

The 2026 Best-Time-to-Post Playbook

By Mel Owen, TimeToPost. October 2026. Online version: <https://timetopost.co/blog/best-time-to-post-playbook-2026>

Most "best time to post" advice is a chart. This is a method. It gives you starting windows for six platforms and five regions, a cadence you can actually keep, hook formulas, and a short list of what to measure so that within a month the windows are yours instead of borrowed.

One honest note first. Nobody can tell you your best time without your data. Every window below is a hypothesis to test, built from audience behavior (commutes, lunch breaks, evening scrolling) and not from a claimed study. Where TimeToPost has published numbers, we link the methodology so you can see exactly what they are and what they are not.

How to use this playbook

1. Pick the one or two platforms where your audience already is.
2. Convert the starting windows to your audience's local time, not yours.
3. Post at those windows for four weeks, with a consistent format.
4. Compare, drop the losers, and keep the winners.

That is the whole loop. The rest of this page is detail for each step.

Step 1: Understand what "best time" actually means

A best time is the hour when your followers are online and your post is likely to get its first wave of reactions. The first wave matters because most platforms judge a post on early response before showing it more widely. A good time is not magic. It just gives your post a better start.

Three things change the answer:

- **Who your audience is and where they live.** A B2B account with followers in the US and a creator whose fans are in Lagos do not share a best hour.
- **What you post.** A quick text post on X and a ten-minute YouTube video are consumed at different moments.
- **What you posted yesterday.** Two posts in the same hour compete for the same people.

What TimeToPost's own numbers are, and are not

TimeToPost publishes relative hourly curves from anonymized aggregate data once a platform has enough posts and enough distinct accounts behind it. Below that line the public pages say plainly that they use an editorial baseline instead. Each post is placed in its UTC publish hour, given a weighted engagement value,

averaged per hour, and the strongest hour is set to 100. That makes it a shape, not an absolute result. You can read the full rules on the [methodology page](#), including the sample-size threshold and what is never exposed.

Use curves like these as a place to start. Do not treat them as a promise.

Step 2: Starting windows by platform

All times are the audience's local time. Treat each as a first guess.

X

X is a fast, text-first feed. A post has a short window of visibility, so timing and posting while people are active matter more here than almost anywhere.

- **Start with:** weekday late morning to early afternoon, plus one evening test.
- **Cadence to try:** one to three posts per day, spaced hours apart, plus replies during the same windows.
- **Reminder:** replying to people in the first minutes after you post tends to help, and replying is a form of posting your audience actually sees.

Bluesky

Bluesky is smaller and more conversational, and the audience skews toward people who check in during breaks and evenings. We do not have a published baseline for it, so the honest advice is to test.

- **Start with:** the same late-morning window you use on X, then an evening test.
- **Cadence to try:** one to three posts per day. Replies and quote-posts do much of the discovery work.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the most "work-hours" feed.

- **Start with:** Tuesday to Thursday, early to mid morning, local to your buyers.
- **Cadence to try:** two to four posts per week. Quality over frequency.
- **Reminder:** if your buyers are in a different region from you, schedule to their morning, not yours.

Instagram

Instagram has the widest spread of use: commutes, lunch, and a long evening.

- **Start with:** lunchtime and early evening on weekdays, with one weekend test.
- **Cadence to try:** three to five feed posts or Reels per week.

TikTok

TikTok distributes in waves, so the first batch of viewers decides how far a video goes.

- **Start with:** late afternoon to evening in your main audience's time zone.

- **Cadence to try:** three to seven videos per week if you can keep quality up. A smaller number of good videos beats a daily scramble.

YouTube

Long videos and Shorts behave differently.

- **Shorts:** treat them like TikTok. Evenings are a sound first test.
- **Long videos:** publish an hour or two before your audience's peak viewing hours so the video has been indexed and shown by the time they arrive. Many creators pick weekend afternoons or weekday late afternoons.
- **Cadence to try:** one long video per week, plus Shorts if you have the material.

Step 3: Timing by region

Your audience's clock is the clock that counts. Here is how to think about five regions. Local time zone offsets are fixed facts; the audience habits are general patterns, so confirm them in your own analytics.

United States

Four time zones on one audience. Anchor on Eastern Time for national reach, since it covers a large share of the population and the afternoon in the West overlaps with its evening. Weekday mornings (7 to 9 AM ET) work for commuters, lunch (12 to 1 PM) for desk scrollers, and 7 to 9 PM for the evening feed. For B2B on LinkedIn, hit mid-morning Eastern.

Europe

Most of Europe sits in one to three hours of Central European Time, so one schedule covers a lot of ground. Mornings and a lunch block are strong, and the evening runs later in southern countries such as Spain, while the UK and Northern Europe tend to wind down earlier. The UK is an hour behind Central Europe, so a post at 12:00 UK lands at 13:00 in Paris. A single mid-morning-to-lunch post is a safe starting point for a pan-European audience.

India

India runs on one time zone, India Standard Time (UTC+5:30), which makes planning simple. Evenings are the dominant block for entertainment platforms. A lunch window and a late-evening block are both worth testing. For B2B on LinkedIn there is a useful trick: your Indian network reads in IST mornings, and your US buyers read in IST evenings, so you can run a two-clock schedule. TimeToPost's India pages cover this in more depth.

Nigeria

Nigeria is on West Africa Time (UTC+1, no daylight saving). Mobile data costs shape how people scroll: engagement tends to cluster into deliberate sessions rather than constant checking, with the evening the strongest block. X is especially active in Nigerian culture, so replies and quote-posts do real work there.

London aligns with Lagos in the British summer and sits one hour behind in winter, so a Lagos evening post reaches the UK diaspora's evening almost for free.

Pakistan

Pakistan Standard Time is UTC+5, thirty minutes behind India. We do not have a dedicated TimeToPost page or published baseline for Pakistan, so treat this section as a method, not a result. Start with the evening block, then test a lunch slot and a late-night slot, and check which wins in your own analytics. Remember that Friday midday has a prayer pause for many people, so Friday evening is usually a safer slot than Friday lunchtime for a broad audience. If a large part of your audience is abroad, add a second schedule for their clock.

Mixed audiences

If your followers span several regions, do not chase every clock. Pick the largest audience, post to its prime window, and let the platform carry the post to others. Add a second, smaller schedule only after you can see in your analytics that a second region exists.

Step 4: Cadence you can keep

Consistency beats intensity. A schedule you drop in week three is worse than a smaller one you keep.

- **Start small.** Pick a number you can hit for four weeks without strain.
- **Batch.** Write a week of posts in one sitting, then schedule them.
- **Separate windows.** Do not put two posts from the same account in the same hour.
- **Leave room for replies.** Reply time is part of the schedule.
- **Do not copy and paste across platforms.** Each platform has its own length, tone and format. Re-write the post for each one.

A sample week for a solo founder on X and LinkedIn:

Day	X	LinkedIn
Mon	1 post, late morning	
Tue	1 post, late morning, 1 reply session	1 post, mid-morning
Wed	1 post	
Thu	1 post, 1 evening test	1 post, mid-morning
Fri	1 post	

That is seven posts a week across two platforms. It is modest on purpose.

Step 5: Hook formulas

Timing gets the post seen. The first line gets it read. These formulas work on most platforms. Pick the one that fits what you know to be true, and never use one to promise something you will not deliver.

1. **The specific result.** "We cut our weekly posting time from five hours to one. Here is the change that mattered."
2. **The thing most people get wrong.** "Most advice on posting times ignores where your audience actually lives."
3. **The short list.** "Three things I check before I schedule anything."
4. **The before and after.** "Before: posting whenever I remembered. After: four fixed windows."
5. **The plain question.** "When do your followers actually read your posts?"
6. **The unfinished loop.** "I tested one posting window for a month. The result was not what I expected."
Only use this if the post pays it off in the next line.
7. **The direct instruction.** "Check your analytics for the hour your best post went live."

Rules that hold everywhere: put the point in the first line, make the first line stand without the rest, and leave the pitch for the end. On video, the first two seconds do the same job as the first line of text.

Step 6: What to measure

Likes are a weak signal. Choose a few metrics and read them the same way each week.

- **Reach or impressions per post.** Did the window get the post in front of people?
- **Replies, shares and saves.** Stronger signals than likes. TimeToPost's own scoring weights comments, shares and engagement rate above likes for the same reason.
- **Engagement rate by hour.** Group your posts by publish hour and compare averages. Ignore hours with only one or two posts.
- **Follower growth around spikes.** A post that brings followers is worth repeating.
- **Clicks, if you link out.** If the goal is traffic or sales, this is the one that counts.

The four-week test

1. **Week 1.** Post at three different windows across the week. Note the format of each.
2. **Week 2.** Repeat the same three windows with similar content.
3. **Week 3.** Replace the weakest window with a new one.
4. **Week 4.** Keep the best two and test a variation, such as a weekend slot.

By the end you have your own numbers, and they will beat any chart you read online. Be careful with small samples: one viral post at 3 PM does not make 3 PM your best hour. Look for a pattern that repeats.

Common mistakes

- **Using your own time zone.** Schedule to your audience's clock.
- **Changing everything at once.** Change one variable at a time or you will not know what worked.

- **Judging a window on one post.** Wait for a handful of posts per slot.
- **Ignoring format.** A video and a text post at the same hour are not a fair comparison.
- **Treating published averages as fact.** They describe other people's audiences.

A one-page checklist

- Choose one or two platforms.
- Write down your audience's main time zone.
- Pick three starting windows from the sections above.
- Set a cadence you can keep for four weeks.
- Write the first line of each post before the rest.
- Track reach, replies, saves and clicks by publish hour.
- After four weeks, keep the two best windows and test one new one.

Do the scheduling once

The hard part of all of this is doing it every week. TimeToPost lets you write your posts, pick times from your own engagement history, and schedule them ahead so the plan runs without you. Use the free [best-time-to-post calculator](#) to get a first set of windows, then start at timetopost.co.