



Chen Lei, aka "Brother Hunzi," works on a cartoon for his new video blog.
— Yang Yujie

Meet the blogger making science funny

Hu Min and Yang Yujie

Recently, a science blogger went viral online. He creates viral content by turning boring and difficult knowledge into engaging comic stories with witty jokes using a pen and whiteboard.

Many may not know him, but they've seen his comics. Chen Lei, known as "Brother Hunzi," founded "Hunzhi" and wrote the best-selling "Half-Hour Comics" series.

In just two months, "Brother Hunzi Draws and Explains" has gained 10 million followers across all platforms since launching in June. His Douyin account has over 10 million followers, and at its peak, a video had 140 million views.

Why switch to on-camera appearances when Chen was famous for graphics? How do popular science videos communicate across circles?

Chen said any form is fine as long as he can explain the knowledge.

Chen often spent over five hours on a five-minute video. From copy structure to storyboard design, matching words with drawings, and knowing when to write and explain, every step requires repeated deliberation.

From the traditional Chinese administrative system to the ancient Chinese dynasties and China's mountain types, complex knowledge is simplified into comics and delivered in short videos.

How to identify missile types quickly? September's short film "Chinese Missiles" depicts China's missile family as visible "guardians" with clear roles.

The shooting equipment is simple — a whiteboard, marker pen, 2,700-yuan (US\$379.8) mobile phone, and tripod — but the content is relaxing and easy to understand.

There is no teleprompter or professional editing.

"I want it to be a sustainable content product, so the cost must be low. The real expenses are not related to equipment but rather to learning, copywriting and design. These represent invisible 'soft investments.'"

These videos were created from meticulous design, a rigor influenced by Chen's early work experience in the automotive industry. "Every part of a car fits perfectly, and knowledge is similar. The 'ease' you perceive is supported by hard work."

Chen has been using the online name "Brother Hunzi" for 10 years. This name reflects his self-perception during his student days.

"My grades weren't good back then, but it wasn't due to a lack of intelligence; I simply hadn't discovered the right methods and interests. I always wondered: Is there a way to make knowledge easier to understand and more enjoyable?"

About 10 years ago, when WeChat accounts gained popularity, Chen launched the "Hunzhi" official account and began creating popular science comics. In 2017, he embraced an additional role as a writer, and he and his team introduced the "Half-Hour Comics" series of popular science books based on the "Hunzhi" brand.

These books present knowledge in subjects like history and economics in a relaxed and easily digestible manner, achieving total sales of over 10 million copies.

In June of this year, Chen ventured out of his comfort zone, transitioning from behind the scenes to the front, and began filming short videos.

"The team had been urging me for a long time, but I was always hesitant.

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I hope to be the one who opens that door, allowing everyone to remember knowledge while having a good laugh.

Chen Lei

Science cartoonist and blogger

Ultimately, I decided to give it a try."

Unexpectedly, this move brought him into a broader public spotlight. To date, his account has released more than 30 videos, covering areas such as traditional culture, history and humanities, with history-themed videos being the most popular.

One of his videos has amassed an impressive 140 million views, marking it as a significant hit.

In addition to drawing from a material library he has accumulated over the past decade, Chen places great importance on viewer comments.

He finds inspiration in the messages left by netizens.

"Many people don't shy away from complex knowledge; they just need someone to explain it in the right way. Whatever netizens want to see, I'll do my best to create it," Chen said.

This "responsive creation" approach has bridged the gap with netizens and turned knowledge dissemination into a two-way interaction.

Chen believes that Chinese people

have an inherent love for traditional culture. "It's just that many people haven't found the door yet. I hope to be the one who opens that door, allowing everyone to remember knowledge while having a good laugh."

Once a "poor student" who struggled to grasp knowledge, he is now unlocking the door to understanding for millions.

Despite becoming a new "top star" in the short video realm, Chen describes himself as an introvert and admits to feeling uncomfortable in front of the camera.

However, a sense of responsibility and internal motivation drives him forward.

"I'm a content creator, and I always need to step out of my comfort zone. As long as I can explain knowledge clearly, I'm open to any form. Popular science can utilize any means necessary; even singing and dancing are not off the table."

As a content creator who has operated a business in Jiading for many years, Chen has a deep affection for the district.

Government departments have provided substantial support in terms of venues and policies, and Jiading's rich cultural heritage and automotive industry background have subtly influenced his content style.

"Jiading is a place with a rich culture. This culture might not impact you directly, but it will seep into your heart."

Over the past decade, he has alternated between graphics and videos, with the format evolving, but his original intention remains unchanged. He continues to sit at his desk every day, writing scripts and shooting videos, all for one pure goal — specializing in clarifying various confusions.