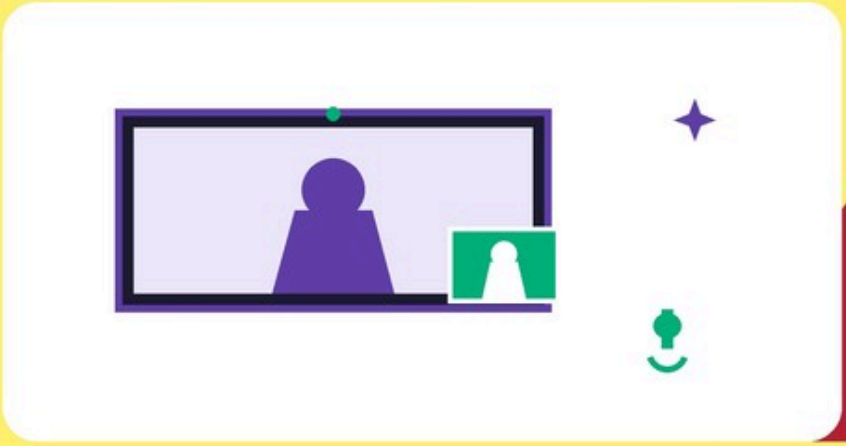
THE PROOF SERIES

Gen Z Proof

A playful guide to Gen Z slang



PROUDLY CANADIAN

John Marshall



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Gen Z Proof: A Playful Guide to Gen Z Slang

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

By John Marshall

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THE CAMERA IS YOU

POV

Three letters that turned every teenager with a phone into a film director. POV means the video is shot from someone's point of view — you're not watching the scene, you're IN the scene.

Grab the phone › Point the camera › Become the scene › Post the POV

1. **What it means** Point of view. The video is filmed as if you are the one experiencing it — the camera is your eyes. Often it's acted out, not literally filmed: someone pretends to be the barista, the teacher, the dog.
2. **How to spot it** The caption says 'POV:' followed by a scenario, like 'POV: you're the new kid at a small-town high school.' Then someone acts it out. You have been cast. Congratulations.
3. **Peak usage** Millions of videos a day. POV: you asked for directions in rural Manitoba. POV: the double-double is ready but your name got butchered. It's a whole genre now.
4. **Say it today** When your grandkid says 'POV,' just know a short play is about to happen. Watch, laugh, and do not ask where the camera crew is.

Good to know: POV-style videos existed on Vine and YouTube years before TikTok, but TikTok made the three-letter version the law of the land.

Take care: A 'POV' video is a performance, not a documentary. If the POV is 'you found a loonie on the sidewalk,' nobody actually found a loonie.

> **A familiar moment:** Retired teacher Elaine, 68, from Winnipeg, asked her granddaughter to film her icing a cake and said, 'Just do the POV thing.' The granddaughter held the phone overhead, narrated the whole thing like a cooking show, and the video got 40,000 views. Elaine now demands 'POV treatment' for all kitchen activities.

THE ENDLESS SCROLL

FYP

The front door of TikTok and the reason your grandkid can't put the phone down. FYP is the For You Page — an endless scroll of videos chosen just for you by an algorithm with opinions.



1. **What it means** For You Page. It's the main feed: video after video, picked by TikTok's algorithm based on what you've watched, liked, and paused on. It's different for every person on Earth.
2. **Why it matters** Landing on someone's FYP is the whole game. 'It hit the FYP' means a video went viral. Your grandkid's dance video with 2 million views? The FYP did that.
3. **The algorithm knows** Watch one video about curling and your FYP becomes curling, curling-adjacent content, and eventually just a man yelling about rocks. It learns fast and it never forgets.
4. **Say it today** If someone says 'it was all over my FYP,' they mean everyone was watching it. It's the modern equivalent of 'it was on all three channels.'

Good to know: TikTok's algorithm is famously aggressive: it can figure out your interests in under an hour of watching. It knows you better than your spouse does.

Take care: The FYP is not the news. It's a mirror that only shows what you already like. Great for hobbies, terrible for understanding the other side of anything.

> **A familiar moment:** Frank, 71, from Mississauga, asked his grandson what FYP meant. The grandson said, 'The For You Page — it's where TikTok puts stuff it thinks you'll like.' Frank watched one video about sourdough. Three days later his entire FYP was bread. He now makes excellent sourdough and blames TikTok.

GRAB A SEAT

Storytime

The magic word that turns a phone camera into a campfire. When a Gen Z kid says 'storytime,' sit down — you're about to hear a saga, usually about something that happened at school, at work, or on the bus.

Say storytime › Set the scene › Build the drama › Deliver the twist

1. **What it means** A signal that a long, juicy story is coming. 'Storytime' announces a personal tale — dramatic, funny, or unbelievable — usually told straight to the camera.
2. **How it works** One person, one camera, one wild anecdote. The best storytimes have chapters, cliffhangers, and a moral that may or may not exist. Think of it as oral tradition with ring lights.
3. **Peak usage** Breakups, bad bosses, worst dates, wildest customers. If it happened and it was outrageous, there's a storytime about it. Several, probably.
4. **Say it today** You can use it yourself: 'Storytime: the time I met your grandfather.' Works at every family gathering. The kids will lean in — it's their native format.

Good to know: Storytime videos routinely run 5 to 15 minutes — an eternity in internet time — which tells you how good the stories are. Gen Z will watch anything if the telling is good.

Take care: Storytimes are told for entertainment, and details may be seasoned. Enjoy the tale; don't fact-check it like a courtroom.

> **A familiar moment:** At a family dinner in Regina, 17-year-old Maya said, 'Storytime: so I'm at the bus stop...' and proceeded to tell a seven-minute tale about a pigeon, a spilled Tim Hortons, and a very confused bus driver. Her grandmother, 74, said, 'In my day we called this a story.' Maya said, 'Yes. Storytime.'

THE SPLIT-SCREEN DUET

Duet

The split-screen that made TikTok a team sport. A duet lets you post your video side-by-side with someone else's — reacting, harmonizing, arguing, or dancing along.

Find the video › Pick your side › Film your half › Post the duet

1. **What it means** A video format where your clip plays next to someone else's original, in real time. It's a response you can see and hear — like a conversation across the screen.
2. **What it's for** Singing harmonies, reacting to cooking fails, fact-checking bad advice, or roasting a friend's dance moves. Duets turned commenting into a performance art.
3. **The etiquette** Duets are usually friendly or funny, and the original creator can turn them off. Duetting someone to mock them is possible, which is why the off switch exists.
4. **Say it today** If your grandkid asks you to duet their video, say yes. It means they want you in their world, on the record. That's an honour.

Good to know: Duets were one of TikTok's breakout features and a big reason it beat every other app: built-in collaboration turned viewers into co-stars overnight.

Take care: Only duet videos from people you know or creators who welcome it. Duetting a stranger's serious video as a joke is how family feuds start online.

> **A familiar moment:** Two cousins in Calgary — 16 and 19 — duetted a video of their grandfather, 78, attempting the latest dance trend. He nailed the chorus move, missed the spin, and fell into the couch. The duet has 900,000 views. He now signs autographs at the community centre. He is insufferable.

THE BORROWED PUNCHLINE

Stitch

The video version of 'yes, and...' A stitch lets you clip a few seconds of someone else's video and then add your own ending — a punchline, a correction, or a plot twist.

Find the clip › Steal the ending › Add your take › Post the stitch

1. **What it means** You take the first few seconds of another person's video, then cut to yourself finishing the thought. It's built for reactions, answers, and comedic timing.
2. **What it's for** 'Stitch this with your unpopular opinion.' 'Stitch this with your best story.' It's a chain letter you actually want — prompts that travel from phone to phone.
3. **The comedy engine** Someone posts a setup — 'tell me you're Canadian without telling me' — and thousands stitch their answers. The result is a crowdsourced comedy show.
4. **Say it today** You'll mostly hear it as a verb: 'stitch this.' It means 'add your version.' If a grandkid says it, they're inviting you to play along.

Good to know: Stitches and duets are the two pillars of TikTok's remix culture — one reacts alongside, the other takes the baton. Together they built a new grammar for the internet.

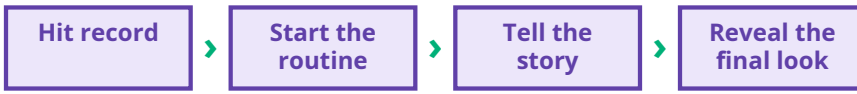
Take care: Stitching someone's video to dunk on them is the internet's version of heckling. Funny with friends, mean with strangers. Know the difference.

> **A familiar moment:** A high school teacher in Ottawa, 58, stitched a student's video claiming the capital of Canada was Toronto. Her stitch — calm, smiling, holding a maple leaf — corrected it with the patience of a saint. It got 3 million views. She now gets recognized at the grocery store and is deeply conflicted about it.

THE VIRTUAL SLEEPOVER

GRWM

The invitation to hang out while someone gets dressed. GRWM stands for 'get ready with me' — a video where the person chats to the camera while doing makeup, hair, or picking an outfit.



1. **What it means** Get ready with me. The creator films their morning or evening routine and talks through their day — the gossip, the plans, the drama — while getting glam.
2. **Why it works** It's company. Millions of people watch GRWMs while getting ready themselves, like a friend on speakerphone. The routine is the excuse; the chat is the point.
3. **The format's range** GRWM for a first date, for a funeral, for jury duty, for a dentist appointment. The joke is that the occasion is wildly mismatched to the glamour. It usually is.
4. **Say it today** If a grandkid says 'GRWM,' they're not asking you to get ready. They're telling you they're filming. Just wave at the camera and carry on.

Good to know: GRWM is one of TikTok's oldest and most durable formats — it survived every trend cycle because people genuinely like watching other people get ready and chat.

Take care: GRWMs can run long — the chatting is the content. Don't wait for the 'point.' The point is the company.

> **A familiar moment:** A 19-year-old in Halifax posted a GRWM — get ready with me — before her first job interview, chatting about her nerves while doing her makeup. Her grandmother watched all 40 of them, left a comment on every one saying 'YOU'VE GOT THIS, SWEETHEART,' and accidentally became the comment section's favourite person.

THE VIBE ANNOUNCER

It's giving

The Swiss Army compliment of Gen Z. 'It's giving' means something radiates a particular vibe — usually followed by whatever that vibe is. It's giving cozy. It's giving main character. It's giving 1974.

See the look › Feel the aura › Name the vibe › Declare it's giving

1. **What it means** It's radiating a certain energy or style. 'It's giving autumn' means the outfit screams fall. It's never about actual giving — it's about the aura.
2. **How to use it** Point at the thing, then name the vibe: 'It's giving CEO.' 'It's giving cottage weekend.' 'It's giving your grandmother's good china.' The comparison is the compliment.
3. **Peak usage** Fashion, home decor, parties, attitudes. Anywhere a vibe can be detected — which, to Gen Z, is everywhere. The world is one long vibe check.
4. **Say it today** Try it on the grandkids: 'It's giving effort.' They'll laugh, then explain. That's the whole game — you start the bit, they finish it.

Good to know: The phrase comes from ballroom culture, where 'giving' described serving a look or an attitude — Gen Z borrowed it, as they borrow all the best things, from queer Black and Latino communities.

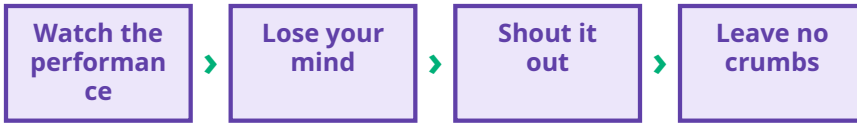
Take care: 'It's giving' is almost always positive or playful. 'It's giving nothing' is the insult version — the vibe equivalent of an empty plate.

> **A familiar moment:** When 72-year-old Doris showed up to her granddaughter's graduation in a vintage 80s blazer with shoulder pads, the granddaughter gasped, 'Grandma, it's GIVING Dynasty.' Doris had no idea what that meant but wore the blazer to church the next Sunday. The minister noticed. Everyone noticed.

THE STANDING OVATION

Ate

The highest praise in the Gen Z kitchen. 'Ate' means someone absolutely nailed it — a performance, an outfit, a comeback. They devoured. No notes.



1. **What it means** They crushed it. Dominated. Did it perfectly. 'She ate that performance' means she owned every second of it. It's about excellence, not lunch.
2. **The full version** 'Ate and left no crumbs' is the deluxe edition — flawless, nothing to nitpick. If someone ate and left crumbs, there were minor notes. No one leaves crumbs on purpose.
3. **Where it lives** Comment sections, group chats, living rooms during award shows. Anywhere a great moment needs a louder word than 'good.'
4. **Say it today** Next time a grandkid shows you something they're proud of, say 'you ate.' Watch their face. You just spoke fluent Gen Z.

Good to know: 'Ate and left no crumbs' is the full ceremonial version — meaning the performance was so complete, so flawless, there was nothing left to critique. The crumbs are the criticism. There are none.

Take care: Do not use it at actual meals. Saying 'you ate' at Thanksgiving dinner causes confusion and, in some families, a formal inquiry.

> **A familiar moment:** At a community theatre fundraiser in Kelowna, 69-year-old Ron did a surprisingly flawless karaoke rendition of a current pop hit. His 18-year-old granddaughter stood up and shouted, 'GRANDPA ATE!' Ron thought she meant dinner. She did not mean dinner. He ate. There were no crumbs.

THE RUNWAY VERB

Serve

To serve is to deliver a look, an attitude, or a moment with absolute commitment. It's giving's bolder sibling — less about the vibe, more about the performance.

Enter the room › Own the look › Hold the pose › Keep serving

1. **What it means** To present yourself — or a look, a line, a moment — with total confidence and style. 'She's serving' means she is delivering. The runway is wherever she stands.
2. **How to deliver it** You don't announce your own serve — others declare it for you. Serving is appointed, like knighthood. Walk in, own it, let the room decide.
3. **The scale** Serving face. Serving looks. Serving attitude. You can serve almost anything, provided you do it like you mean it. Half-hearted serving is just standing there.
4. **Say it today** Use it on others, never yourself: 'You're serving today.' Best deployed when someone clearly made an effort — the hair, the outfit, the entrance.

Good to know: Like 'it's giving,' 'serve' comes from ballroom culture — to serve a look meant to present it with total confidence. Gen Z adopted it wholesale, as is their right and their habit.

Take care: Declaring 'I'm serving' about yourself is like laughing at your own joke before the punchline. Let the audience crown you.

> **A familiar moment:** When 70-year-old Eileen walked into her grandson's birthday party wearing a sequinned jacket she'd owned since 1979, the room went quiet. Then her granddaughter whispered, 'She's SERVING.' Eileen now wears the jacket to every family event. She calls it her 'serving jacket.' It serves.

THE HIGHEST HONOUR

Mother

The ultimate title of respect. Calling someone 'mother' — lowercase m, always — means they are iconic, nurturing, and effortlessly in charge. It is not about actual parenthood. It is about legend status.

Witness the greatness › Feel the awe › Say it with reverence › Crown her mother

1. **What it means** She is THAT woman. Iconic, powerful, maternal in the mythic sense. 'Mother is mothering' means she is doing what legends do — flawlessly, probably while wearing something fabulous.
2. **Who gets it** Pop stars, actresses, that one aunt who runs the family group chat with an iron fist and a heart of gold. Motherhood here is a vibe, not a birth certificate.
3. **How to say it** With awe, never casually: 'MOTHER.' Often in all caps, often alone as a complete sentence. Punctuation is emotion. More caps, more respect.
4. **Say it today** If your granddaughter calls you 'mother,' accept the crown gracefully. You have been knighted by the internet's highest order.

Good to know: The term exploded around 2022, when fans started calling pop divas 'mother' online — but the usage goes back to ballroom 'house mothers' who sheltered and mentored young queer people.

Take care: Do not call your actual mother 'mother' in this tone unless she enjoys being a meme. Some mothers prefer the traditional spelling of respect: a phone call.

> **A familiar moment:** A 16-year-old in Saskatoon calls her grandmother 'Mother' — not grandma, not nana, just Mother, said with deep reverence — because the woman once fixed a flat tire in a snowstorm wearing church clothes and then made perogies. 'She mothers,' the teen explained. The grandmother has never been prouder.

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