

# PUBLIC ACCESS: PRODUCE YOUR OWN TV SHOW

*How to get started producing a public access television show.*

You can have your own TV show. It's easier than you might think and best of all, it's absolutely free!

How, you ask? The answer is public access.

Public access television is non-commercial airtime made available to the public, free of charge.

The only requirement to utilize public access, is that you live in the community where the show will be produced.

Most public access facilities offer training in shooting, audio and editing, and provide all the equipment you'll need.

While the law no longer requires that cable companies air public access programs, a certain percentage of cable revenue in any market must go to the host city or municipality.

A portion of this money goes towards public access television, so most markets (even small ones) have a public access channel and a modest studio.

If producing and broadcasting your own public access TV show sounds enticing to you this material will tell you how to get started.



## Getting Started



The first step is to contact your local public access station and sign up for an orientation class.

Most facilities have ongoing seminars and continuing education to help you increase your production knowledge.

If you have questions during a shoot, a staff person is usually available to help you.

My experience with the PAT process over the years is that they will mandate that you complete a training course and obtain your PAT License.

Once you have it from one station, you can use it to produce PAT programming at any other in that state.

***NOTE: Check out the hyperlinked list at the end of this report to find a station in your area***

Once you finish the orientation and get tested on the equipment, you're ready to produce your show.

Usually, you must submit a finished program to the public access facility before it airs so someone can view your tape and make sure it fits the station's guidelines.

Once approved, you will receive a time slot for your show to air.

**Remember, your program has to be non-commercial; that means you cannot say or show phone numbers, dates of events, prices or store names within the show itself.**

***You can put phone numbers at the end of the show, typically for no longer than 10 seconds. Anything longer than that is considered advertising.***

## **Everything You Need**

If you have no experience with video or TV production, public access can be a great place for you to start.

At most public access stations everything is provided for you--a studio for shooting, editing facilities, digital video cameras for location shooting, computer editing systems, microphones and audio cables, dressing rooms and more. This is a big help for a beginner or a person that does not have equipment.

Although most studios now have well-maintained digital equipment, this is public access, so don't necessarily expect cutting-edge equipment. They will, however, provide everything you need to shoot and edit a program.

Other producers are usually available to crew for you, and in turn, it is expected that you will crew for them. Most facilities have a book that lists people who are certified and available to work on a production crew.

## **Different Time, Same Channel**

Depending on your city, you may have to wait for a time slot before your program can air.

And, you don't always have the option of choosing the time slot you like.

Typically, you will not have a time slot for more than 13 weeks, so it can be hard to build an audience to follow your program.

You may be on Saturday at 8 p.m. and then moved to Wednesday at 7 a.m. Your 8 p.m. audience will wonder where you went.

You cannot advertise the move in advance, because you won't know where you're going until the move has been made.

There is typically nothing you can do about this. The facility has to make space for new producers.

If you are in a facility that has a lot of producers, you may be asked to go off the air (if your show has been airing for a long period of time), to give new producers a chance.

## The Golden Rule

Each station will have its own rules and regulations about the use of equipment, crew and timeslots.

Check with your local access station for specifics.



**However, there is one guideline to which all public access programs must adhere:**

**You cannot make any money from the show.**

The station staff will watch your show carefully.

If they find that you've produced a commercial show, you can be banned from having a show, or using the facilities and editing equipment.

***You can put phone numbers, e-mail or web site URL at the end of the show, typically for no longer than 10 seconds.***

***Anything longer than that is considered advertising***

## You've Got Access

The opportunity is there for you to take your own program to the airwaves.

Despite some restrictions and scheduling irregularities, managing your own public access time slot is a wonderful opportunity.

## How to Get on Public Access Television

Get your message to the masses by scoring a slot on your local public access station, which is a channel that is made available to the general public.

## You Will Need

- A programming idea
- A public access television station
- Proficiency with TV equipment

## Steps

**STEP 1** - Have an idea for the kind of program you want to make. Anything goes on public TV, as long as it's not pornographic, offensive, obscene, libelous, or commercial.

**STEP 2** - Find a station in your area by typing "Global Village PAT" into a search engine. It will take you to a site that links to about 700 public or community access television sites worldwide.



Residency rules vary among stations, so ask about using a station outside your hometown.

**STEP 3** - Contact the station for their producer requirements; they all operate a bit differently. In some cases, you'll have to make your show on your own and then apply to air it; other channels have a studio you can use and equipment you can borrow on a first-come, first-served basis.

Stations that lend out their equipment usually require that you train on it before you can borrow it. Some offer classes for a small fee.

**STEP 4** - Make your program. Most stations want shows that are about 28 minutes long, leaving two minutes for opening and closing credits.

**STEP 5** - Submit your show. It will be aired whenever the station has an available time slot, though most stations will try to accommodate you if you have a specific time in mind. It may also air several times over the course of a month.

Celebrity chef Dave Lieberman started a public access cooking show during college at Yale University.

***An example of PAT Television requirements:***

*The object of Public Access Television in Calaveras County is to offer residents the means and opportunity to video tape topics and events in Calaveras County and to have those topics and events cablecast on Public Access Television (Channels 7 and/or 9) located in San Andreas.*

*The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors with funds from the Cable Franchise Fees, supports the Public Access Television Studio including production and editing equipment so residents of Calaveras County, who do not own video equipment, may produce topics and events for Public Access Television (Channels 7 & 9).*

*Upon successfully completing a free familiarization course and proving competency on the equipment, a resident of Calaveras County may check out, at no charge, production equipment such as camcorders, tripods, microphones and photofloods that may be used to produce a video that would be acceptable for viewing on Public Access Television. (Note:*

*Equipment may NOT be taken from the County without prior approval from the Manager.) Furthermore, producers are permitted to use all the facilities at the Studio, free of charge, including the video editing equipment, by appointment on a first-come-first-serve basis. A producer is responsible for the cost of any video tapes.*

*If under age 18, a separate form must be completed by the parent or responsible guardian.*

**You can get a complete list of all of the PAT Stations at the following websites:**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_public-access\\_TV\\_stations\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_public-access_TV_stations_in_the_United_States)

<http://www.communitymedia.se/cat/linksca.htm>