How To Become A TV Presenter
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# How To Become A TV Presenter

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What is a Chat Show?

One of the earliest formats created for television was the chat show, also known as a "talk show". Early TV presenters in the US such as Jack Paar, Johnny Carson, Steve Allen, and Garry Moore combined interview segments with sketch comedy, musical numbers, and improvised audience participation.

The basic premise of a chat show was to bring on popular entertainers or news-makers for live interviews with a quick-witted host. The audience would be entertained by the anecdotes of the guests or the improvised quips of the host or sidekick.

By the late 1960s, the chat show format became more focused on the interviews themselves, leaving the sketches and improvisations to the variety shows. TV presenters such as Dick Cavett, David Frost, Mike Douglas and Tom Snyder all became household names through their personal interview styles.

Guests on these chat show programs were encouraged to do more than simply promote an upcoming film or musical album. Cavett and Snyder were especially adept at the "talking heads" format, drawing their guests into lengthy academic discussions and using tight close-up shots.

By the 1980s, the chat show format had once again shifted from academic interviews to a more confrontational style, with hosts such as Jerry Springer, Phil Donahue, Maury Povich, and Oprah Winfrey often booking controversial guests.

Some critics of this style of chat show believed the producers were simply pandering to the audience's taste for controversy, not presenting a legitimate exploration of the subject at hand. Several of the more controversial chat shows did not survive, while others changed their formats back to the traditionally cordial guest/host relationship.

The modern chat show format runs the gamut from controversial tabloid shows hosted by Montel Williams and Maury Povich to the established shows hosted by such names as Jonathan Ross, David Letterman, Michael Parkinson, Jimmie Kimmel, Conan O'Brien and Craig Ferguson.

The syndicated chat show format is often a combination of musical performances, audience interaction and short celebrity interviews.

Celebrities such as Ellen DeGeneres or Rachel Ray are often recruited to host these syndicated chat shows, since they can be produced quickly and not affect the talents' other professional obligations.
Local television stations also produce their own versions of a chat show, since they do not require elaborate sets or difficult camera movements. It's not unusual for a local cable access program to duplicate a basic chat show format as well.

These local chat show efforts may not have the technical sophistication of a professional version, but they do provide a way of disseminating events of interest to local viewers.

**What is a TV Presenter?**

A TV Presenter is the person who runs or anchors a television show. The key purpose of such a host is to relay information about the show to the viewers, interact with the guests, and to help make smooth transitions between segments.

There are many kinds of television programs that employ a television presenter, but they are particularly common on chat shows.

In addition to assisting with transitions within a show, a presenter is also often responsible for commenting on the content of the shows. This is particularly common in game shows. The commentary of the presenter can help viewers to understand exactly what is going on from moment to moment, especially when important events are taking place or when events are taking place at a rapid pace.

It is common for a TV presenter to have a background in theater, screen acting, or news broadcasting as the skills related to these professions relate directly to the skills needed to present a television show.

Sometimes models or former models present TV shows. Female comedians may go on to present their own chat shows. This is the case, for example, with Rosie O'Donnell and Ellen Degeneres.

Sometimes a TV presenter will share the stage with various celebrity and non-celebrity guests. This is true for chat shows, new shows, and game shows. This is the case, for example, with the popular morning US chat show *Live with Regis and Kelley*, which is co-presented by Regis Philbin and Kelly Ripa.

The iconic American game show *Wheel of Fortune* is presented by both Pat Sajak and Vanna White. She was the first female co-presenter of a television game show. Ms. White was most certainly not the last and she may have paved the way for women to present shows of their own.

Other famous television presenters include the famously acerbic Anne Robinson who presented the BBC's *The Weakest Link*. She also presented the American version of the show which was broadcast by NBC.
Before presenting The Weakest Link, Robinson worked as a journalist. Another well-known TV presenter is Alison Sweeney. Sweeney, who has a background in acting for soap operas such as Days of Our Lives, began presenting the weight loss game show The Biggest Loser in 2007.

As well, Anne Robinson and Alison Sweeney are just two of the many TV presenters that have graced network and cable shows since Vanna White first took the stage in 1982.

**What Does a TV Presenter Do?**

TV Presenters lead many different types of television shows in front of live studio audiences. The presenter often contributes to the preparation and editing of the content of the show and strives to keep the attention of the live audience as well as people watching the TV show at home.

*An effective presenter will have a strong understanding of the format and is devoted to the production process.*

The presenter will review scripts and take directions from stage managers and producers. TV show presenters often discuss issues with the audience and schedule special guest appearances and also interview guests and ask interesting questions. They strive to provide vibrant and entertaining details on topics. Most TV show presenters specialise in specific types of television shows such as game shows, chat shows, reality shows, and sports shows.

Having said, a TV presenter is the central element of a chat show. Whether mediating discussions, bringing in experts to educate the audience, or interviewing celebrities, the TV presenter is the face of the show.

*Becoming the presenter of a chat show is a complicated career path, but most well-known presenters have a background at some level of journalism or entertainment.*

A TV presenter will appear in the vast majority of episodes, providing the show with a stable central figure. In recognition of the importance of the job, many chat shows are named after the presenter.

*Television TV presenters typically are awarded a chat show after already achieving some level of fame with the public; according to some media experts, having an identifiable presenter makes it more likely that viewers will watch the show. In radio, TV presenters are more likely to be recognised experts in their field, but may also achieve some form of celebrity to listeners or the general public.*
Depending on the format of the show, the presenter may serve as a mediator, interviewer, or an educator.

Mediators typically invite guests on the show to discuss a topic, and may ask questions, direct the flow of conversation, or even participate with their own expertise. Educators often present advice shows, dispensing wisdom about a variety of topics from nutrition, to maintaining cars, to personal relationships. On an interview-based chat show, the presenter typically questions a famous or expert guest about a wide variety of subjects.

Although some TV presenters specialise in one format, many combine all three to provide a varied program. Some famous shows feature episodic topics that may be explored by interviews, discussions, and education all in one show.

Both varied and single-format shows seek to create an audience base that is interested enough in the show to tune in for each new episode; one way of gaining a loyal audience is to have a TV presenter that attracts viewers or listeners through their personality and style.

There is not a set path to becoming a TV presenter. Some work as TV or radio journalists, gaining credibility, contacts, and public exposure through a news-based career or others arrive from an entirely different industry (Martha Stewart, Dr. Phil, Dr. Oz, Davina McCall, Wendy Williams, Christine Bleakley, Ellen Degeneres, and many others).

Others are celebrities, such as actors or models, who are hired to run a chat show because it is believed that their name or personality will draw viewers. Radio or TV interns or assistants often develop their careers by gaining enough credibility at their station to be allowed to substitute if a regular presenter is ill or absent. Performing well as a substitute presenter can eventually lead to opportunities for a new show.

The Daily Duties of a TV presenter

The presenter of the show is the on-screen persona of the show. The job often includes:

* Presenting information and/or opinions.
* Introducing people and elements of the show.
* Interviewing guests.
* Linking between segments of the show.
* Managing on screen activities.

Being a TV presenter is all about personality. Although presenters must learn a few simple technical skills, what usually makes or breaks a good presenter is the ability to project the right type of on screen personality, but more importantly, empathise with the guests and the audience.
Obviously some presenting roles have specific requirements. For example, a news reader must be able to read a teleprompter without mistakes, a football commentator must have good game knowledge, a presenter of a children's show must be able to relate well to kids, the presenter of a cooking show would be wise to know the subject matter.

During a typical production the presenter may need to work closely with the director, floor manager, camera operators and sound operators.

**What Kind of Skills Are Required?**

To become a TV presenter, there are certain requirements that simply can’t be taught. You must enjoy speaking and communicating, but a burning curiosity is a far more important trait.

The reason being is that people love to talk about themselves. Your job is to ask penetrating questions, to convince a guest to open up, and to gain their trust to such a point that they reveal thoughts and opinions that might otherwise remain hidden. If you want to gain the reputation of being a great talker, then you must first be a great listener.

Talking and listening are only the beginning steps if you wish to become a TV presenter. You should have a quick wit, be able to think on your feet, and improvise with reckless abandon.

The best sort of chat show integrates fact, humor, sparkling repartee, and emotion. **To become a TV presenter, you need to be a reader of people, one who can elicit the highs and lows of both guest and audience.**

You should also have an ample dose of confidence.

*If your preferred venue is radio*, you should be very comfortable with a visible audience that consists only of a microphone, an engineer, and perhaps a call screener. *If your medium is television*, and includes a live audience, you must have charisma, stage presence, and the abilities of a talented actor.

Technically, education plays a big role for those who seek any type of long-term career, in or out of the entertainment industry. A degree in journalism, media, TV and radio, or drama is very helpful. Attendance at a private broadcasting school is also good. This is not the sort of job that just falls into one’s lap, and you will usually have to **build a track record** by working as a reporter, deejay, or anchor.

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Many media outlets – local, regional, and national – offer internships for those who wish to break into the business. If the opportunity arises for one of these coveted spots, do not turn it down. Not only will you gain invaluable experience, you will also begin making contacts in the industry.

Most TV presenters gain their jobs because a producer or network executive noticed their talent and dedication, and decided to give them their “big break.” Media is the type of business, much more so than any other, where who you know is just as important as what you know. An on-camera presenter is expected to be knowledgeable in the subject matter, the guests, the general composite of the audience, as well as have the following skills:

* Basic knowledge of television terminology and operating procedures.
* A clear voice.
* Self-confidence.
* Interpersonal skills.
* For studio, the ability to keep presenting while hearing instructions through an earpiece.
* Improvisation skills.
* The ability to work calmly under stress.
* In most cases, some knowledge of the program topic (e.g. sports, etc).

Are You TV Friendly?

Like it or not, it's a fact that your looks can have a bearing on your ability to find work within the industry as a television presenter. You don't necessarily have to be gorgeous, but average people are under-represented in this vocation.

If you're not blessed with a certain look or appearance, don't assume that you can never be in front of a camera. You might be surprised at how well you come across with a little training and a little makeup. You can also look for work in areas which are less reliant upon physical appearance.

For example, an ordinary-looking personality would have trouble getting work on a makeover show, but might do fine in general interest shows such as science, travel, or some other type of show.

Why Become a TV Presenter?

If you love talking, are opinionated and has a charming personality, being a TV presenter is most likely an excellent choice. You can talk about any issue that you're passionate about and have celebrities and VIPs as your
guests.

Over time, you are most likely considered as a member of the "celebrity society" as well. Look at that Mississippi small town girl who is now one of the most influential people of our lifetime (Oprah Winfrey). She started without anybody knowing anything about her, and yet, she succeeded against all odds and beyond her wildest dreams.

Of course, there is only one Oprah, but there are tons of small town radio and TV talk show presenters. Just listen to a local radio or watch a local public TV station. There must be at least a few who are among the rank of "local celebrities." Now multiply that number to hundreds or even thousands of small and medium-sized towns around the world.

Contrary to popular belief, TV presenters don't need to live in first-class entertainment cities, such as London or New York. That's the beauty of this profession. You can start in any city (or town) and from anywhere.

Anywhere? Yes, even from your own bedroom, if you have the necessary equipment, such as the computer software specifically designed for Internet-based radio shows (podcast or webcast).

If the “Do-It-Yourself” approach is not your cup of tea, you can also purchase some airtime at a local radio station and start from there. Many successful TV presenters purchased airtime for their show before they became famous.

If you're concerned about funding the airtime, consider accepting commercials from local businesses. You can also mention some businesses' events and be paid for those brief announcements. There is no limit on how much to charge either (but it's always recommended to be reasonable).

If it sounds too good to be true, well, not really. Once you have access to airtime, you need to keep yourself updated of the latest happenings and trends in the chosen field.

For instance, if you choose to become a sports show presenter, you'll need to know the latest scores and world or team records, for instance. Another example, if you choose to become a parenting show presenter, you'll need to know the latest findings about children's learning styles and medications.

The key is choosing a topic that you're familiar and comfortable with talking about as well as exciting enough for you to keep yourself updated of the latest trends and happenings. Also make sure that there are a sufficient number of guests whom you can interview.
Chat show guests are an important part of the success of the chat show, so make sure to cultivate and maintain your contacts. They don't need to be household names, as long as they are credible sources in their field, they should be qualified to be interviewed.

Today, being a TV presenter is much easier than before. With sufficient preparation on what you're going to encounter, you should be able to break into and succeed in this growing field with confidence.

**How Can I Become a TV Presenter?**

Often, a person who wants to become a TV presenter seeks a bachelor’s degree in preparation for this career, though not requirement.

While there’s no ironclad way a person can follow and expect to be guaranteed a job, *an individual interested in this field can boost your chances of securing a job by completing internships with a major television network.*

Additionally, **interning with a cable network or presenting on a public access channel may help.** Likewise, gaining exposure in the entertainment industry, such as by presenting events at a comedy club or nightclub, may help a budding TV presenter to make valuable contacts.

While there are some people who become a TV presenter without going to college, pursuing a bachelor’s degree in a related field may help. In fact, a person may have a difficult time competing for a TV presenter position at a major network without a degree in a related field.

Many people interested in this field choose to pursue degrees in broadcast journalism. Others may work toward degrees in communications or related majors. No matter which major the aspiring presenter chooses, taking classes in television broadcasting, public speaking, and mass communications may provide good preparation.

Besides education, internships may help pave the way for a person who wants to become a TV Presenter. In many cases, television networks hire new talent from among those who already work with them. As such, an intern may have an advantage over other job candidates.

Regardless of whether an internship leads to a job with the same network, an intern can gain valuable experience in such a position and may also make career-boosting contacts. Often, these internships are unpaid, but a person who wants to become a TV presenter may chalk the lack of pay up to paying her dues.
To gain exposure and related experience, a person who wants to become a TV presenter may spend some time presenting events in comedy clubs and similar entertainment revenues. Not only will this provide the budding presenter with experience in appealing to a crowd and developing good stage presence, but it may also help her to make a name for himself or herself in the entertainment industry.

After completing a degree and gaining at least some experience, a person who wants to become a TV presenter may seek an entry-level job with a television network.

These jobs are typically far from the spotlight an aspiring presenter craves, but they do provide a way to get a foot in the door. In fact, many TV personalities start with lower paying jobs behind the scenes and work their way up to the spotlight.

Common Characteristics of a Great Presenter

In the television industry there are a wide variety of television shows. TV show presenters are highly trained and experienced professionals that lead many different types of television shows from game shows to reality shows. There are many characteristics that will make a successful TV presenter, including the following:

✦ Charisma
✦ Great communicator
✦ Friendly
✦ Hard worker
✦ Drive

The Education Experience

TV show presenters typically need at least a bachelor degree in broadcast journalism, communications, or other related field and sufficient work experience.

Prospective TV show presenters usually complete courses in mass communications, television broadcasting, broadcast journalism, and public speaking.

However, many careers within the industry do not require a college degree. In the entertainment business, experience is always valued more than a traditional 4-year degree from a University.

If you are still attending college, here are some majors and coursework to consider that can further help you throughout your career in the industry:
The Career Prospects for a TV Presenter

Employment of TV show presenters is expected to decline slowly, decreasing 4% from 2008 to 2018.

Job prospects should be fair with strong competition. TV show presenters with extensive experience will have the best job opportunities. Some job openings will stem from the need to replace TV show presenters that retire, transfer, or leave the profession for other reasons.

As mentioned, the benefits of a solid education go a long way for those interested in entering the entertainment field, especially if you want to become a popular TV presenter.

Most likely, in the not-so-distant future, Web-based TV and radio stations will be changing the landscape of the market.

More than ever before, anybody who can talk clearly, think independently, opinionated and has a personable personality has the potential of becoming a TV presenter.

The key is knowing where to start and how to launch your career with confidence.

Getting The Experience

It is important to gain as much experience as possible before entering the chat show circuit or any facet of the entertainment business. This will go a long way in helping you impress all the right people.

You should consider the following as an entry point and/or gateway into the business:

✦ Work at your college radio or television station
✦ Volunteer at a local radio or television station
✦ Get a good internship. The idea is to obtain an internship that will lead to paying work within the company after you have completed it, or at least lead to strong contacts that will result in a paying gig.
✦ Established commercial radio and television stations are a great place
to start, but you may also want to consider interning at a larger network or production company.

✦ Work on putting together a demo tape with any on air work you have done during your internship or while volunteering

Many aspiring TV show presenters complete internships with major television networks to gain practical experience in the field and establish valuable contacts.

Some TV show presenters start out presenting on local or public access television channels. TV show presenters often complete additional training throughout their careers to improve their skills and keep up with technological advances.

How To Establish Yourself

Many aspiring TV presenters get their start on the small town circuit, while others make use of the latest tech scene advances. The idea is to get exposure while garnering experience. This can both be accomplished by any of the following:

✦ Present a local radio show
✦ Present a local television show
✦ Web show or program from your home. For example, there are many aspiring TV presenters that get their start on YouTube.
✦ Become an assistant to a producer or on air personality

How Much Do TV Show Presenters Make?

As of January 2010, the average annual salary for TV show presenters is £50,000; average annual TV show presenter salaries vary greatly on location, employer, education, experience, and benefits.

A career as a TV show presenter is a great choice for people with a strong interest in leading a variety of television shows.

TV show presenters must have a solid understanding of televisions broadcasting and the ability to presenter shows on a variety of topics. They must have an outgoing personality, excellent stage presence, and ability to capture the attention of the audience.

Once you have established yourself as a TV presenter, you can begin to take your career to the next level, and of course exponentially grow your income by:
✦ Getting your show syndicated locally;
✦ Getting your show syndicated nationwide;
✦ Getting your show syndicated internationally;
✦ Starting your own production company (Harpo Productions produces the Oprah Winfrey Show);
✦ Other channels (books, magazines, films) to consider.

Most importantly, to maintain longevity within this career, TV show presenters must have excellent communication and interpersonal skills because they often interact with a variety of guests, contestants, and audiences. Overall, you must be quick on your feet and be able to make effective decisions, to be successful in the industry.

Final Tips and Practical Advice

If you want to be on camera, put together a GREAT reel. This is your ticket to getting a good agent. If you don’t have access to celebrities in your hometown, figure out your own unique take on events happening in your area (i.e. A County Eating Contest).

✦ Don’t be afraid to show your personality. Be funny. If irreverence is your thing, be irreverent! Uniqueness is rewarded. If you’d rather stay behind camera, be smart and persistent.

✦ Start a blog where people can go to read your interviews. Earn a following. Be active on social profiles like Twitter and Facebook. Don’t be afraid to put yourself and your writing out in the world!

✦ Thick skin, knowledge of the industry, and the ability to think on your toes. Thick skin because you often have to deal with difficult egos – either from the publicist, agent, celebrity, or all three!

✦ Knowledge of the industry is a MUST – if you don’t know what’s going on in a celebrity’s personal life, and you ask an offensive or sensitive question, your interview is over – and this is a poor reflection on you and the outlet you are working for.

And finally, the ability to think on your feet.

✦ Sometimes you’ll be on a red carpet and have no idea who a certain celebrity is that you are interviewing — but you should still be able to hold a conversation and ask interesting questions.

✦ If you do a lot of live broadcasts, so many times you will be asked to fill dead air time. When this happens during major award shows, you will read up on the nominees and their work so that you have enough
to talk about for several minutes. Doing your homework is imperative.

✦ Don’t wait, just do. If you can’t necessarily get hired right away, start your own blog and use that as a portfolio to get hired.

✦ Network and take the jobs you can get in order to get more experience, meet more people and increase your network. Know and understand your goals from the beginning, but still be open to surprise opportunities that may come your way.