

Why TV shows are hot ... and then suddenly not

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

1 Warmer

How do you usually watch TV? On your smartphone, on a laptop or tablet, on a regular TV? Compare your answers with a partner.

2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers will help you.

adore

show

season

boom and bust

critic

- _____ is a situation in which you have periods of success followed by periods of failure. (para 1)
- A _____ is a television programme. (para 1)
- A _____ is someone whose job is to write their opinions about things such as books or films. (para 1)
- A _____ is a period of time when a series of television programmes are shown. (para 2)
- If you _____ something, you like it very much. (para 2)

prioritize

audience

run

cult

tempting

- A _____ TV programme is one that is very popular with a particular group of people. (para 2)
- The _____ is all the people who watch a television programme. (para 3)
- If something is _____, it makes you feel that you want to have it or do it. (para 3)
- A _____ is a period of time when a television programme is shown regularly. (para 4)
- If you _____ something, you treat it as being more important than any other thing. (para 6)

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

- How many TV shows have been made so far in 2018?
- Why do TV audiences have a larger choice than ever now?
- According to Gavin Haynes, what is the perfect length for a TV show?
- When are comedies usually most popular?
- When are dramas usually most popular?
- How many seasons of the TV programme *The Handmaid's Tale* have there been so far?

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TV's boom-and-bust cycle: why shows are hot ... and then suddenly not

Lanre Bakare

2 August, 2018

- 1 It seems that we are in a period of boom and bust in TV. It's definitely a boom time because there are so many new shows – more than 520 in 2018 – but it's also a bust time because critics love the shows but, very quickly, the shows become less good.
- 2 Big shows usually start slowly. *Breaking Bad* was hardly noticed at first but finally lasted for five seasons. It also took a long time for critics to adore *The Wire* but then it became a cult programme. The same thing happened to *Mad Men*.
- 3 But now, as TV makes more shows than ever, something has changed. Audiences want more and more new shows and – with the increase in on-demand services and different streaming sites – they have a bigger choice than ever before. They can watch the latest programmes but also older programmes they perhaps missed before. It has never been so tempting to stop watching a show and move on to something different.
- 4 The TV writer and presenter Gavin Haynes was asked to give the perfect length for a TV show. His answer was 4.36 seasons. And *The Ringer* website has found when most TV shows are the most popular. "Comedies are usually the most popular 45% of the way through their runs and dramas 25% of the way through their runs," it explains. In general, dramas become less popular more slowly, probably because audiences want to know what happens next.
- 5 Before, if audiences liked a show, they would watch the next season of it. Now, it is fashionable to say that you have stopped watching a show. Giving a long list of reasons for stopping is even better. Some critics have even explained how long you should give certain types of shows (comedies, dramas, etc) before you stop watching them. With so many options for audiences, the effect of a show can easily become less and less strong with each season.
- 6 In an article for *The New York Times*, writer Lauren Oyler said that the internet makes so many demands on people's attention spans that they have to prioritize and when we prioritize, we stop watching those shows we no longer need.
- 7 In 2017, there were shows that critics said were fantastic but they ended quietly. A number of big shows no longer had the support of the critics or audiences that their earlier series had. Others seem simply too big to die. *Orange is the New Black* has more than enough fans to keep going on Netflix. But does it feel as full of life as it did when it was first shown?
- 8 *The Handmaid's Tale* seems to be following a similar path. When it started, a huge number of critics talked about how great it was but before we were halfway through season two, things changed. Now, the depressing show has become too much for the same people loved it 12 months ago and the idea of another eight seasons seems like torture.
- 9 Speaking to *The Ringer*, TV producer Mike Schur explained why people should keep watching shows, even if their first seasons are not great. "The reason that most shows' best seasons are number two and three is because you've had enough time to learn about the characters and the audience has had enough time to get to know them."
- 10 Who's looking forward to *The Handmaid's Tale* season three?

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4 Comprehension check

Match the beginnings and endings to make statements about the text.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. There are more new TV shows now ... | a. ... popular in their second and third series than in their first. |
| 2. Dramas become less popular more slowly ... | b. ... audiences have a lot more choice than they used to have. |
| 3. Some television programmes are more ... | c. ... than ever before. |
| 4. Audiences are beginning to stop watching shows ... | d. ... the second season has been less popular. |
| 5. Critics loved the first season of <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> but ... | e. ... because they have a bigger choice than ever before. |
| 6. With the increase in on-demand TV and streaming sites, ... | f. ... because people want to know what happens next. |

5 Two-word expressions

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make phrases from the text.

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. attention | a. site |
| 2. cult | b. number |
| 3. streaming | c. different |
| 4. on- | d. span |
| 5. something | e. demand |
| 6. huge | f. programme |

6 Prepositions

Complete the phrases from the text using these prepositions.

for about of to for through

- last _____ five seasons
- reasons _____ stopping
- move on _____ something different
- full _____ life
- halfway _____ season two
- learn _____ the characters

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7 Word stress

Put these words from the text into two groups according to their stress.

programme
support

option
demand

halfway
before

torture
season

critic
enough

A o o	B o o

8 Discussion

- What is your favourite TV show? Why do you like it?
- Is there a TV show you really dislike? If so, why do you dislike it?

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KEY

2 Key words

1. boom and bust
2. show
3. critic
4. season
5. adore
6. cult
7. audience
8. tempting
9. run
10. prioritize

3 Find the information

1. more than 520
2. because of the increase in on-demand services and streaming sites
3. 4.36 seasons
4. 45% of the way through their runs
5. 25% of the way through their runs
6. two

4 Comprehension check

1. c
2. f
3. a
4. e
5. d
6. b

5 Two-word expressions

1. d
2. f
3. a
4. e
5. c
6. b

6 Prepositions

1. for
2. for
3. to
4. of
5. through
6. about

7 Word stress

A 0 o	B o 0
programme	halfway
option	support
torture	demand
critic	before
season	enough