



Strictly embargoed until 00.01 Friday 29th December 2023*

**Wheel of Fortune
Graham Norton
Press Pack**



Why did you decide to host The Wheel of Fortune?

It was lovely to be asked to do this. Over the years I have done gameshow pilots and they've always been new formats, there is always a moment when you are doing a new game show when you realise 'oh that's why this won't work'. With the Wheel of Fortune it's a tried and tested formula. It's been running for fifty-one years in America so that is what gave me the confidence to say yes, the game is really strong.

When was the last time you hosted a gameshow?

It must have been about thirty years ago. My very first job was a middle of the night, filthy version of Mr & Mrs and it was called Carnal Knowledge made by Rapido. We made twenty- seven episodes in a few days. So, I think this was the last gameshow I hosted. I've done some reality since then and I've done pilot game shows but this is the first big game show since then.

The Wheel of Fortune hasn't been on UK television for over twenty years, could you explain how the game works?

I think even people who haven't even seen The Wheel of Fortune, think they have. The wheel is so iconic. It's weird it's like it's in our DNA, people are born knowing about The Wheel of Fortune.

The game is a combination of skill and luck. So, the luck is all about the wheel and what it lands on, so there is nothing you can do as a player to get better at that. There are three contestants and they spin the wheel. They each get a turn and whatever it lands on is the monetary value of the letters. Then they've got to solve the puzzles and the puzzles are where the skill comes in. It's interesting the players who are good and the players who are not so good, if you keep your nerve you can kind of think 'oh that must be i,o,n at the end of that word'. The people who don't do well are the ones who just see blanks as they just can't calm down to guess what it is. That's what I like about the game play, it's half luck. If its all luck what's the point and if it's all skill the best person wins. What's good about this is the person who is best at solving the puzzle can still lose if the wheel doesn't like them, so it's a nice combination of those two things.

There are two end games. One person gets the opportunity to play these games and in the game you get to choose a category out of three. One of the end games you play for a holiday and the other one you play for a really big cash prize, up to £50,000.

How does the puzzle work?

It's like hangman as you pick the letters, but it's not as simple as that. As you play the game you discover some of the puzzles are slightly different. Some of the grids are crosswords or sometimes they are linked phrases, but the basic puzzle is like hangman. You get a clue so the clue could be 'it's a weekend activity' so there will be some sort of phrase to give you a ballpark.

How do the prizes work?

There are spot prizes as well. Sometimes there will be a spot prize on the wedge where the wheel lands. If the letter you choose is up there, you also get the spot prize as well as the money. It's quite hard to leave with nothing. People will leave with nothing but it's hard to leave with nothing.

The £50,000 gets added to what they've already won so they can win more than £50,000. So, if you've got to the position where you are playing for £50,000 you've probably got quite a lot in the bank already.

Also, on the wheel you have bankrupt wedges and lose a turn wedges. If the wheel lands on a bankruptcy wedge you only lose the money from that round. As the game goes on, the top amount on the wedges on the wheel increases but so does the number of bankrupt wedges, so it's kind of yin and yang. It is fascinating how the wheel will have a run of 'no I'm not playing' and people will just keep landing on the bankrupt wedge.

In the final puzzle the player doesn't know how much money they are playing for. They can be playing for anything between £15,000 and £50,000 so it's only after they've won or lost that they find out.

So, it's not too cruel, you don't watch somebody accumulate thousands and thousands and then it all goes. Hopefully everybody has banked a bit as they go. That's why I say it's quite hard to leave with nothing, it's doable but it's hard to do that.

If you were playing the game, how well do you think you'd do?

It's weird as I feel with word puzzles you either get them quite quickly or you really are just bamboozled. When you are looking at the three players you kind of know when one of them has got it (the puzzle) and they really want the wheel back as they know the answer. You feel like it's obvious and they still get it wrong because there is kind of a snow blindness that takes over. It's a bit like trying to parallel park when people are watching you. You are trying to do a word puzzle and people are not just looking over your shoulder there are two banks of people and cameras all watching you. I like to do a cross word but if my husband is doing it at the same time on his phone I don't like it.

What have the contestants been like?

What struck me about the contestants is they are up for a good time and they are here to have fun, but it was only when I got onto the studio floor that I realised 'hang on this is serious money, this is big'. For the people who win they are walking away with a lot of money, that is really going to affect their lives. It's going to be a good year for them. That was the element that I stupidly hadn't taken into consideration before I actually met the contestants. So, we do have fun but at the end the stakes are high.

There are a couple of celebrity episodes, tell us about them.

I'm looking forward to the celebrity specials and it will be interesting to see how they play. They are playing for charities so in a way the stakes are higher because it's a charity they support. It's also quite exposing, you could end up looking a bit of an idiot. Also, a lot of celebrities are quite competitive so I think it will be quite cut throat.

You've been filming the shows in Manchester, what have the audience's been like?

What's been lovely is the audience gets so into it. It's weird as it hasn't been on UK Television for over twenty years but it's like the audience just knows the game. They are really into the wheel and you can tell when the audience knows the puzzle, the audiences have been great!

Embargoed credit:

Wheel of Fortune will start Saturday 6th January on ITV1, ITX and STV

Wheel of Fortune

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EP1

BAFTA award winner **Graham Norton** hosts the iconic game show **Wheel of Fortune** where contestants spin to win.

The epic game show will once again be centred around a giant carnival wheel as the contestants spin to win for a life changing cash prize.

In this thrilling game of skill and luck, the turn of the wheel secures a cash value before they pick a letter to help them solve the puzzle. For every correct letter they reveal in the puzzle they win multiples of that amount. The pressure is on as they could lose what they just won at a spin of a wheel which contains 'bankrupts' and 'lose a turn'.

In addition to cash, they can also win some impressive prizes. Everything is up for grabs but only one lucky contestant will get the chance to add big money to their cash pot and see if they can take it home.

In the first show of the series Becca, 34 from Swansea, Kurt, 28 from Newcastle and Soraya, 53 from Suffolk all have a go at spinning the iconic wheel for a chance to come away with cash, prizes and even a holiday!