

# Big Brother

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Britain's Channel 4 is currently screening what they term a 'social experiment'. In a series called Big Brother, ten participants have their every move recorded by cameras and microphones hidden around a house. Each week, one participant is evicted until the last person remaining is declared the winner. He or she will win a large sum of money.

Here are some FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) about the programme. Guess the answers and then check in the text.

1. How many cameras are there?
2. Is there anywhere in the house with no camera - do they have any privacy at all?
3. Have the participants ever met before?
4. Exactly how long are the ten participants in the house for?
5. Can they leave if they want to?
6. What can the Big Brother participants win?
7. How were these ten people chosen?
8. Why were these ten people chosen?
9. How many people applied to be on Big Brother?
10. What contact will the participants have with the outside world?
11. What are the participants allowed to take into the house with them?
12. Can you watch them in the shower?

**B**IG BROTHER is the ultimate voyeuristic experience, the lowest point in TV history or a fascinating experiment in social behaviour, depending on your point of view. What ever you think of it, millions of people in Britain are hooked. The lives of ten people are put under a microscope for the viewers' delight - they are filmed 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. The same idea has already been screened in Spain and, before that, in Holland and has proved popular in those countries.

There are a total of 26 cameras and 30 microphones around the house and garden. Each participant also has their own personal microphone which is switched on at all times. Even the bathroom has a camera and a microphone - there is no refuge!

The ten participants, who met for the first time on the first day in the house, have to stay in the house for as long as possible up to a maximum of nine weeks. However, every Friday one person will be evicted from the house after being nominated by their housemates and then by the

British public. Those who wish to leave the house can do so at any time, but they would forfeit any chance of winning the £70,000 prize money.

The application process involved filling out a questionnaire followed by interviews, psychological testing and auditions. Of the 40,000 applicants, Big Brother selected the ten because they were 'an interesting mixture of people, with varied personalities, ages and interests'.

While they are in the house, all contact with the outside world is forbidden. Newspapers, radios, televisions are all prohibited - even watches and clocks! The participants were allowed to take one suitcase of clothes into the house and one small suitcase of personal belongings.

The cameras in the house are on for 24 hours a day and two of the participants were screened taking a shower together on the first night they were there! However, the makers of Big Brother say they reserve the right to show whatever they want to - it is not something the viewers can choose.

## Over to You

Discuss the following, giving reasons for your answers:

1. If you had the chance to win a lot of money, would you be a participant in Big Brother?
2. Do you think it's possible to act naturally in front of so many cameras?
3. Do you think this is a genuine experiment or just a chance for the TV channel to make lots of money?