



# MEET SCOTLAND'S BIGGEST YOUTUBER

Our Tuition panel member **Steve Johnston** is pushing close to 80k subs on YouTube and is Scotland's biggest content creator on the platform by some margin. Here, he tells us how he got there and what plans he has for the future.

— Interview **BRYCE RITCHIE** — Photos **STEVE JOHNSTON / PSP MEDIA**

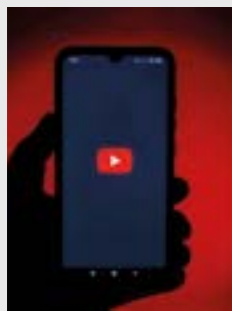
**Q So how's life as Scotland's biggest golf YouTuber?**

When you put it like that it feels amazing. To think I'm a PGA professional who randomly started to film some golf content with zero experience working with cameras, editing software, acting skills, presentation know-how or the best dialect in the world and now there you go, top channel in the home of golf. I'm proud of what I've achieved to date.

It's a bit strange going to your work and being asked by visitors for a selfie but I guess that's all part of it.

**Q Take us back to when you started the channel - what were those early days like?**

The early days were slow. To gain views let alone subscribers was a tough gig but the old cliché of stick with it really is the answer. There was a point where I thought, 'Why am I doing this?' I remember



**WANNA BE A YOUTUBER?**

All the kids want to YouTube, vlog, create content, whatever it may be. Here's Steve's best tips on taking your content to the next level...

**1 BE CONSISTENT WITH YOUR UPLOADS**  
Consistency with uploads is very important. I upload every Monday and Thursday so my viewers know when they can see my fresh content. Using YT Studio analytics is key here as they tell me when my audience uses the channel the most. It's pointless uploading content when none of my viewers are online.

**2 KNOW WHAT CONTENT WORKS AND WHY**  
Giving the viewers what they want and the only way to find that out is to ask. "Leave a comment in the box below of what you would like to see me deliver in my next video". If you get a couple of similar replies then that's a green light, just make sure the title explains that's what's being delivered.

**3 DON'T TRY TO FAKE YOUR PERSONALITY**  
Finally, just be yourself. You mentioned I was a natural in front of the camera which is flattering but I'm just being me. I love my subject and exploring that subject to the core and I feel that comes across. If you don't believe in your subject and have to play a false role to the viewer then you'll get found

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thinking who really wants to watch golf instruction from me when there are so many more established golf coaches out there?  
I started with a very simple Sony handycam that I bought second hand on eBay. My laptop was a dinosaur and the software I used for editing was slow, glitchy, but free. I was working at the Roxburghe Golf Club at the time and had recently introduced video analysis to our coaching facility which sparked the idea of producing videos of my own swing for personal reference to better my game. I quickly realised the video analysis also picked up audio so I would talk my way through alterations I was making to my swing to make the process of swing changes easier to understand and quicker to implement. I then decided to upload the videos to YouTube as I felt others may benefit from them and that was where my YT journey began.

**Q And people liked what they saw?**  
Yeah, once I had a couple of dozen videos uploaded I was getting feedback from members at the Roxburghe regarding how they were enjoying my content. Gradually I started to get viewers of the videos commenting and some subscribers began to appear.



As I mentioned earlier, it was a slow process but word of mouth and gradually improving my editing skills and presentation skills saw the channel beginning to grow. At that early stage, every new subscriber was a huge win for me.

**Q When did you realise there was some traction in your content?**  
When you reach 1000 subscribers and 4000 hours of view time, you can monetise your channel and earn some revenue, that was the ultimate goal. Immediately after reaching that milestone, I knew this was going to be something I wanted to pursue. My first YouTube payment was roughly £40 which back then was 2 1/2 golf lessons. That doesn't seem a lot but, as my channel grew, I started to understand the YouTube algorithm better and became aware that certain successful videos can consistently generate revenue years after they have been uploaded. Add this to growing a subscriber base and then there is real value in what I was doing. Still pennies, though.

**Q But then your numbers started growing pretty quickly?**  
Traction came when I hit 10 thousand subs, which ironically was the week I was invited by Rick Shiels to play

**"It was a slow process. Gradually, I started getting viewers. At that stage, every new subscriber was a huge win for me."**

in his YouTube golf day (May 6, 2019) at Formby Hall. I was getting a lot more views and more comments on my videos. I then followed most other YouTubers with asking viewers to subscribe and click the like button which I discovered from networking with other YouTubers that the YT algorithm likes that interaction and can have a positive effect on where YouTube place your videos on their platform. When YouTube recommend your videos to other viewers timelines, then you know you are doing something right.

**Q Did the YouTube world help with your own coaching offering?**  
I chatted with Rick (Shiels) in the clubhouse at Formby and we were discussing coaching. He said the best feeling from the success of his YouTube channel was golfers booking lessons with him after viewing his content. That's exactly where I was at that time, golfers had just started to contact me for tuition having seen me on YouTube and, to be honest, that's the most



**35.8%** of Steve's views comes from the USA, with 28.1% from the UK. The rest is entirely a worldwide spread.

flattering part of the project. Great for the customer as well as the YouTube guy is accessible and a bit of a novelty for them, hence the selfie chat from earlier!

**Q How was that Formby week with all the other golf YouTubers?**  
That week was great for me and it really opened my eyes to the possibilities of YouTube from a business point of view. I started to realise that this little channel of mine could become a serious income stream for my Pro Shop business.

**Q Did it take a while to work out what you wanted to do content-wise or did it just come naturally?**  
As I mentioned it came off the back of my introduction of videos analysis at the Roxburghe. Coaching and learning more about technique was my main interest so it made sense to start delivering content about

the subject I knew best. I have dabbled in equipment reviews and would like to introduce more of that in the future but for now I'm still a "technique freak". A lot of guys do club reviews and they do them very well so I feel that market may not need another guy giving out the same technical specifications. On the other hand people might want to know what Steve Johnston thinks of the latest driver so if the demand from viewer comments and the support from manufactures arises then I'll look more into it.

**Q What else would you like to bring to your channel?**  
I would love to have time to do more on-course instruction or vlogs as I feel they would bring real value to the channel. It's great seeing me give all this free instruction but I feel the viewers would like to see me execute my findings on the course more than I actually do. Finding time to get out there is tricky,

but I am going to make time going forward.

**Q You're a natural in front of the camera - what's your secret?**  
I remember discussing YouTube with a certain magazine editor and we were discussing catch phrases for some reason. After that chat I decided if I had a catchphrase right at the start of my videos it may settle me and allow me to start each video with a bit of natural flow. When someone puts a camera in front of your face and asks you to perform, it's very easy to freak out and I was that guy.

**Q Of course, that magazine editor was my good self. But, honestly, you took to it so well. I'm surprised to hear you struggled initially.**  
Getting words out my mouth to begin my presentation was just a joke. I stuttered, paused and fidgeted until eventually I said something so this had to change. My second-hand Sony handycam had a red light that

I could clearly see when it was recording which mentally told me I was on, we were recording. I now start every video with the catch phrase 'RIGHT WE'RE ON' and then I just seem to flow into my introduction... it's genius!

**Q You're a natural**  
I wouldn't say I'm a natural but I speak to the lens as if I'm coaching or golfing with one of my mates. 'RIGHT WE'RE ON' and coaching a mate is my approach. I'm glad you think I'm a natural, I'm delighted with that ha ha.

**Q How do you deal with trolls?**  
That used to really bother me. I've noticed in business as I get older I'm getting better at saying "no" to people. I adopt the same approach now with YouTube. When I get bad comments or nasty reviews I just say "no" by removing that viewers comments from my channel. They can still comment but other viewers and myself will no longer

## STEVE JOHNSTON Q&A



▶ His primary audience is aged between 45 and 75 watching on smartphones.

see their comments. I can just remove them from the thread for that certain video but I delete them from ever commenting again. Bye bye! But to be honest I don't get many bad comments at all which, again, may be due to the age of audience I pull in. If I was on a younger platform such as TikTok I reckon it might happen more. The reviews of most videos are so kind and positive although the bad ones are the ones you remember most. If you drive the ball great all day then slice one out of bounds on the last hole which drive sticks in your head?

### **Q** Tell us a bit about the offshoot content with Eureka?

Eureka Golf Swing is flying, I'm mean who doesn't want to straighten out their slice? The YouTube platform allowed me to successfully build an audience, an audience that engages with me and my content. That audience has then continued their support by visiting eurekaGolfsing.com which is unbelievable. I honestly never saw that success coming.

It just shows you the power of YouTube. For me I worked hard at it, I built a following and the result is those followers want more interaction. I have filled my coaching diary from YouTube viewers and delivered my Eureka website to my viewers all from the YouTube platform. Customers also come to me for custom fitting as they feel they already know me. The whole YT concept is much more than just video content if you lever it and use it correctly. I'm so grateful.

I remember reading Gary Vaynerchuk's book and he said "giving away something for free will make you rich". I'm far from being rich but giving away free content on YouTube has been my best career move to date.

### **Q** How much time does it take up per week and do you still see yourself doing it in 10 years?

YouTube is owned by Google and it the second largest search engine in the world after Google itself so the YT platform is going nowhere. In ten years time I definitely see me still on YouTube. People watch television in a very

different way now. Everything is streamed so you can watch what you want, when you want. Gone are the days of waiting until Wednesday evening to watch Dallas?? Just stream it when you like. In ten years time my content will still be current. The golf swing has evolved as the equipment has evolved but we still refer to Hogan, Nicklaus, Jacobs and the likes for how to play the game.

I upload two videos per week to my channel. I'd love to upload more but I run two businesses also, so I have to be realistic. To deliver one video I do research on my subject, plan my content, film the content, edit the content, create the thumbnail and title then upload the content for a scheduled time on YouTube. This process takes anywhere between 2 and 4 hours depending on the content. The longest part of the process is creating the thumbnail and the title. I can ponder over that for days after the content is created.

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*Head to YouTube and search for Steve Johnston PGA to watch and subscribe*

### **What equipment do you use?**

Canon EOS 250D camera, Rode Wireless Go mic, MacBook Pro, FCPX editing software and some golf clubs

### **How long does it take to do a 15 min video?**

Anything from two to four hours depending on the content. Filming a vlog on the course takes longer than an instructional piece in the range bay yet it takes less time to edit.

### **How many vids do you do a week?**

I upload two videos per week

### **How many vids have you done in total?**

To date I have uploaded 701 videos

### **What's your total views?**

To date I have 10.1 million views

### **Will you ever run out of content ideas?!**

I carry a notebook with me and when I see or hear something that I know would work on my channel I scribble it down. The book is always pretty full. A lot of my content comes from player feedback when coaching and as the game continues to progress, we'll always have fresh approaches and new topics to discuss. As long as there is golf, I'll have content!