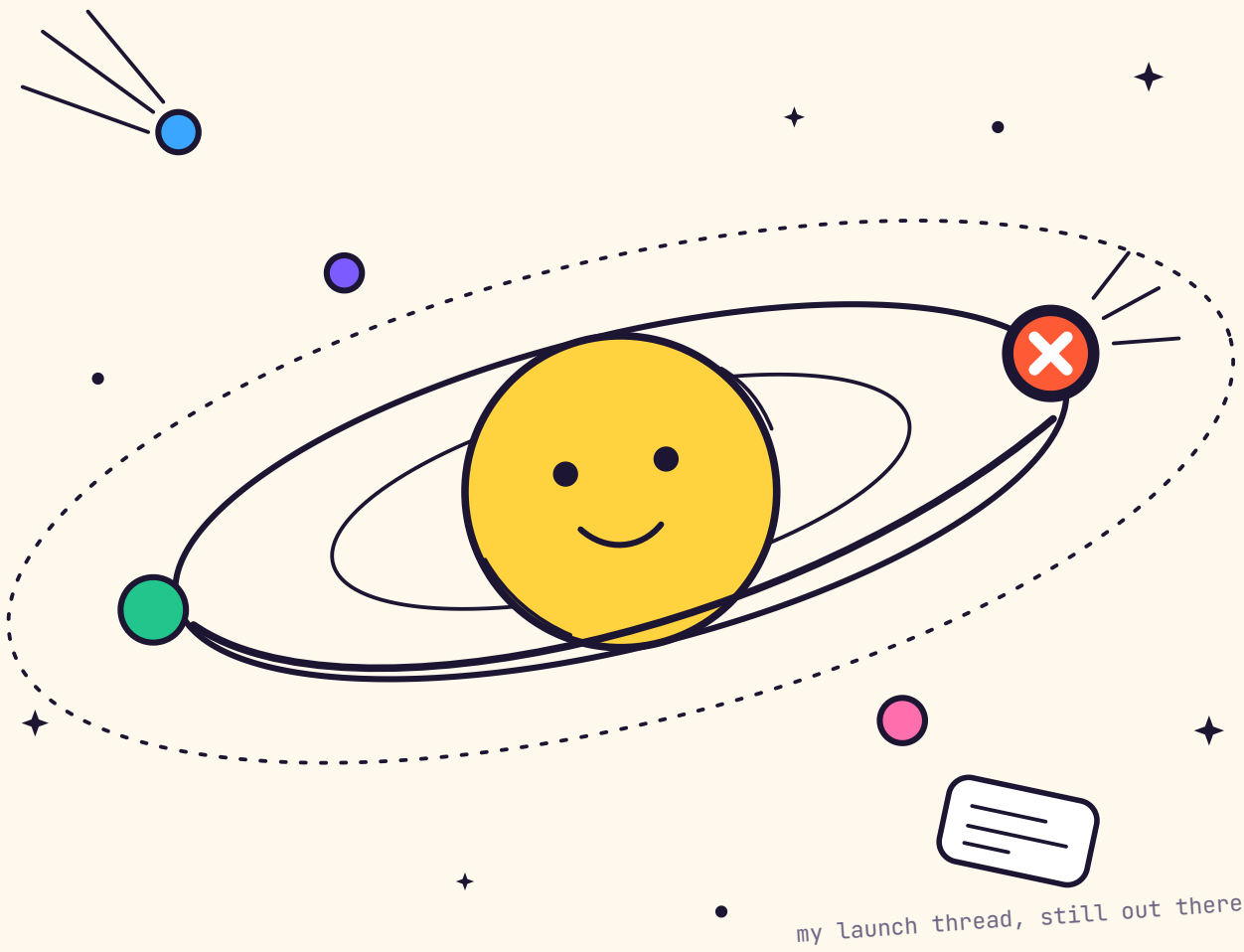
Orbit X

FIELD GUIDE · NOVEMBER 2026



my launch thread, still out there

Same work, better aim.

A field guide to growing on X, written from two sources: the ranking code X published, and the numbers from my own account, flops included.

George Karakabakov
@karakabakov_ · maker of Orbit X · posts after the toddler is asleep

checked against X's code
on 20 Nov 2026

BEFORE WE START

I did everything right and got forty views.

I opened my X account on October 1 with zero followers, a 9 to 5 and a toddler. X happens after bedtime. His, not mine.



For a month I did what every thread tells you to do. Posted several times a day. Replied to anything that moved. A typical post got around forty views, and some of those were me checking whether it had more views yet.

Then two things happened. X put its For You ranking code on GitHub, weights and all. And I sat down with 150 of my own posts and sorted them by what actually worked. The two agreed with each other so neatly that I got a bit annoyed about October.

This guide is those two things side by side: **what the code says** and **what happened when I tried it**. Where I'm guessing, I say so.

The whole guide in thirty seconds

1
X ranks on what it thinks you'll do next. A predicted reply is weighted about seven times a predicted like. Write things people can answer.

2
A small account lives in other people's threads. Your reply under a rising post is read by more people than your own post is.

3
The clock is short. New posts from small accounts get a lift for about two hours. After 48 hours a post is out of For You for good.

4
Annoying people is expensive. Mutes, "not interested" and reports carry the heaviest weights in the file, and they all point down.

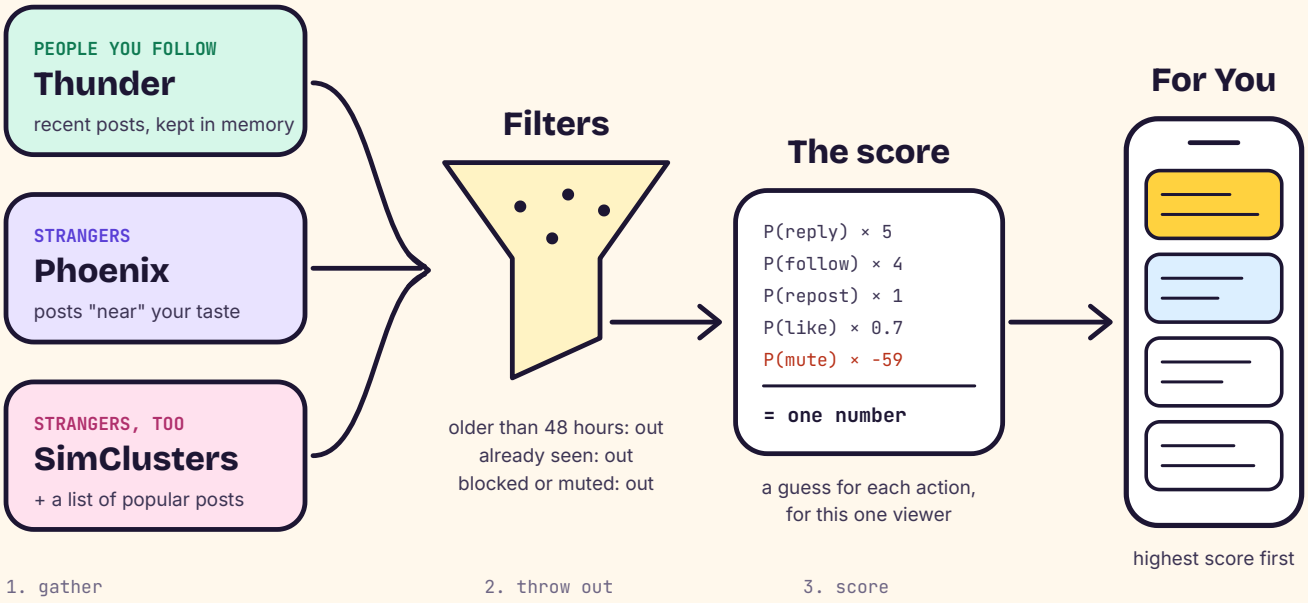
Fine print, up front. The numbers from X come from its public code. X says the main weights file mirrors production, but it runs experiments on top and changes values often. My numbers are one account over seven weeks. Treat both as a map drawn by someone who has been there once, in the dark.

CHAPTER 1 HOW THE FEED GETS MADE

Your post applies for a job 1,500 times a second.

Every time someone opens For You, X runs the same four steps for that one person. Nobody is "pushing" or "suppressing" your post. It's auditioning, over and over, for one viewer at a time.

(I made up the 1,500. X doesn't publish that number. The four steps are real.)



Two doors in

Your post reaches someone either because **they follow you** (Thunder) or because a model decided it sits close to what they've been engaging with (Phoenix, SimClusters). At 40 followers the first door is forty people wide. The second door is the whole game, and you get through it by looking like the posts a stranger already engages with.

One model, many guesses

Phoenix reads the viewer's recent history and predicts how likely they are to do each thing: like, reply, repost, share, follow, mute. The guesses are multiplied by weights and added up. That sum is your score. The next chapter is the weights.

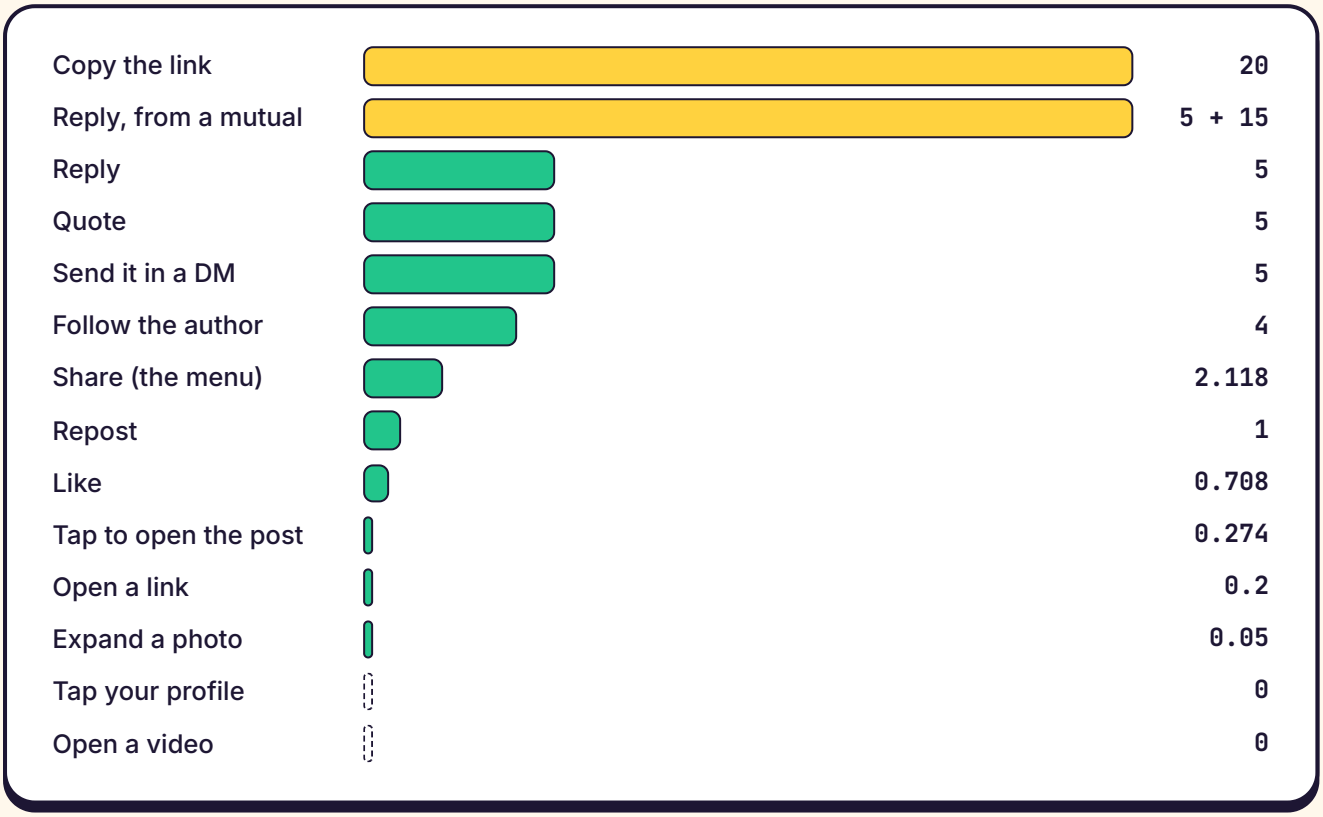
One line worth pausing on. The filter list drops posts the viewer has already seen. So "repost your own post later for a second wave" reaches new people, but it doesn't re-show it to the ones who scrolled past the first time.

CHAPTER 2 THE PRICE LIST

What X thinks each tap is worth.

These are the weights in `home-mixer/params/param.rs`, the file that turns Phoenix's guesses into one score. I didn't round them to look tidy. Somebody at X really did pick 0.708 for a like.





The like is the cheapest thing on the menu

A reply, a quote or a DM share is weighted about seven times a like. A follow, nearly six. If your post earns likes and nothing else, it's being paid in coins.

Two things are worth 20

Copy link: people copy a link to send it to a group chat or a doc, so useful posts win. **A mutual's reply:** on your original posts, the reply weight for someone you both follow is 5 plus a boost of 15. More in chapter 5.

Zero means zero

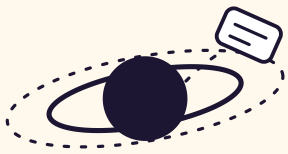
Opening a video: 0. A profile tap: 0. A profile visit only starts to count when it ends in a follow, which is worth 4. Chapter 8 is about that two-second window.

Reading time counts too, through small weights on predicted reading time: 0.05 for stopping on a post, plus more for time spent on it and after tapping in. X's changelog from October says the model got much better at predicting time spent, and now looks for posts people read to the end. A post worth finishing beats a post worth glancing at.

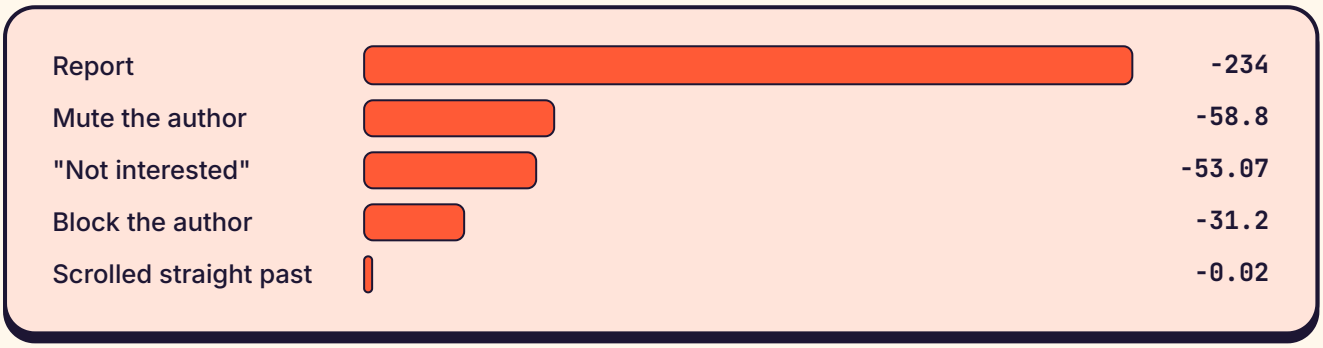
The four taps that cost you.

Everything on the last page fit on a scale that stopped at 20. This scale goes to 234, and it points the other way.

When the model thinks a viewer is likely to mute you, tap "not interested", block or report, your score for that viewer drops hard. And the model learns those guesses from how people like that viewer reacted to posts like yours.



"like if you agree" went here



How to read these numbers without embarrassing yourself

Every "X algorithm" thread does the same sum: 234 ÷ 0.708, so "one report cancels 330 likes". X added a comment to the code specifically to say **that's wrong**. Here's why, in X's own framing:

- **Weights multiply predictions, not counts.** The score uses the model's guess of how likely *this viewer* is to report you. Nobody is tallying your reports against your likes.
- **Reports are rare.** X says the baseline chance of a report is more than 1,000 times lower than a like. The weight is huge so that a tiny probability can matter at all.
- **It's personal.** If a certain crowd mutes you, you sink for viewers who resemble that crowd, and less so for everyone else. X says this is also why mass-report brigades don't work the way people fear.

What earns the fines

- Engagement bait: "like if...", "repost if...", "comment YES"
- Picking fights and calling people names
- Posting off your usual topics to a crowd that followed you for one thing
- Tag walls and the same pitch pasted under ten posts

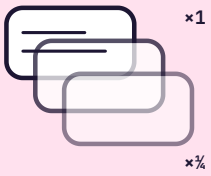
The practical version

You won't see your mutes. So the test is boring: **would a stranger who never asked for this be mildly irritated by it?** If yes, you're buying likes from fans with fines from everyone else. At these weights, that's a bad trade.

CHAPTER 3 AFTER THE SCORE

Three thumbs on the scale.

After the weighted sum, X adjusts the score three more times. Two work against you. One was written for accounts exactly your size, and almost nobody talks about it.



1. The repeat-author decay

In one person's feed, your first post gets its full score. Each one after that is multiplied by a shrinking factor. With the reranker's defaults that's about ×0.63 for the second, ×0.44 for the third, down to a floor of ×0.25.

What to do: five posts in one hour compete with each other for the same viewers. Space them out. Three good posts across a day beat eight in a burst.



2. The stranger discount

A post shown to someone who doesn't follow you has its score multiplied by a factor below 1 (0.75 in the reranker's defaults). Replies and reposts get the same treatment even from accounts the viewer does follow. Plain original posts from followed accounts are the only ones at full price.

What to do: every follower removes the discount for one more person, forever. That's why a follow is weighted 4, and why a small engaged following matters more than a viral stranger audience.



3. The new-author boost `this one's for you`

The code calls it "cold start". With the current values, each feed load can lift one post to around slot 15 if all of this is true:

- the author has **50,000 followers or fewer**
- it's an **original post**, not a reply
- it's **under two hours old**
- it has had **fewer than 200 feed impressions** so far

Why this matters. X deliberately hands a small account's fresh post some test views with strangers. A post that turns those into replies gets shown again on its own score. A post that gets silence has used up its two hours. You don't need X to "notice" you. You need to pass a test you're already being given.

CHAPTER 4 WHAT TO POST

Nobody on X is looking for your product.

I learned this from a spreadsheet, the most humbling way to learn anything: 150 of my own October posts, sorted by type, median of each.

WHAT I POSTED	MEDIAN VIEWS	WHAT CAME BACK
Product posts (feature here, update there)	53	one engagement. Probably my own thumb.
Launch threads	10,000 to 12,000	about seven engagements. Lots of eyes, nobody cared.
"Let's connect" introductions	421	25 engagements, 15 of them replies
Everything, overall	59	two engagements

The cleanest experiment I never planned

Two posts on November 1, a few hours apart, with almost exactly the same views.

POST A

The launch of my Mac app.

189,673 views
23 likes
4 replies

POST B

"Tell me what you build, where you're from, and your goal before the year ends."

189,931 views
61 replies

Same reach, fifteen times the conversation. Through chapter 2: post A collected likes at 0.7. Post B collected replies at 5, and some of those people followed (4). One post was teaching X to show me to more people. The other was a billboard.

What reached furthest for me

1. **Introductions** that end with a question
2. **Milestones** with a real number
3. **Plan vs reality**, kept short
4. **Lists** from my own stack

And the product?

It still gets posted, as the ending of a story: the problem first, then the thing I built. And end on something answerable in five seconds. "What are you building?" works. "Thoughts?" doesn't. Nobody has thoughts on demand.

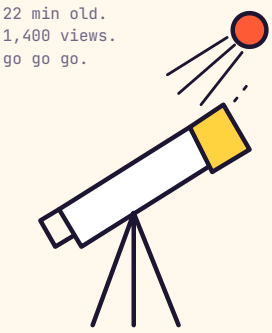
CHAPTER 5 BORROWED REACH

Your reply doesn't travel. The post carries it.

Here's a line from X's filter list that changed how I spend my evenings: For You drops **replies from accounts the viewer doesn't follow.**

So your reply is never going to appear in a stranger's feed by itself. It gets read one way: someone opens the post you replied to and sees you near the top. So the reply is only as good as the post it sits under, and how early you got there.

A great reply under a two-day-old post is a message in a bottle. The same reply twenty minutes in is read by everyone who opens the post for the next day.



Which posts I reply to

- **15 to 60 minutes old**
- **1,000+ views already**, with real replies, not only likes
- Authors **bigger than me, not celebrities.** Under a 2-million account a reply is a raindrop in the sea
- On my topics. No crypto, no politics

What I write

- Something only I could say: **a number from my own work**, another angle, a real question
- One to three sentences. People read replies mid-scroll
- No links, no hashtags, no "check my profile"
- No pitch, unless they asked for a tool

Before and after

THE POST

"Charged $5 for my first app. Nobody valued it. Raised to $29 and sales went up."

WEAK

"So true, pricing is hard!"

Fits under any post ever written.

BETTER

"Same here: going from $9 to $19 halved my refunds. Did you keep a free tier?"

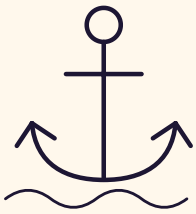
A number, and a reason for the author to answer.

Why the follow-back matters. Since July 2026, when you and a viewer follow each other, X adds 15 to the reply weight on your original posts: 20 instead of 5. So every reply that turns into a mutual follow makes your next post count four times as much with that person. My 639 replies in six weeks did more than any post.

CHAPTER 6 DEAD WEIGHT

Things that quietly sink a post.

None of these get you "shadowbanned". They just earn little or nothing in the score, or they earn fines. I've done all of them. Several in the same post.



A link in the main post

Opening a link is weighted 0.2. A reply is 5. And a reader who leaves stops adding reading time. Say the point in the post. Put the link in the first reply, or at the end of a thread.

Hashtags

I searched the weights and the scoring code for "hashtag". Zero results. The only trace in the model is that it notes when a viewer taps one. What they do is make a post look like an ad, which is how you meet the fines page.

A video with nothing to read

Opening a video is weighted 0, and the video-view weight is 0 in the defaults. A video can still do well, but because of what it makes people *do*: reply, share, stay. Always give it a line of text that stands by itself.

Engagement bait

"Like if you agree, repost if you don't." It collects the 0.7 taps from fans and the mutes from everyone else. X's creator rules also now ban repeatedly asking for engagement. Two reasons to stop.

Posting in bursts

Chapter 3's repeat-author decay: your posts fight each other. Same for replies. More than about five replies in ten minutes, or the same "let's connect!" under twenty posts, reads as a bot to people. (Those thresholds are mine, from watching what gets ignored.)

Buying followers, joining pods

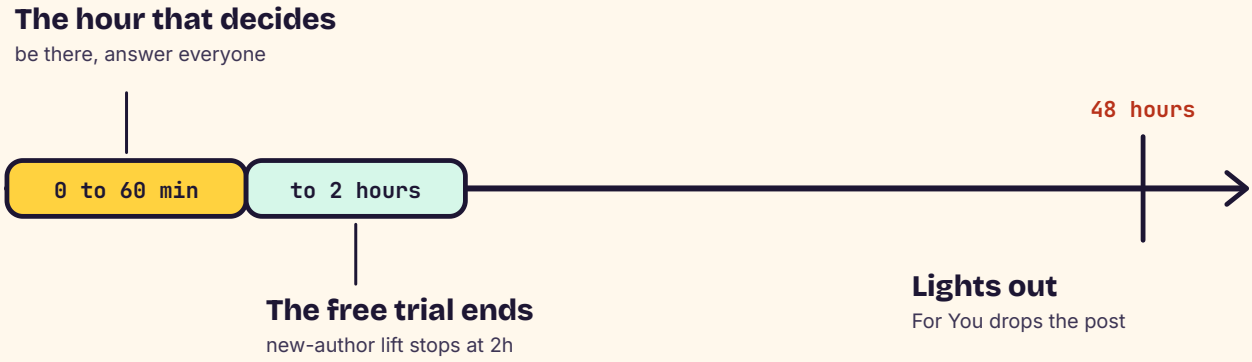
Bots don't reply, share or read to the end. So your posts get tested on an audience guaranteed to do nothing, and fail the test. You'd be paying to make chapter 3's free trial harder. Pods are no better: X's code comments say an action only counts on a post served in the Home timeline, so likes traded through a group chat link do nothing.

What isn't on this list: the hour you post at. I grouped 150 posts by hour and it barely mattered. Midday was a little ahead. *What* I posted swung views far more than *when*. An introduction at a "bad" hour beat a product post at the best one, every time.

CHAPTER 7 TIMING

A post has three clocks.

Timing does matter on X. It's just not the "post at 9:07 on Tuesdays" kind. It's how long you stay after you hit post.



Clock one: the first hour

What I see, every time: a new post is shown to a small group first. If they answer, it goes wider. If they don't, it's mostly done.

Post when you can stay 30 to 60 minutes, and answer every reply in that window. Each answer is more conversation under the post.

Clock two: two hours

This one is in the code. The new-author boost only applies to posts under 7,200 seconds old. After that your post has to stand on its own score.

So "post and go to bed" wastes the one window X gives small accounts for free.

Clock three: 48 hours

Also in the code. Past two days, For You won't pick the post up at all. People can still find it on your profile or through search, but the feed is finished with it.

Stop refreshing day-three analytics. Write the next one.

So what's the best time to post?

When your followers are awake **and you're free for the next hour.** Both halves matter. A perfect slot you can't stay for loses to an average one where you can.

If you have 90 days of posts, group them by weekday and hour and take the **median** views, not the average, so one lucky post doesn't make its hour look ten times better. Ignore any hour with fewer than three posts.

If you have no history yet, start with three slots in your audience's time zone:

`08:30 · 12:30 · 17:30`

Before work, lunch, after work. After a month you'll have your own pattern. Mine turned out to be "midday, slightly".

CHAPTER 8 THE PROFILE

You have two seconds.

Someone liked your reply and tapped your name. In the weights file that tap is worth exactly 0. What happens in the next two seconds is worth 4, and removes the stranger discount for that person for good.

THE RÉSUMÉ

"Software engineer. Founder. Coffee lover."

Tells me nothing will happen if I follow you. Also, everyone loves coffee. It's not a personality, it's a dependency.

THE PLOT

"14 years at agencies. Burned out in 2024. Shipping small Mac apps solo. $0 → $10k MRR · now $1.2k"

Past, present, and a number that will move. I want to see how it ends.

The formula

1

Who you were, or what happened.

"14 years at agencies. Burned out in 2024."

2

What you're building now.

"Shipping small Mac apps solo."

3

A public number that will change.

"$0 → $10k MRR · now $1.2k"

Why the number matters most

A number gives people a reason to check back. Revenue, users, days in a row, books written: anything public that moves. It also keeps you honest, and readers can tell.

And every time it changes, you have a post. Milestones with a real number were my second-best format after introductions.

Small things that add up

- X allows **160 characters**, and an emoji counts as two
- One true human detail beats three job titles
- Product link goes in the link field, not the bio text
- Keep a few recent posts worth reading on top. An empty profile is a closed shop



Test it on a stranger. Show someone your profile for two seconds, then hide it and ask what you do and what happens next. If they can't answer the second part, the plot is missing.

CHAPTER 9 THE ROUTINE

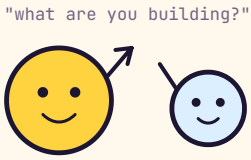
Thirty to sixty minutes, with a coffee.

I don't have three hours a day and I'm guessing you don't either. This is the whole routine. It's boring, and it works because almost nobody keeps it up for more than a week.

WHEN	WHAT	WHY (CHAPTER)
Morning	**One post:** an introduction or an easy question	Replies are weighted 5 (ch. 2). Fresh posts get the new-author lift (ch. 3)
20–30 min	**Replies to rising posts** in your niche, 15 to 60 minutes old	The post carries your reply (ch. 5)
Midday	**A second post.** Stay around after it	The first hour decides (ch. 7)
10 replies	**To new builders** and to people who replied to you	Follow-backs become mutuals: reply weight 20, not 5 (ch. 5)
Evening	**A third post,** then answer every reply you got today	Spaced out, so your posts don't fight each other (ch. 3)

Say hi to the people nobody answered

Every day someone posts "let's connect, what are you building?" and hundreds of new builders answer. Most of those answers get ignored. Reply to a few with something specific about what they make. They follow back, and they keep replying to you for months. These were my first real followers, and they're still the first ones under my posts.



Try this for the next 14 days

1. **Day 1:** a post that introduces you. What you build, where you're from, who you want to meet. End with a question
2. **Every day:** 10 replies to posts in your niche that are under an hour old
3. **Every day:** answer every reply you get, the same day
4. **Every 3 days:** another introduction or easy-question post
5. **Day 14:** write down your follower count, and which posts got *replies*, not views

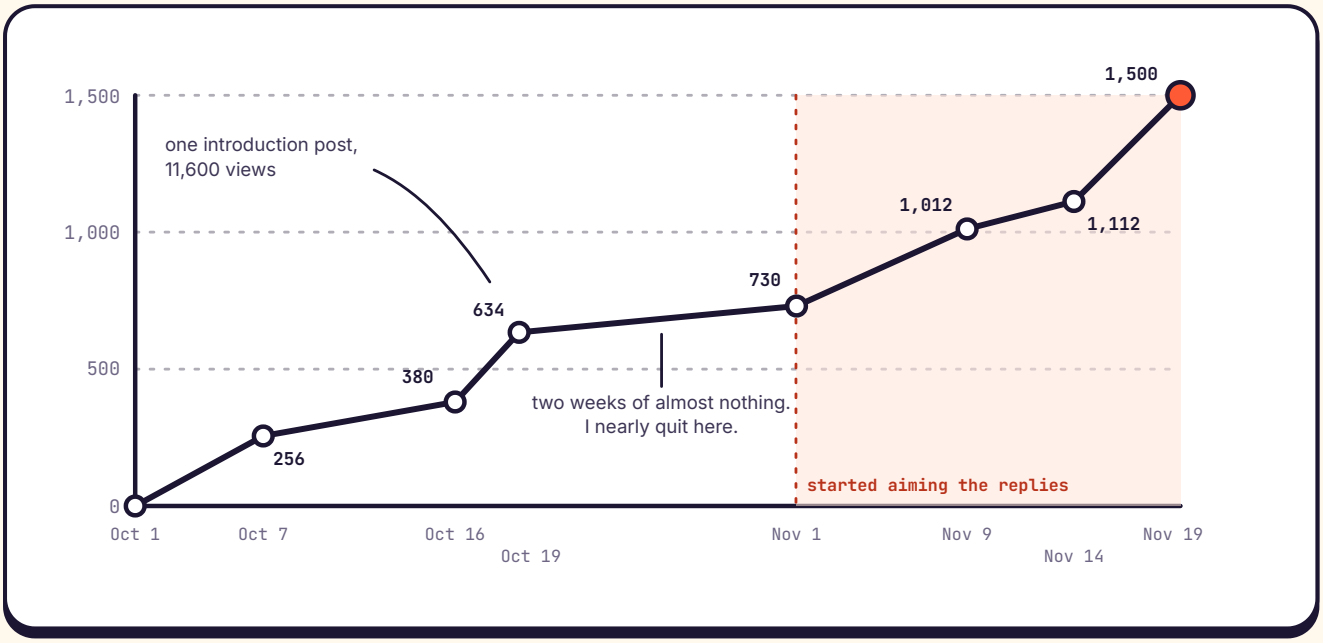
Pin the list somewhere you'll see it. Mine lived on a sticky note next to a baby monitor.

If nothing changed after 14 days, look at your replies, not your posts. Could anyone else have written them? If yes, that's the fix. It was mine.

CHAPTER 10 PATIENCE, SADLY

Growth is a staircase drawn by a toddler.

The plan was steady growth every day. Reality was two flat weeks, one big weekend, repeat. Here's my actual follower count, flat parts left in.



The flat weeks aren't wasted

From 634 to 730 took two weeks. Reply, post, nobody sees it, do it again tomorrow. Then on November 6 one post got **152k views and 211 replies**, and the next day I went from 819 to 978. Biggest single day of the run.

That post only worked because of the people I'd been talking to during the flat weeks. They replied first, in the first hour, which is the part that pushes a post out. **The flat weeks are where the jump comes from.** Most people just aren't there anymore when it arrives.

What changed on November 1

October: about 700 followers in 31 days, roughly 23 a day, replying to whatever I could find. I spent more time hunting for a post worth replying to than actually replying.

From November: about 800 more in 19 days, roughly 42 a day. Same evenings, same effort. The only change was **which posts the replies went under, and when.** I'd built a tool to find them while they were still climbing. That tool turned into Orbit X.

> **One account. Not a promise.** Your niche, your timing and plain luck all matter. I'm showing you this so the flat part of your own chart doesn't talk you out of it.

TEAR THIS PAGE OUT THE CHEAT SHEET

Ten seconds before you post.

- [ ] Can someone **reply in five seconds?**
- [ ] Is there a **number or detail only I could know?**
- [ ] Would anyone **copy the link** to send it to a friend?
- [ ] Is the **link out of the main post?**
- [ ] No hashtags, no "like if you agree"?
- [ ] Will I be around for the **next 30 minutes?**
- [ ] Has it been a while since my last post?
- [ ] Would **I** stop scrolling for this?

Three or more empty boxes: rewrite it, or post it later.

The weights, pocket size

Copy link · a mutual's reply	20
Reply · quote · DM share	5
Follow	4
Share	2.1
Repost	1
Like	0.7
Open a link	0.2
Profile tap · video open	0
Block	-31
"Not interested"	-53
Mute	-59
Report	-234

Applied to the model's guesses, not to counts.

A good reply

- Post is 15 to 60 min old
- 1,000+ views, real replies
- Author bigger, not famous
- 1 to 3 sentences
- Only I could have written it

The three clocks

- **1 hour:** stay and answer
- **2 hours:** new-author lift ends
- **48 hours:** out of For You

New-author lift: 50k followers or fewer, original post, under 200 impressions.

The bio

- Who you were
- What you build now
- A number that will move

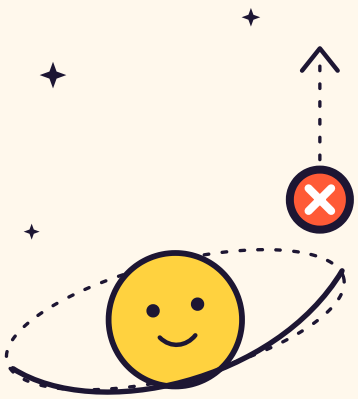
160 characters. Emoji count double. Update the number when it changes.

Post things people can answer. Reply where people are already looking. Stay for the first hour. Don't quit in the flat part.

ONE LAST THING

You still do the work. This just aims it.

Everything in this guide can be done by hand. I did it by hand for a month. The slow part was never the writing. It was finding the right post to reply to before its moment passed.



So I built the part I was bad at. **Orbit X** watches your niche and lists the posts that are taking off right now, while an early reply still gets seen, with a draft in your own voice for each. You read it, fix it, and send it yourself.

It also does the other chores from this guide:

- **Replies:** rising posts, new builders, your mentions, in one list
- **Simulator:** race two drafts against these weights before you post
- **Schedule:** your best hours from your own last 90 days
- **Analytics:** which of your habits earn replies, not only views

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Same work, better aim

Where the numbers come from

X's ranking code. github.com/xai-org/x-algorithm at commit `ed78e06` (20 Nov 2026). Weights and new-author settings: `home-mixer/params/param.rs`, synced from production on 19 Nov. How weights apply: `xai-value-model/`. Mutual-follow boost: `docs/BIDIRECTIONAL_BOOST_CHANGE.md`. Repeat-author and stranger factors: `vm-ranker/params.rs`. New-author rules: `home-mixer/scorers/author_cold_start.rs`. Filters: `home-mixer/filters/`.

X says the weights file mirrors its main production values and that big experiments show up in the repo. The reranker's factors are code defaults, so production may differ. If you're reading this in 2027, check the files.

My numbers. One account, @karakababkov_, from 1 October to 19 November 2026. Post medians are from 150 posts over about three weeks in October. The reply and view totals are from the first six weeks: 276 posts, 833k views, 1,148 replies received, 639 replies sent.

What I'm guessing. That a new post is tested on a small group first (I see it, the code doesn't spell it out). The "five replies in ten minutes" threshold. And the 1,500 times a second, obviously.

What are you at right now, and what's your next number?

Tell me on X: @karakababkov_. I answer everyone. It's in chapter 9.
– George