

Thumbnail Best Practices Guide

Your **thumbnail** is the **first thing viewers see**, and YouTube's AI scans it **just like video content** to determine whether your video should be **age-restricted, demonetized, or flagged**. Following **safe thumbnail practices** can help **increase visibility and monetization** while keeping your content compliant.

Why Thumbnails Matter for Compliance & Click-Through Rate (CTR)

- ✓ YouTube scans thumbnails for explicit imagery and flagged content
- ✓ A well-designed thumbnail improves CTR (Click-Through Rate)
- ✓ Avoiding flagged visuals reduces the risk of demonetization or strikes

Safe Thumbnail Practices

- ✓ Use text-based or abstract thumbnails instead of explicit visuals.
- ✓ Include a clear, high-quality face shot (smiling and well-lit).
- ✓ Use clean backgrounds and vibrant colors for higher engagement.
- ✓ Blur or censor cannabis-related visuals (if necessary).
- ✓ Ensure thumbnails are high resolution (1280x720 px).
- ✓ Test different thumbnail styles to see what performs best.

Risky Thumbnail Mistakes (Likely to Get Flagged)

- ✗ Using close-up shots of cannabis plants, joints, bongs, or smoke.
- ✗ Showing exhaling vapor, dabs, or any form of consumption.
- ✗ Displaying dispensary branding, packaging, or logos.
- ✗ Using overly provocative or misleading imagery.
- ✗ Adding text that suggests extreme effects (e.g., “Super High” or “Mind-Blowing Strains”).

Thumbnail Design Tips for Maximum Engagement

- ✓ Keep text minimal (3-5 words max) & bold for easy readability.
- ✓ Use contrasting colors (yellow, white, black, or red) to make text pop.
- ✓ Ensure the subject's face is visible with clear eye contact (faces boost CTR!).
- ✓ Avoid too much clutter—keep it clean & visually appealing.
- ✓ Maintain brand consistency across all thumbnails.

 **Bonus Tip:** Use Canva, Photoshop, or Thumbnail Maker apps for professional designs.

Final Thoughts: How to Keep Your Thumbnails Safe & Click-Worthy

- ✓ Keep thumbnails visually appealing but avoid flagged imagery.
- ✓ Blur or censor sensitive visuals if necessary.

- ✓ **Use vibrant colors, bold text, and expressive facial reactions.**
- ✓ **Test different styles to optimize CTR.**

By following these best practices, you can **increase engagement while keeping your video compliant with YouTube's guidelines.**

 **Use this guide to design thumbnails that attract clicks while staying within YouTube's rules!**