GOOGLE LABS CREATIVE STUDIO • 2026 PRACTICAL HANDBOOK

Mastering Google Flow

The complete, step-by-step visual guide to planning, generating, directing, and editing cinematic AI films with Veo 3.1, Imagen 4, and Gemini.

Flow Agent Storyboarding | Ingredients Consistency (@Tags) | Start & End Frame Keyframing | Camera & Lens Direction | Native Dialogue & SFX | Scenebuilder Timeline



Three Engines, One Studio

Unifies Gemini Omni Flash, Nano Banana 2 / Imagen 4, and Veo 3.1 in one browser & mobile workspace.

Built for Continuity

Lock faces, outfits, and props across dozens of shots using Ingredients and Save-Last-Frame anchors.

Zero Experience Needed

Plain-English workflows, visual UI maps, copy-paste prompt formulas, and credit-saving habits.

Inside This Guide & What Google Flow Actually Is

Most AI video tools give you a single text box that produces random 5-second clips. **Google Flow** (`flow.google`) is a complete digital film studio built to tell multi-shot stories with consistent characters, sound, and editing.

Quick Navigation

1. **What Is Google Flow?** & Model Triad p. 2
2. **Access, Tiers & Credits** (Smart Budgeting) p. 3
3. **Workspace UI Tour** (Annotated Map) p. 4
4. **Your First 15-Minute Film** (6-Step Pipeline) p. 5
5. **Flow Agent & Ingredients** (Character Lock) p. 6
6. **Generation Modes & Frames-to-Video** p. 7
7. **Prompt Anatomy** (8-Part Formula) p. 8
8. **Camera & Lens Guide** (Visual Cheat Sheet) p. 9
9. **Directing Audio** (Dialogue, Lip-Sync & SFX) p. 10
10. **Scenebuilder, Flow TV & Flow Tools** p. 11
11. **Troubleshooting & Pre-Flight Checklist** p. 12

Visualization: The Three-Model Engine Under the Hood

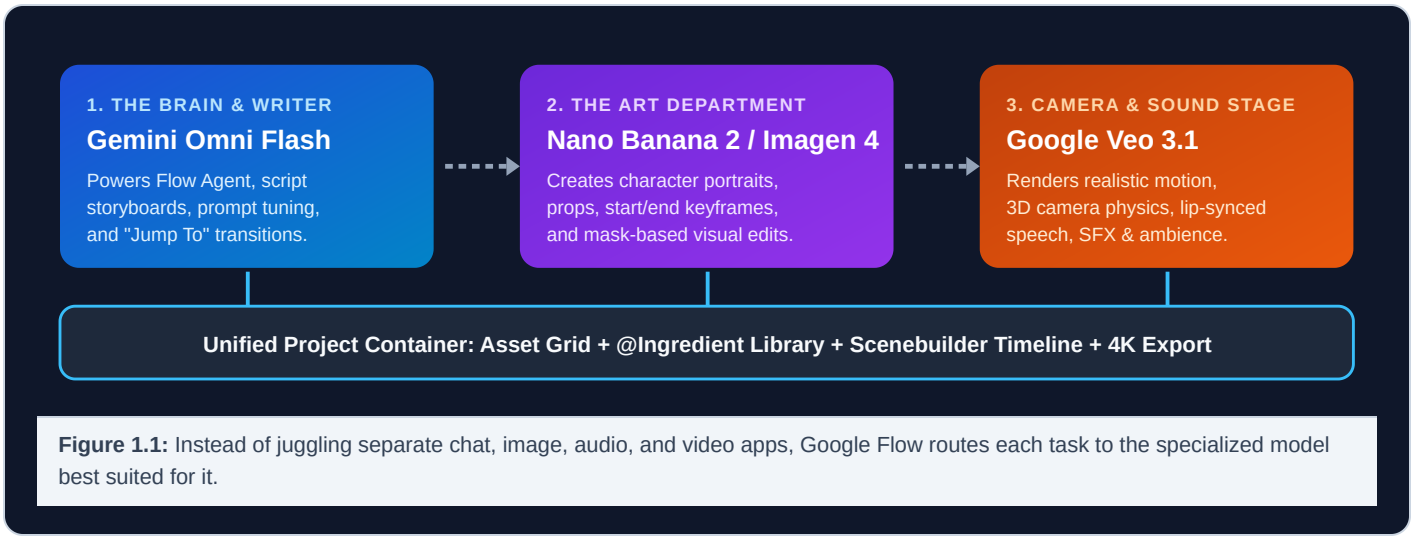


Figure 1.1: Instead of juggling separate chat, image, audio, and video apps, Google Flow routes each task to the specialized model best suited for it.

Why Filmmakers & Creators Use Flow Over Standalone Video Generators

A Standalone Video Prompt Box

- Every prompt invents a brand-new face and outfit.
- Fixing a small mistake requires re-rolling the entire clip.
- Silent clips force you to hunt for external voiceovers and Foley sound effects.

B Google Flow Studio Workflow

- **Ingredients** lock characters, products, and art styles across every scene.
- **Frames-to-Video** anchors exact opening and closing compositions.
- **Native Audio + Scenebuilder** let you direct speech, sound, and cuts in one place.

Getting Started: Account Setup, Plans & Credit Math

You can start experimenting with Google Flow in under two minutes for free, then scale up only if you need longer productions, premium models, or 4K exports.

Step-by-Step First Login

1 Open Flow Studio

Visit `flow.google` (or `labs.google/fx/tools/flow`) in Chrome, Safari, or Edge, or install the **Google Flow** iOS/Android companion app.

2 Sign In (18+)

Sign in with a personal Google Account or qualifying Google Workspace account. Age verification (18+) is required in supported regions.

3 Create a Project

Click **+ New Project**. Every project acts as a dedicated folder holding your chat history, Ingredients, clips, and Scenebuilder timeline.

Subscription Tiers & Credit Allowances (2026 Structure)

Plan Tier	Typical US Price	Credit Allowance	Best For & Unlocked Capabilities
Free Tier Google Account	**$0 / month**	**50 daily credits** Resets midnight PT; peak limits 2–5 PM UTC	Learning the interface, generating Nano Banana / Imagen Ingredients, and testing draft clips daily.
Google AI Plus Entry Creator	**~$4.99 / month**	**50 daily + 200 monthly** Uninterrupted peak access	Casual social creators making weekly vertical Reels/Shorts (`9:16`) and running artist-built Flow Tools.
Google AI Pro Standard Production	**~$19.99 / month**	**50 daily + 1,000 monthly** Shareable with family group	Veo 3.1 Lite & Omni Flash 1.2 (3–15s + Omni Extend; Fast/Quality retire Dec 5, 2026), dialogue, and 0-cr 1080p upscales.
Google AI Ultra Studio / Agency	**$100 or $200/mo**	**10,000 or 25,000 monthly** + 50% off Veo 3.1 Lite/Fast rates	Heavy commercial production, priority queue, half-rate Veo 3.1 Lite/Fast takes, and 4K upscaling.

How Credits Are Consumed (And How to Stretch Them 4× Further)

Before every generation, Google Flow displays the exact **credit cost badge** next to *Generate*. Note that **Veo 3.1 Fast & Quality retire Dec 5, 2026** (Quality costs 100 cr—above Free's 50/day); Google recommends **Veo 3.1 Lite** (same cost for 4s or 8s, so pick 8s) or **Omni Flash 1.2** (billed per second; 360p costs ⅓ of 720p).

Pro Habit 1: Storyboard in Images First

Generating stills with **Nano Banana 2 / Imagen 4** (unified with Whisk & ImageFX inside Flow) costs a fraction of video credits. Nail character looks and lighting *before* rolling Veo.

Pro Habit 2: Draft in 360p / Lite, Upscale for 0 Credits

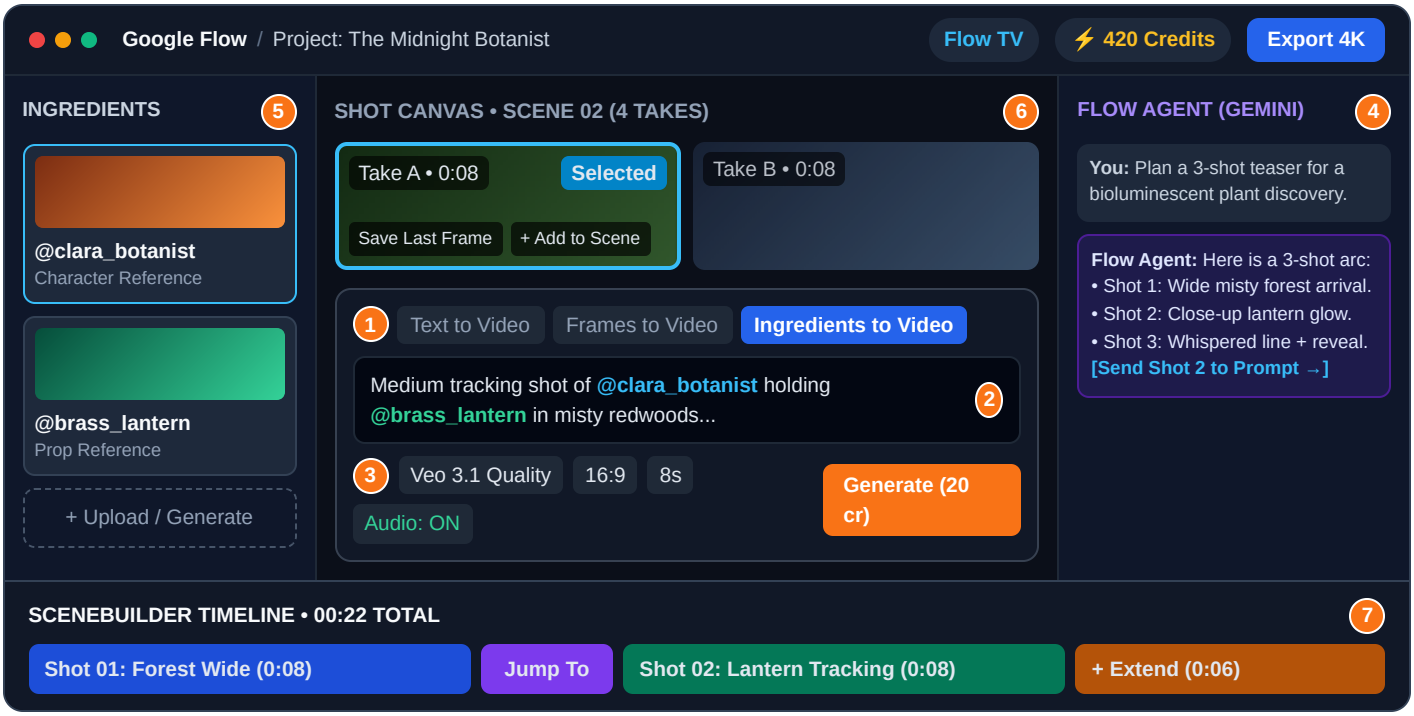
Draft timing in **Omni Flash 1.2 (360p)** or **Veo 3.1 Lite (8s)** with 1–2 takes. Plus, Pro & Ultra subscribers can **upscale 360p keepers (1–10s) to 1080p for 0 credits**!

Good to Know: SynthID Watermarking & Commercial Safety

Every export embeds Google DeepMind's imperceptible **SynthID** digital watermark into its pixels and audio frames—invisible to human viewers, resilient to compression, and built for transparent AI provenance.

The Google Flow Workspace: Annotated Visual Tour

When you open a project in `flow.google`, everything lives inside one dark-mode studio screen. Use the numbered callouts below to orient yourself in seconds.



Numbered Interface Reference

1 **Generation Mode Switcher:** Toggle between *Text to Video*, *Frames to Video* (start/end images), and *Ingredients to Video* (character/prop references).

2 **Prompt Bar & `@` Mentions:** Describe camera, action, and dialogue; type `@` to inject saved characters or props directly into the scene.

3 **Parameter & Cost Strip:** Pick model (Veo 3.1 Fast vs. Quality), aspect ratio (`16:9` or `9:16`), clip length, Audio ON/OFF, and preview exact credit cost.

4 **Flow Agent Sidebar:** Chat with Gemini to brainstorm scripts, break ideas into shot lists, set project-wide style rules, and auto-fill prompts.

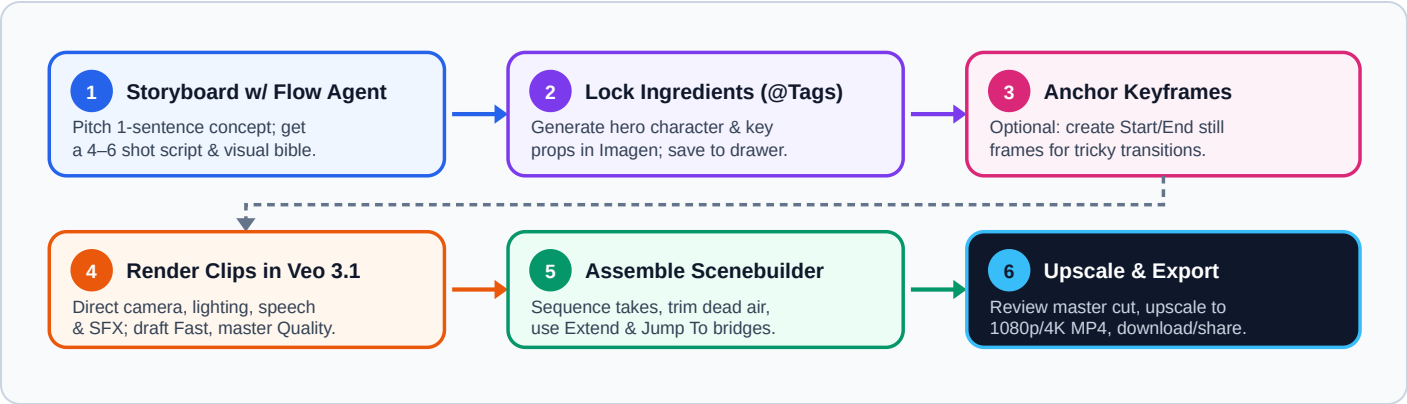
5 **Ingredients Library:** Store uploaded or Imagen-generated characters, objects, and style cards so every shot stays visually consistent.

6 **Shot Canvas & Frame Actions:** Audition multiple takes side-by-side, make in-place fixes, click *Save Last Frame*, or push winners to the timeline.

7 **Scenebuilder Timeline Dock:** Drag clips into story order, trim handles, lengthen clips with *Extend*, or bridge cuts smoothly with AI-powered *Jump To*.

The 6-Step Filmmaking Pipeline (Start to Finish)

Beginners often make the mistake of jumping straight to video generation. Follow this proven 6-step studio order to build a cohesive 30-second short film on your very first try—without wasting credits.



Walkthrough Example: Making *"The Midnight Botanist"* (24 Seconds)

Stage	What You Click & Type in Google Flow	Resulting Output
1. Plan (2 mins)	Open **Flow Agent** and type: *"Create a 3-shot, 24-second atmospheric film about a botanist discovering a glowing fern in a misty redwood forest. 35mm cinema style."*	Flow Agent writes a 3-shot breakdown with suggested camera lenses, lighting notes, and ambient forest audio cues.
2. Ingredients (3 mins)	In the **Ingredients** panel, click + *Generate*. Create a portrait of Clara (terracotta jacket, round glasses) and a brass plant lantern. Tag them `@clara` and `@lantern`.	Two locked visual reference cards appear in your left sidebar ready to anchor every video shot.
3. Shot 1 (3 mins)	Select **Ingredients to Video**, `16:9`, `8s`, Audio ON. Prompt: *"Wide crane shot descending into misty redwoods at dusk as @clara walks down a mossy trail carrying @lantern..."*	Veo 3.1 renders Clara in her exact jacket holding the exact lantern, complete with footsteps on damp moss and distant owls.
4. Shot 2 (3 mins)	Hover over Shot 1, click **Save Last Frame**, switch to **Frames to Video**, and set it as the Start Frame. Prompt a close-up push-in as she kneels and whispers, *"There you are."*	Shot 2 picks up seamlessly from the exact forest spot and lighting of Shot 1 with lip-synced whispered dialogue.
5. Shot 3 & Edit (4 mins)	Generate a macro shot of the glowing fern, drag all three clips into **Scenebuilder**, trim 0.5s off the ends for snappy pacing, and click **Export (1080p / 4K)**.	A polished, continuous 24-second short film downloaded as a single MP4 with synchronized sound.

Golden Rule of Pacing

Professional films rarely hold a static shot for 10+ seconds unless dramatic tension demands it. Aim for **4 to 6 seconds per cut** in Scenebuilder—trimming the first and last half-second of AI clips immediately makes edits feel human-directed.

Solving "Character Drift" with Flow Agent & Ingredients

The #1 frustration in AI video is watching your main character morph into a stranger from Shot 1 to Shot 2. Google Flow solves this with two paired tools: **Agent Instructions** and **Ingredients to Video**.

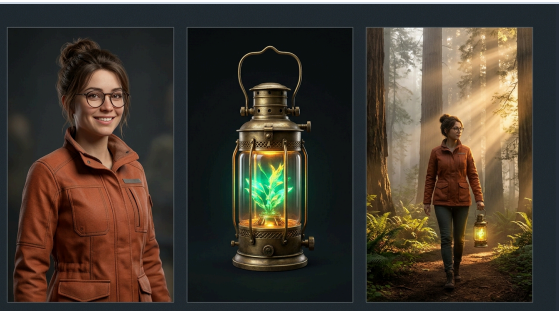
Part A: Setting Persistent "Agent Instructions"

Inside the Flow Agent panel, open **Agent Instructions** (project-level rules). Anything you write here is automatically remembered across every storyboard and prompt Gemini writes for this project:

```
Example Project Agent Instructions:
• Visual Style: Shot on 35mm Kodak Vision3 500T film, subtle grain, natural skin texture, anamorphic bokeh.
• Color Palette: Deep Pacific Northwest forest greens, warm amber lantern light, cool slate shadows.
• Audio Rule: Realistic Foley footsteps and forest wind only; always append "no background music" unless asked.
```

Part B: How "Ingredients to Video" Works

Switch your prompt bar to **Ingredients to Video** to combine **up to 3 visual reference assets** (uploaded photos or Nano Banana 2 / Imagen 4 generations) into one coherent video clip:



Ingredient 1 (@clara): Neutral portrait locks facial structure, glasses & terracotta jacket.

Ingredient 2 (@lantern): Isolated dark-backdrop prop locks brass housing & glowing leaf.

Combined Veo 3.1 Output: Both references merge naturally into golden-hour redwood motion.

4 Best Practices for Bulletproof Ingredients

1 Use Clean, Neutral Reference Cards

Generate or upload character portraits against a plain, softly lit background—not a busy crowd. Clean edges stop background clutter from bleeding into unrelated scenes.

2 Let the Image Describe Appearance

Once `@clara` is attached, don't waste 40 prompt words re-describing her brown hair and glasses. Spend your prompt words on **action, emotion, camera, and sound**.

3 Stick to 2–3 Core Ingredients Per Shot

Combining 1 Character + 1 Hero Prop + 1 Environment/Style card hits the sweet spot. Overloading 5+ conflicting objects confuses spatial composition.

4 Save Multi-Angle Character Sheets

Ask Imagen inside Flow for a *"front and three-quarter profile turnaround sheet"* of your hero so Veo understands how they look when turning their head.

Generation Modes & "Frames to Video" Keyframing

Every shot in Google Flow starts by choosing one of three generation modes. Picking the right mode before typing saves hours of trial-and-error.

Decision Matrix: Which Mode Should You Pick?

Mode	Inputs Required	Ideal Use Case
Text to Video	Text prompt only	Establishing shots, b-roll landscapes, atmospheric weather, abstract transitions, or brainstorming brand-new scenes from scratch.
Ingredients to Video	1–3 reference images (`@tags`) + prompt	Character-driven scenes, product commercials, or branded worlds where the exact face, outfit, or object must appear in new angles.
Frames to Video	Start Frame (and/or End Frame) + prompt	Exact composition control, seamless shot-chaining, dramatic reveals, morphs, and day-to-night or before-and-after transitions.

Visualizing "Frames to Video" (Start + End Keyframe Interpolation)

When you drop an image into the **Start Frame** slot and a second image into the **End Frame** slot, Veo 3.1 calculates realistic intermediate physics, lighting shifts, and camera motion to connect point A to point B:



[00:00 START FRAME] Golden morning bookshop + cyclist —— **Veo 3.1 8s Interpolation →** **[00:08 END FRAME]** Rainy neon twilight & wet cobblestones

Pro Technique: The "Save Last Frame" Continuous-Shot Trick

1 Pause at the End

Play your generated 8-second clip in the Shot Canvas and scrub to the final clean frame (e.g., `0:07.9`).

2 Click "Save Frame"

Click **Save Frame** on the video player. Google Flow instantly adds that exact still image into your project assets.

3 Feed Into Next Shot

Switch to **Frames to Video**, drop that saved frame into **Start Frame**, and direct the next 8 seconds of action!

Why Filmmakers Love Frame-Chaining

By chaining the last frame of Shot A into the first frame of Shot B, you can choreograph unbroken 25-to-40-second "oner" sequences (like walking from a sunny street through a shop door into a dimly lit library) with zero lighting jumps.

The 8-Block Director Prompt Formula

Treat Google Flow's prompt box like a film director's cue sheet—not a search engine. Ordering your prompt from big visual rules down to specific audio cues gives Veo 3.1 crystal-clear instructions.

Color-Coded Master Prompt Anatomy

1. Format & Film Style
2. Subject & Setting
3. Specific Action
4. Camera & Lens
5. Lighting & Texture
6. Quoted Dialogue
7. SFX & Ambience
8. Constraints

Photorealistic 35mm cinema drama, subtle Kodak film grain. **Weary spaceship pilot @maya sits inside a cramped, rain-streaked dropship cockpit.** **She flips two overhead brass toggle switches, glances at the flickering radar screen, and exhales sharply.** **Slow dolly-in from medium shot to tight close-up, 50mm anamorphic lens with shallow depth of field.** **Moody cyan instrument glow mixing with pulsing amber warning lights on brushed steel.** **She says, "We have thirty seconds before atmospheric entry," in a calm, hushed voice.** **Crisp metallic switch clicks, low turbine hum, heavy rain pelting cockpit glass.** **One continuous shot; no subtitles; no background music.**

Before & After Prompt Makeovers

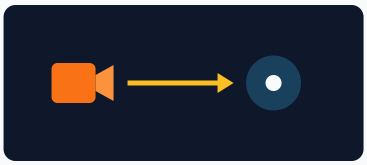
Beginner Vague Prompt	Upgraded Google Flow Director Prompt	Why It Wins
"A cool car driving fast in the desert."	*"1970s matte-black muscle car speeding down a cracked salt-flat highway at golden hour. Low-angle lateral tracking shot at wheel height, 24mm wide lens, dust plume billowing behind tires. Deep V8 engine roar and rushing wind; no music."*	Defines camera height, focal length, time of day, dust physics, and raw engine audio.
"A barista hands coffee to a customer and talks."	*"Warm indie film look. Smiling barista @leo slides a ceramic latte cup across a walnut counter in a sunlit cafe. Over-the-shoulder medium shot, soft morning window light, rising steam. @leo says, 'Careful, the mug is hot,' in a friendly tone. Ceramic clink, espresso machine hiss, quiet cafe chatter; no music."*	Locks speaker attribution, short lip-syncable quote, tactile prop action, and layered room tone.
"Product video of a smartwatch."	*"Commercial studio macro film. Sleek titanium @watch resting on wet black basalt stone as water droplets roll off the sapphire screen. Slow 180-degree orbital arc, 85mm macro lens, crisp rim lighting. Subtle water droplet plinks; no voiceover."*	Combines `@watch` Ingredient with orbital camera motion and tactile surface reflections.

Avoid "Everything Everywhere" Prompts

Do not pack three separate plot twists into one 8-second clip (*"he wakes up, makes breakfast, runs outside, and catches the bus"*). Give each clip **one clear physical beat** and assemble the story in Scenebuilder.

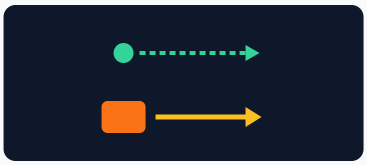
Visual Camera Movement & Lens Cheat Sheet

Avoid generic words like *"moving camera."* Veo 3.1 is trained on real cinematography terminology—use the exact movement phrases below to direct intentional, rock-steady shots.



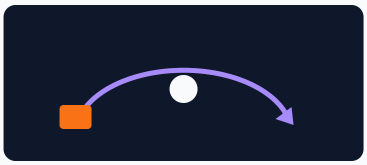
Dolly In / Push-In

Camera physically rolls forward toward subject, building intimacy or tension.
`"Slow dolly-in to close-up"`



Lateral Tracking / Truck

Camera glides sideways alongside a walking or running subject.
`"Side-profile lateral tracking shot"`



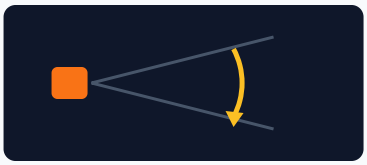
180° Orbit / Arc Shot

Circles smoothly around hero or product while keeping them centered.
`"Smooth orbital arc around subject"`



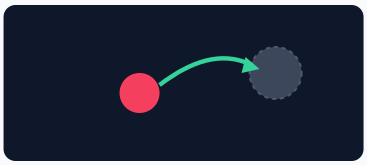
Crane Rise / Boom Up

Sweeps vertically upward to reveal a vast landscape or city skyline.
`"High crane shot rising above trees"`



Tripod Pan / Slow Tilt

Camera stays planted in one spot and rotates left/right or up/down.
`"Locked tripod slow pan right"`



Rack Focus Shift

Shifts sharp focus from a foreground object to a background character.
`"Rack focus from teacup to doorway"`

Eliminating the "Plastic AI Look": Texture, Lenses & Lighting Keywords

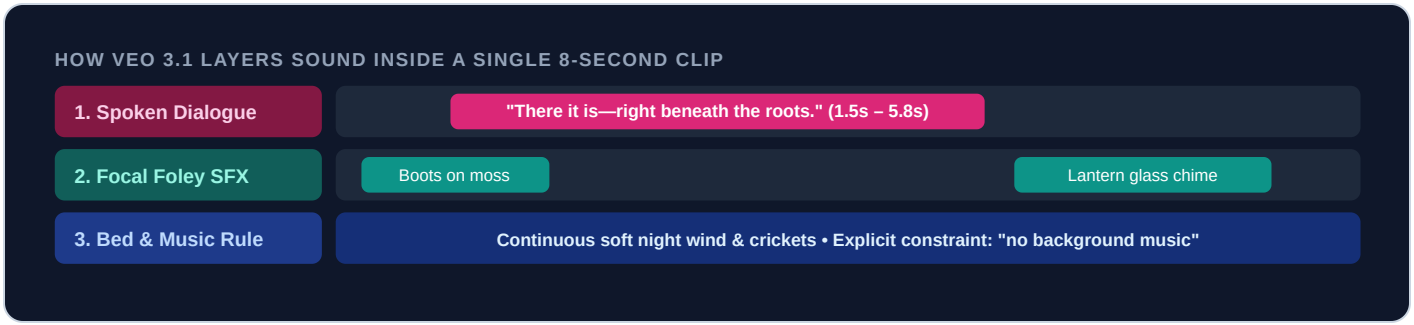
Visual Dimension	Copy-Paste Keywords Recognized by Veo 3.1 & Imagen 4
Film Stocks & Era	`35mm Kodak Vision3 500T` • `16mm grainy documentary film` • `IMAX 65mm crisp cinema` • `vintage 1990s VHS camcorder`
Focal Length & Glass	`24mm wide-angle lens` (expansive environments) • `50mm prime natural eye-level` • `85mm portrait shallow bokeh` • `100mm macro`
Lighting Setups	`warm golden-hour backlight` • `overcast soft diffused daylight` • `high-contrast chiaroscuro rim light` • `volumetric fog beams`
Camera Rig Feel	`static locked-off tripod` • `smooth Steadicam glide` • `subtle handheld documentary urgency` • `FPV drone dive`

Aspect Ratio Tip (16:9 vs. 9:16)

Pick your aspect ratio **before** generating Ingredients or keyframes. Lateral tracking shots shine in widescreen `16:9` (YouTube, TV, film), while vertical `9:16` (Shorts, Reels, TikTok) works best with tight medium close-ups, dolly push-ins, and vertical crane tilts.

Directing Synchronized Dialogue, SFX & Ambience

With Audio toggled **ON**, Veo 3.1 generates lip-synced speech, physical Foley sound effects, and room ambience simultaneously with video pixels—no external lip-sync plugin required.



The 4 Golden Rules of Clean AI Dialogue

1 Put Exact Words in Quotation Marks

Attribute the quote directly to the speaker:
Good: `@clara looks up and says, "Follow the river north," in an urgent whisper.`
Bad: `Clara tells them to go north.`

2 Respect the 15-Word Budget

Natural human speech runs ~2.2 words per second. In an 8-second clip, cap dialogue at **10 to 16 words** so the actor finishes speaking naturally before the cut.

3 Direct Vocal Delivery & Emotion

Add a short performance note right after the quote: *"in a warm, raspy voice," "with breathless excitement," "deadpan and monotone,"* or *"through a crackly radio."*

4 Split Two-Person Conversations

Don't cram three back-and-forth lines into one clip (causes lip-sync confusion). Generate **Shot A (Speaker 1)** and **Shot B (Speaker 2 reaction)**, then cut between them in Scenebuilder.

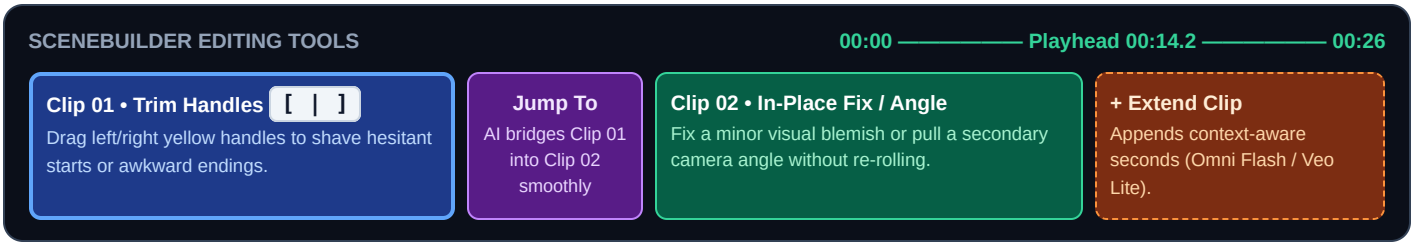
Controlling Background Music vs. Clean Room Tone

Crucial Tip: Always Add `"no background music"` for Multi-Shot Films!

If you leave music unspecified, Veo may invent a different orchestral score on every 8-second clip—which clashes horribly when stitched together in Scenebuilder! Always end narrative prompts with `"quiet room tone, no background music"`, then lay a single unified music track underneath your finished edit (or only ask for music on standalone one-shot posts).

Assembling Your Film in Scenebuilder & Beyond

Once your clips are generated, open **Scenebuilder** at the bottom of the workspace. Unlike rigid storyboards, Scenebuilder is a flexible *"generate, then assemble"* timeline with AI continuity superpowers.



Core Scenebuilder Actions Explained

- **Add & Reorder:** Hover any winning take in your Shot Canvas and click **+ Add to Scene**. Drag clips left or right on the timeline to test alternate story orders.
- **Trim In/Out Handles:** Grab either edge of a clip on the timeline to trim dead air or cut right on physical motion ("cutting on action" makes transitions invisible).
- **Jump To (Smart Continuity Bridge):** Need your character to move from a car interior to standing outside a diner? Select **Jump To**—Gemini and Veo synthesize a context-aware bridge shot linking the two locations.
- **Extend:** Appends extra seconds to a shot that ended slightly too soon (powered by **Omni Flash 1.2** 3–15s Omni Extend / **Veo 3.1 Lite** workflows—or use the manual *Save Last Frame* method from Page 7).
- **Export, 0-Credit 1080p & 4K Upscale:** Subscribers on Plus/Pro/Ultra can upscale 360p drafts (1–10s) to **1080p for 0 credits**, or choose **4K Upscale** on Ultra and download a single ready-to-publish MP4.

Bonus Ecosystem Features & Artist-Designed Flow Tools

FX 5 Artist-Designed Flow Tools

Alongside custom plain-English tools, try five pro-built presets: **Character Poster** (promo key art), **Character Arc** (consistent aging across scenes), **Pixel Machine** (CRT/ASCII/bitmap titles), **Lucid Glass** (prism & lens blooms), and **Pocket Studio** (multi-angle cinema cuts from one phone take).

TV Flow TV & Mobile Companion

Study curated short films and prompt recipes inside **Flow TV** in the top header, then pair the **iOS/Android app** to snap real-world reference photos directly into Ingredients and receive push alerts when heavy 4K renders finish.

Troubleshooting Clinic & Creator Cheat Sheet

Keep this final page handy while working in `flow.google`. Almost every frustrating generation has a fast, predictable fix.

Top 7 Common Problems & Instant Fixes

Symptom / Problem	Root Cause & Exact Fix in Google Flow
Character's face or outfit changes between shots	You used plain *Text to Video*. Generate a neutral portrait in Imagen, save it as an **Ingredient** (`@hero`), and use **Ingredients to Video** for every shot.
Spoken line gets cut off at the end of the clip	Too many words for clip duration. Trim dialogue to **≤15 words per 8s clip**, put exact speech inside `"quotes"`, or split into two shots in Scenebuilder.
Clashing music plays under every clip	Veo generated default score per clip. Append `"quiet room tone, no background music"` to your prompts (and Project Agent Instructions).
Visuals look overly glossy, floaty, or "AI-smooth"	Missing lens and texture cues. Add `"35mm film grain, natural skin texture, 50mm lens, overcast natural lighting"`.
Jarring jump when cutting from Shot 1 to Shot 2	Lighting or pose shifted. Use **Save Last Frame** on Shot 1 → drop into **Start Frame** of Shot 2, or trim 0.5s off the cut point in Scenebuilder.
Hands or complex props warp mid-action	Too many simultaneous actions. Isolate complex prop interactions into a dedicated **macro insert shot** using an Ingredient card of the prop.
Running out of credits or missing Fast/Quality	Veo 3.1 Fast & Quality (100 cr) retire **Dec 5, 2026**. Draft in **Omni Flash 1.2 (360p)** or **Veo 3.1 Lite (8s = 4s price)** and upscale 1–10s keepers to 1080p for 0 credits!

Pre-Flight Checklist: Check These 6 Boxes Before Clicking "Generate"

- ☐ **1. Right Mode Selected?** (*Text* vs. *Ingredients* vs. *Frames*)
- ☐ **2. Aspect Ratio Set First?** (`16:9` landscape or `9:16` vertical)
- ☐ **3.** `@Ingredients` **Tagged?** (Hero character & key prop attached)
- ☐ **4. Camera Specified?** (e.g., *dolly-in, lateral track, tripod pan + lens mm*)
- ☐ **5. Audio Scripted Cleanly?** (Short `"quoted line"` + SFX + `no music`)
- ☐ **6. Credit Tier Matched?** (*Veo 3.1 Lite / Omni 360p* + 0-cr 1080p upscale)

Ready to Roll Camera?

Open `https://flow.google`, start a free 50-credit daily session, pitch a 3-shot micro-story to **Flow Agent**, lock one character Ingredient, and assemble your first scene today.