

2025

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Just a few months ago, musician Tyler, The Creator’s new song “St. Chroma” was at the top of the charts. Intermixed among whispered braggadocio, self-mythology, and a truly unusual music production, was a powerful chorus line: “Can you feel the light inside? Can you feel that fire?”

Approximately 2,000 years before “St Chroma,” in the beginning of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his followers: “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”

Every year, Axis gets to bridge the gap between what Jesus said about light and how Tyler, The Creator talks about it.

This new year will come with a new set of challenges—a new set of topics to discuss with the rising generation, and a new set of trends shaping the world Gen Z and Gen Alpha are growing up in. This guide is designed to give you a heads up—to help you watch for these trends and be prepared to discuss these new cultural forces we think will have a big impact.

And whatever the new year brings, and however light or dark it seems, it is still our God who shows us the way. As Minnie Louise Haskins wrote in her poem “Gate of the Year,”

*I said to the man who stood
at the gate of the year,*

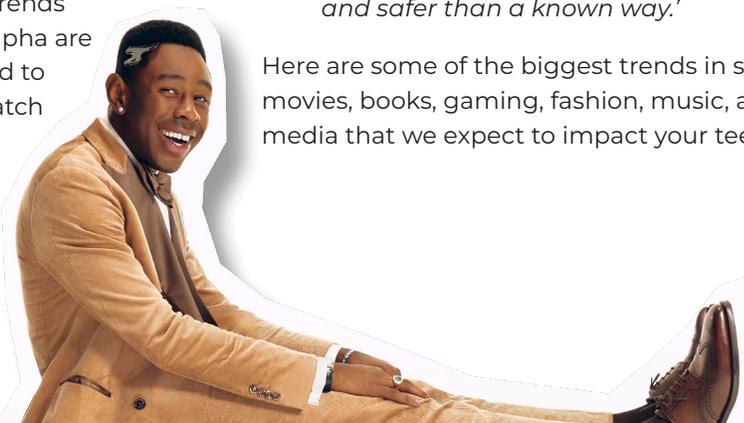
*‘Give me a light that I may tread
safely into the unknown.’*

And he replied:

*‘Go out into the darkness and put
your hand into the hand of God.*

*That shall be to you better than light
and safer than a known way.’*

Here are some of the biggest trends in streaming/ movies, books, gaming, fashion, music, and social media that we expect to impact your teens’ world.



STREAMING / MOVIES

It's impossible to fully predict the scripted content that the internet will get excited about in the next year, but there are some shows and movies that are already generating buzz.

We expect: anticlimactic endings to some much-loved series, reboot fatigue taking over the online discourse, a big year for musicals, and a lot of Minecraft memes.

Stranger Things

Stranger Things was the series that first solidified Netflix's place as a power player in the teenage entertainment space. The smash hit horror show is coming to a close with its fifth season next summer.

Showrunners have confirmed that Will, one of the main characters, is gay and that they will explore his sexuality more in the final season. Exactly how this will affect the story and how large a part it will play in the narrative is unknown.

The series has a fair amount of violence and gore that may be disturbing for a younger audience—even as the series' thematic elements of friendship and camaraderie make the show a comfort watch for many viewers. Season four was split into two groups of episodes, released several months apart, for people to binge in two halves. Fans suspect the same will happen with the final season—with the first half releasing earlier in the year, and the second half releasing later in the year.

Andor

Andor will complete its two-season run on Disney+, as the show's storyline reaches a foregone conclusion at the beginning of the 2016 film *Rogue One*. *Andor* is widely regarded as the best *Star Wars* show ever made after *The Mandalorian's* reputation was tainted by its campy, somewhat disjointed seasons two and three. Some even consider *Andor* to be the best *Star Wars* anything.

The content is also much more mature than most *Star Wars*. The first season contained brief references to prostitution, systemic abuses of power, prison riots, and some graphic violence.



One Piece (Live Action)

Many fans worried about the creation of a live-action Netflix adaptation of the classic anime *One Piece*, concerned that it would be just another in the long list of terrible anime adaptations. Unexpectedly, the first season became one of the **highlights of 2023**. The second season hopes to introduce some of the crazier aspects of the manga—which would be no small feat.



One Piece features a fair amount of violence and language. **Common Sense Media** rates it as being 14+. It centers around a dysfunctional “found family” of many rag-tag characters trying to find a hidden pirate treasure called “the One Piece.” The story’s core themes are freedom and pursuing one’s dreams—Luffy, the main character, wants to be the greatest pirate of all time and goes to great ends to achieve his goal.

A Minecraft Movie

The **trailer’s** reception may have been poor, but the movie is still likely to be a big box-office success. It seems the movie is trying to appeal to a younger audience rather than its original fanbase (who are now mostly adults). These adult fans are already complaining about the movie being live-action and the CGI horrors to which viewers will be subjected as a result (see: the **Minecraft sheep**). Notch, the creator of the game, had a different reaction to the trailer, saying that it looked “fun.”



Rather than creating a story out of the hidden lore of the Minecraft game, *A Minecraft Movie* will be a portal fantasy that takes four characters from our world and pulls them into the “Overworld,” where only their creativity can take them back. It will be released in theaters on April 4, 2025.

The Last of Us

The popular post-apocalyptic zombie series based on the runaway hit video game of the same name will return in 2025. The first season was a hit for a few reasons: first, because the game was incredibly successful in its own right, and many consider it one of the best video games ever made. Second, because the internet loves seeing Pedro Pascal be a reluctant father figure (see also: *The Mandalorian*).

Season 2 will pick up the controversial storylines of *The Last of Us: Part II*. Neil Druckmann, who is both the creator of the game and one of the showrunners, has said he intends to stay true to the themes from the video game but it remains to be seen how much of the plot points will be changed or rearranged. The focus of season two is likely to be on hatred and forgiveness as well as LGBTQ+ representation. A seven-episode season will likely come out weekly on Max in the first half of 2025.



Snow White (Live Action)

Disney has been making quite a few live-action adaptations from classic films in the past few years. These have been very successful at the box office so far because they provide a reliable and safe entertainment option for parents with younger children.

But things don't really bode well for this film's box office success. Outspoken actress Rachel Ziegler plays the titular character. Ziegler does not appear to be a fan of the original film, to say the least, and has already belittled it in interviews. Disney was also planning to replace dwarves from the story with "forest spirits," a creative choice they later decided to walk back. The film has also been beset by delays. It is now scheduled to be released in theaters on March 21, 2025.

How to Train Your Dragon (Live Action)

Many fans of the animated series are upset that their beloved franchise is already getting the live-action treatment, and there are fears over the distinctive designs of the dragons being ruined or water-down, along with **controversy** over race-swapping one of the main characters.

Despite the last movie coming out over five years ago, the *How to Train Your Dragon* fandom is large and active, and the franchise is a favorite among fanfiction writers (Archive of Our Own has **over 12,000** individual works related to it). The new movie is likely to renew buzz around the trove of fanfiction works, which range from high-concept character pieces to smut. The movie will be released in theaters on June 13, 2025.



QUESTIONS FOR YOUR TEENS ABOUT STREAMING/MOVIES

What movies or TV shows had the biggest impact on you in 2024?

Are there any new movies or new seasons of shows you're looking forward to in 2025?



BOOKS

Despite the **abysmal literacy rates** of Gen Alpha, kids still like reading. According to the **School Library Journal**, reading made the top five of tweens' hobbies (coming in fourth behind sports, arts and crafts, and video games).

We expect: big moves from studios acquiring romantasy faves to make them into movies, brewing backlash to BookTok's objectification of men, ongoing controversies in YA over LGBTQ+ representation, and a continued resurgence of interest in older series, like *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games*.

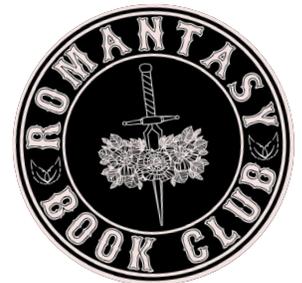
Romance and romantasy

For better or worse, a segment of TikTok content that revels in racy romances and erotica (referred to as **"BookTok"**) has popularized reading, especially among teen girls. One sales assistant observed to **The Guardian**, "I can't stress how much BookTok sells books. It's driven huge sales of YA [young adult] and romance books."

Gen Z still prefers hard copies to ebooks—perhaps because an ebook just doesn't photograph as well for BookTok. More than ever, books are sold because of their "vibes," or certain tropes that readers want—e.g., **enemies to lovers**, chosen ones, or **dark romance**.

Two of the most popular series to emerge are Sarah J. Maas' *A Court of Thorns and Roses* and Rebecca Yarros' *Fourth Wing*. Both of these series are written for adults and feature graphic sexual content, but younger audiences have picked them up regardless. *ACOTAR*, as Maas's books are known, popularized "fairy smut" as a kind of subgenre, and the recent success of *Fourth Wing* has solidified **"romantasy"** (a mix between romance and fantasy that heavily features tropes from both genres) as its own genre (some bookstores now have entire sections dedicated to it).

As a result of this trend, the term "spice" has been popularized to refer to how much sexual content a book has. Online forums for fantasy readers are rife with people requesting books with or without "spice."



Rebecca Yarros will continue her *Fourth Wing* series with its third installment, *Onyx Storm*. This comes out on January 31, 2025. This book straddles genres between adult and young adult—being marketed towards adults, but written like a YA book. However, much of the content would not be appropriate for a teen, with strong language, violence and gore, and graphic depictions of sex.

No announcement has been made regarding Maas' next *ACOTAR* book, but many have speculated that it could be released in 2025.

Fantasy

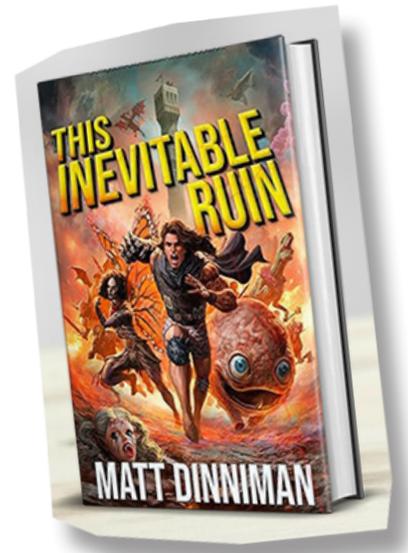
Fantasy as a whole has been steadily growing, with authors such as Brandon Sanderson, Leigh Bardugo, James Islington, and N. K. Jemisin regularly releasing bestsellers. As of 2020, **fantasy** was the most popular genre among Gen Z, with 53% regularly reading it—and that number has likely gone up in recent years.

Sanderson, in particular, has been on an impressive run of success in the past few years. Sanderson is unique among some other breakout fantasy authors because of how clean his books are. In 2023, he had **the most funded Kickstarter of all time**, pulling in over \$40 million for four “secret projects” he wrote. Sanderson is almost a household name by now—with his fans ranging from **Henry Cavill** to **Victor Wembanyama** to **Ben Shapiro**. He'll be releasing his fifth “**secret project**,” *Isles of the Emberdark*, in mid-2025, which revisits a world he had previously written a short story in and follows a man from a pre-industrial world navigating the fallout from making first contact with extraterrestrials.

Matt Diniman will release *This Inevitable Ruin*, the seventh book in his *Dungeon Crawler Carl* series that popularized so-called “LitRPG” as a genre. *Dungeon Crawler Carl* follows a man whose world is suddenly destroyed by extraterrestrials, forcing him to go underground with his ex-girlfriend's cat to compete in a bizarre game show that is the real-life D&D. The physical book is **set for release** on November 11, 2024, but the audiobook (most people's preferred method of reading this series) will release in early 2025.

Joe Abercrombie, master of the “**grimdark**” genre—a genre known for its dark subject matter, morally gray characters, and grim violence—will start a new series on May 7, 2025. Set in a fictional medieval Europe, *The Devils* is about demons, monsters, and a dark order of clergy trying to stop a coming apocalypse.

Guy Gavriel Kay, the author who helped Christopher Tolkien collect and publish J.R.R. Tolkien's writings and posthumously release the *Silmarillion* (along with many other of his works), is coming out of a partial retirement to release *Written on the Dark* on May 27, 2025.



Young Adult (YA)

LGBTQ+ romances are becoming mainstream in YA. For example, the majority of romances on [this list of YA releases for next year](#) are about queer relationships, and about half of [this list](#) are as well. In many ways, YA has become the face of representation, with a heavy emphasis on depicting all sexualities, ethnicities, and backgrounds in a way that few other genres do. Some books from those lists to be aware of in 2025 are [Togetha](#), [Leo Martino Steals Back His Heart](#), and [It's a Love/Skate Relationship](#).

Other books that are likely to be popular next year in YA include:

Breath of the Dragon. Shannon Lee, the only living child of martial artist and actor Bruce Lee, has teamed up with Fonda Lee (renowned fantasy author) to create a new fantasy series based on the characters of Bruce Lee. The book is to be released on January 7, 2025.

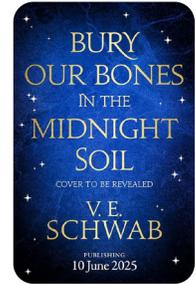
The Bones Beneath My Skin by T.J. Klune will be traditionally published on February 4, 2025. Klune self-published this book over six years ago, but since his sudden growth in popularity, many of his older books are being republished. The book is a supernatural road trip thriller about a young girl on the run. Klune is the face of fantasy LGBTQ+ fiction in YA, with numerous best-selling books, all focusing on queer characters and romances.

Sunrise on the Reaping by Suzanne Collins will be released on March 18, 2025. This novel is a prequel to the original *Hunger Games* series.



Bury Our Bones in the Midnight Soil

by V. E. Schwab. This book is not specifically marketed as YA, but the author is immensely popular among teens. The book is **described as** a tale “about hunger, rage and the ways in which women are told to be satiated even when they aren’t,” following three sapphic vampires. It is scheduled for release on June 10, 2025.



There are some positive aspects to these genres taking off. Reading comprehension is an important skill, and following complicated plotlines set in fictional worlds with rules that differ from our own requires more thought and concentration to take in. Fiction can help people process emotions they don't know how to express, and following different characters with unique viewpoints can help promote empathy.

As G.K. Chesterton wrote in *Tremendous Trifles*, “Fairy tales, then, are not responsible for producing in children fear, or any of the shapes of fear; fairy tales do not give the child the idea of the evil or the ugly; that is in the child already, because it is in the world already... The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairy tale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon.”

While not all fantasy books are edifying, the same can be said of any genre. There are some fantasy novels that do instruct and encourage morality, but it can be hard to distinguish them from the dregs of the genre.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR TEENS ABOUT BOOKS:

Would you say that reading fiction has become a bigger trend in 2024?

Why do you think so many more young people are paying attention to fiction?

Are there any books you're hoping to read in 2025?





GAMING

The gaming industry as a whole is experiencing a lot of movement, with buyouts of big studios and constant acquisition of little ones making the whole “creating games thing” challenging. Some long-awaited titles will likely drop this year, if they don’t continue to be beset by delays.

We expect: *Grand Theft Auto* streamers taking over Twitch and YouTube, simulated reality games getting more and more sophisticated, and big, splashy new gaming experiences available for people who love a historically accurate story.

Grand Theft Auto 6

The release of *GTA 6* is shaping up to be one of the biggest cultural events of 2025. Rockstar Games is widely regarded as one of the greatest video game studios of the 21st century, with hits like **GTA 5** and **Red Dead Redemption 2**, so the excitement around their new release is palpable among fans.

Memes about the game are already rampant. While it has been just over two years since the game was announced—somewhat standard for triple-A titles—it has been over a decade in the making. The *GTA* series is known for mature storylines that glorify violence, promiscuity and alcohol use.

Civilization VII

This will be the latest in a popular game franchise that follows the growth of a civilization from early settlements to advanced culture. *Civilization VII* is a strategy game in which the player tries to build and maintain an empire through three epochs: antiquity, exploration, and modern.

The *Civilization* games are well-loved, and its previous entries have all been positively received. There are no content issues in the games, as it focuses more on the logistics of running an empire than the gritty details of, say, beheading a rival. The game is set to come out on February 11, 2025.



Kingdom Come: Deliverance II

A historical open-world action role-playing game that takes place in the middle ages. The original *Kingdom Come* focused on historical accuracy, and *Deliverance II* is the scope of gameplay the studio wanted to make with the first but didn't have the resources. The first game was highly rated, with many fans describing it as the best game of all time.

It is not a franchise for all ages. The game is **rated mature** for gore (it's an action game, go figure), language, and graphic sexual content. Given the choice-based gameplay, it is possible to **skip these scenes**, but the player is still put in sexual situations, even if the cutscenes are avoided.

This game is also scheduled to be released on February 11, 2025.

Cozy games

Games focusing on a cozy aesthetic and simple gameplay are making more money than ever. People who don't consider themselves gamers can easily pick up any of these games, and the simple gameplay means they can operate on almost anyone's computer.

While no universally agreed-upon definition of "cozy" games exists, they are characterized by a focus on simple, repetitive tasks and often having a limited or nonexistent plot.

The list of games like this has expanded since 2012—now including **Stardew Valley**, **Animal Crossing**, **A Little to**



the Left, **Unpacking**, and **Dredge**, among many others—and **the genre is reaching new heights**.



Cozy games to have on your radar include **Reka**, a game set in a fictional 19th-century Europe that centers around the witch apprentice to Baba Yaga; **Tiny Glade**, a stylized town-building game that will release in early access at the end of September (and is Steam's most wish-listed cozy game); and **Paralives**, which is set for a tentative release next year and has generated a huge amount of hype—especially considering how small the development team is.

Krafton, a Korean game studio, is taking a big stab at creating the next big life simulator game. The goal of their game **InZOI** is to take what made *The Sims* successful and improve on it by incorporating AI and designing the game to make it easy to "mod" the game (modify the game with unofficially produced, downloadable add-ons).

Tabletop role-playing games

Tabletop role-playing games played in-person or online (TTRPGs, or just RPGs) are also increasing in popularity. High-profile streams of live-action RPG campaigns have become commonplace. For example, consider the livestream *Critical Role*, whose success has been so large that it spawned a TV series now streaming on Amazon Prime called **The Legend of Vox Machina**. There has also been a **reported 85%** increase in interest in *Dungeons & Dragons* since 2020.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR TEENS ABOUT GAMES:

Do you prefer "cozy" games like *Minecraft* and *Stardew Valley*, or games with action and storylines?

Has a game ever been more than just entertainment for you—such as actually changing your view on something?



FASHION & BEAUTY

For several years, Gen Z was all in on the “clean girl” aesthetic. This particular look paired carefully parted ponytails with natural makeup, cropped tees, white sneakers, simple jewelry, a signature scent, and sweatpants. In 2024, popular catchphrases like “mob wife” and “brat” hinted at a growing interest in dramatic makeup and statement pieces.

We expect: a turn toward “under consuming” skincare and minimalist beauty routines, contrasted with heavy-handed lip liner, overpowering pink blush, eye-catching outfits, and the return of the smoky eye.

K-Beauty and skincare

The biggest beauty trend happening right now is skincare. The past decade has seen a huge uptick in the use of Korean skincare routines, also known as K-Beauty. These customizable routines prioritize gentler ingredients, protecting the skin barrier, and promoting softer skin. Key active ingredients in these multi-step regimens include bee propolis and snail mucus.

Having a pricey skincare routine has become something of a status symbol, which is why so-called “**Sephora kids**” are buying hundreds of dollars worth of skincare products. But some dermatologists have started to express concerns over this trend, pointing out that teenagers combining too many products with strong active ingredients can prematurely age their skin or aggravate conditions like acne. Real skincare aficionados will begin to adjust their behavior accordingly.



Maximalist fashion

Fashion has moved on from the hot pink Barbie trend from the summer of 2023, but music and movies continue to be a large influence. Singer Sabrina Carpenter has popularized fringe bangs, thigh-high boots, and bleach blonde hair. Pastels, lingerie-style clothing and “bubble dresses” are also trending staples of Carpenter’s “coquette” **look**.

Other clothing trends to be aware of include 80s nostalgia (think: tulle, polka dots, exaggerated silhouettes, and yes, shoulder pads) and Americana/western wear, including fringe, suede, navy, classic jeans, and cowboy boots.



Body modification

The modern age gives young people access to two things that are known to cause lasting effects on people's self-esteem: social media and selfie cameras. Because of the face filters, lighting, and angles used by celebrities and influencers to make themselves appear more attractive, it is especially easy for young girls to feel inadequate in comparison. Now, with the increased use of AI technology to improve filters, it is growing more difficult to distinguish between what is natural and what is a filter on social media.

These factors contribute to the rise of "**Instagram face**," which some describe as the "same-ification" of beauty. Everyone seems to want (and many people have paid to have) the exact same features: sharp cheekbones from buccal fat removal, a chiseled nose from a rhinoplasty, plumped lips, threaded eyebrows, false eyelashes, and a stiff face from Botox injections. Cosmetic body modification has gone mainstream. So-called "baby Botox" is a trend that encourages women to get injections as a preventative measure before they spot a single wrinkle.

Compounding the issue is the fact that most people's view of themselves is no longer how they appear in a mirror (which can be distorted enough), but how they appear in a self-facing camera. Plastic surgeons have noted a relationship between selfies and a sharp uptick in young people's desire for rhinoplasty. A recent **small-scale study** has shown that sensor cameras significantly



distort perspective, especially at close range—meaning that most teens have an inaccurate (and often unflattering) perception of themselves.

Looksmaxxing

Looksmaxxing is a term that has been used on Internet forums for some time, but over the past few months, it's gone viral—especially among young men. Looksmaxxing aims to maximize one's physical attractiveness within a set of (presumably objective) criteria, such as having a strong jawline, "**hunter**" eyes, and a muscular physique. This can be achieved by "softmaxxing" (using natural means such as good hygiene, moisturizing, using a **gua sha**, or working out) or "hardmaxxing" (unnatural methods such as plastic surgery or steroid use).



Fashion and beauty have always been easy obsessions for people to write off, but it is also possible to go too far in the other direction by caring too little. A slovenly appearance can be as much a problem as vanity.

For this reason, Augustine referred to sin as "disordered loves," arguing that it's not that we love the wrong things, but we love the right things in the wrong way. Solomon tells us in Proverbs 31:30 that beauty is vain, but Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 that our bodies are a temple—so which is it? Both, of course! Taking care of our bodies is important, but it is necessary not to idolize our efforts or ourselves.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR TEENS ABOUT FASHION AND BEAUTY:

What do you think about the "same-ification" of beauty online? Why do you think that trend is happening?

What are people you know (at school, at church, etc.) saying about skincare routines?

What's a healthy amount of self-care?



MUSIC

This past year's pop music headlines were dominated by country crossovers. There is Taylor Swift, the Biggest Machine in Music, who notoriously crossed *out* of country as her primary genre, and a slew of other artists who attempted to cross *into* the country scene. There were a few other artists, like The Weeknd and Kendrick Lamar, who were able to snag a spot on the charts, sometimes for a few weeks at a time.

We expect: more pop stars exploring a country sound, vintage hip-hop getting lots of airplay, the receding tide of the Swift era, a Grammy for Chappell Roan, more viral hits for Sabrina Carpenter, and a thick crop of folksy singer-songwriters brought to us by TikTok.

Rap and Hip-Hop

Hip-hop isn't as dominant as it once was, but that doesn't mean it's going anywhere.

Some of the genre's most recognizable artists, such as Tyler, The Creator, Drake, and Kendrick Lamar, continue to produce successful singles. The feud between Kendrick and Drake was the biggest thing that happened to hip-hop in 2024, with diss tracks aimed at each other heating up the charts all summer and other rappers, including Future and Metro Boomin', jumping in take sides and release their own hit singles about the beef. Lamar's scheduled performance at the Super Bowl in February will surely give his streaming numbers a boost.

Controversial (and most might say disgraced) rapper Kanye West had a surprisingly successful 2024 with his *Vultures* collaboration with Ty Dolla Sign, which means more music is likely in the works. Rapper Eminem has been having a career resurgence as Gen Alpha discover his back catalog alongside his new album, *The Death of Marshall Mathers*. And the women of hip-hop, including Nicki Minaj, Cardi B, GloRilla, Doechii and Megan Thee Stallion are all likely to make their way to the top of the charts this year.

Country

Country music's popularity has reached a new height. Artists Kacey Musgraves, Morgan Wallen, and Zach Bryan are among the performers topping the charts. Of the 18 songs from Bryan's most recent album "The Great American Bar Scene," 17 charted on the Hot 100,



including one at no. 1 (that one being “I Remember Everything,” featuring Kacey Musgraves). More than just streaming success, many of Bryan’s songs have also been made into viral soundbites on TikTok and Instagram, racking up millions of views.

Hip-hop artists are also starting to experiment with country music. Beyoncé’s *Cowboy Carter* album debuted at no. 1 this year, marking the 8th chart-topper of her career. And Shaboozey’s single “A Bar Song (Tipsy)”, a blend of hip-hop and country, climbed the charts and stayed at the top for months.

With the impressive growth of country music and other pop artists breaking out of their genre and announcing country albums (Lana Del Rey releases *Lasso* in 2025), you can expect to see this trend of big artists crossing over *into* country to expand and evolve further in the new year.

Folk

Folk music has been raised by the same tide that popularized country music. Hozier, Noah Kahan, Lizzy McAlpine, Lord Huron, and Phoebe Bridgers, are all artists in the indie-folk and folk-pop subgenres that have had impressive success in 2024. Hozier’s smash summer hit “Too Sweet” was his first-ever song to take no. 1 on the charts—and he and all of the other listed artists have had songs regularly charting in the top 100.

Pop

Taylor Swift had an incredible year in 2024, and she is not predicted to take a break. It’s very likely that Taylor will complete her “Taylor’s Version” re-recording project within the next year with a re-release of *Reputation* and her debut record, *Taylor Swift*.

With the saturation of Swift in pop culture recently, many people are beginning to wonder if there will be a Swift burnout, and some are predicting it will happen soon (though frequenters of Swift fans’ subreddit “r/taylorswift” would strongly disagree). Sabrina Carpenter is the artist who some have suggested might take her place as the queen of pop. Olivia Rodrigo, a massive name in pop music who enjoyed a hugely successful tour this year, is also expected to release an album sometime in 2025.

Gracie Abrams is another act that is getting a lot of mainstream attention.

Lady Gaga will release her first new album in five years after a short hiatus from songwriting. Rihanna is planning a worldwide tour upon the release of her next album—also at an undisclosed time in 2025.

A long-awaited reunion of Korean supergroup BTS is likely to shake up the pop charts. The last BTS members are set to return from their two-year mandatory military service in mid-2025, and their official reunion will be shortly after. You can expect to hear a lot more K-pop in the new year.



Rock

Rock music is still one of the most **popular music genres**, with nearly half of Americans listing it as one of their favorites, and almost a third listing it as their favorite. However, rock is much less popular among younger generations, as only 17% list it as their favorite genre.

Rock music will have some big releases in 2025, with many bands releasing their first new studio albums in decades—including Biohazard’s first studio release in 13 years in the first quarter of 2025, Dark Angel releasing their first studio album in 34 years sometime in the year, and Trouble releasing their first in 12 years.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR TEENS ABOUT MUSIC:

What band/musician had the biggest impact on you in 2024?

Is there anyone you’re specifically hoping will release new music in 2025?

Has a song ever impacted more than just your mood, and actually changed the way you think about something?



SOCIAL MEDIA APPS

This past year marked a turning point in Silicon Valley as the research that linked social media use to the teen mental health crisis became nearly impossible to dispute. Terms like “brainrot” and “doom scrolling” are being used *by teens themselves* to describe content consumption online, and fewer and fewer teens are actually posting content to public forums with their real names attached.

We expect: a sea change in how much teens use social media, an embrace of “real life” and analog experiences, massive reforms in content moderation from tech giants, and at last, a final verdict on the TikTok ban.

Instagram

Meta-owned Instagram is used by **65% of Gen Z**. There’s tons of reasons for teens to spend time on the app, though fewer and fewer actually post to their feeds. At this point, many younger users lean in to using Instagram for direct and private interactions rather than splashy public posts. The DM feature makes it easy to share memes and chat, and the “close friends” feature lets teens push their content out to a small and controlled group of people.

In 2024, Instagram’s **parental controls** began to, at last, make significant improvements. Parents can now view their teens’ time spent on the app, who they follow and who follows them, and what reports they submit to Instagram.

In 2025, it’s important to know that Instagram has become nearly overrun by AI influencers. These are not troll accounts, but deliberate attempts to make these AI-generated “people” famous—featuring AI-generated photos, manufactured personalities, and even AI-generated music made “by” the influencer. At this point, we’ve all likely heard AI music without even realizing it—some AI songs have even gone viral.

Snapchat

Snapchat’s primary use is its image-based communication. Teens can send images with short text blurbs (called “snaps”) to their friends and the image is automatically deleted after it is viewed. This can create a false sense of



security, leading to teens being more willing to send more risky messages—but its designers argue that this ephemeral communication is actually more like what conversations were like in previous generations.

Snapchat does have a text chat as an option, but it usually takes a backseat to the more commonly used “snaps.” The app’s “streak” system helps drive engagement by encouraging users to send snaps to their friends every day to keep a streak going once it’s started.

In 2024, the main reason teens use Snapchat could be because their friends are on it, and their parents aren’t. It feels safer to goof around because their parents don’t know what they’re up to. That being said, Snapchat also has rolled out **parental controls** that allow you to set content restrictions and see who your teen is talking to.

In 2025, the app is planning to launch a major redesign called “Simple Snapchat.” This new user experience will focus only on messaging, camera integration, and a unified, scrolling video feed that sounds a lot like TikTok. There will also be new tools that encourage “creators” (aka influencers) to make their home on the platform. By Snapchat’s own account, nearly all of these new features will rely heavily on AI.

X (Twitter)

Formerly branded as Twitter, X has declined in popularity since Elon Musk took the reins in 2022. Usage of the platform has decreased by almost a quarter since then, and public opinion towards it has increasingly soured. Even though over a third of its users are from Gen Z, X does not offer any parental controls or oversight.

Ongoing litigation has revealed that Twitter’s management was cooperating with the US government for years to censor certain ideas, even in direct messages. This revelation has pushed X’s current leadership to push in the other direction, sometimes to the extreme. In 2024, X changed their terms of service to allow any and all consensually-created adult content to be posted as long as it is “properly labeled and not prominently displayed.”

In 2025, the platform will likely lean even more into its free speech absolutism. Those who disagree with

X’s ownership, politically or otherwise, will likely continue to abandon the platform in favor of other microblogging apps such the Meta-owned Threads or newcomer Bluesky.

Reddit

Reddit is one of the fastest-growing social media platforms—fueled, in part, by Google pushing Reddit threads in its search engine results. Also, with the increasing amount of AI-generated articles, more people want to find real human experiences to answer their questions. Reddit is a forum website that separates itself into different communities (called subreddits). Gen Z is using it to find a community online with real people.

In 2024, teens are drawn to Reedit because of how it encourages anonymity in a way that few social media platforms do. This makes some teens feel comfortable and able to be more honest. But this can be dangerous because there is no way to monitor teens’ use of the platform and there are no parental controls.

Reddit debuted its IPO in 2024, and since then, its stock price has been revised upward. Users may feel like they are in a safe space to express their opinions. But in 2025, more will start to understand that Reddit is now a public company and as such, its leadership will make decisions that reflect certain values and drive toward certain outcomes. Eventually, this may provoke a massive outcry or exodus of users.

YouTube

YouTube is bigger than ever, and almost everyone in Gen Z and Gen Alpha spends hours on the platform each day. What teens spend their time watching varies, as the platform has a niche for every possible interest.

YouTube offers several options for **parental controls** to suit the different needs of parents. The YouTube Kids app offers a more limited selection of content than the main app and website and lets the parents set time restrictions. They also offer two levels of supervision designed for pre-teens and teens. The controls for pre-teens allow parents to choose from three content settings, block channels, and set time limits. For teens,



parents can see overviews of their activities, including comments, subscriptions, and video uploads.

In 2025, teens will be referring to lots of YouTube content as “brainrot.” It’s a catchall term for low-quality, low-effort content created to keep people’s attention and not much else—and this type of content is *thriving* on YouTube. Brainrot is perhaps best exemplified by a series called Skibidi Toilet—a surreal, animated story told in short increments about toilet people fighting a war against humanoid characters with electronic devices for heads. The YouTube series has grown so large it caught the attention of Hollywood. **Michael Bay** is looking to build a **cinematic franchise** off of the series. Also included in the brainrot category are YTP (YouTube Poop) videos—edits that splice together films into entirely different and nonsensical stories.

Twitch

Twitch is a video streaming platform with over 35 million daily active users. Content on the platform varies from reaction videos to movies to hardcore gaming sessions. Though designed specifically for gaming, the most watched category is “Just Chatting” (a catch-all term for anything that isn’t gaming).

Because of the anonymous nature of Twitch chats, harassment has been a big issue on the platform. Recently, Twitch implemented a new policy to combat sexual harassment, along with improving their AutoMod to better filter out unwelcome comments, but the harassment of streamers—and especially the objectification of female streamers—is still an issue. Twitch does not offer any parental oversight, but it does automatically filter out known mature streaming channels if their age is reported to be under 18. However, this system is far from perfect.

Kai Cenat is one of the most-watched Twitch streamers in the world right now. He won streamer of the year in 2022 and 2023 and had an average of almost 80,000 viewers on his streams in 2024. He is considered a “variety streamer,” meaning his streaming channel has no specific focus. His top three **most streamed categories** on Twitch are currently *NBA 2k25*, *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice*, and “Just Chatting” taking the top spot. Though you may not have heard of Cenat, your teens have almost

certainly been affected by him, as he **invented the word** “rizz” and popularized “gyatt.” He has enough reach to introduce slang terms into the mainstream.

TikTok

TikTok is one of the biggest social media platforms for Gen Z, and one of the fastest-growing platforms for Gen Alpha as well. TikTok has **parental controls** that allow parents to filter out videos that contain keywords, turn off comments, and set time limits. Teens whose accounts are verified as being under 16 do not have access to direct messaging on the app.

TikTok is also set to be banned in the United States over national security concerns on January 19, 2025, unless ByteDance Ltd. divests control over the company.

In 2025, expect even more shopping “experiences” hosted in the TikTok app. TikTok already increasingly encourages users to shop directly from the app, which could be fueling the rise of a trend called “overconsumption core.” This trend refers to intentionally buying excessive amounts of clothes, make-up, shoes, or household items produced by fast-fashion companies (e.g., Shein, Romwe, Cider, H&M) and cheap retailers based overseas (e.g., Temu, Alibaba). Note that Temu itself was actually the most-downloaded app for teens in 2024.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR TEENS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA AND TRENDS:

Are you surprised to learn that Temu is the #1 most popular app for Gen Z?

Would you prefer for TikTok to be banned or not banned in 2025? Why?

Which social media trends over the past year have stood out most to you?



Conclusion

So many parents and caring adults have told us that their teens are often bewildered by their cultural knowledge after using our resources. “How did you know that?” is a common question, and it’s one we love to hear about.

We hope and trust that this cultural roundup has given you plenty to talk about with your teens about. And if you feel overwhelmed by the amount of content in this guide, please understand: we’re still only scratching the surface.

However things change next year, we can have courage to face them because we know that our God will remain steadfast. As David writes in Psalm 139:5-10: “You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”

Thank you for being a part of our work to help reach the next generation. However teen culture continues to grow and change in 2025, from all of us at Axis, we hope you have a happy new year.

2025

Axis is a crowdfunded nonprofit organization providing free resources to Christian parents discipling the next generation. For more free resources, visit [Axis.org](https://axis.org)!



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