

Definition: **“User-initiated video ads”, or “click-to-play video ads”, are defined as video advertisements that play only following explicit user action (such as clicking on the ad).**

## Standard Interpretation

The specific language that supports the position regarding video ads being acceptable only when user-initiated, rather than automatically playing with sound or being overlay ads, can be found in the section detailing what is not considered an acceptable ad within the Acceptable Ads Standard. It states:

*"The following types of ads are currently unacceptable and cannot be considered for inclusion on the allowlist:*

- ...
- *Autoplay-sound or video ads*
- ...
- *Overlay in-video ads*
- ...
- *Pre-roll video ads"*

This language, however, is subject to the following exception: *"Except when the user intentionally interacts with the ad (e.g., clicks on the ad to see a video ad playing)."*

The Standard therefore states that video ads that automatically play with sound or are overlay in-video ads are not permissible, unless such interaction is initiated by the user themselves (such as by clicking on an ad to start a video).

## User-Initiated

Determining what constitutes "user initiated" action for playing a video ad involves discerning clear, deliberate actions taken by the user that indicate their intent to engage with the ad. The key is to ensure that the user's interaction is unmistakably intentional, eliminating any ambiguity that the ad started without the user's explicit consent. Here are principles to guide what should be considered as "user initiated":

- **Explicit Action:** An action is considered explicit when the user makes a clear, deliberate decision to engage with an ad. Clicking or tapping on a universally-recognized 'play' symbol (>) is a prime example of such explicit action. This action leaves no doubt about the user's intention to view the ad.
- **Intentionality:** The user's intent is clear when they perform an action specifically designed to initiate ad playback. This is typically done through a click or tap. Actions that can be performed unintentionally, such as hovering, do not sufficiently demonstrate user intent, as they can easily occur accidentally.
- **Avoiding Misleading Design:** The design and placement of the ad and its play button should not be misleading or deceptive, tricking the user into clicking the ad unintentionally. This includes avoiding disguising ads as content or other elements that users are likely to interact with as part of their intended navigation.

## Guidelines for Compliance

While the Standard permits user-initiated video ads, such ads must still otherwise meet the requirements of the Standard, including:

**Transparency:** ads must be clearly labeled and recognizable as advertising content, ensuring users are fully aware they are engaging with an ad.

**User Control:** users must have control over initiation of the ad, including the ability to stop the ad (at least as easily as it was to start the ad).

**Sound Policies:** Sound within video ads must be user-initiated, with no autoplay sound. The initiation of sound in an ad must be a result of a deliberate action taken by the user, such as clicking or tapping on the video to turn on the sound or clicking to play a video where there is a clear indication that sound will be on. This requirement ensures that ads do not intrude on the user's experience uninvited, especially in environments where unexpected sound could be disruptive or unwelcome.

## In-stream Video

While the Acceptable Ads Standard does not explicitly address the in-stream placement of click-to-play video ads (e.g., pre-roll, mid-roll, post-roll), the underlying principles of non-disruptiveness and user control over their browsing experience imply that ads should not significantly impede access to content. Accordingly, user-initiated video ads cannot impede video content.

## Enforcement and Assessment

In enforcing these guidelines, the team should consider the overall user experience, the ad's disruptiveness, and whether the ad adheres to our core principles of transparency, user control, and minimal disruption.

## Statement in regards to sustainability

The guidance on click-to-play video ads is based on the current Acceptable Ads Standard. While it reflects our commitment to non-disruptiveness and user control, please be aware that these guidelines may be revised as we explore incorporating sustainability into our standards. As this area evolves, adjustments to ensure minimal disruption and enhance user experience might be necessary. We welcome your insights and questions on any upcoming changes.