

# The Half-Hour Documentary

A half-hour show is not 30 minutes of content! After figuring in three two-minute commercial breaks and a terminal break, your show only has about 22:56 of content.

If need be, your operations department can add spots or promos to make the breaks longer.

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Have your art department design a “look” for the show, including special banners for supers, an open, a background to type info on, etc. See if anybody will help you choose music for the open, bumps, etc.

As you produce your show, keep track of the name of everybody who helps you...you'll need this later for the credit roll.

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Start your show with compelling video and information before the open.

Following the open, tell your viewers everything they can expect over the next half-hour, and make sure you tell why this is important and how it relates to them.

Build to a crescendo...the big payoff...in your last segment.

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At the end of each segment, make sure you tease what's coming up in the next and final segments, and support these teases with good video and sound bites.

Think of other innovative ways to hold the audience, such as a trivia question that you ask (and repeat at least once), and then answer at the end of the show.

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Write simple, write enthusiastically, and write in a manner that constantly explains the physical relevance of your subject.

Don't do all of the talking! Let the experts you interview tell some of the story through their expertise.

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Shamelessly self-promote your show starting the week before it airs. Plug it in your weathercasts, send an e-mail with details to the local newspaper television critics (getting a personal e-mail from you will garner substantial attention), and call some local DJ's to do radio interviews.

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Finally, check the ratings that your show got. If you got higher ratings than what normally airs in that time slot, then you've just guaranteed your station lots of future money-making opportunities using your science documentary ideas.

# Why Be the Station Scientist?

You get to do stories about stuff that interests you.

Work is more fun!

You can win awards! (AAAS, AGU, AMS, Emmy, SEJ, etc.)

Your news director sees you in a different light – your value increases because you bring more than just the weather to the table.

Your credibility skyrockets – viewers consider you the “go to” science guy / gal.