

YouTube adds thousands of ad-supported TV shows for free

Article

The news: YouTube users will now be able to stream over 4,000 full seasons of TV shows on the platform for free with ads, with plans to add up to 100 more shows and films every week.

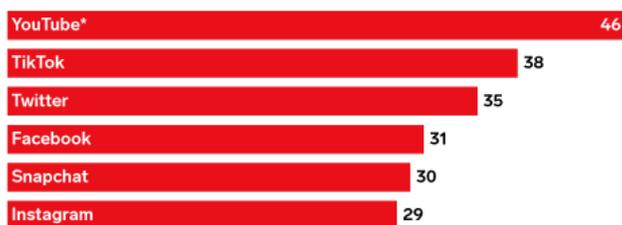
- The [list of shows](#) now available includes reality TV hits whose clips are already incredibly popular on the platform like “**Kitchen Nightmares**,” and a laundry list of shows from eras past like “**Father Knows Best**” and “**Andromeda**.”

How we got here: YouTube is late to the ad-supported video-on-demand (AVOD) TV show craze that **Tubi, Roku,** and other major streaming platforms like **Disney+** and **HBO Max** are all getting in on, but it's been inching in this direction for a while.

- It might be cheaper for YouTube to license TV shows than to create its own: In January, YouTube shut down its Originals division, which failed to produce hits on the level of other streaming originals.
- TV is also an obvious opportunity for YouTube, whose viewers are increasingly watching the platform from smart and connected TVs. In 2022, **57%** of YouTube viewers will use the platform on a CTV at least once per month, jumping to **60.8%** by 2025.

Average Time Spent per Day by US Adult Users on Select Social Media Platforms, 2022

minutes



Note: ages 18+; time spent with each medium includes all time spent with that medium, regardless of multitasking; for example, 1 hour of multitasking on desktop/laptop while watching TV is counted as 1 hour for TV and 1 hour for desktop/laptop; *YouTube forecast data is from Jan 2022; includes all desktop/laptop, mobile, and other nonmobile connected-device time watching video
Source: eMarketer, Feb 2022

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The AVOD opportunity: Adding TV shows helps YouTube in several key areas, and allows it to reach the growing audience for ad-supported video that could help make it an even more dominant hub for digital video.

- YouTube's historical issues with its algorithm's promotion of upsetting or harmful content is again under the spotlight thanks to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, raising brand safety concerns. But now, YouTube's vast TV catalog gives brands a safe space to advertise without fear of their ads running before combat footage or fringe political content.
- It's not just advertisers who benefit from AVOD channels: Viewers are increasingly using a mix of subscription and advertising-based video. We expect the number of US AVOD viewers to rise from 127.7 million in 2021 to **164.0 million in 2025**.

Looking forward: YouTube is already a leader when it comes to non-TV digital video like live streaming, and it leads all social media platforms in time spent. But many of the most popular shows of the moment—including older shows like “**The Office**” whose clips have historically reached millions of views on the platform—are now locked exclusively behind competing streaming services.

- Tapping into the growing demand for ad-supported digital video gives YouTube another channel to boost watch time and appease advertisers, but it won't put it in the cultural driving seat like its subscription-based competitors.