

Why D&D Is More Popular Than It's Ever Been In Over 45 Years

Have you noticed that you've been hearing about Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) way more than you used to? You're likely not imagining it; D&D popularity has seen an absolutely unprecedented surge over the last seven years. The most straightforward statistic to demonstrate this boost is the fact that D&D merchandise sales have grown by double digits every year for the past *five* years! Not only did D&D experience a massive boom, that train is still rolling and even picking up speed. So why did this happen? The answer is not completely cut and dry. It's likely due to a number of factors, such as a newly-released edition, popularity on streaming channels, a focus on inclusivity, and others, all outlined below. Should you start playing? That answer *is* cut and dry, and that answer is yes.

Factor 1 - Release of the Fifth Edition in 2014

No matter the platform, a new release will always boost sales. This factor is self-evident, and it's exactly why Apple releases a new batch of iPhones every year. But Wizards of the Coast, the creators behind D&D, give their releases a little more love than Apple does theirs. D&D's release date is officially 1974, with the release of D&D Edition No. 1. Since then, D&D has seen four additional releases, and the fifth edition has been universally praised as a much-needed advancement for the tabletop game. This new release focused on storytelling more than previous releases and building better ways for beginners to start, so a boost in sales was expected. However, one circumstance that was less easy to predict: the popularity of this edition hasn't waned at all. The game continues to become more and more popular each year.

Factor 2 - Live Streaming

Another factor aiding D&D's popularity is that it has become one of the more popular games to tune into on the popular streaming service Twitch. Twitch itself is a phenomenon as well, exploding in popularity over the last few years, with a vast creative base pumping out quality content that millions of fans follow daily. Coinciding with Twitch's rise in popularity was the arrival of some extremely high-quality D&D session streams, the most notable being *Critical Role*. *Critical Role* casts legitimate, successful voice and screen actors to play out the D&D campaigns, giving them the feeling of a true fantasy epic. *Girls, Guts, Glory* is another hugely popular stream featuring an all-female cast, spreading the excitement even further. Real-life D&D character popularity has skyrocketed as a result. In addition to live streaming, popular D&D podcasts, such as *Dragon Talk* and *Join the Party*, have aided D&D's rise in popularity along its way.

Factor 3 - Inclusivity

As previously mentioned, the newest edition of Dungeons and Dragons placed a large focus on welcoming beginners and newcomers. As you've certainly thought before, D&D can seem a daunting idea to get into. This may be the result of stigma surrounding nerdiness, or possibly the huge scope and open-endedness that is classic to D&D. The fifth edition of the game addresses these issues, with many more beginner-friendly options and campaigns available, and even better, a much more progressive attitude overall. Many sexist elements of the game, such as females required to have lower strength than males, highly revealing female armour, and the inability to be non-binary or non-heterosexual, have been axed. What remains is an edition that invites anybody to join, regardless of their gender or sexuality. You can now make the most popular D&D races into just about any type of individual you want.

Factor 4 - Stranger Things

Dungeons and Dragons has entered the mainstream media, and it's debatable when that happened. A strong argument for the culprit is the show *Stranger Things*, which featured D&D as a minor plot element early in the show. It eventually called the main antagonist a name plucked directly from one of the more popular D&D monsters: the Mind Flayer. While *Stranger Things* was not the first show to mention Dungeons & Dragons, it was by far the most popular of the last 30 years to do so, and it's important to note that the show didn't outright mock the tabletop RPG, much like other movies and TV shows have. The show didn't kick off D&D's popularity, since the fifth edition was released two years before the first season of *Stranger Things*, but it's clear that it helped keep the hype alive and spread the game to a broader audience.

Factor 5 - Celebrity Support

For better or for worse, most of us admire celebrities to some extent. So with the rising popularity of D&D, there has been a slew of stars proclaiming their love for the game and the frequency at which they play it, even joining other celebrities for bouts of all-star D&D campaigns. The list of outed celebrity D&D players is long, but some notable presences are Marilyn Manson, Anderson Cooper, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Drew Barrymore, Stephen Colbert, Vin Diesel, Terry Crews, and the list goes on and on. These celebrities are role models, so it often gets people asking, "If somebody as cool as Terry Crews plays D&D, it's got to be cool, right?"

Factor 6 - Technology

Back in D&D's early years, campaigns mandated that every adventurer physically show up to each session, and the same problem would plague nearly every attempt: players would flake. Making the drive over to your Dungeon Master's house every week or two just couldn't fit into everybody's busier and busier schedules. With the advent of videoconferencing, however, this

issue has been hugely mitigated. D&D's nature is extremely suitable for video calls, with screen sharing, video feeds, and the availability of the internet for quick rule-checking. And we all know how much more comfortable we've gotten with video calling lately (you knew you couldn't read an article that didn't mention COVID). It's hard to claim that playing D&D without being in each other's physical presence is as good as the real thing, but nowadays, you at least have that option.

How Popular Is D&D Compared To Other Tabletop Role-Playing Games?

D&D, as we all know, is *the* tabletop RPG. It's a complete cultural icon, and most of us wouldn't be able to mention another tabletop RPG if we wanted to. But does that match up with the actual player population? [Polygon released an article](#) exploring this question. The answer is what we all expected: D&D is over five times more popular than any other tabletop RPG, representing over half of the player population. So, not only is D&D coming to dominate as a more mainstream entertainment option, but it also dominates in its field.

Key Takeaways

As you can see, the rise in popularity of Dungeons and Dragons is not without explanation. Instead, a coalescence of several factors all built upon each other to give D&D its biggest boon in over 45 years. The release of the stellar fifth edition kicked things off, and technology and celebrities helped build the appeal further and further, to a point that defied everybody's expectations. For perhaps the first time, D&D is seen not as nerdy and inaccessible, but as something that, eventually, you cannot afford to miss out on due to its cultural pervasiveness. So join D&D now so you can catch this wave and experience one of the phenomena of our age!

Goblin Gaming Stocks The Finest D&D Products at The Best Prices Available

When you've finally stopped wondering and decided to take the plunge, you'll need some gear. We're talking handbooks, campaigns, figurines, all of the necessities to give your sessions some legitimacy and believability. Here at Goblin Games, we stock everything you'll need, from your very first beginner session, all the way until you find yourself hosting five different campaigns as a Dungeon Master. Just visit <https://www.goblingaming.co.uk/collections/dungeons-dragons> to find whatever you will need to get started or continue your adventure!