launch	

Gate 5: Episode Structure

Rule: Structure decisions made here shape every episode. Lock them before scripting begins.

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
5.1	Hook placement confirmed: attention-earning moment occurs within the first 3 seconds of every episode	Assume no sound; the visual must hold the scroll alone	
5.2	Episode runtime target set: 60–90 seconds per episode	Shorter episodes consistently outperform longer ones in this format	
5.3			

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
	Unlock mechanic confirmed: ad-gated (viewer watches an ad to open the next episode) or payment-gated (viewer pays to unlock)	Payment-gated requires Minis Center and a qualifying market	
5.4	Cliffhanger structure mapped for every episode	Each episode must end on a hook that makes the next click feel necessary—not optional	
5.5	Product/brand integration points mapped by episode	Integration should feel embedded in story, not bolted on	
5.6	Episode-naming and numbering convention confirmed	Consistency across the series aids viewer navigation	

Gate 6: Platform Configuration

Rule: Configure before you produce finished assets. Platform settings affect what's possible in post-production.

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
6.1	Drama Center is set up on your brand TikTok account	Required regardless of which path you're using	
6.2	If using Minis Center: Minis Center is configured in your brand account	Confirm your market qualifies first (Gate 2)	
6.3	If using Minis Center: payment unlock settings are configured and tested	Test the viewer experience end-to-end before episode 1 goes live	
6.4	Episode upload specs confirmed: vertical video, correct aspect ratio, caption and thumbnail requirements	Pull current specs directly from TikTok Business Help Center	
6.5			

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
	TikTok Shop integration confirmed if you're running a shoppable series (Crocs model)	Shoppable links require TikTok Shop to be active on the account	
6.6	Test upload completed on a non-public basis to confirm all platform settings function	Don't skip this—unlock mechanic failures at launch are avoidable	

Gate 7: Growth Max Campaign Setup

Rule: Build the campaign structure and connect tracking before episode 1 is published. Growth Max has nothing to optimize without live signals.

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
7.1	Growth Max campaign created in TikTok Ads Manager	Use the Mini Drama campaign type	
7.2	Optimization objective selected: in-app ad revenue or in-app purchases	Match to your conversion objective from Gate 1	
7.3	TikTok Pixel installed and firing correctly on relevant web properties	Verify via TikTok Pixel Helper before launch	
7.4	TikTok SDK integrated if you're optimizing for app events	Required for app install and in-app event optimization	
7.5	Audience signals configured: custom audiences, lookalikes, interest and behavior targeting	Seed the algorithm with your best existing audience data	
7.6	Mini Drama feed ads creative assets prepared and uploaded	These are the paid placements that drive viewers into episode 1	
7.7	Campaign reviewed by a second set of eyes before it goes live	Catch setup errors before spend begins	

Gate 8: KPI Definition

Rule: Set every KPI before you write the script, not after the series is live. Retrofitting targets onto content that's already underperforming produces rationalization, not insight.

Metric	What to Set	Your Target	Notes
Episode-over-episode retention rate	% of episode 1 viewers who watch episode 2; % who reach episode 3	% Ep1→2 / % Ep1→3	A steep drop after episode 1 means the hook or pacing is off
Episode completion rate	% of viewers who watch each episode to the end	___% per episode	Benchmark against your existing TikTok video completion rates
In-app ad revenue (Drama Center / Minis Center)	Revenue per episode or per series	\$___	Set a floor, not just a target
In-app purchase conversion rate (Minis Center only)	% of viewers who pay to unlock later episodes	___%	Set before launch; adjust after episode 3 data
Incremental audience reach	New viewers reached beyond your existing audience baseline	___% increase	TikTok reported 52% increase in their own testing; treat as directional only
Conversion rate to primary objective	% of viewers who complete your named conversion event (Gate 1)	___%	Tie to your existing funnel benchmarks
Episode 3 review threshold	Minimum retention/ conversion to continue the series	Define now	If you hit below this at the Gate 11 review, you adjust or pause

Gate 9: Budget Allocation

Rule: Split budget across three buckets before any PO is raised. Underfunding any one bucket creates a broken experience.

Budget Bucket	What It Covers	Estimated Amount	Notes
Production cost (per episode)	Scripting, casting, shooting, editing, continuity review per episode	\$ per episode / \$ total	Co-produced series with a drama creator typically cost less than full in-house production for a first series
Growth Max media spend	TikTok Ads Manager auction spend to promote the series via Mini Drama feed ads	\$ total / \$ per episode	This must be funded before episode 1 goes live—the algorithm needs spend to generate optimization signals
Creator fee (if co-produced)	Creator's fee for co-production, scripting contribution, or talent involvement	\$ ____	Separate from production cost if creator is both producer and talent
Contingency	Episode reshoots, platform troubleshooting, mid-series creative adjustments	10-15% of total budget	Don't skip this line
Total pilot budget		\$ ____	

Note on Growth Max spend: The system optimizes across the arc, not just per episode. Underfunding media spend limits the algorithm's ability to find and retain the right viewers. Set a realistic floor before launch.

Gate 10: Episode 1 Pre-Launch QA

Rule: Every item below must be checked before episode 1 publishes. This is your last chance to catch errors before viewers see them.

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
10.1	Episode 1 reviewed against your brand voice guardrails (Gate 4.6)	Does it sound and look like your brand?	
10.2	Episode 1 reviewed against TikTok Community Guidelines and advertising policies	Check the current version at TikTok's Business Help Center	
10.3	Hook lands within the first 3 seconds with no sound	Watch episode 1 on mute and confirm the scroll-stop works visually	
10.4	Cliffhanger ending is clear and functional	Would a first-time viewer feel compelled to open episode 2?	
10.5	Unlock mechanic tested end-to-end by someone who hasn't seen it before	Fresh eyes catch UX friction that the team misses	
10.6	TikTok Pixel / SDK confirmed firing on relevant events before episode goes live	Don't launch with unverified tracking	
10.7	Episode thumbnail, caption, and hashtag copy reviewed	These drive click-through from the feed	
10.8	Growth Max campaign confirmed active and spending	Episode 1 should go live with paid promotion already running	
10.9	Legal/compliance review completed if required by your category	Especially relevant for regulated categories (finance, health, supplements)	

Gate 11: Mid-Series Review Trigger

Rule: Schedule this before launch. The episode 3 checkpoint is your decision gate—don't wait until episode 10 to act on what episode 3 already told you.

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
11.1	Mid-series review meeting scheduled for after episodes 2-3 go live	Put it on the calendar before episode 1 launches	
11.2	Review attendees confirmed: at minimum, the campaign lead, creative lead, and media/performance lead		
11.3	Decision framework for the review agreed in advance	Three possible outcomes: continue as planned, adjust arc/creative, or pause series	
11.4	Adjustment triggers defined: what retention rate or conversion rate below your Gate 8 targets triggers a creative change?	Define the number, not a feeling	
11.5	Pause criteria defined: what outcome at episode 3 means you stop production on remaining episodes?	This is a business decision—make it before you're emotionally invested in the series	
11.6	Escalation path confirmed: who has authority to approve a mid-series creative pivot or pause?		

Gate 12: Attribution Sanity Check

Rule: Confirm data is flowing correctly before scaling spend. Optimization without verified attribution is guesswork with a budget attached.

#	Check Item	Notes	Status
12.1	In-app purchase data is visible and accurate in TikTok Ads Manager	Verify against your own payment records—not just TikTok's dashboard	
12.2	In-app ad revenue data is flowing correctly in TikTok Ads Manager	Check within 24–48 hours of episode 1 going live	
12.3	Conversion events are attributed to the correct campaign, ad set, and creative	Misattribution here distorts every optimization signal	
12.4	Episode-level performance data (views, completion rate, retention) is accessible and segmented by episode	You need per-episode data, not just series-level totals	
12.5	Attribution window confirmed and consistent with your other TikTok campaigns	Use the same window across campaigns for apples-to-apples comparison	
12.6	A second team member has independently verified the data setup	One set of eyes is not enough before you scale spend	
12.7	Data confirmed clean before any spend increase is approved	Do not scale Growth Max spend on unverified attribution	

Launch Readiness Summary

Use this table as your final sign-off before episode 1 goes live.

Gate	Title	Complete?
1	Strategy Gate	
2	Audience & Market Check	
3	Brand Fit Scoring (score $\geq$ 10)	

Gate	Title	Complete?
4	Production Setup	
5	Episode Structure	
6	Platform Configuration	
7	Growth Max Campaign Setup	
8	KPI Definition	
9	Budget Allocation	
10	Episode 1 Pre-Launch QA	
11	Mid-Series Review Trigger	
12	Attribution Sanity Check	

All 12 gates checked? You're cleared to publish episode 1.

If any gate is marked Blocked: resolve it before launch. A series that goes live with a broken unlock mechanic, unverified tracking, or no episode 3 decision framework will cost more to fix mid-run than it would have cost to fix before.

Quick Reference: Key Numbers to Know Before You Launch

Metric or Parameter	Value	Source
Recommended episode runtime	60–90 seconds	TikTok Growth Max for Mini Dramas specs
Minimum pilot episode count	5 episodes	Required for story momentum
Hook placement requirement	Within first 3 seconds	Platform best practice
Minis Center qualifying markets	US, Canada, AU, NZ, Indonesia, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Brazil, Mexico	TikTok platform data, 2026

Metric or Parameter	Value	Source
TikTok-reported incremental reach lift	52% when Mini Dramas run alongside off-platform promotion	TikTok internal testing, June 2026—not independently verified
TikTok-reported advertiser scale increase	10x when Mini Dramas run alongside off-platform promotion	TikTok internal testing, June 2026—not independently verified
Brand Fit Score threshold to proceed	18–25 out of 25	Sociallyin decision framework
Brand Fit Score threshold to test-and-learn	10–17 out of 25	Sociallyin decision framework
Mid-series review checkpoint	After episodes 2–3	Before production on remaining episodes is locked

Produced by Sociallyin, 2026. Platform features, market eligibility, and ad product specifications change. Verify current specs in TikTok Business Help Center and TikTok Ads Manager before launch.