

CHECKLIST · FREE RESOURCE

META ADS ON A SMALL BUDGET

*How to run Facebook and Instagram ads on 500 to 5,000 € a month
without wasting half of it*

Maison
Mint

AGENCY

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Meta ads budget checklist

Most small Meta accounts do not fail because the budget is too small. They fail because the budget is spread over too many ad sets, the tracking is broken so the algorithm learns from the wrong signal, and nobody has decided in advance what a good result costs. Fix those three and a 1,500 € budget behaves like a 5,000 € one.

This is the list we run before we touch a new account and again every month after. It is written for the 2026 version of Meta: Andromeda-era delivery, Advantage+ campaigns as the default, broad targeting winning more often than not, and creative doing the job that audiences used to do. If your mental model of Meta ads is from 2021, a few of these points will feel wrong. Test them anyway.

Numbers in here are from our own accounts and are illustrative. Your market will differ. The logic will not.

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Before you spend a cent

Ten minutes of arithmetic saves months of guessing.

- ☐ **You know your break-even ROAS**
 - Divide 1 by your gross margin. At a 40 % margin, break-even ROAS is 2.5. Anything below that loses money even if the dashboard looks green.
- ☐ **You know what a lead or a sale is worth to you, and therefore your maximum cost per result**
 - For e-commerce: average order value times margin, minus returns. For leads: deal value times close rate. Write the number down.
- ☐ **The monthly budget can survive four weeks without a single sale**
 - Learning takes time. If one bad week forces you to pause, the account never leaves the learning phase.
- ☐ **The budget is at least 5 times your target cost per result per day, per ad set**
 - Meta needs roughly 50 conversions a week per ad set to optimise properly. If you cannot afford that, run fewer ad sets, not smaller ones.
- ☐ **You have decided the split: roughly 70 % to proven campaigns, 20 % to testing, 10 % to retargeting**
 - At under 1,000 € a month, skip the separate retargeting set and let Advantage+ handle it.

Tracking (the part everyone skips)

The algorithm optimises toward whatever you measure. If you measure badly, it optimises badly, and no budget fixes that.

- ☐ **Meta Pixel and Conversions API are both live and deduplicated**
 - Events Manager should show each event arriving from browser and server with the same event_id. Browser-only tracking loses 20 to 40 % of conversions after iOS and consent changes.
- ☐ **Event match quality is 6 or higher on the purchase or lead event**
 - Below that, send more customer parameters (email, phone, name, hashed) through CAPI.
- ☐ **Consent Mode and the cookie banner do not block the pixel for people who said yes**
 - Test it: accept cookies, buy, see the event. You would be surprised.
- ☐ **The optimisation event is the real goal, not a proxy**
 - Purchase, not Add to cart. Qualified lead, not Page view. If volume is too low, pick the closest event with at least 30 a week and move up when you can.
- ☐ **Domain verified, aggregated event measurement configured, eight events prioritised**
 - Still required for iOS delivery.
- ☐ **UTM parameters on every ad URL, built with a template**
 - utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=paid&utm_campaign={{campaign.name}}&utm_content={{ad.name}}. Then GA4 and Meta tell the same story.

Account structure that does not waste money

Fewer, bigger, simpler. Every extra ad set splits the budget and the learning.

- ☐ **One or two campaigns, not ten**
 - An Advantage+ Sales (or Leads) campaign for proven creative, one testing campaign. That is the whole account at this budget.
- ☐ **Advantage+ campaign budget on, so Meta moves money to what works**
 - Manual budgets per ad set only when you have a strong reason, such as a separate market with its own currency.
- ☐ **Targeting is broad or Advantage+ audience, with interests used only as suggestions**
 - In 2026 the delivery system reads the creative to find the audience. Narrow stacks of interests cost more and reach fewer buyers.
- ☐ **Exclusions are set: existing customers excluded from prospecting, recent purchasers excluded from retargeting**
 - Cheapest optimisation there is.
- ☐ **Geographic targeting is the places you can actually serve and ship to**
 - A surprising amount of small-account spend goes to cities nobody delivers to.
- ☐ **Placements are Advantage+ (automatic), with creative made for 9:16 and 1:1**
 - Manual placements almost always raise cost. Fix the creative, not the placement.
- ☐ **Each ad set has 3 to 6 ads, each ad has a job**
 - One shows the product, one answers the main objection, one is social proof, one is an offer. Not six variations of the same thing.

Creative is the targeting now

In the Andromeda era, the creative tells Meta who to show the ad to. Budget spent on weak creative is simply lost.

- ☐ **At least one new creative concept a week, not a new colour of the same one**
→ A concept is a different angle: a different problem, a different person, a different format.
- ☐ **Vertical video first, 9:16, with the point made in the first two seconds and captions on**
→ Most of the audience watches without sound.
- ☐ **Plain, phone-shot content is in the mix next to designed ads**
→ UGC-style ads routinely beat polished ones on cost per result. Test both.
- ☐ **Primary text leads with the outcome, not the brand**
→ Nobody cares who you are until they care what you do for them.
- ☐ **Every ad carries a specific offer or a specific reason to act now**
→ A real reason, not fake urgency. Meta's review and your customers both see through it.
- ☐ **Winners are identified by cost per result and hook rate, not by likes**
→ Hook rate = 3-second views divided by impressions. Under 25 % and the opening is the problem.
- ☐ **Creative fatigue is watched: frequency above 3 to 4 per week and rising CPM means swap it**
→ Set an automated rule to flag it.

Weekly and monthly routine

Small budgets die from over-management. Touch the account on a schedule, not on a feeling.

- ☐ **No edits to a learning ad set for at least 3 to 4 days after launch**
 - Every significant edit restarts learning and burns budget.
- ☐ **Weekly, 20 minutes: check cost per result against your max, pause clear losers, note creative fatigue**
 - Clear loser = at least 2 times the target cost after spending 3 times the target. Not before.
- ☐ **Budget on winners goes up by 20 % at a time, no more than every 3 days**
 - Doubling a budget overnight usually doubles the cost per result for a week.
- ☐ **Monthly, one hour: ROAS against break-even, creative winners into the proven campaign, new test concepts queued**
 - Write a four-line summary. It becomes your playbook.
- ☐ **Automated rules cover the boring parts**
 - Pause if cost per result exceeds 2x target after X spend; notify if frequency exceeds 4; notify if spend drops to zero.
- ☐ **Results are reported on blended numbers too, not just Meta's attribution**
 - Compare total revenue and total ad spend month over month. Meta's reported ROAS is useful for optimisation, not for the board.

The short version

Know your break-even ROAS. Fix tracking with CAPI. One Advantage+ campaign, broad targeting, four ads with different jobs. New creative concept every week. Touch the account weekly, scale by 20 %. That is 90 % of what we do for clients on small budgets, and it works because it is boring and consistent.

If you would rather hand it over, our Meta and Google Ads management starts at a size that makes sense for a 1,500 € a month budget and up. Book a free 30 minutes at mintagency.eu/contact and we will look at the account together.

Book a free 30 minutes

Written by Sarah Johanna Ferara and the Maison Mint team, Tallinn. Figures marked as our own data come from client accounts we manage and are illustrative. Free to share; please link to mintagency.eu/resources when you do. © Mintagency OÜ 2026.