



F1 Guide (Part 1) - Introduction

[Intro: Cedar Falls, Car Crash]

Welcome to the Sidepodcast Guide to Formula 1. This series is aimed at complete newbies to Formula 1, people who have never seen a race, or who had no idea what was happening when they did watch one. Trust me, I went through a year of watching every race without knowing who was who or why they were doing what they were doing. I know what you're going through. Once I made the decision to figure it all out though, it wasn't long before things started to click into place. And now I want to help you have the same experience.

So let's start at the very beginning and take a look at where Formula 1 fits in the world.

In the early 1900s, F1 began with rickety cars and older gentleman drivers, but the actual F1 Championship didn't begin until the 1950s. As the decades passed and the Championship developed, it soon became clear that Formula 1 was the pinnacle of motorsport. The cars were the fastest, the technology was the most advanced and the drivers were at the peak of their fitness coming from countries all across the world.

With the introduction of sponsorship, F1 took on its more commercial form and can now be considered big business – with figures reaching millions and billions with ease. With big business comes politics and sometimes it's who you know and how much money you have that gets you what you want. F1 is riddled with conspiracy theorists – I will admit to being one of them – but depending on how immersed you want to get in the Formula 1 world, that side of things is easily ignored. What really matters is what happens on the track.

Travelling across the globe for about eight months of the year, Formula 1 visits countries large and small, rich and not-quite-so-rich, with colourful backdrops, glamorous visitors and plenty of local culture to be soaked up. Covering Friday, Saturday and Sunday, a Formula 1 weekend is an intense ride, from early testing, to the closing laps of the race.

The basic structure features a race every fortnight. Sometimes the calendar is played with a little bit and there are races on back-to-back weekends, or sometimes you have to go a few weeks before seeing the familiar faces again. Once it is time for another race, you can monitor the news for your favourite team as they arrive at the destination. I'll get into the details of the weekend another time, but in brief, Friday involves practise sessions, Saturday is for qualifying and Sunday is race day. Then there is just time to digest the events of the weekend and catch up with all the press releases, before the teams are moving off to their next destination.

I won't lie and tell you there is never a dull moment in Formula 1. Being a fan is a frustrating business. The winter months can pass with no news whatsoever, and unless there is a race on that week, there's very little to keep you occupied. You have to be dedicated to find news that will keep you interested when nothing is going on. The races themselves are also quite sporadic. You can be leaping with excitement during the frantic action of the pit stops, and then there can be many laps just watching the traffic go by. But when you catch that fantastic overtaking move, or end up on the edge of your seat to see who comes out on top, it is absolutely, 100% worth it.

I think that's enough for our introduction – join me next time for a more in depth look at the race weekend.

[Out: Cedar Falls, Car Crash]