

PULSE

**GEN Z
101**



**HOW DO YOU DO,
FELLOW KIDS?
COLLECTOR'S EDITION**

CRIB NOTES ON TODAY'S TEEN CULTURE

Introduction

As the world's leading teen whisperers, YPulse helps major brands understand what makes young people tick, click, and occasionally cringe.

But there's one question we keep hearing from our clients (and every confused parent at their wit's end):

"What the #\$%! is my kid talking about?"

So, to help preserve family harmony—or at least minimize the number of exasperated sighs and muttered "never minds" at the dinner table—our team of youth culture experts has compiled crib notes to today's teen universe.

CRUCIAL WARNING: While this guide will help you decode teen-speak, we absolutely do not recommend trying to use these terms yourself. Known side effects include teenage meltdowns, dramatic room exits, and your teen changing their name and moving to another country. Proceed with extreme caution.

Word on the Street

Lost in translation? You're not alone. As the world's leading experts on youth culture and behavior, we know that trying to understand today's teens is like attempting to decipher a whole new language—one that evolves faster than you can say "no cap fr fr." Whether you're a brand trying to connect with Gen Z or a parent wondering why your teenager just called something "mid," our annual guide to teen-speak is here to help you navigate this linguistic labyrinth. (Though fair warning: attempting to use these terms yourself may result in severe eye-rolling. Don't say we didn't warn you.)

ate *verb*

when something or someone absolutely crushes it. Like "slay" but with more flavor. Example: "Her performance at the talent show? Yeah, she ate that."

aura *noun* an invisible coolness meter that everyone apparently has but no one can actually see. Think of it like crypto, but for social clout. Example: "Helping that lost freshman find their class? +1000 aura points for you."

based *adjective* when someone's living their truth without caring what anyone thinks. Can be either a genuine compliment or deeply sarcastic. Example: "You wore Crocs to prom? That's pretty based."

bop *noun* plot twist—this used to mean a catchy song, but now describes someone fishing for thirsty comments online. Example: "Another shirtless mirror selfie? Total bop behavior."

brain rot *noun* what teens blame when they can't remember what they learned in class because they spent six hours watching videos of people making tiny food. Example: "Sorry, teacher, my brain is full of TikTok brain rot."

brat *adjective* inspired by Charli XCX, it's giving chaotic-but-making-it-fashion energy. The kind of person who might have a breakdown at brunch but makes it look aesthetic. Example: "She showed up two hours late with iced coffee and no explanation. Pure brat behavior."

bussin' *adjective* when something (usually food) is so good it deserves its own hype team. Example: "This cafeteria pizza is actually bussin' today."

CEO *noun* the undisputed champion of literally anything, from making TikToks to being chronically late. Example: "My dad's the CEO of dad jokes nobody laughs at."

fr fr *phrase* short for "for real, for real." Because saying things once is so millennial. Used to emphasize that you're being super serious right now, no cap. Example: "This pizza is bussin' fr fr." (Translation for #olds: "This pizza is genuinely very good, I am not exaggerating.")

gyat *phrase* an exclamation that basically means "wow, they're attractive" but make it Gen Z. Example: "GYAT! The new student just walked in."

ick *noun* that moment when your crush does something so cringeworthy, all attraction immediately evaporates. Example: "He typed 'your' instead of 'you're' and suddenly I got the ick."

mewing *verb* a facial exercise that promises to give you model-worthy cheekbones and a chiseled jawline. Mostly involves awkwardly pressing your tongue against the roof of your mouth while trying to look natural in public. Example: "He's been mewing



@aaronmakelky

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ohio *adjective* has nothing to do with the actual state. Used as a stand-in for any chaotic or cursed situation, because apparently Gen Z collectively decided Ohio is where weird things happen. Example: "My phone died, I lost my wallet, and it started raining. Total Ohio moment."

for three months and now he can't eat a sandwich without thinking about his tongue placement."

mid *adjective* when something is aggressively average or disappointing. The ultimate underwhelmed reaction. Not terrible enough to be bad, not good enough to be good – just stuck in mediocrity limbo. Example: "The new superhero movie was mid. Not even worth making a TikTok about."

no cap *phrase* The Gen Z version of "no lie" or "seriously." When someone's speaking straight facts and wants you to know they're not exaggerating. Often paired with "fr fr" for extra emphasis. Example: "No cap, that math test was the hardest thing I've ever seen in my life."

npc *noun* someone who seems to be running on autopilot, like those background characters (non-playable characters) in video games. Example: "She just repeats whatever's trending on TikTok. Total NPC behavior."

sigma *noun* the lone wolf who's supposedly too cool to care about being cool. It's giving main character energy. Example: "He eats lunch alone while reading philosophy books. Classic sigma move."

skibidi *adjective* originally from a bizarre but viral YouTube series featuring toilet warriors (yes, really). Now it's either the best thing ever, the worst thing ever, or completely meaningless – even teens can't agree. Example: "That game is skibidi, bro!"

touch grass *phrase* The digital equivalent of "go outside," usually directed at someone who's way too invested in online drama. Example: "You've been arguing in YouTube comments for six hours straight. Please touch grass."

Cultural Map

If you want to understand today's teens, forget everything you think you know about youth culture. This is a generation that turns chicken shop interviews into romance novels, and makes studying into performance art. They're redefining what's cool on their own terms – whether that's embracing their grandma's favorite Cracker Barrel sweatshirt or turning a 16-year-old darts champion into their latest hero. Here's your map to the moments and movements shaping Gen Z's world, from the revolutionary to the wonderfully ridiculous.

Brainrot Studying

Thanks to AI-powered sites like grademaxx.com, students are transforming boring study materials into hypnotic TikTok-style videos. The tool converts standard PDFs into engaging content complete with gameplay footage, ASMR, and teen-friendly explanations – because apparently regular reading is so 2023.

Chicken Shop Date

A YouTube series where host Amelia Dimoldenberg interviews celebrities in budget chicken shops, playing up painfully awkward first-date energy. Her deliberately uncomfortable style was working perfectly until she accidentally sparked genuine chemistry with Andrew Garfield, sending the internet into full shipping mode.

Digital Condoms

BILLY BOY's innovative app lets partners lock both their phones' cameras and



@colorxcallie

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Cracker Barrel Chic

In an unexpected fashion twist, Gen Z is flocking to Cracker Barrel restaurants nationwide hunting for their embroidered sweatshirts. These cozy vintage-style pieces, traditionally spotted at weekend breakfast with grandma, are going viral on TikTok with millions of views as the must-have comfort wear of the season.

microphones simultaneously during intimate moments. By placing phones close together and swiping down in the Camdom app, it creates a Bluetooth connection that prevents any sneaky recording – complete with an alarm if anyone tries to unlock.

Darts Revolution [UK]

Sixteen-year-old Luke “The Nuke” Littler has single-handedly transformed darts from pub game to Gen Z phenomenon. After nearly becoming the youngest world champion ever at the PDC World Darts Championship, he became the first darts player to hit 1M Instagram followers and launched his own successful merch line.

TikTokers to Know

Just when you thought you'd figured out who's who on TikTok, the algorithm has shuffled the deck again. This year's most influential creators aren't just dancing to trending sounds – they're reshaping how teens shop, eat, talk, and even do their makeup. From a production assistant who accidentally revolutionized Hollywood marketing to a beauty guru making "demure" the word of the year, these are the names your teen probably knows (and the ones responsible for why they suddenly need a mandolin slicer or keep calling things "mindful"). Consider this your cheat sheet to the voices shaping Gen Z culture, one TikTok video at a time.

Demetra Dias @demetra | 3.8M followers

The unofficial CEO of teen girl spending, with 3.7M followers watching her every shopping haul. She's turned "add to cart" into an art form, becoming TikTok's go-to guru for what to buy next – and making everyone's bank accounts nervously sweat in the process.

Golloria George @golloria | 3.1M followers

A beauty influencer (3M followers) who's revolutionizing makeup inclusivity one swatch at a time. After coming to the U.S. as a refugee from South Sudan, she started testing makeup on her deep skin tone and now consults for major beauty brands like Rhode and Patrick Ta, helping them expand their shade ranges.



@joolieannie

How to be demure at work



Jools LeBron @joolieannie | 2.3M followers

Created 2024's most unavoidable catchphrase "very demure, very mindful" (which literally became dictionary.com's word of the year). Her 2.3M followers tune in for workplace-appropriate beauty tips that are, you guessed it, very demure and very mindful. The trend was so huge even brands couldn't stop saying it.

Monet McMichael @monetmcmichael | 3.8M followers

With 3.8M followers, she's mastered the art of making mundane moments entertaining. Her "Get Ready With Me" videos feel like FaceTiming your bestie, complete with hilarious commentary about everything from grocery shopping to beauty routines. Major brands like Google and L'Oréal have noticed – turns out being relatable is actually pretty marketable.

Reece Feldman @guywithamoviecamera | 2.4M followers

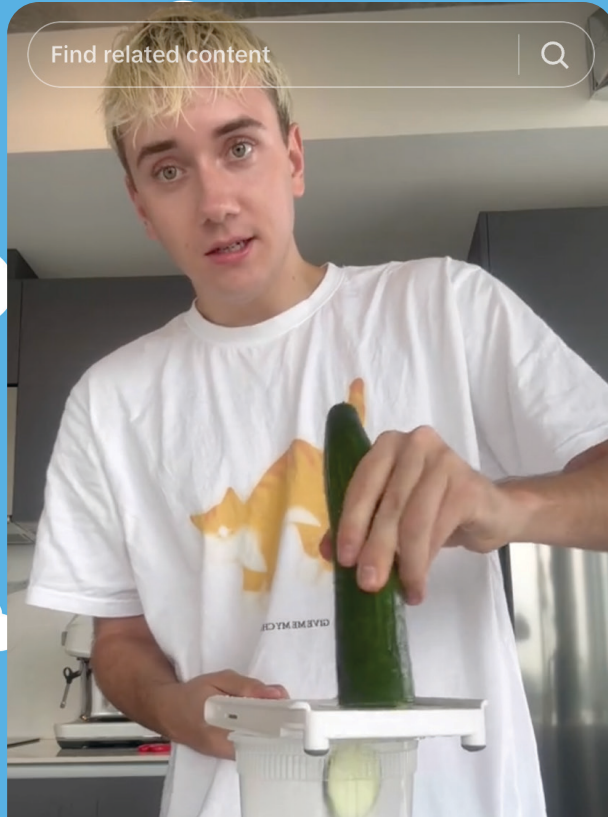
Started as a sneaky production assistant filming behind-the-scenes content without permission, now he's a full-blown digital marketing genius with 2.4M followers. From The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel to Wonka, he's completely changed how Hollywood promotes movies on TikTok. Talk about a plot twist!

Becki Jones @beckijones4 | 853K followers

With 853K followers, she's part of TikTok's latest food-obsessed crew taking over New York City one restaurant review at a time. Her content splits between budget shopping hauls at B&M, travel adventures, and making everyone hungry with her foodie finds. She's typically spotted with @coreysworld, creating the kind of food content that makes your delivery app look very tempting.



@logagm



Logan “Cucumber King” Moffitt @logagm | 7M followers

A foodie creator (6.9M followers) who shot to stardom by... *checks notes*... eating whole cucumbers. His Korean cuisine content is amazing, but it was his iconic line “Sometimes you just need to eat a whole cucumber” that made him a legend. If your teen suddenly wants a mandolin slicer, blame Logan.

Hashtag Decoder Ring

Welcome to another year of teens speaking in hashtags that sound vaguely concerning but are actually (mostly) harmless. From turning seasonal depression into aesthetic content (#winterarc) to using a panicked Muppet to share their most embarrassing moments (#PepeTheKingPrawn), Gen Z continues to process life's ups and downs through a uniquely digital lens. Some trends reflect their anxieties (#doomspending), others their ability to turn earnest moments into meme gold (#holdingspace), but all of them offer a window into how today's teens are making sense of their world, one viral hashtag at a time.

#doomspending

When you're anxious about the economy, so you... checks notes... spend more money? This hashtag captures Gen Z's slightly chaotic approach to financial stress – buying things to feel better about not being able to afford bigger things. It's retail therapy with a side of existential dread.

#winterarc

TikToks viral #WinterArc encourages starting healthy habits for mental and physical fitness before the new year even starts, generally from October through January. The hashtag has posts of people embracing a stay-on-the-grind mindset to make lasting habit changes—whether it's going to the gym, upping their personal development, setting personal goals, or getting up early, they're refocusing on themselves for the season.



@tessyhill

It was warmer than I anticipated so I was sweating in my sweater vest and black cargo jeans, which were rentals from nuuly

#pepethekingprawn

Sometimes only a frazzled Muppet can capture life's most embarrassing moments. This hashtag features a panicked-looking Pepe from Muppets in Space alongside stories that make you want to crawl under a rock. Started by @caitycline21 sharing customer service horror stories, it's now the universal symbol for "well, that was mortifying."

#holdingspace

When a journalist told the Wicked stars that fans were "holding space" with the lyrics of "Defying Gravity," it sparked both genuine emotion and gentle mockery. Cynthia Erivo's heartfelt reaction, combined with Ariana Grande's supportive single-finger hold, created the perfect storm of sincerity and meme potential. Because nothing says Gen Z like turning an earnest moment into both merchandise and memes.

#brainrot

When your FYP has absolutely destroyed your attention span, that's brainrot, baby! This hashtag describes the state of mind after consuming too much social media content – though ironically, teens are now using it to describe anything they're obsessed with. "This song gave me brainrot" is basically Gen Z for "I can't stop thinking about this."

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