

General Show Planning – Making A Clock

Overview: This resource pack is designed to offer general advice, tips and practical examples on how best to plan a general radio show. We will look at how shows are usually planned using a 'clock' and how this technique can be adapted for different types of shows.

We will also look at why 'clocks' are used historically and how they are used by modern radio stations to automate much of the planning process.

Finally we will look at a few other important aspects of show planning such as timing, station sound and listener fatigue.

Key skills used include:

- Planning and show structure.
- Arranging a sequence of events (programming) to create a framework for your show.
- Working with time and time critical events.
- Using a pie chart to represent a show plan (or clock).

National Curriculum References

Key Stage Goals

Mathematics

- **Statutory Requirement (Measurement – Year 2):** *Pupils should be taught to:*
 - *Compare and sequence intervals of time. (page 114)*
 - *Know the numbers of minutes in an hour and the number of hours in a day. (page 114)*
- **Statutory Requirement (Statistics – Year 2):** *Pupils should be taught to:*
 - Interpret and construct simple pictograms, tally charts, block diagrams and simple tables. (page 116)
 - Ask and answer simple questions by counting the number of objects in each category and sorting the categories by quantity. (page 116)
 - Ask and answer questions about totalling and comparing categorical data. (page 116)
- **Statutory Requirement (Number And Place Value – Year 3):** *Pupils should be taught to:*

- Identify, represent and estimate numbers using different representations (page 118)
- **Statutory Requirement (Statistics – Year 6):** *Pupils should be taught to:*
 - Interpret and construct pie charts and line graphs and use these to solve problems. (page 145)

Please note that planning shows also includes a number of skills associated with script writing, language development and vocabulary. These skills are frequently referenced in other resource kits so have been excluded for specific reference in the above although obviously they are just as applicable.

General Show Planning – A Simple Clock

Whether it is a music show, a discussion program or a radio quiz, all programs require a plan to help the presenters deliver the elements of the show in the correct order and in most cases to do so within the allotted time frame for the show. A show clock can be as simple as a list of things you want to include in your show, in the order that you want to include them. Some examples might look like:

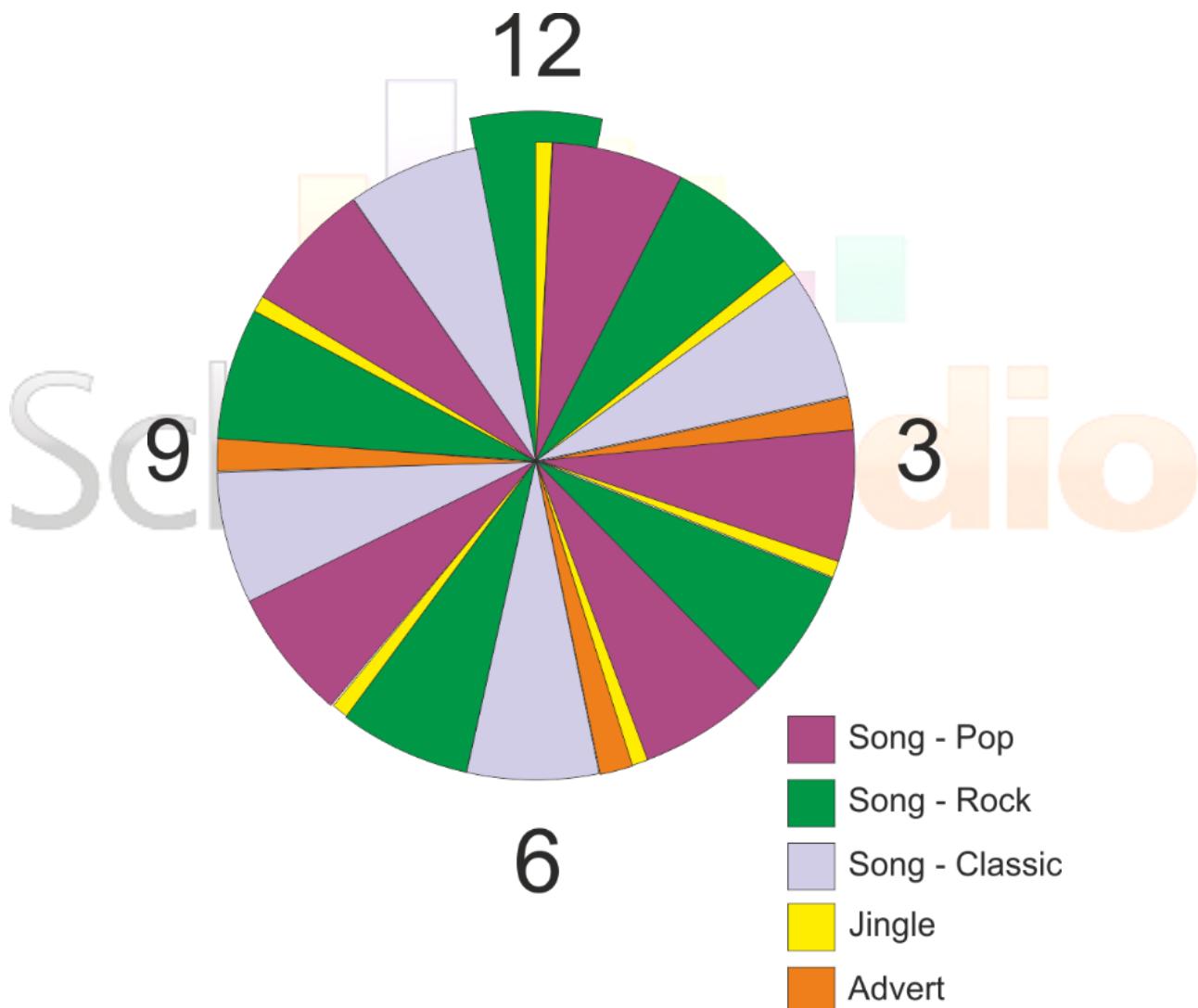
Music Show Clock	Discussion Show Clock	Quiz Show Clock
<i>Introduction Jingle</i>	<i>Introduction Music</i>	<i>Quiz Intro Music</i>
<i>Song - pop</i>	<i>Presenter Link - presenter introduces the show and the topics being discussed</i>	<i>Presenter Link – Introduce the quiz and the guests.</i>
<i>Song - pop</i>	<i>Jingle</i>	<i>Round 1</i>
<i>Jingle</i>		
<i>Presenter Link (i.e. presenter talks)</i>	<i>Presenter Link - Introduces first topic and provides overview</i>	<i>Presenter Link – Summarise the first round then move on to round 2</i>
<i>Song – rock</i>		<i>Round 2</i>
<i>Jingle</i>	<i>Guest Link – Discussion between presenter and guest.</i>	<i>Presenter Link – Recap over rounds 1 & 2 and introduce the final round.</i>
<i>Interview (pre-recorded)</i>		
<i>Song – pop</i>	<i>Jingle</i>	<i>Round 3</i>
<i>Song – local band</i>	<i>Advert</i>	
<i>Advert</i>	<i>Presenter Link – Welcome back</i>	<i>Presenter Link – Congratulate the winners and remind the listeners to listen next time.</i>
<i>Promo for school event</i>		
<i>Etc...</i>	<i>Etc...</i>	

		Etc...
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As you can see, these simple clocks do not include a great deal of detail, they are just a framework for the content that will be included in the show. The fine detail (such as which songs to play, scripts for discussion etc.) comes later when the presenter is using the clocks to plan or present a specific show.

But why is it called a clock?

To answer this question you have to go back to the early days of music radio before computer software was used to schedule the songs the presenters would play. In order to ensure that all the music was rotated and to avoid the presenters just playing their favourite songs, many stations would have a simple clock 'pie chart' stuck to the wall in the studio.



The pie chart would show the presenter what type of music or other content they should be playing at any time in the hour by representing all of the different types of content as

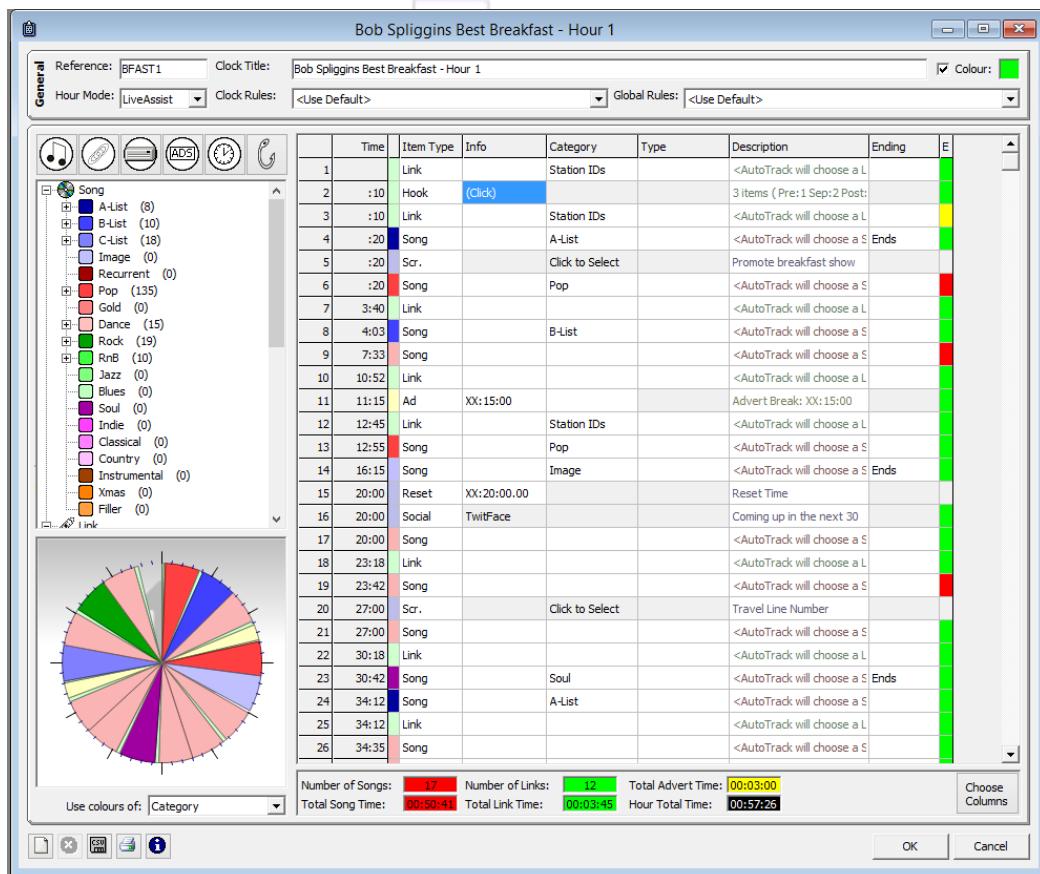
segments in the pie chart which would correspond to the time in the hour on an analogue clock face.

In our example we have three different types of music plus a segment for jingles and adverts.

By applying the clock face analogy, we can see that at quarter past the hour we should be playing a pop song but at quarter to the next hour we should be playing an advert break.

Many stations also combined this with a rudimentary 'music rotation' system which consisted of three shoe boxes with pop, rock and classic music (in the form of vinyl records) in them. When the clock called for a pop song, the pop record from the front of the box was played and then returned to the back of the box, thus rotating all the pop songs before repeating the first song.

Modern radio uses a far more advanced version of the same principle with Music Scheduling software such as AutoTrack (which is included with your School Radio system).



This picture shows a clock in modern scheduling software.

Why Use A Clock?

Whether your clock is a simple list or a pie chart, the reason for having it is that it can help to bring consistency and professionalism to your broadcasts. If you know the structure for

the show that you are presenting, you can plan for all the elements, pick the music in advance, write scripts and research what you are going to talk about.

Without a clock you would need to start with a 'blank sheet' each week which would mean more work and less consistency for your listeners.

There is also a couple of other reasons why planning a show around a clock is a good idea.

Station Format – Clocks often include common elements of sequences across all shows. If you listen to Radio 4, at the end of each hour they have the famous time signal 'beeps' (a sequence of beeps that lead exactly into the news at the start of the following hour). In Radio 4's clocks, the 'beeps' will be the last element in each clock and the news will be the first element in the start of every clock.

Show Format – Clocks also help you to maintain a consistent show format for your listeners. Let's say you promise your listeners a good mix of pop, rock and polka music. If you are picking your music as you go, you might play plenty of pop and rock music but neglect your polka fans just because you don't feel like polka. Stick to a clock and you will guarantee that you play the balance of music you originally planned.

Listener Fatigue – This is a strange concept but we know (from years of radio research) that no matter how much listeners like a particular type of music, they cannot listen to very similar songs, back to back for extended periods. This results in 'listener fatigue' which in turn results in listeners turning off. The answer is to add variation (even if you are playing all the same genre in a show) by breaking the music with other audio elements (speech, jingles etc.) and thinking about the songs you are playing and trying to add variation in tempo (the speed of the song) and energy (the power or impact of the song). Doing so will ensure more listeners enjoy your shows.

Considering Timing

The other main reason for building a clock is that it can also show you how much content you need in order to create shows of a specific duration or to work with time critical events (like the news beeps on Radio 4).

Imagine you need to present an hour long show and you need it to finish exactly at the end of the hour because you are broadcasting a 'live' event next. How many songs will you need? How many jingles and how can you structure a show so that the content is spread through the hour and you can be fairly confident that you will finish at the correct time?

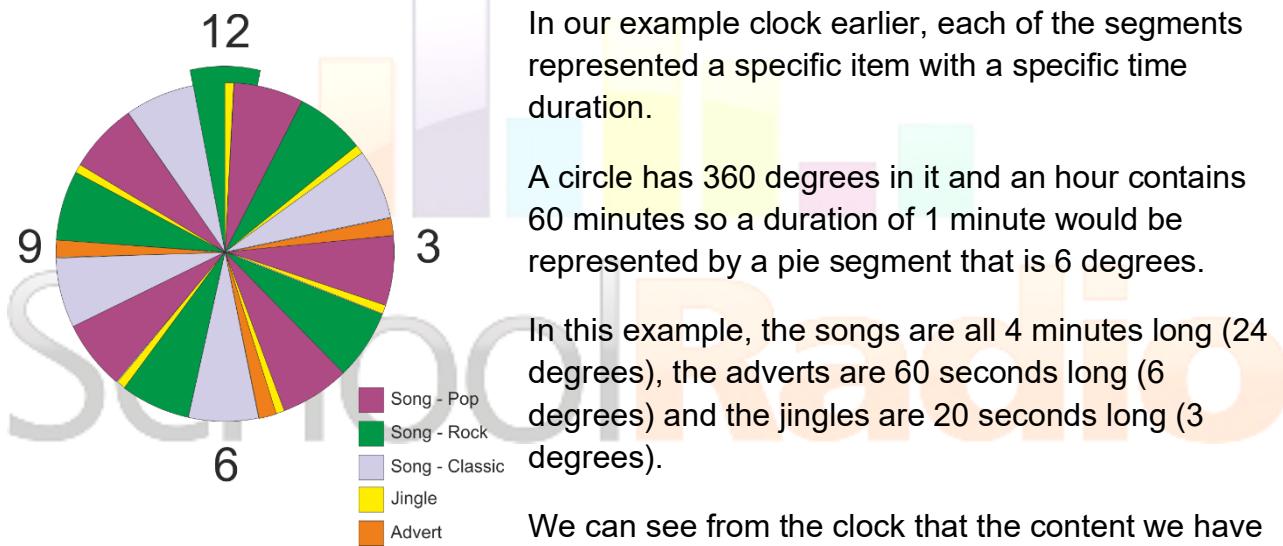
The answer is of course to use a clock to plan your show.

If you are using a simple list then you would need to add a column to show that average (or expected) duration of each item in the clock.

Music Show Clock	Duration
<i>Introduction Jingle</i>	<i>30 Seconds</i>
<i>Song - pop</i>	<i>4 Minutes</i>
<i>Song - pop</i>	<i>4 Minutes</i>
<i>Jingle</i>	<i>30 Seconds</i>
<i>Presenter Link (i.e. presenter talks)</i>	<i>60 Seconds</i>
<i>Etc....</i>	

You can use this to see when you will have enough content for your show.

Using a pie chart clock provides a more visual way of seeing this.

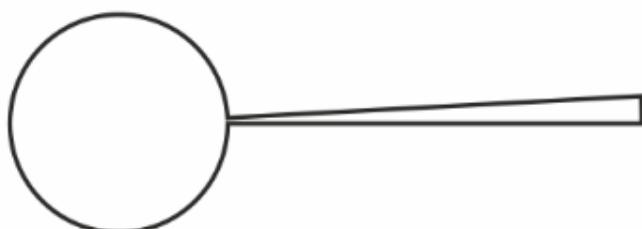


This is exactly what we aim for when planning a radio show as it is easier to deal with an overrun of a few seconds (by finishing a few items early) than an underrun (meaning we have to add content).

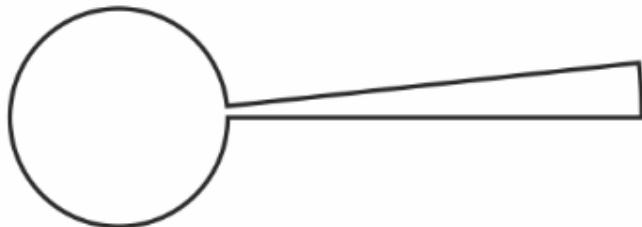
Have A Go At Building A Pie Chart Clock

Print and cut out a few copies of the segments below. They represent 30 second, 60 second and 4 minute clock elements. You can colour code them for different song genres if you like.

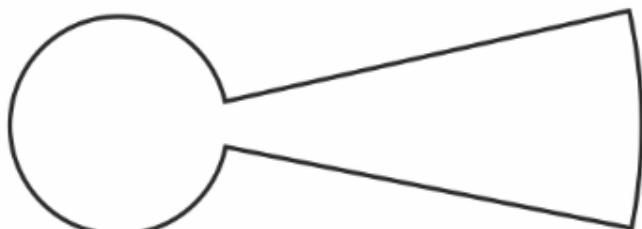
Once you have a few of them, try creating a simple pie chart clock by arranging the segments into a circle (as above). Using a split pin might allow you to easily re-arrange the order of the items in your clock.



3 Degrees (30 seconds)



6 Degrees (60 seconds)



24 Degrees (4 minutes)



As mentioned above, each minute on the clock equates to a 6 degree segment. Try creating segments to represent elements of other lengths (for example a 3 minute song would be 18 degrees).

Once you have created a clock for your show, you have the framework from which all future shows can be built with a consistent mix of content and a format your listeners will recognise.

Industry Tips:

- Consider the people who will be listening when you design your clocks. Think about the music they might want to hear.
- Look at the structure of your clocks, is it even across the hour or are the sections too heavy with speech or music.
- Feel free to use the clock to add more detail to your show. Instead of just having a 'presenter link' clock element, why not write the script and add it directly into your clock.
- Radio stations that run all the time (24/7) use clocks to provide a framework for each show, then use advanced music scheduling software that converts the clock to an actual list of songs, jingles and other content that the presenter plays. Very few professional radio presenters get to pick the music they play (but there are exceptions such as music specialists or big personality DJ's).
- A clock is a plan, don't be afraid to deviate from it if you need to but always keep it in mind.