

6-7 SWEEPS THE

HOW NONSENSE BECAME THE TOP CULTURAL PHENOMENON OF 2025

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Adhering to the post-football game tradition, on a Friday evening in October, a group of high-schoolers gathered at an In-N-Out in Burbank for a celebratory cheeseburger.

The youth gathered around the pickup counter like a barricade at a concert. Phones out. Shoving for visibility. Giggling with anticipation. Some still painted with eye black from the game.

The front row, after building up the moment with a drumroll, shushed the rest to silence as an In-N-Out server approached the intercom. The anticipation: brewing. The excitement: palpable. But the hype wasn't for a double-double combo. But the order number.

The server in the white paper hat lined with palm trees put the microphone to his mouth. He paused to build suspense, then shouted the order number like he understood the assignment.

"SIX-SEVEN!"

The eruption filled the restaurant with incoherent cheers. The crowd of painted faces still had enough spirit left over for one more frenzied celebration, as if the In-N-Out employee scored the game-winning touchdown. He joined in the hollering, experiencing the glory of a star quarterback, simply for uttering two numbers.

"I think it's so dumb that it's funny," said LPC student Nick Ayala. "I'm like, 'We're a little too grown for that.'"

The two numbers — pronounced "six-seven" — have become more than a social media trend. The phrase, and its accompanying "either-or" hand gesture, have infiltrated the cultural zeitgeist. The sustained "six-seven" buzz reflects an online youth culture where absurdity is king.

As the algorithms reward short, high-engagement content, outrage and randomness often eclipse nuance and intention. "Six-seven" doesn't need to have a meaning. What matters is that it lands and provokes a reaction.

For Gen Z and Gen Alpha — generations raised with smartphones and social media — the boundaries between digital and physical life are blurred. Virality is hardly new. From MySpace rankings to Facebook rants. From dances on Vine to AI on TikTok. Billions have indulged in the triviality of social media, with memes as shorthand and GIFs as conveyors of context.

6-7 is no exception — except that, unless it's insanely viral, it offers little as a window into culture or as a source of value in understanding its audience. Which is probably why Dictionary.com coined the numbers they define as "meaningless, ubiquitous and nonsensical" to be their 2025 Word of the Year.

"I like that whoever understands that it's fun for fun's sake is in on the joke," said Daniel High, a communications major at LPC. "I've seen a lot more older people accepting it and playing along because it gets a shared laugh."

This phenomenon invites a larger question: What does it reveal about the generation carrying it forward?

Maybe its emptiness is the point — a reminder that young people are not bound by traditional communication methods and don't need deeper meaning, only

shared recognition. In a world saturated with information, where YouTube rabbit holes are normal and "do your own research" is cliché, perhaps finding joy in futility is a rebellion. Against the endless dread in the background of their youth. Against misinformation and manipulation. The freedom of surrendering to meaninglessness turns nihilism into enlightenment.

If a phrase that stands for nothing can still seduce millions into hysteria with less substance than cotton candy, what does that say about the way this generation forms connections, interprets reality and finds belonging?

A cry for help? Perhaps. Maybe the kids aren't alright. Or, this frenzy marks an era of youth skilled at building community from fragments, at turning nonsense into language and finding moments of light-heartedness in their darkening world.

"There's a playful randomness that Gen Z puts out that other generations just don't understand," said Simrah Awan, a social media expert and branding professional with the Golden State Warriors. "A lot of brain rot and slang that sometimes means absolutely nothing brings young generations together."

Origins of a phenomenon

The term "six-seven" originated from Philadelphia rapper Skrilla's song "Doot Doot (6 7)" which came out in December 2024. He rapped:

Shooter stay strapped, I don't need mine
Bro put belt right to they behind
The way that switch brrrt, I know he dyin'
6-7

When Skrilla took to Genius, an encyclopedia for music and lyrical interpretation, he left the intended meaning of 6-7 ambiguous. He later alluded to it being a reference to a street in his Southwest Philadelphia neighborhood.

The phrase skyrocketed after it permeated the world of basketball. Fans used the song "Doot Doot (6 7)" in video edits of players such as LaMelo Ball, a guard for the Charlotte Hornets who stands at 6-foot-7.

As players became aware of the viral edits, they began slyly referencing the phrase "six-seven" in conversation with the media to ping the radar of online audiences.

Chief among them was Taylen Kinney, a high school basketball player ranked No. 17 in his class, who popularized the term early this year by incorporating the phrase in all of his interviews.

When asked what he would rate his Starbucks drink one-through-ten, Kinney said, "Like six...six-seven," with "either-or" hands, intoning the uncertainty of weighing the options of six and seven.

Jesting to a social media audience with an engaging, referential quip defines "clip farming" culture.

Clip farming: (verb) is doing something on social



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media with the hope that it gets clipped and goes viral.

It's essential in an attention economy ruled by short-form content. Getting "clipped" translates as relevance — a skill media-savvy athletes like Kinney, now playing in the media-centered Overtime Elite basketball league — executes with ease. And their Gen Alpha audiences follow suit.

In March, a new mascot dubbed "6-7 kid" emerged at an Overtime Elite game. Twelve-year-old Maverick Trevillian saw the camera pointed in his direction and parroted Kinney's signature "six-seven" tone and hand gesture. Trevillian's face has been edited and pasted into oblivion on social media.

Adam Aleksic, founder of the Harvard Undergraduate Linguistics Society and content creator, said the joke is a symptom of this blur between digital surveillance and real life.

"Fundamentally," the linguist told his social media audience, "these early iterations of the joke relied on that idea of getting clipped — meaning that they optimized a real-world interaction for a perceived online audience. It is performed with this implicit awareness that the algorithm is always watching."

What is the meaning, actually?

All roads lead to meta-irony.

Meta-Irony: (noun) A form of irony layering multiple levels of meaning and self-reference to the point where the speaker's true intent becomes difficult or impossible to determine.

The confusion and ambiguity that meta-irony delivers is central to the humor of it.

"We've so internalized this constant knowledge of the digital gaze that we conform to it in our offline behaviors," Aleksic said. "However, at a certain point, our conformity started to parody itself, and 6-7 turned into a burlesque manifestation of brain rot in real life."

Viral memes often emerge from niche communities, spiral into the mainstream and are promptly pronounced "dead" once they reach Facebook. Definitely, once brands start commodifying them.

The evolution of 6-7 reflects its ability to adapt and survive the rapid cycle of trending on social media. It's been a full year this month and it doesn't seem to be losing steam, judging by the popularity of AI song "6-7 Merry Rizzmas". The song, which boasts millions of likes on TikTok, echoes the classic tune of "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" just in time to infuse the meme with nonsensical holiday cheer.

"I think because of TikTok, it keeps evolving," said Ayala.

The phrase itself is certified brain rot — which was Oxford's Word of the Year in 2024.

Brain rot: (noun) refers to mindless and often meaningless internet content, as well as

A shared reference, even a nonsensical one, can serve as an anchor.

its subsequent negative impact on the brain.

6-7, like many "brain rot" Gen Alpha terms, is context-dependent. It can be used to reference something mediocre, with the "either-or" hand motion, or it can be an interjection parroting someone who has said 6-7 in conversation. The absurdity means it is easily applicable to almost any conversation.

At its core, 6-7 is a social signal and a bid for connection.

"Semantically, it's almost void," said linguist and social scientist Taylor Jones, who lectures at the Naval Postgraduate School.

"Socially, however, it carries a communicative function of being a shibboleth."

Shibboleth, by definition, is language regarded as distinctive for a particular group. It is a word or saying used by adherents of a party or sect, and usually regarded by others as empty of real meaning. Anger and confusion from older generations only fuel the appeal. 6-7 checks the box of rage-baiting, the internet tactic that is a common driver of clippability.

Rage-baiting: (verb) is posting content that is deliberately frustrating, provocative, or offensive to provoke outrage and boost engagement.

6-7, Jones asserts, acts as a similar password. It marks the speaker who does it, who has the appetite for its absurdity, as part of an in-group.

Perhaps that's why the buzz of 6-7 persists. Belonging can feel daunting and fleeting for minds inundated with social media. Community is hard, research has shown, for young people who grew up in meta universes with online anonymity, posturing through profiles and the social barrier of texting. Not to mention the pandemic that further diminished in-person interactions.

Social media is both a modern-day savior and a villain. A creator and destroyer of connection. A shared reference, even a nonsensical one, can serve as an anchor. A socially-binding antidote to the isolation of a digital age.

"Six-seven" embodies all the cheeky, algorithm-friendly traits of modern-day virality — which at its essence is simply a quest for community. To be "in" is to signal that you understand the code, that you can speak the language. That you're seen.

And maybe that is the quiet truth beneath the joke. Something so trivial and frivolous is but a giggling reminder of what really matters. Connection.

Even if it happens over animal fries.