



What Is Fandom?

CLOSE YOUR EYES. WAIT—NOT YET.

First, think about all the books you read, the games you play, the movies and TV shows you watch. Okay, now close your eyes and go through those stories in your mind. What characters pop into your head? Are you picturing a scene or moment that you adore? What are some of your favorite books or movies or games that you can revisit again and again? All the things that you feel excited about and all the characters that you are picturing—whatever you're imagining right now, you're a fan of it. And, good news, you can be a fan of anything and everything, and you can be a fan of more than one thing, too. There are fantasy fans, video game fans, sports team fans, and so many more.

A fan is a person who has a strong interest or admiration for a particular person or thing.

QUIZ

What Kind of Fan Are You?

ARE YOU READY TO GET more creative with your fandom and express yourself? Take this quiz to find a place to start your journey. Circle whichever answers feel best for you right now, and don't worry if you're having trouble deciding. You can totally choose more than one answer for each question if you want.

In your free time, you're most likely to do which of these things?

- a. Finish a craft project you've been working on.
- b. Cozy up with a good book.
- c. Chat with your friends about a cool new thing you learned.
- d. Organize an outing with friends to see a movie.
- e. Beat the next level of your video game.
- f. Open your sketch pad and draw.





Playing the Part

COSPLAY EQUALS COSTUME PLUS PLAY. A Japanese magazine first coined this version of the word in the early 1980s, and just like the equation says, cosplaying is when you wear a costume and pretend to be a fictional character. If you've ever put on a costume for Halloween or pulled outfits out of a trunk and pretended to be someone (or something) else, then congratulations, you've already cosplayed.

While the word *cosplay* is relatively new, people have worn costumes for hundreds of years. Think about it: actors put on costumes for roles in theater productions, and other times, people played dress-up for fun. Performers in Kabuki, a Japanese dance-drama dating back to the 1600s, wore elaborate makeup called kumadori, while masks and elaborate costumes were all the rage for masquerade balls, which go back to the fifteenth century during Carnival festivities in Italy. Part of the fun was disguising yourself and seeing if anyone you knew could recognize you. That aspect of masked balls and makeup is still true for

HISTORY LESSON: DISNEYBOUNDING



Believe it or not, this is a kind of casual cosplay created specifically for Disney fans. Leslie Kay came up with the term in 2011 when she was bound to Walt Disney World for a vacation. When planning and deciding what to wear on her trip, she started making lookbooks online featuring modern outfits inspired by the classic costumes of different Disney characters. (Tip: Lookbooks can be an excellent place to start when thinking about and planning a casual cosplay.)

DisneyBounding doesn't involve wearing wigs or carrying elaborate props like other cosplay types; instead, it's all about color blocking and using accessories like jewelry or bags to mimic the look of a certain Disney character.

For example, instead of painting your skin blue and wearing a mask to look like the Genie from *Aladdin*, you could do a DisneyBound option by pairing a blue dress—or a blue top and pants—with a bold red belt. Adding extra accessories like gold colored bracelets to represent the Genie's cuffs or wearing magic lamp earrings or a necklace make for the perfect finishing touches.

When you mix-and-match outfit components based on their solid colors, this is known as **color blocking**. In casual or DisneyBound cosplay, this technique is used by wearing everyday clothes that match the color, style, or patterns of your favorite characters' outfits.

GROUP COSPLAY

While you're going through your everyday clothes, maybe you'll find the perfect pink dress and tights for a Princess Bubblegum cosplay and remember that a friend has a plaid shirt that is a perfect match for Marceline from *Adventure Time*. This would be the perfect opportunity for a group cosplay. Group cosplay is just what it sounds like: a group of people picking out characters from the same story or universe to cosplay as together. If you and your friends are part of the same fandoms, then it can be really easy and fun to coordinate a group cosplay. You can cosplay together as those characters at a convention, a party, for a photo shoot, or whenever you want to wear your costumes, which is a perfectly valid and magnificent reason.



Hey, Listen

COMPARED TO OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF fandom in this book, podcasting is but a baby. Picture podcasting like the Child, affectionately known as Baby Yoda, from *The Mandalorian*, toddling its way through the world. All kidding aside, the realm of modern podcasting has grown exponentially since its beginning in the early 2000s. A podcast is a digital audio file, usually available as an episodic series, that can be downloaded by listeners. Podcasters record the audio file, and listeners, or subscribers, to the podcast receive new installments through their computers or mobile devices. Think of it like radio, but online.

In truth, audio releases in this style stretch back through the decades; it was once called *audio blogging*, which is basically the old-timey word for podcasting. Without internet access and digital playback devices, audio blogging didn't come close to having the widespread reach and popularity then that podcasts have today. And, let's be honest, "audio blogging" doesn't sound as catchy as podcasting, does it?



— PODCASTER SPOTLIGHT —

STUFF YOU MISSED IN HISTORY CLASS

Holly Frey and Tracy V. Wilson host the *Stuff You Missed in History Class* podcast.

What was your first fandom?

Tracy: *Pac-Man*. I was six. Of course, the idea of “fandom” would have been totally different in the early 1980s, and my participation in it as a six-year-old didn’t really compare to later fandoms. But we were an Atari family, and we had *Pac-Man* and its successors to play at home. I had *Pac-Man* T-shirts and a *Pac-Man* board game, and I loved the Hanna-Barbera Saturday morning *Pac-Man* cartoon.

Holly: *Star Wars*! Seeing it for the first time, I fell in love with all the aliens and the fact that it was a galaxy populated by all kinds of different beings and none of them were considered weird. There wasn’t really much fandom back then—it was kinda just me and two of my friends playing in the backyard. It wasn’t until I was an adult that I really found fandom the way we think of it today; it was such a marvel that other people loved the same thing as I did! It felt like found family. We all lived very different lives and came from different backgrounds but somehow all spoke the same language.

What’s the most challenging thing about releasing a podcast frequently and consistently?

Holly: Our show is heavily researched with a lot of writing and prep before we ever sit in front of a mic. So it can get a little exhausting to always have a deadline looming.

What advice would give to kids who want to start podcasting?

Tracy: You can start one right now if you’re interested. You probably have all the technology you need in your pocket. But make sure that you’re very ready to commit to publishing on a regular schedule and stick with it.

Getting Started

Before you get too wrapped up in choosing a podcast style or format, you should put some—actually, a lot of—thought into your topic. What will be the core subject matter of your podcast? You can be broad, or you can be more specific in your approach. You could make a general interest the connective tissue—like video games, comics, or fierce female heroines. One idea is to make a fandom-specific podcast, like the *Harry Potter* podcast *MuggleCast*. It’s up to you how specific you want to be and what you want to talk about; just remember it should be a topic you’re passionate about and interested in talking about. Take some time to consider how much you think you can discuss whatever your topic is, too. Get a blank sheet of paper and write your proposed topic in the middle and circle it. Around that circle, write down specific show ideas based on that topic. Circle those ideas and connect it to your topic with lines. If you end up with several lines and ideas on your paper, that’s a good indication that you’ll have plenty to say about it.