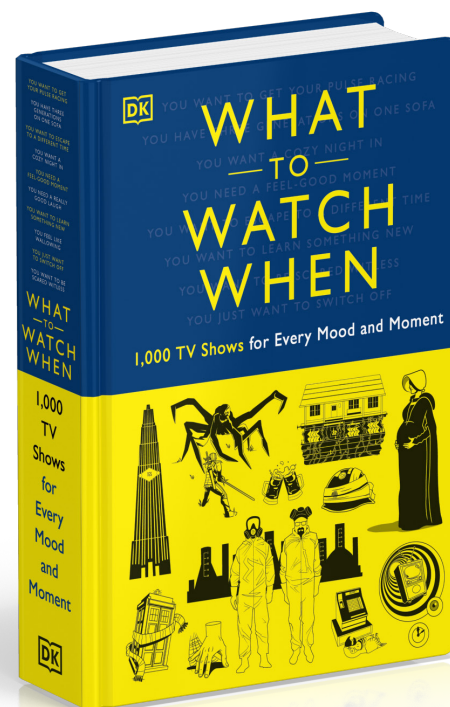


# ANSWERING THE ETERNAL QUESTION... WHAT TO WATCH NEXT?

Looking for a box set to get your adrenaline racing or to escape to a different era? In need of a good laugh to lift your spirits? Hunting for a TV show that the whole family can watch together?

If you're feeling indecisive about your next binge-watching session, we've done the hard work for you. Featuring 1,000 carefully curated reviews written by a panel of TV connoisseurs, *What To Watch When* offers up the best show suggestions for every mood and moment.



## COMMUNITY

COMEDY • 2009 • RATED: TV-14 • 22 MINS • SEASONS: 6  
JOEL MCHALE, GILLIAN JACOBS, CHEVY CHASE

**A smarmy lawyer is disbarred after it is revealed he doesn't actually have a university degree. He enrolls in a community college and forms a pretend study group so he can get closer to his attractive classmate.**

Unhappy with putting his life on hold after getting busted for lying about having a degree, Jeff Winger (Joel McHale) plans to get through community college as fast as possible with no distractions. That is, until he meets Britta Perry (Gillian Jacobs), his cute classmate. With one thing on his mind, Jeff tries to form a makeshift study group with Britta so he can get to know her better, but his plan hits a snag when she invites several other students from their class to join the group.

Cue movie-obsessed nerd Abed Nadir (Danny Pudi), overachiever Annie Edison (Alison Brie), former hotshot football star Troy Barnes (Donald Glover), religious do-gooder Shirley Bennett (Yvette Nicole Brown), and Pierce Hawthorne (Chevy Chase), a wealthy tycoon looking for self-discovery. Together, the six of them form an unlikely friendship, continuing to take classes together every semester. When they're not studying, they're begrudgingly helping the dean make Greendale Community College as great as it can be, often with hilarious results. Toss in teacher Ben Chang (Ken Jeong) and you have one seriously eclectic group of people.

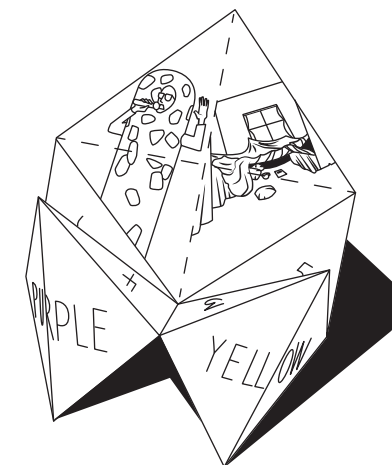
Several episodes are parodies of pop culture gems, such as Clint Eastwood's spaghetti western films and *Pulp Fiction*. The live-action show also makes the occasional foray into

animation, using everything from traditional 2D forms, to 8-bit video-game stylizations, and stop-motion reminiscent of *Wallace and Gromit* (see p97).

*“I'm a teacher.  
Wait, that's worse than  
the truth. I'm a student.”*

Jeff (S2 E2)

Season 3 even features a multiple timeline episode that plays out in seven different ways. Titled “Remedial Chaos Theory,” the instalment was nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Writing in a Comedy Series. With so many diverse episodes, it's hard to decide which is best.



CREATOR: Dan Harmon PRODUCTION CO: Krasnoff Foster Productions, Harmonius Claptrap, AGBO (as The Russo Brothers), Universal Media Studios (UMS), Sony Pictures Television (in association with)



For the curious

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# THE SIMPSONS

ANIMATED COMEDY • 1989 • RATED: TV-14 • 22 MINS • SEASONS: 31  
DAN CASTELLANETA, NANCY CARTWRIGHT, JULIE KAVNER

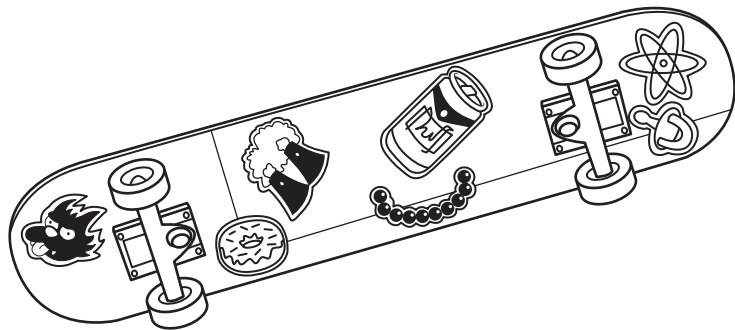
**Starring America's favorite animated TV family for more than three decades, *The Simpsons* packs popular culture references, witty zingers, satirical jabs, and compelling storytelling into each episode, with a town full of memorable, quirky characters at its disposal.**

What does a trip to the fair town of Springfield entail? To start, hop on a skateboard or take the monorail to the hallways of Springfield Elementary School, where class clown Bart (Nancy Cartwright) writes lines on the blackboards in after-school detention. While the show's opening sequence is largely static, you will notice that each episode comes with a new punchline on Bart's board—a hint at the number of inside jokes within each installment. As the opening continues, core members of the family—Homer (Dan Castellaneta), Marge (Julie Kavner), Bart, Lisa (Yeardley Smith), and baby Maggie—congregate on their couch in front of the TV for another rotating gag that highlights the seemingly bottomless well of creativity at work.

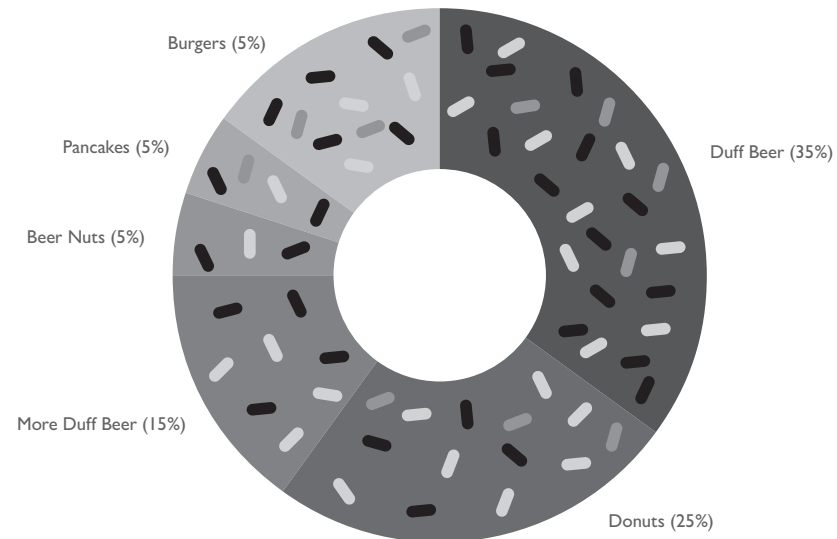
The show's best stories—often found in the first 10 seasons—expertly blend character-driven drama, inventive visual jokes, and sharp commentary on the absurdity of modern life: Homer's monotonous job at the power plant (and evil boss Mr. Burns), Bart's puckish antiauthoritarian streak, Marge's long-suffering devotion to her family, and Lisa's often-tested moral center. Springfield has a rich cast of regulars—many with multiple breakout episodes—ranging from pious neighbor Ned Flanders and lovable barfly Barney Gumble to brusque Bozo-like television host Krusty the Clown and Marge's chain-smoking sisters, Patty and Selma.

*“Kids, you tried your best,  
and you failed miserably.  
The lesson is, never try.”*

Homer Simpson (S5 E18)



THE DIET OF HOMER SIMPSON



Also remarkable is *The Simpsons'* ability to lure high-wattage guest stars into its world. Movie stars voice semi-regular characters, including Kelsey Grammer as murderous sidekick Sideshow Bob. And lest you forget that the Simpsons live in the real world, other guests appear as themselves, such as Harry Potter writer J. K. Rowling or famously reclusive author Thomas Pynchon.

Some of the show's top work features in its annual "Treehouse of Horror" episodes: vignette-filled anthologies pegged to Halloween that parody classics such as *The Raven*, *The Shining*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. The series' send-up of the latter features a particularly memorable turn by Groundskeeper Willie as Freddie Krueger. The specials are among the show's most creative episodes, with gripping storytelling and plenty of fantastical flights of fancy.

With all the show's dizzying parody and sardonic humor, you might miss that its real heart focuses on the disappointments,

trivialities, and quibbles of everyday life. Along with not-so-typical plot threads, such as Homer's trip into space with an Apollo 11 crew member, or an intergenerational feud with the residents of neighboring town Shelbyville, *The Simpsons* takes on issues such as corporate greed, hypocritical clergy, and even the more mind-dulling aspects of cartoons with its show-within-a-show *Itchy and Scratchy*, a hyper-violent take on *Tom and Jerry*.

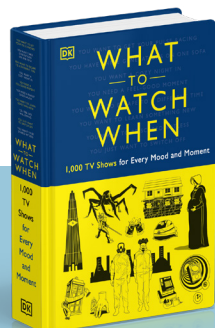
From counting down the hours at Moe's Bar to starting another season with its nuclear-energy-themed baseball team, Simpsonland is the stuff of small-town life. It's as American as a Duff Beer at a Springfield Isotopes ball game or a microwaved convenient-store apple pie, and well worth a visit.

CREATORS: James L. Brooks, Matt Groening, Sam Simon PRODUCTION CO: Gracie Films, 20th Century Fox Television, Twentieth Century Fox, Fox Television Animation, The Curiosity Company, Twentieth Century Fox Animation



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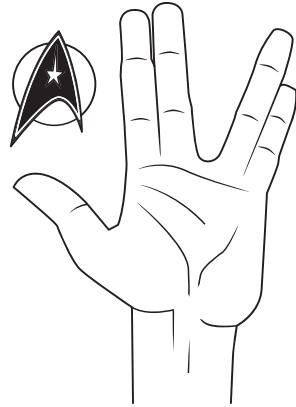
# STAR TREK

SCI-FI • 1966 • RATED: TV-PG • 50 MINS • SEASONS: 3  
WILLIAM SHATNER, LEONARD NIMOY, DEFOREST KELLEY

**The crew of the *Starship Enterprise*—Captain Kirk, Mister Spock, et al—explore the far reaches of the galaxy in search of intelligent life and alien civilizations. They try to promote peace and justice, but the sentiment isn't always returned.**

In the 1960s, the Space Race and the challenge to put a man on the moon captivated millions around the globe. *Star Trek* followed that wave of interstellar interest with a series all about exploring uncharted corners of the Milky Way galaxy. What makes the *Enterprise* crew's mission so intriguing and relatable here on Earth is that the challenges they find in space—issues such as intolerance, racism, and greed—are similar to those here.

Created by Gene Roddenberry, the show takes its cues from westerns and adventure novels—and would go on to inspire waves of other space dramas, including *Star Wars* and *Firefly* (see p91), to say nothing of all the *Star Trek* sequels, from *Voyager* (see p134) to the recent *Discovery* (see p135).



Set only some 200 years from now, the main cast is led by commanding officer James T. Kirk (William Shatner) and consists of science officer Spock (Leonard Nimoy), chief medical officer Leonard McCoy (DeForest Kelley), engineer "Scotty" (James Doohan), communications officer Uhura (Nichelle Nichols), helmsman Sulu (George Takei), and navigator Chekov (Walter Koenig). Of course, with that many personalities traveling the stars, some conflict is inevitable.

The fair-minded Kirk often finds himself advised in two directions by the emotionless-yet-reasonable Spock—who has mixed human and alien-Vulcan heritage—and the more passion-driven McCoy. Likewise, the other cast members reflect a diversity of genders, races, and nationalities, shining a spotlight on the polarization of its era, the 1960s, and a more enlightened future ahead. One notable exchange between Captain Kirk and Lieutenant Uhura features the first kiss between a fictional white male and a fictional black female to premiere on US network television, a big deal at the time.

The crew faces many formidable challenges, from beleaguered Starfleet compatriots—such as a crew member stricken with megalomania and imbued with the power of telekinesis—to a litany of alien species. The lizardlike Gorn make a notable appearance in this series, as do the yeti-inspired salt vampires. Those monster-like creatures are joined by more humanoid races, such as the Klingons and the Romulans, names that will be familiar to most people whether you're a Trekkie or not.

A word of caution: the series' original pilot may throw you. It features a slightly different cast—instead of Captain Kirk, you get to travel the spaceways with Captain Pike (Jeffrey Hunter). After the pilot was rejected, Hunter withdrew from the show, paving the way for Shatner to star in a second more successful pilot.

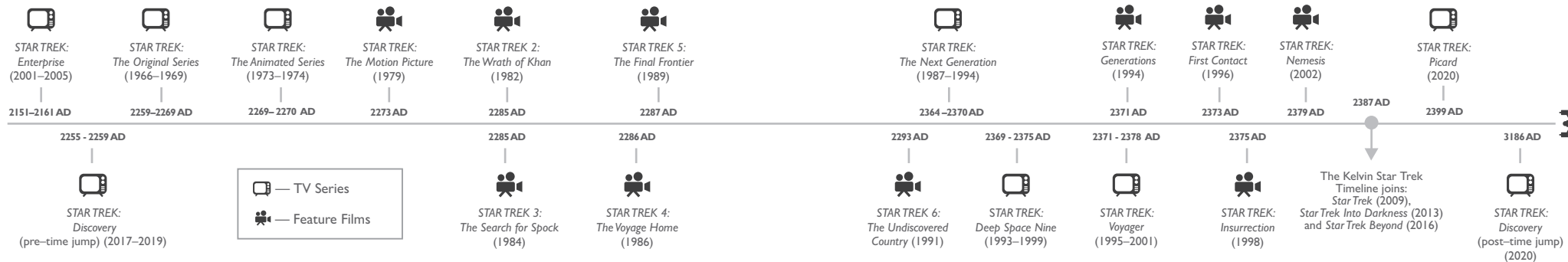
Likewise, the array of dazzling space gizmos can be a bit overwhelming. As well as the warpdrive (the thing that makes the ship go really fast) and phasers (guns that, don't forget, can be set to stun), there are also transporters that can beam you down to a planet's surface, and tricorders, devices that can be used to do everything from detecting radiation to recording memories (which comes in handy with all the space mischief going on around).

*“To boldly go where no man has gone before ...”*

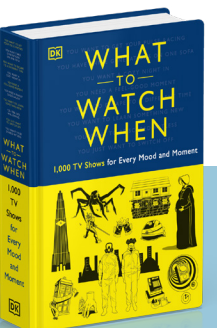
Captain Kirk

For all its technology, though, *Star Trek* is really about the core belief that in the future humans will see past differences, and evolve. On the *Enterprise*, humankind is noble and the crew is open-minded in its exploration of other worlds and cultures. Even when Kirk and crew beat their enemies, they sometimes reach out to their defeated foe to offer help. That's something the world could still learn from *Star Trek* today.

## THE PRIME STAR TREK TIMELINE



CREATOR: Gene Roddenberry  
PRODUCTION CO: Desilu Productions, Norway Corporation, Paramount Television



# BOY MEETS WORLD

COMEDY • 1993 • RATED: TV-PG • 23 MINS • SEASONS: 7  
BEN SAVAGE, WILLIAM DANIELS, RIDER STRONG

**Get ready to start shouting “Fee-hee-heenay,” because this coming-of-age show is guaranteed to bring out the goofy kid in you. Follow along as a boy and his pals take on the world ... well, to start with, at least the sixth grade.**

Seeing your teacher outside of school is weird enough, but what if you lived next door to him, too? That’s what Cory (Ben Savage) has to put up with throughout his school years, never able to pull one over on Mr. Feeny (William Daniels). Of course, it’s not for lack of trying, especially with his best friend and total bad boy, Shawn (Rider Strong), as his partner in crime.

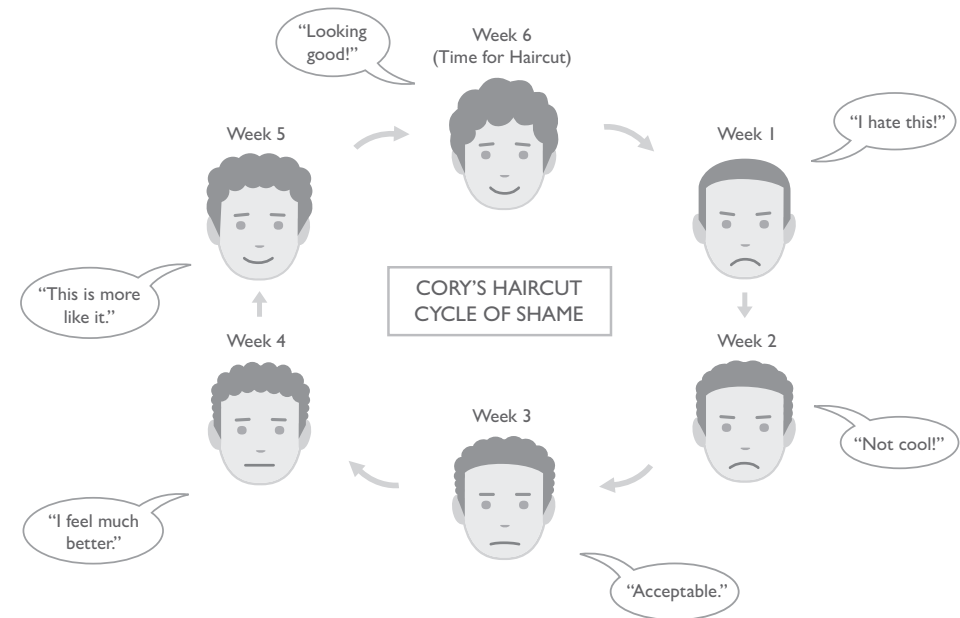
*“Friendship [...] is a real gift. And it’s given with no expectation and no gratitude is necessary.”*

Mr. Feeny (S1 E10)

Throughout the course of the series, Cory, Shawn, and Topanga (Danielle Fishel)—Cory’s love interest—grow up before our eyes. They begin the series in sixth grade, and end it in college. Toss in Cory’s quirky older brother, Eric (Will Friedle), and this fab four will become your new best friends as you watch them experience all the drama of growing up, such as being torn between hanging out with the “cool” kids and your

“weirdo” friends, taking your first steps in dating, and the disappointment of not getting into your dream school.

The series, though lighthearted and wholesome overall, isn’t afraid to explore more mature topics, such as child abuse, underage drinking, death, and cults. But don’t let that stop you from vegging out on the sofa and bingeing on it from start to finish. You’ll quickly become engrossed in Cory and Topanga’s adorable relationship—a major focal point of the series. Topanga is strong and independent, and Cory is wise enough to respect and adore that about her. Meanwhile, their friend Shawn struggles to find the girl of his dreams, letting both his unconventional family life and stubbornness sometimes get the better of him. Thankfully, Cory and Topanga are always there to help him out, and vice versa. These guys really are the Three Musketeers.



*Boy Meets World* wouldn’t be the beloved show it is today without the hilarious and dim-witted remarks of Eric. As the series progresses, his personality not-so-subtly shifts from cool older brother to total goofball. In Season 3, episode 17, he admits, “I said to myself, Kyle ... that’s what I call myself,” which perfectly sums up his oddball personality. Every family has an Eric, someone who can always keep the room laughing and the mood upbeat. Eric’s eccentricity is in perfect contrast to Mr. Feeny’s no-nonsense demeanor. Though he presents himself as a formidable educator, Feeny always offers an ear to listen and a shoulder to cry on when Cory, Shawn, Topanga, and Eric have a problem they can’t solve. His words of wisdom are sure to inspire you as much as they do his students.

As the kids grow up before our eyes onscreen, they expand their friendship squad significantly. Instead of being a fearsome foursome, they later become a beloved group of eight. Meet Angela (Trina McGee), Shawn’s girlfriend; Jack (Matthew Lawrence), Shawn’s half brother;

and Rachel (Maitland Ward), Eric and Jack’s roommate. Together, the group’s shenanigan levels double, making it twice as fun to watch how everything plays out.

Though the show is a standard sitcom, it isn’t afraid to take some risks and go against its normal setup from time to time, such as the Season 5 episode that acts as a parody of the horror movie *Scream*, slowly “killing off” each of the main characters in a whodunnit style that leaves you guessing until the very end. Another out-of-the-box example is the Season 3 episode in which Cory travels back in time to the 1950s and is mistaken for a Russian spy.

There’s always something new and exciting happening in *Boy Meets World*, and you’ll find yourself making the Feeny call in no time.

CREATORS: Michael Jacobs, April Kelly  
PRODUCTION CO: Michael Jacobs Productions, Touchstone Television



For the curious

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