

## “Script Writing” MCD502

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### Television comedy

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Television comedy had a presence from the earliest days of broadcasting. Among the earliest BBC television programmes in the 1930s was *Starlight*, which offered a series of guests from the music hall era — singers and comedians amongst them. Similarly, many early United States television programmes were variety shows including the *Texaco Star Theater* featuring Milton Berle; comedy acts often taken from vaudeville were staples of such shows.

The range of television comedy is extremely broad to the extent that anything under the heading comedy can be put before an audience through the medium of television. However, it is true to say that certain genres of comedy transfer to the small screen more successfully than others. Many cartoon television comedies have been produced and aired. These include the likes of *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, *Futurama* and *Family Guy*.

### Sitcom

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The *situation comedy*, or sitcom, has been the most common, successful and culturally significant type of television comedy. As the name suggests, these programs feature recurring characters placed in humorous situations. The first television sitcom was *Pinwright's Progress*, ten episodes being broadcast on the BBC between 1946 - 1947.<sup>[1][2][3]</sup> Since the early 1950s with *I Love Lucy* in the U.S. and *Hancock's Half Hour* in the UK, sitcoms have always had a special place in the hearts of viewers and gathered highly devoted followers, as the familiar characters often become beloved. Often performed before a live audience (or, in some cases, a simulated live audience in the form of a laugh track), usually filmed or taped with a multiple-camera setup, and almost always a half-hour in length, sitcoms are seldom presented as realistic depictions of life but often generate honest humor through the relationships between and ongoing development of characters. Since the debut of *I Love Lucy* television has never been without sitcoms and they have often been the most popular and lucrative of all program types. Even in the early 2000s, the cast of the NBC sitcom *Friends* were among television's highest paid performers.

### Comedy-drama

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A comedy-drama, sometimes known as a dramedy, is a program that combines humor with more serious dramatic elements, aiming for a considerably more realistic tone than conventional sitcoms. These programs are shot with a [single-camera setup](#) and presented without a laugh track, and typically run an hour in length. This can refer to a genre of television or radio drama series. There are several notable dramedies, varying in different subgenres. This includes dramedies like [Desperate Housewives](#), [Parenthood](#) and [Ugly Betty](#), medical dramedies like [M\\*A\\*S\\*H](#) and [Grey's Anatomy](#), legal dramedies like [Ally McBeal](#) and [Boston Legal](#), and [Glee](#) - probably the first musical dramedy.

### Sketch comedy

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Sketch comedy programs differ from sitcoms in that they do not basically feature recurring characters (though some characters and scenarios may be repeated) and often draw upon current events and emphasize [satire](#) over character development. Sketch comedy was pioneered by [Sid Caesar](#), whose *Your Show of Shows* debuted in 1950 and established many conventions of the genre. American sketch comedy reached a later peak in the mid-1970s with the debut of [Saturday Night Live](#), originally a variety program but soon devoted mostly to sketches. In the UK, two of the more successful examples are *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Little Britain*.

### Stand-up comedy

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Stand-up comedy has been fairly well represented on television. Stand-up comedians have long been a staple of variety and late-night talk shows; indeed, talk-variety shows such as *The Tonight Show* traditionally open with a comedy monologue performed by the program host. Television stand-up reached a peak of popularity on [British](#) schedules with the immensely popular [ITV](#) programme *The Comedians*. Their style of comedy was swept away almost entirely in the Britain of the early 1980s when a new generation of stand-ups challenged what they saw as racist and sexist humour and revolutionised the form under the banner [alternative comedy](#). In the US, stand-up comedy programs became popular on many [cable television](#) channels beginning in the mid-1980s, as such "brick wall" shows (nicknamed for the stereotypical use of a fake brick wall as a backdrop) were cheap to produce and air. Stand-up humour later had mixed fortunes on the small screen, often shunted away to the small hours or as part of a larger entertainment extravaganza.

### Improvisational comedy

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Improvisational comedy has recently been popular with television audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, most notably with both British and American versions of the program *Whose Line is it Anyway?*.

### Game show comedy

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There are many UK comedies in which the format is that of a gameshow, and may give the guests a chance to perform stand up comedy to win a round. Examples of this genre include *Have I Got News For You*, *8 Out of 10 Cats*, *Mock the Week* and *Never Mind the Buzzcocks*.

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