THE FREE KIT

Character Lock

Keep one character identical in every shot of an AI video ad.

By **Hafiz Afaq** — AI filmmaker & creative director, Karachi

What it is

Character Lock keeps the same character in every shot — one face, one outfit, one turnaround, with locked locations and light — so the person, the product and the room never drift. I lock the character before I make a single clip. Every shot prompt repeats those locks word for word.

The problem it fixes

AI video has one problem that kills story ads. Characters drift. A face changes between shots. A shirt changes colour. A product label melts into nonsense. One clip looks fine on its own. Across more than twenty-five clips, the drift adds up to a different person by the end, and the viewer stops believing the story. A three-minute ad lives or dies on its characters, and drift is what kills it.

The four locks

1. **One face.** Fixed on a character sheet before any video is made. Every clip starts from that sheet, never from scratch.
2. **One outfit.** Locked on the same sheet, so clothes never change colour or style between shots.
3. **One turnaround.** The character from every side, with fixed identity marks that prove it is the same character.
4. **Locked locations and light.** The room and the light are locked with the character, so person, product and room don’t drift apart.

What’s inside this kit

Page 2 — The Character Sheet. The fill-in template. Print it, or type straight into the boxes.

Page 3 — The Prompt-Lock Checklist. The method, step by step, in the order it is done.

Page 4 — Worked example: ULTRA. The 3-minute ad that proved it — what was locked, and how.

Free to share. This kit is the working method behind the Character Lock service — not a theory, and not a shortcut.

The Character Sheet

Fill this in before the first clip. Every shot prompt repeats these locks word for word. Print it, or type straight into the boxes.

Character name

Role in the story

Face locks

Eyes, nose, mouth, jaw, hair, skin, age, expression. Be specific — vague faces drift.

Outfit locks

Every item, every colour, shoes, accessories. What the character wears in every shot.

Turnaround reference

Front / side / back. Note where the reference frames live.

Identity marks

Fixed marks that prove it is the same character — for ULTRA, an ear notch on one set side.

Props locked

Products and objects that must look the same in every hand and on every table.

Locations & light

Each room, each light. One motivated light per location.

Voice & style

How the character sounds and moves. The one thing the viewer must feel.

Negative locks — what must never change

Bans: looks, colours or details that must never appear — for ULTRA, no mascot-suit looks, no colour casts.

Nothing is animated until the locks exist. That order is what makes the method work.

The Prompt-Lock Checklist

The method, step by step. Tick each box as you go.

The four stages — with approval at each one

- [ ] **1 · Brief.** Your product, audience, platform, and the one thing the viewer must feel.
- [ ] **2 · Cast and lock.** Characters, product and sets locked on sheets before any video is made.
- [ ] **3 · Direct.** Every shot directed with references, lens, light and continuity rules.
- [ ] **4 · Edit and QC.** Edit, captions, sound, and a frame-by-frame check before delivery.

The golden rules

- [ ] Lock the character before the first clip. One face, one outfit, one turnaround.
- [ ] Lock the locations and the light with the character.
- [ ] Repeat the locks word for word in every shot prompt. The same references, the same words, in every prompt.
- [ ] Attach the sheets to every shot. For ULTRA, eighteen start frames each listed exactly which sheets to attach.
- [ ] Write lens, camera height and light into every shot, like a shot list.
- [ ] Nothing is animated until the locks exist.
- [ ] Check the character frame by frame in QC. If the locks are in the prompt, the character stays. If they are not, it drifts.

Before you send a prompt, ask one question: are the locks in it, word for word? If not, add them.

Worked example: ULTRA

A 3-minute AI character story ad (3:13, 9:16, 1080×1920). More than 25 clips. Three locations: a kitchen, a garage and a truck.

The brief

A script and a reference ad: a dad who is always on edge, and a friend who quietly switched to a zero-nicotine pouch. My call was to make the dad a grizzly and his best friend a golden Labrador. Animals stop the scroll and carry the emotion without a casting call — as long as each one stays exactly the same animal in every scene.



A still from ULTRA — the bear dad.

What was locked

— **The bear:** turnaround sheet, an ear notch on one set side, and a ban on mascot-suit looks and colour casts.

— **The dog:** the same golden Labrador in every scene, locked on his own sheet.

— **The props:** the ULTRA tin and the old silver tin, locked on sheets — and the label composited from the real packshot, so it is always correct.

— **The rooms:** kitchen, garage and driveway plates, each with one motivated light.

The story in seven beats

1. Dad on edge in the kitchen.
2. The garage.
3. The confession: “Ten months ago I switched to this.”
4. The product hero: the tin on the bench in a patch of sun.
5. Dad’s turn: “Why doesn’t anyone talk about this?”
6. The switch — a montage: the new pouch, the old tin in the bin.
7. The end line: “Same ritual. Zero nicotine. No crash.”

The switch is shown without a word. The old silver tin drops into the kitchen bin, and that is the whole argument.

Behind it

Eighteen start frames, each listing exactly which sheets to attach, with lens, camera height and light written like a shot list. Each frame was animated in short takes, with dialogue and timing written into the prompt. The finish: captions, a sound bed for each location, cleaned dialogue, a music swell into the reveal, and a –14 LUFS master. Made with Google Flow and Veo 3.1, Nano Banana Pro, CapCut, and Claude.

The same method sits behind a 56-second brand film (ERASED) and a 37-second UGC testimonial ad (ORAKSER).

About Hafiz Afaq

AI filmmaker and creative director in Karachi, working remotely for brands in the US, UK, Canada, Australia and the UAE. Eleven client brands, one person from brief to final file, seventeen case studies on the portfolio. Three recent ads went from brief to delivery in one day.

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