

# Premieres Week: One of the Best Fall Traditions

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Though Halloween candy hit stores in July and pumpkin spice everything made its debut in August, at least one fall tradition remains a *fall* tradition. I'm talking, of course, about fall television. Like so many Americans, premieres week is a highlight of my year. I've spent the past month counting down the hours to the return of Eleanor and Chidi, Team Gwen and Team Blake—and of course, Jack, Rebecca, and Randall.

Their stories, like all good stories, draw us in and bring us together. We anticipate what's coming, and we talk about it once it's here. But even though the excitement around fall premieres is as strong as ever, the viewing experience has changed dramatically.

A premiere used to be a can't-miss event: our enjoyment was tied to a particular date and time. Now it's a *won't-miss* event: the anticipation builds, the community is active, and yet we know that missing a moment will never mean missing out.

With phones, tablets, and laptops, we're watching whenever, wherever, and however we want. This flexibility is the difference between the four million people who watched SNL a decade ago on linear or the more than four million people who watched SNL last season, almost half tuned in digitally.

It's easy to join the community around a show. Ten years ago, the people tuning in for a premiere were often the same ones who had tuned in for the previous season. If you were new to the crew and wanted

to join the water-cooler conversation, you had to wait for a box set of DVDs.

This year, millions of people will tune in to see *This Is Us*. That includes not just longtime fans, but people who fell in love with the Pearsons and binge-watched the entire show this summer: 20 percent of viewers who watched *This Is Us* after the Season 3 finale watched three or more episodes at once. It also includes those of us who re-watched the last three seasons to get ready, and cried all over again. In fact, data shows that the majority of binge watching occurs the week before premiere week—with viewing rates 4 percent higher than the summer average.

And when NBC's streaming platform launches next year, superfan bingeing will likely reach new heights. "Must-watch" TV will become "just-watched" TV faster than you can say "peacock."

Now, the water cooler is "virtually" open to anyone. Fans can tweet and post in real time. That explains why ad-supported TV accounted for 84 percent of the top 10 trending Twitter topics within the first four weeks of the fall broadcast season. And why premiere week last year sparked a million more social engagements than the week following the Emmys.

That's the beauty of community. These shows aren't meant to be watched in stillness and silence. They're meant to be enjoyed together—with a few loved ones, or several thousand of your closest friends.

So yes, fall TV is still a fall tradition, but its power is hardly limited to a few months of the year. Just like the leaves change colors in some parts of the country, viewership changes, too. Every year I'm excited











