Name: _____ Date: _____

Counting a Channel: What Ryan's World Counts

Reading level 13 · 1414 words

Four reports across six years give four numbers for the same YouTube star. In February 2018, Good Morning America reported over 12 million subscribers for Ryan's channel. On October 29, 2020, Macy's said 40.2 million, while another report that week said 27 million. On November 22, 2022, the company behind his brand said 50 million subscribers and over 1 billion monthly views. On March 27, 2024, it said a reach of 61 million subscribers and 83 billion lifetime views across his YouTube channels. Plot them and you get a rising line. But each number came from a different speaker, in different words, and a number is only as clear as its definition. This book uses Ryan's World to show what those definitions are.

Start with the subscriber, which YouTube's help page defines this way: a channel's count reflects how many viewers have subscribed to follow it. Closed accounts, and accounts identified as spam, do not count toward the total. So the figure is filtered before anyone sees it. Viewers also see only a shortened version of the count, not every digit, and how much is cut depends on how big the channel is. The November 2022 release called its 50 million the figure for the YouTube channel. But a company release of April 3, 2023 gave the Ryan's World channel as over 34 million. The company's wording changes from release to release, so these figures cannot be joined into one line.

Views are harder to pin down, because YouTube's help page says that starting August 24, 2026, views are counted the moment a video starts to play, across all formats. It also says that repeated playbacks, such as the same video on several devices or in several tabs, may be discarded. The system aims to reflect real people, not automated programs. The page does not say what the earlier rule was. By our reading, that date is later than every figure in this book, so those figures predate it, and the page does not say how earlier counts differed. A lifetime total built over many years is a sum of counts made on many days, perhaps under different rules. So the 83 billion reported in March 2024 is a record of what YouTube had counted by then.

Numbers can be checked against each other: in November 2021, Time reported a lifetime view total of 48,597,844,873 for Ryan, and in March 2024 the company reported 83 billion. By our arithmetic, that is a gain of about 34 billion in roughly 28 months, or about 1.2 billion a month. In November 2022, the company had said over 1 billion monthly views, a figure for its channels. The three statements fit together, if all three count the same set of channels, and that condition is the catch. Time said he had nine channels in 2021, and the company said ten a year later, so the set itself was changing. The check proves nothing, but a mismatch would have been a warning.

A subscriber follows a channel, but a channel earns by a separate rule. YouTube's Partner Program lets a channel share in ad revenue and use features such as memberships and Supers. To be paid a share of ad revenue, a channel needs 1,000 subscribers and either 4,000 qualified watch hours in the past 12 months or 10 million qualified views of Shorts, YouTube's very short videos, in 90 days. But the help page describes only what membership unlocks. It does not describe the business that can be built on top of it, and part of that business sits outside YouTube, in products, television and film.

Part of it is licensing, which means the owner of a name lets other companies make goods under it. In February 2018, pocket.watch and Bonkers Toys showed a toy line made with him at the New York Toy Fair, with toy cars, figures and a fire truck. Good Morning America called that fair the largest toy trade show in the Western Hemisphere. A trade show is a place where firms show new products. Time reported in November 2021 that the Ryan's World name was on 1,600 licensed products in 30 countries. A company release a year earlier had said products were sold in stores in 24 countries in 2019. Those are different years and different wordings, so they describe growth only loosely.

Behind the screen is a small studio. In November 2020, Sunlight Entertainment said it managed nine YouTube channels, and in November 2022 it said ten. In March 2024 it said it released about 25 videos a week across all its channels, with a team of about 30 people. By our arithmetic, that comes to about 1,300 a year. He told YouTube's blog in August 2024 that his usual videos are filmed casually on a phone, and that a scene is often shot once. Time had reported in 2021 that the videos are made without multiple takes. In November 2022, pocket.watch said its library held tens of thousands of videos on more than 40 platforms.

The asset that travels is a character. The official Ryan's World site names 19 characters, among them Red Titan, Combo Panda and Gus the Gummy Gator. Gus and Combo Panda are in Ryan's Mystery Playdate, a Nickelodeon series announced in February 2019 with 20 episodes. In 2020, Macy's made Red Titan into a balloon 51 feet long, 28 feet wide and 42 feet tall, designed by its own parade studio. In September 2021, Nickelodeon ordered 20 more episodes, which made season four 30 episodes long. In November 2022, the company said he was still the only parade character based on a YouTube creator. That claim would end the day a parade flew another.

A character can also be sold in sequence, in stages that the trade calls windows. Super Spy Ryan, a 30-minute hybrid of live action and animation, was exclusive to Amazon Kids+, which means offered in only one place, when it began on November 27, 2020. A holiday special went to The Roku Channel, free and exclusive, in November 2022. The movie opened in theaters on August 16, 2024. By November 27 of that year, it was streaming on Hulu, Peacock, Ryan and Friends Plus and The Roku Channel. A window is the stretch of time in which a title is first offered in one place. Each release put the same characters in front of a different audience, in a set order.

Film is a different craft from the channel. He told YouTube's blog that the movie had a script and a huge crew, and that the hero is based on him. In the story, the hero is pulled into a magic comic book and must become a superhero named Red Titan to rescue people trapped inside it. He said the biggest lesson was patience, since the script, the lighting and the coordination took more time than he expected. The animated parts, like those of Super Spy Ryan, were made by Shin-Ei Animation, the Japanese studio behind Doraemon and Crayon Shinchan. In a hybrid, two kinds of work, filming people and drawing images, have to fit into one story.

Claims of firsts need the same care as counts. Macy's said he was the first YouTube creator featured in its parade in 94 years. A local television report called the 2024 movie the first time a digital creator had a movie in theaters nationwide. The first claim comes from the parade's own organizer, so it can be checked against the parade's own list. The second is wider, since it depends on how digital creator and nationwide are defined, and the report gave no list. Both are given as what was said, and by whom: Macy's, and a local television station. A claim of a first changes the day someone else qualifies.

That leaves the question of today's number. Any figure printed here, or anywhere, is a photograph. The 40.2 million of October 29, 2020, was a number that Macy's gave on one afternoon, for whatever its source counted that day, and another report that same week gave 27 million. A channel's own page shows a shortened count that changes. A figure in a book stays where it was taken. The newest company total quoted in this book is the one from March 2024. A subscriber count is a shortened number, a view count is a running total, and a company release is one speaker's statement on one day. Each answers a slightly different question.

Questions

1. Why does the book say the four subscriber figures should not be read as one rising line?

A. They came from different speakers in different words, and the same company gave 50 million and then 34 million

B. One of them was wrong

C. They counted views

2. According to YouTube's help page, which accounts do not count toward a channel's subscriber total?

A. Accounts that watch every day

B. Closed accounts and accounts identified as spam

C. Accounts that are under a year old

3. In this book, what does it mean when a platform's release is exclusive?

A. Free to anyone
B. Offered in only one place
C. Made by a different studio

4. By the book's arithmetic, how fast did Ryan's lifetime views grow between November 2021 and March 2024?

A. About 12 million a month
B. About 34 billion a month
C. About 1.2 billion a month

5. Why does the book call a printed subscriber figure a photograph?

A. It shows one moment, and counts keep changing
B. It is always rounded up
C. It includes pictures

Words to know

licensing: permitted use
windows: release stages
hybrid: a mix
exclusive: only here
revenue: money earned

Answer key: Counting a Channel: What Ryan's World Counts

1. A. They came from different speakers in different words, and the same company gave 50 million and then 34 million
2. B. Closed accounts and accounts identified as spam
3. B. Offered in only one place
4. C. About 1.2 billion a month
5. A. It shows one moment, and counts keep changing