

Popular British television shows

There are lots of different types of television shows, including detective programmes and cookery shows. Here are a few examples of famous television programmes in the UK.

Soap Operas

The soap opera is a classic British television series. The most famous ones include 'Coronation Street' and 'Eastenders'. They show about three episodes a week. The characters become household names and the series often tackle difficult issues (such as alcoholism) to make it more 'realistic'.



Reality TV shows

Reality TV shows remain very popular in the UK. The first major reality show was 'Big Brother' in which ordinary people were put in a house together and were filmed. The most popular programmes at the moment are 'The Only Way is Essex' and 'Made in Chelsea' – both programmes follow the lives of people living in Essex and London.



The Only Way is Essex – a television series about a group of friends from Essex



Made in Chelsea – a series about a group of wealthy, privileged friends in London

Drama

'Doctor Who' is a science fiction series for children that first appeared on TV screens in 1963 and ran until 1989. It was revived in 2005 and since then three famous actors have taken on the role of 'The Doctor' – Christopher Eccleston, David Tennant and Matt Smith. The Doctor is a Time Lord who travels through time and space with a female companion, having adventures and meeting many terrifying enemies.



This picture shows all the actors who have played the role of 'Doctor Who' over the years. The bottom three pictures are of the most modern incarnations, played by Christopher Eccleston (left), David Tennant (centre) and Matt Smith (right).



This picture shows how the Doctor travels around! This is a Tardis, an old blue police telephone box. It is much bigger on the inside!

Perhaps the most popular TV drama series at the moment is 'Sherlock', starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman. It is a modern-day interpretation of Arthur Conan Doyle's famous detective books. The series has been watched by millions of viewers each week! Martin Freeman will soon be seen as Bilbo Baggins in the film of 'The Hobbit'.



Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman as Sherlock Holmes and Dr John Watson



Andrew Scott as Moriarty, Sherlock's evil enemy

Another phenomenally successful TV show is 'Downton Abbey', written by Julian Fellowes and starring, among a stellar cast, Dame Maggie Smith. It follows the trials and tribulations of a distinguished aristocratic family. The second series finished in the UK in December and has since been very popular in America. The show is made by ITV, a channel that usually loses in the ratings to the BBC, and has been a great success for the channel.



The country has been hooked on the 'will they won't they' relationship between Mary and Matthew, as well as supporting the lovely Bates below stairs.

'Being Human', a series about a vampire, a werewolf and a ghost living in the same house, has been a smash-hit for BBC3, a channel which usually broadcasts smaller, independently made dramas and documentaries.



News Quizzes

Another highly popular genre is the news quiz, usually an irreverent look at current events and world news. One of the most famous is 'Have I Got News For You', in which the two main panellists (Ian Hislop and Paul Merton) are joined by comedians and politicians to answer humorous questions about the news.

