

Single and Wrapper Formats

Formats can be broken up into SINGLE and WRAPPER formats. Single formats are like primary colours; they exist singularly and can be combined in ways that create new colours. So for example, blue and yellow make green. By combining two different formats, you have created a different format.

When you look at the ten formats, you will notice that there is no listing of words you may have heard before such as “Documentary” or “Feature” or “Reality”. These have been used to describe formats but they are misleading. If we were to ask a group, “What is a documentary?” many people will have different ideas of what a documentary is or examples of ‘documentaries’. This makes the word problematic. Similarly so are the words “Feature” and “Reality”. The word feature may refer to a feature film (a film over 90 minutes), a news feature (meaning a big story usually over many pages in a newspaper) or personality feature (a particular person who features in a story). As you can see from these examples, the words used are unspecific and could be interpreted in different ways.

The Single Formats

Single formats, as mentioned above, are simple, basic formats that can be used alone or in combination. There are five single formats. It usually helps to think of these as primary colours (Red, Yellow, Blue).

FORMAT NAME	FORMAT DEFINITION
DRAMA	Drama is any information or story that is presented to an audience by actors . The audience will know that what they are watching is DRAMA if they are aware that the people in the story are actors and not real people. Drama is the only psychological format, meaning that it is the one format in which we understand what is in the characters mind. Drama is the most consumed format and uses story to deliver a strong emotion to an audience.
TESTIMONIAL	A testimonial or testimony is a person or people who deliver their own story or viewpoints on a certain topic directly to the audience. The difference between testimony and interview is that testimony is a personal story or views delivered directly to the audience, without intervention or questions by someone else. Sometimes interviewers edit out their questions so the interview appears to be a straight testimony. Testimony can be really powerful if the person talking can explain their story in a powerful way, using rising tension, a symbol and other essential elements of story.

INTERVIEW	Interviews are structured by the questions the interviewer asks the interviewee. A powerful interview has carefully formulated and sequenced questions, so the story told builds in tension answering a central question.
DISCUSSION	Discussions are simply a group of people expressing opinions or arguing. Discussion will have a group of 3 or more people exchanging opinions on a given topic. The story comes from the quality of the opinions or arguments .
DEMONSTRATION	Demonstration relies on a person showing us a process or skill in a step-by-step manner. The story comes from the process - the sequence of steps.

Wrapper Formats

Now that we understand the five single formats (drama, testimonial, interview, discussion and demonstration) let's look at the Wrapper Formats. Wrappers are formats that use single formats in a combination of ways. A wrapper is the way that one or more single formats are presented. It can hold lots of different single formats. The wrapper format is very popular in television and radio, and new and exciting programmes are created by changing the contents of the wrapper formats. A good way to think about these is by thinking about cake. If you have ever baked a cake you know that there are always the same list of basic ingredients: milk, flour, eggs, sugar. By using more of one and less of the other, or by adding new ingredients you get different types of cake: chocolate cake versus vanilla, light and fluffy versus solid with nuts. The wrapper formats of television are the same.

There are five types of wrapper formats, they are: Magazine Programme, Report, Actuality, Montage, Game. Wrappers can hold single formats and other wrappers within their structure.

FORMAT NAME	FORMAT DEFINITION
MAGAZINE	A magazine format relies on links by a presenter or presenters . The story is told by linking one item to the next. The typical format is link-item-link-item-link. In a magazine the logic of the format comes from the links. Most often these will have a theme or general topic that they cover such as "Sport" or "Lifestyle".
REPORT	A report is a single subject that is explored by a reporter . The reporter can be seen or can be just a voice that guides our understanding of the content. The report usually has a number of items in it that the reporter guides us through, most often Interviews, Testimony and Discussion are used, however the report can feature others.

<p>ACTUALITY</p>	<p>Actuality refers to live, unedited events as they happen. Live events such as sports games or matches, a concert, a press conference or presidential address are often presented live and unedited. However, while waiting for the President to speak, during the concert pause or during game half time, other formats like interview, discussion or even report may be inserted, turning Actuality into a wrapper. Actuality wrapper can contain many other formats.</p>
<p>MONTAGE</p>	<p>Relies on editing to tell a story. Editing is the process of taking different shot footage, quotes or sound clips and putting them together to tell a story. Montage is similar to a report, in that it usually explores one subject, however it does not have a reporter or a voice over explaining it. It relies completely on the editing. Montage has become a very popular format since the rise of MTV – music videos are essentially just editing.</p>
<p>GAME</p>	<p>Game format is anything that contains rules. In a game format the rules tell the story. Generally these rules build tension for the audience. Really engaging games have interesting rules that have a pay off when the contestants win or lose or overcome the obstacles or rules.</p>