The Five Phases

Every reality show pilot moves through the same five phases, in order. Skipping one does not save time. It just moves the cost to a later, more expensive phase.

LESSON 1 OF 7

Keywords: The Language of Production

Before you build anything, learn the words. Production has a language. When you can name each part, you stop guessing and start deciding. Here are the terms that run through all five phases.

THE FIVE PHASES, IN ORDER

Foundation: deciding who this is about and what you are proving, before anything is scheduled. Everything after this is easier or harder based on what gets decided here.

Preproduction: planning the shoot on paper before you show up to it. Everything decided on paper is one less thing to solve live with the camera rolling.

Production Day: the actual filming. The plan gets you in the room. The real proof is in the moments you did not plan.

Postproduction: editing the footage into the story. Editing is finding what proves the Three T's and building the story around only that.

Release and Launch: getting the finished pilot in front of real people. A finished pilot nobody sees never happened.

THE WORDS INSIDE THE PHASES

Show DNA is the core of who this is about and why, the main output of Foundation. A clear DNA keeps every later decision consistent.

The Shot List is the specific shots you need, in order, written before the day. It turns a chaotic shoot into a checklist, so nothing gets missed.

Selects are the moments in your footage that actually hit a T or a feeling. You build the episode from the selects. Everything else is a candidate for the cut.

The Arc is the beginning, middle, and end you cut toward, not the order things happened. Story order beats chronological order.

The Bridge is ending each release pointing to the next episode. It builds a season instead of five disconnected posts.

QUICK CHECK 0 OF 1 DONE

QUICK CHECK

What is "Show DNA," and which phase produces it?

A A music track you add in editing, produced in Postproduction.

B The core of who this is about and why, produced in Foundation. ✓

C The list of shots you need, produced in Preproduction.

D The platform you release on, produced in Release and Launch.

ANSWER

Show DNA is the main output of Foundation. It defines who this is about and why, so every later decision stays consistent.

LESSON 2 OF 7

The Five Phases Overview

A pilot is not just a shoot day. It is five phases done in order. Miss the planning and the shoot day gets expensive. Miss the release and the shoot day was wasted.

THE FIVE, IN ORDER

1. Foundation: decide who this is about, and why. Define the person, the story, the Three T's throughline, and the specific result you are trying to prove, before anything is scheduled.

2. Preproduction: plan the shoot before you show up to it. The shot list, the locations, the roles, the gear, and the schedule, all decided on paper first.

3. Production Day: the actual filming. Capture the real moments, follow the shot list, and stay flexible enough to catch what actually happens, not just what was planned.

4. Postproduction: edit the footage into the story. Cut for the Three T's and Five Feelings arc specifically, not just for length. Add sound and graphics, and finalize the episode.

5. Release and Launch: get it in front of real people. A publishing schedule, the right platform, real promotion, and tracking how people actually respond.

WHY THE ORDER IS NOT OPTIONAL

Skipping a phase does not save time. It just moves the cost to a later, more expensive phase. Skip Foundation and you show up on Production Day with no idea what you are proving. Skip Preproduction and you solve every problem live, on camera, under pressure. Skip Release and the finished pilot never gets seen, so every phase before it was wasted. The order is the whole point.

PUT IT IN ORDER

Put the five phases in the correct order, from the first decision to the finished pilot going live.

▼ THINK IT THROUGH, THEN SHOW THE ANSWER

1. Foundation: decide who this is about and what you are proving
2. Preproduction: plan the shoot on paper before you show up
3. Production Day: the actual filming, capturing the real moments
4. Postproduction: cut the footage into the story arc
5. Release and Launch: get the finished pilot in front of real people

Foundation, Preproduction, Production Day, Postproduction, Release and Launch. Each phase depends on the one before it, and skipping one just moves the cost later.

Phase 1: Foundation

A pilot without a foundation is just footage. Everything after this phase is easier or harder based on what gets decided right here. Foundation needs a conversation, not a camera. It is planning, not filming.

THE 5 THINGS TO NAIL IN FOUNDATION

1. The Subject Decision: pick exactly who and what this is about. One real person, one real situation. Not people in general, not a concept, an actual specific story.

2. The Three T's Throughline: map your trouble, transformation, and trust before you shoot. Know what you are rebelling against, what changed, and who is going to vouch for it, on paper first.

3. The Five Feelings Audit: decide which feelings you already have proof for. Underdog, gift, struggle, method, payoff. Know which ones still need to be captured on Production Day.

4. The Result Statement: write the specific, provable outcome. The exact thing you want the finished pilot to demonstrate, in one sentence, not a vague hope.

5. The Non-Negotiables List: decide what absolutely cannot be faked or skipped. A real client, a real result, a

real reaction. Name what has to be real before you plan around it.

THE ONE RULE

Do not skip to the shot list. The subject must be specific, one real person and one real story, not "people like this." Write the result statement down instead of keeping it vague in your head. If you cannot name all Three T's, you are not ready to shoot yet.

QUICK CHECKS 0 OF 2 DONE

CHECK 1 OF 2

Which is a proper Subject Decision for Foundation?

A "Small business owners who are struggling to grow."

B "Maria, a single mom, trying to land her first 5 catering clients in 7 days." ✓

C "A show about the power of hard work and belief."

D "People who want to change their lives."

ANSWER

One real person, one real situation, one specific story. That is a Subject Decision you can actually build a pilot around.

CHECK 2 OF 2

You should lock your shot list before you finish your Result Statement.

A True

B False ✓

ANSWER

False. Foundation comes before the shot list. Until you have written the specific result you are proving, you do not know what to shoot. Do not skip to the shot list.

Phase 2: Preproduction

Preproduction is where you plan the shoot before you show up to it. Everything decided on paper is one less thing you have to solve live, in front of a real person, with the camera already rolling.

THE 5 THINGS TO NAIL IN PREPRODUCTION

1. The Shot List: break the episode into the specific shots you need. Establishing, confessional, action, reaction, closing. Written out, in order, before the day arrives.

2. The Location Scout: know exactly where each shot happens. Confirmed ahead of time, not figured out on the day.

3. The Cast And Crew Confirm: confirm every real person appearing on camera, in writing, ahead of time. Do not assume someone will show up because they said they would.

4. The Gear Check: decide what is actually shooting this. Phone is enough. Audio, lighting, backup battery, and storage, tested, not assumed.

5. The Schedule: a real, timed run of the day, so nothing gets rushed or missed when the actual day gets unpredictable.

THE ONE RULE

A shot list with no locations is not finished, so attach a real place to every shot. Confirm real people in writing. Test your gear the day before, not the morning of. Build in more time than you think, because real days always run longer than planned. Phone is enough, but only if it is tested. Untested gear is the same as no gear.

MATCH THE PAIRS

Match each Preproduction task to the problem it prevents on the day.

▼ THINK IT THROUGH, THEN SHOW THE ANSWER

Shot List	You never stand there wondering what to film next
Location Scout	You never scramble to find a place once you arrive
Cast And Crew Confirm	The people you need actually show up on camera
Gear Check	Your battery, audio, and storage do not fail mid-shoot
Schedule	Nothing gets rushed or missed when the day runs long

Every Preproduction task removes one live problem. Everything decided on paper is one less thing to solve with the camera already rolling.

LESSON 5 OF 7

Phase 3: Production Day

The plan gets you in the room. The real proof happens in the moments you were not planning to capture. Production Day is the actual filming, and the best footage usually shows up after the plan runs out.

THE 5 THINGS TO CAPTURE ON PRODUCTION DAY

1. The Cold Open: capture your first real moment before anyone performs, before the camera changes how people act. The most honest footage is usually the earliest.

2. The Confessional: a direct-to-camera moment where you say the truth. Not the pitch. The actual, honest version, said plainly.

3. The Real Action: the actual thing happening, not a recreation of it. If it can be reshot exactly the same, it is not real anymore.

4. The Unplanned Moment: stay rolling past the planned shot. This is usually where the real proof lives, after the plan runs out.

5. The Closing Shot: end on the moment that answers your Foundation result. The specific shot that proves the thing you set out to prove.

THE ONE RULE

Roll longer than feels comfortable, because the real moment is often after the planned one. Do not stop when it goes off plan, because off plan is often where the story actually is. Get the confessional early, before the day's energy wears off. Capture more than you think you need. Postproduction cannot create footage that was never shot. One real reaction beats five staged ones.

QUICK CHECK 0 OF 1 DONE

QUICK CHECK

On Production Day the planned shot ends, but the moment keeps going. What do you do?

A Cut immediately. You got the shot on your list, so the job is done.

B Keep rolling past the planned shot. The real proof usually lives after the plan runs out. ✓

C Stop and re-stage the moment so it is cleaner for the camera.

D Ask the person to repeat their reaction so you can capture it again.

ANSWER

Stay rolling past where you would normally stop. The Unplanned Moment is usually where the real story is, and a caught reaction beats a staged one.

Phase 4: Postproduction

Editing is not cutting the footage down. It is finding what actually proves trouble, transformation, and trust, and building the story around only that.

THE 5 THINGS TO NAIL IN POSTPRODUCTION

1. The Selects Pass: pull only the moments that actually hit. Trouble, transformation, trust, or a feeling. Everything else is a candidate for the cut.

2. The Structure Cut: order the selects into a real arc. A beginning, middle, and end, not just the order things happened in.

3. The Trim: cut every moment that does not earn its place. Shorter is almost always stronger. If it does not need to be there, remove it.

4. The Sound And Music Pass: add only what supports the real moment. Never cover up a real reaction with music. Silence can be the strongest choice.

5. The Name Check: make sure your method or feeling is said out loud at least once. If nobody names it, nobody remembers it.

THE ONE RULE

Cut for the arc, not the timeline. Chronological order and story order are not the same thing. If a moment does not hit a T or a feeling, cut it. Silence can beat music, so after a real moment, let it sit. Watch it once with the sound off. If it still works, the story is strong. Done beats perfect, so ship the episode.

PUT IT IN ORDER

Put the Postproduction steps in the order you actually do them.

▼ THINK IT THROUGH, THEN SHOW THE ANSWER

1. Selects Pass: pull only the moments that hit a T or a feeling
2. Structure Cut: order the selects into a beginning, middle, and end
3. Trim: cut every moment that does not earn its place
4. Sound and Music Pass: add only what supports the real moment
5. Name Check: make sure the method or feeling is said out loud

Selects, Structure, Trim, Sound, Name Check. You find the material, shape the arc, tighten it, then layer sound and confirm the method is named.

LESSON 7 OF 7

Phase 5: Release and Launch

A finished pilot nobody sees never happened. Release is not an afterthought. It is the phase that makes everything before it count.

THE 5 THINGS TO NAIL IN RELEASE AND LAUNCH

1. The Platform Pick: choose exactly where this goes first. Do not spread thin across everywhere at once. Win one place before expanding.

2. The Release Schedule: decide the day and cadence before you post the first one. A schedule you actually keep beats a perfect post you are late with.

3. The Promotion Push: plan how you will personally share it. Do not just post and hope. Tell real people it exists.

4. The Response Tracking: watch what people actually say and do, not just view counts. Comments and replies tell you if it is landing.

5. The Next Episode Bridge: end every release pointing to the next one, so the season builds instead of five disconnected posts.

THE ONE RULE

Pick one platform to win first, then expand once it is working. A schedule you keep beats a perfect late post, because consistency compounds. Share it yourself. Track reactions, not just views. Every episode points to the next, so you build the season, not five one-offs. Phone is enough. Consistency matters more than any single post.

QUICK CHECK 0 OF 1 DONE

QUICK CHECK

You just posted your first episode. Which move best builds a season?

A Post the same episode to every platform at once to maximize reach.

B End the episode pointing to the next one, so viewers come back for episode two. ✓

C Wait for the view count to spike before deciding what to do next.

D Delete it and re-edit if it does not get views in the first hour.

ANSWER

The Next Episode Bridge is what turns five posts into a season. Point to what is next so the audience carries forward instead of dropping off.

Read the whole course free at realityshow101.com.
Module 08.