Creator Pay SOP

When to keep TikTok Shop creators on commission, when to pay a fee or a retainer, and how to test paid deals without paying for videos that never sell.

Most brands start on commission to keep the risk low, and that is the right place to start. Two things go wrong from there. On a new shop, commission alone often brings few posts, because creators cannot yet see that the product sells. And when brands do start paying, the fees tend to go to creators who have never sold anything for them.

We use an offer ladder. Every creator starts on the first rung. Each step up in pay is earned with sales, has an end date, and is checked on a set day. The brand signs off a budget band for each rung before the programme starts, so every offer inside the band can be made within 24 hours.

Four rules

Sales earn the step up

A fee or retainer goes to a creator with sales for you, or, for a paid video, sales in your category in the last 30 days.

Work out break-even first

Every fee is divided by your margin per order after commission. That gives the orders it has to buy.

Every paid deal has dates

Deliverables, a sales minimum, review dates and stop rules, in writing, before the sample goes out.

Retainers can come back down

Reviewed every two months against a sales floor. When sales fall, the creator moves back to commission.

> **Approvals in advance.** No creator is offered a rate before the brand's approval rule is known. Anything above the agreed band goes to the approver, who decides within 24 hours.

The offer ladder

Rungs apply per creator, except rung 3, which opens when the programme as a whole is behind.

Rung	Offer	When	Move on when
1	Sample plus commission	The default for every new creator, with a test window	They post and sell: rung 2 or 3a. Nothing by day 21: stop sampling them
2	A boost or bonus with an end date; competitions	Replies or posting under target after two weeks	A creator reaches your top 10 by sales: 3a
3	Paid per video, with a sales minimum	Rung 2 not working by week four, inside the approved band, for creators with category sales in the last 30 days	Over break-even at day 28: 3a. Under: back to commission
3a	Standout deal: ongoing samples, ad spend behind a set number of videos, a commission step-up after a sales threshold, a voucher for their viewers	A creator already selling well for you (top 10 by sales, or a video over your sales threshold)	Still selling after two months: a retainer test
4	Retainer	Proven sellers only, offered after they have replied and sold	Sales fall at the two-month review: back to commission, with the step-up on offer

Programme checkpoints

- **Week two.** Replies or posting under target: open rung 2 for the creators you have, before the brand asks.
- **Week four.** Still under target: rung 3 for creators who sell in your category, within the band.
- **Every two weeks.** Sales review for every creator on a standout deal.
- **Every two months.** Retainer review against each creator's floor.

Commission changes

Commission cuts announced after creators have started cause a backlash; we have seen it in three shops. Announce any planned step-down at the first sample, with the date it happens. Step-ups are a reward and can be announced any time, with the threshold and the start date.

> Higher commission alone does not fix targeting: in one shop, 30% commission to creators picked without targeting brought sample requests and almost no sales.

The maths

Break-even on a fee

Margin per order after commission = selling price minus product cost, other costs per order (delivery, packaging, platform fees) and commission. Orders to cover a fee = fee divided by that margin.

Worked example	Value
Selling price per order	£24.99
Product cost, and other costs per order	£6.50 and £3.50
Margin before commission	£14.99
Commission at 15%	£3.75
Margin after commission	£11.24
Fee for three videos	£300
Orders to cover the fee	27 (sales of about £675)

Then ask one question: has this creator sold 27 orders in a month for anyone? If not, the fee is too high or it is too early. In the Lab, expected orders under break-even reads "does not pay back"; under one and a half times break-even reads "thin", and runs only as a test with a sales minimum.

The floor for a retainer

Margin after commission as a share of sales = margin after commission divided by price (£11.24 / £24.99 = 45%). Sales floor = monthly retainer divided by that share. A £500 retainer needs about £1,112 of sales a month to pay for itself.

What a paid deal costs per order

(Fee + commission on every order) divided by orders. At 45 orders, the £300 deal above costs £10.42 an order against £3.75 on commission alone, and keeps £206 after the fee. Compare it with what a sample costs you per order today before you decide.

> **Where pay goes furthest.** In one client shop, a creator turned 3 samples into 48 orders in two weeks. In another, creators already selling got a standout deal with commission stepping from 13% to 15% after 25 sales, and drove most of the shop's affiliate sales by early October 2026.

Running a first paid test

Who qualifies

- Sales in your category in the last 30 days, above your floor.
- A post rate on past samples of 75% or more, and videos with the product link attached.
- Niche and brand fit; no haul or unboxing-only accounts; not retained by a competitor.
- Judged on sales and post rate, never on follower count. We have seen 1.7 million followers with £34 of sales in 30 days.

Before the sample goes out

Written terms: deliverables and dates, the fee, who pays, the sales minimum, how payment details are collected (through the payer's finance route, never in chat), usage rights (organic or ads, term, expiry) and the review dates.

When	What happens
Day 0	Terms agreed in writing; samples sent; brief sent on delivery
Day 7	First video due. Nudge anyone who has not posted
Day 14	Review 1: orders per creator against break-even. Second nudge
Day 21	Stop anyone with no video: no further fee, no new samples
Day 28	Decision per creator: standout deal, another paid round, or back to commission
Delivery + 14 days	Fees paid for delivered videos; paid date recorded

Creator red flags

Flag	Do this
Asks for a retainer or per-video fee before any sales	Offer rung 1 or 2 only, and say what unlocks a paid deal
High followers with tiny sales	Judge on sales and post rate
Posts without the product link	Ask for an edit before any fee is paid
Posts once, then silence	Nudge at day 7 and 14; stop at day 21
On a retainer with falling sales	Two-month review; back to commission

What we have seen

- UGC paid at £10 a video: the creator quit.
- Retainers offered to creators with no sales history for the brand: none was signed.
- Competition prizes cost about 2 to 4% of the winners' sales in one shop while stock held. Pause or redesign competitions during a stock-out of the hero product.
- Prizes paid late because payment details were never collected at entry. Collect them through the payer's finance route when a creator enters.

Two templates

Reply to a fee request before any sales

Hi [name], thanks for coming back to us about [brand].

We start every creator on a free sample of [product] and [commission] commission on every sale. Creators who sell for us move on to paid deals: ad spend behind their videos, a higher commission after [number] sales, and paid videos for our top sellers.

If that works for you, send me your address and I'll get a sample out this week.

Commission step-up

Hi [name], good news. Your sales for [brand] have passed [number] orders, so your commission on [product] goes up from [commission] to [new rate] from [date].

Thank you for the videos. If you'd like more samples to film with, let me know.

Six more templates are in the Lab: the paid video offer, the standout deal, written terms, the commission change notice, the retainer review and the internal approval request.

Want it run for you?

Pear is a UK TikTok Shop agency. We agree the offer ladder and a budget band for each rung with every brand at kick-off, and move each creator up a rung only when their sales justify it.

Book 30 minutes with Tom, our founder:
calendly.com/tom-peargrowth/30min

General guidance from Pear's own creator method. Results depend on your product, margins, stock and creators. Check TikTok Shop's current affiliate policies and your own Affiliate Centre settings before making any offer. Pear Growth Ltd, peargrowth.com.