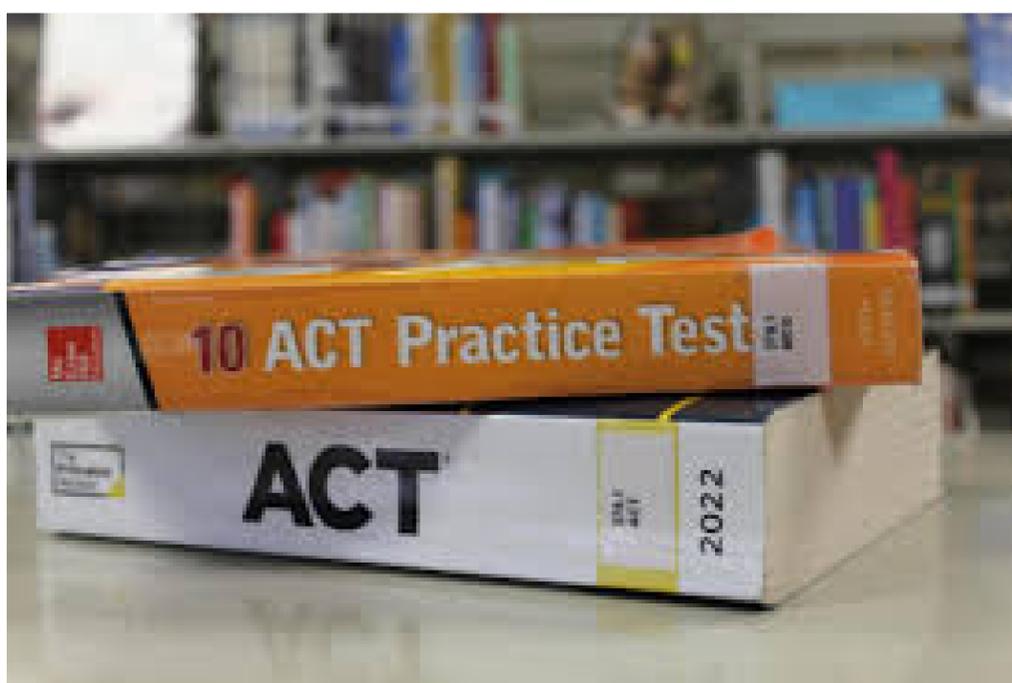




DOES PRACTICE ACT HELP STUDENTS?

Written by David Tolan, Student Reporter

February 5, 2026



ACT Practice Textbooks

ACT practice is something many students deal with during the school year, including me. At Northtown Academy, the ACT is talked about a lot, and it can start to feel like just another thing to stress over. Teachers push practice tests and review work, but students still wonder if all that practice actually helps in the end.

A lot of the stress comes from how different each section of the ACT feels. English and reading can be especially hard for students for whom English is not their first language, since so much of it depends on vocabulary and understanding how sentences are written. Math and science come with their own challenges, like remembering formulas, reading graphs, and working quickly. Even when students practice, it can be discouraging when improvement feels slow.

During the school day, it's obvious that ACT prep is on students' minds. People compare scores, study during free time, and complain about running out of time on practice tests. Some students take ACT practice seriously, while others try not to think about it too much. I usually do a little bit of practice at a time instead of cramming, but the pressure to do well is still there.

As the test date gets closer, ACT practice starts to feel more familiar, even though the stress doesn't completely go away. Practice might not work the same for everyone, but it does help students know what to expect on test day. Overall, ACT prep shows how differently students handle pressure, and it reflects what many students experience at Northtown Academy.

SNEAK PEEK



Does journalism actually matter? A student wrote an article asking this very same question. Why does journalism matter? And how does it affect the lives of students? Look inside if you want to see more!



National Hijab Day at Northtown Inside, there is a fantastic article on Northtown's very own Hijab Day! Turn the page and you'll find a student's thrilling account of the event.

STUDENT LIFE

NATIONAL HIJAB DAY AT NORTHTOWN

Written By Hagar Aly, Student Reporter

February 4, 2026



National Hijab Day was celebrated at Northtown on February 4th with a fun and meaningful event for students, teachers, and staff. The event helped students learn about different cultures, religion, respect, and understanding others.

The day started with a few girls giving speeches about what the hijab means to them and why some Muslim women choose to wear it. They shared that wearing the hijab is a personal choice and part of their faith. Students and staff asked questions, and Ms. Glaser made everyone laugh when she asked, “Can you wear a hijab with a bikini?”

After the speeches, students were invited to try on hijabs. Volunteers helped to demonstrate how they are worn. One student said, “Wow, it makes me feel so warm,” and Ms. Garcia joked, “Haha, it matches my outfit,” which made everyone laugh. Sweets and snacks were also shared, making the event feel welcoming and fun.

Every year, this event is usually for the girls. This year, there was a change. For the first time, there was also an event for the boys. Mr. Aziz organized a separate room where the boys wore jalabiyas. Many boys said they enjoyed it and felt included.

Teachers and staff showed their support by attending and participating. The event was organized by Ms. Gigi and her friends Ms. Sinanagic, Ms. Surgit and Ms. Glaser, who helped make the day successful. Overall, National Hijab Day brought students and teachers together and showed that Northtown values respect, diversity, and inclusion.



SPORTS

GIRLS VARSITY SOFTBALL

Pumas Softball Team Ready for a Great Season

Written By Emmalynn Perez, Sports Reporter

February 5, 2026



Northtown pumas
Girls softball

TRYOUTS

WEEK OF
FEBRUARY
23RD

- ✓ Make sure you have a waiver turned in
- ✓ Sports physical

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Coach Rivera, Coach Rosario, or Coach Gray.

The Varsity Puma girls softball team is coached by Mr. Rivera, Mrs. Rosario, and Mr. Gray. They are excited to start the season with tryouts scheduled for February 25 and 26. If you are interested in playing, you should stop by the main office door and see Coach Rivera.

The team is looking forward to starting the 2025-26 season and welcoming new and returning players. With strong school spirit and determination, the Pumas are ready to work hard and grow together as a team. The team is focused on improving skills and teamwork while pushing each other to play to their full potential. Through dedication, effort, and support for one another, the Pumas hope to make this season both successful and memorable.

The Pumas are excited for another great season—good luck to the team, and go Pumas!

SENIORS WHO ARE ATTENDING PROM AND/OR SIX FLAGS:

The deadline to make a deposit or fill out the extension contract for senior events passed on **February 18th**. If you were unable to make a deposit or fill out the extension form but would still like to attend senior events you must reach out to **Ms. Bargielowski** (bbargielowski@cicsnorthtown.org) **ASAP**.

All remaining payments and any guest forms for prom will be due to Ms. Bargielowski no later than **April 15th**. Ms. Bargielowski will be taking payments **Wednesdays after school only in the main office**. If you have Dual Enrollment and need to pay at a different time, please email Ms. Bargielowski to set up a time to make your payment.

Remember, if you are bringing a guest to prom you must fill out a **guest form and pay for a ticket for your guest**. Guest forms for NTA non-senior and outside guests can be found outside the main office. Make sure you fill out the correct form.

More information will be coming soon about prom meal choice and running for prom king and queen if you are interested, so keep an eye on your email!

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about senior events, please reach out to Ms. Bargielowski.

CURRENT EVENTS

MINNESOTA ICE OPERATION TURNS DEADLY: COMMUNITY REELS AFTER SHOOTING

Written by Issa Aquino, Student Reporter

February 5, 2026



Law enforcement and first responders outside the scene of the ICE enforcement action in Minnesota.

In a tense early-morning enforcement action on Jan. 7, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and Minnesota law enforcement were involved in a shooting that left several people injured and a community shaken. Authorities say the incident began when ICE agents arrived at a residence in Minneapolis, Minnesota as part of an enforcement operation targeting immigration violations. According to police statements, an altercation occurred

that led to gunfire, injuring individuals at the scene. Local law enforcement supported the operation and helped secure the area. Emergency medical services transported those hurt to nearby hospitals.

Officials have not released the names of those involved, pending family notifications. “We are cooperating with federal partners and conducting a full investigation,” said a spokesperson for the local police department.

“Our priority is ensuring public safety and answering the many questions residents have.” Community members gathered near the scene later in the day, expressing concern and sadness. “It’s heartbreaking to see something like this happen in our neighborhood,” said a community member. “We want peace and answers.”

Federal authorities said they will review the events leading up to the shooting and release more information when available. As investigators continue their work, residents and officials alike hope the answers that emerge will help a shaken community begin to heal.



Photo obtained from Yahoo

CURRENT EVENTS

STUDENTS ACROSS THE U.S. WALK OUT IN PROTEST AGAINST ICE

Written By Elijah Rogers, Student Reporter

February 9, 2026



Picture from *Los Angeles Times*

High school students across the United States, including here in Chicago, have recently walked out of class to protest U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and federal immigration policies. Similar walkouts have taken place in states such as Indiana, Washington, Maryland, and Utah, showing a nationwide wave of student activism.

In Chicago, students from several high schools left their classrooms during the school day to gather outside and march together. Many carried signs and chanted messages in support of immigrant communities, saying they wanted to stand up for classmates and families affected by immigration enforcement.

The walkouts were mainly organized by students using social media. While the protests were peaceful, some schools warned students that leaving class could result in unexcused absences or other consequences.

Reactions to the walkouts have been mixed. Some teachers and community members supported the students' right to express their opinions, while others felt protests should not interrupt class time.

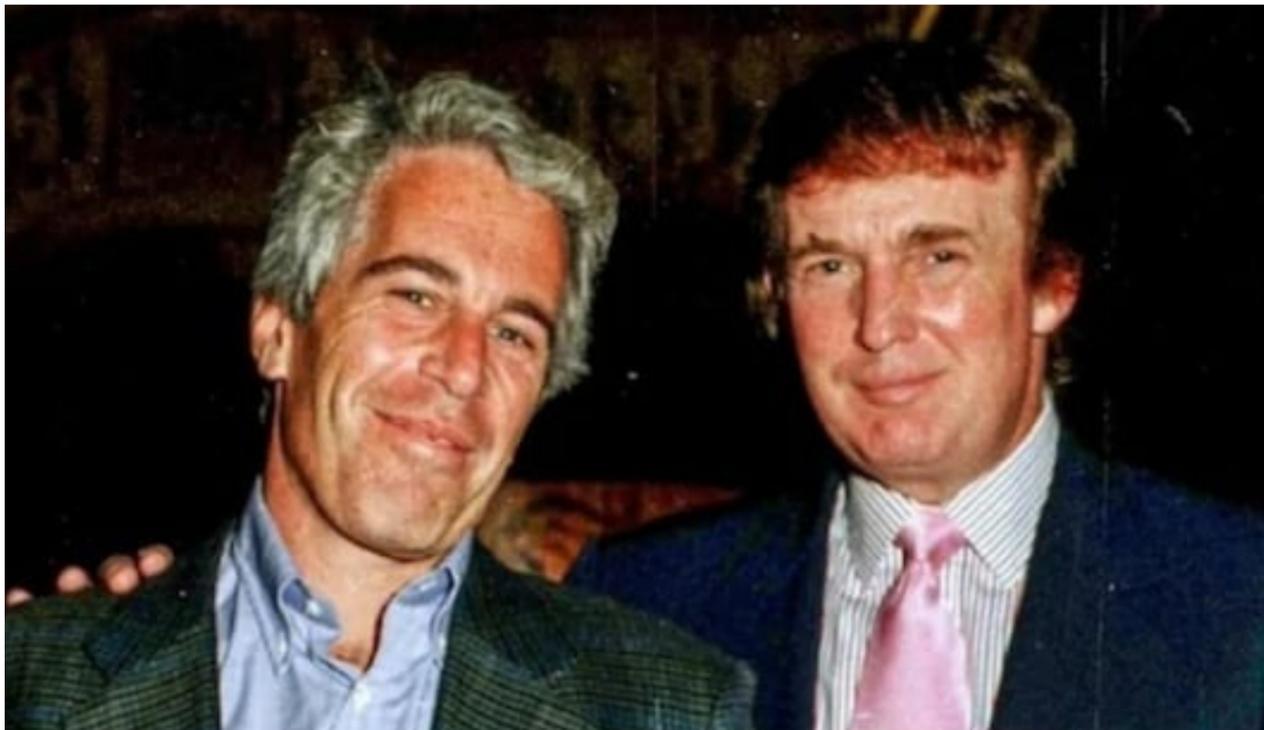
The Chicago walkouts are part of a larger movement of young people speaking out on social and political issues. By participating, students hope their voices will be heard and that attention will be brought to issues they care about.

CURRENT EVENTS

EPSTEIN PAPERS STIRRING DEBATE AS TRUMP PUSHES PAST THE CONTROVERSY

Written by Vanessa Le, Section Editor

February 5, 2026



A photo of Jeffrey Epstein and President Donald J. Trump

President Donald Trump was interviewed about his opinion on the Epstein files in the Oval Office on February 3, 2026 after being found to have been mentioned multiple times in the Epstein files. Trump stated that he had not read the newly released files and followed up with “I think it’s really time for the country to get on to something else.”

Jeffrey Epstein was a wealthy financier who was accused of sexually exploiting underage girls. In 2008, he pleaded guilty in Florida to prostitution with a minor and served a brief jail sentence under a plea deal. In 2019, Epstein was arrested again on federal sex trafficking charges in New York. He died later that year while awaiting his trial in jail, his death being ruled as a suicide.

In early February 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice released over 3 million pages related to the late sex offender. The files included thousands of photos of Epstein’s property, emails, flight logs, and tips submitted to the FBI through the National Threat Operations Center. The files contain mentions of several high-profile individuals, including Trump, former President Clinton, Elon Musk, Prince Andrew, and many others. The documents also contained allegations of rape against Trump, with some accounts suggesting the incidents took place at Epstein’s residence.

During an interview with CNN reporter Caitlyn Collins, she asked Trump about his thoughts on the survivors of Jeffrey Epstein, and Trump responds by calling her the worst reporter, stating that CNN has no ratings because of people like her. He then continued with, “You know she’s a young woman, I don’t think I’ve ever seen you smile. I’ve known you for 10 years. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a smile on your face. You know why you’re not smiling? Because you know you’re not telling the truth.” On Collins CNN show Tuesday night, Collins told her audience the Epstein scandal is nothing to smile about.

It’s not the first time Trump has lashed out at a reporter, nor had it been the first time he lashed out at Caitlyn Collins. In December 2025, Collins questioned Trump about “why the new ballroom was costing more money than originally thought one year ago,” referring to the planned expansion of the White House.

CURRENT EVENTS

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ACCUSED OF 'SPYING' ON LAWMAKERS REVIEWING UNREDACTED EPSTEIN FILES

Written by Alissa Malagon, Political Reporter

February 13, 2026

Attorney General Pam Bondi testified before the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday (Feb. 11) amid scrutiny over the Justice Department's handling of the files related to its investigation into convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Jamie Raskin, asked the Justice Department's inspector general to investigate what he characterized as 'spying,' and Mike Johnson, House Speaker, a close ally of President Donald Trump, offered his own scolding when asked about the issue Thursday. Johnson said that he did not think it was appropriate for the Justice Department to be tracking the search histories of the lawmakers who are reviewing the files from the Epstein investigation.



In the heated tension of the argument between United States Attorney General Pam Bondi and lawmakers/congressmen and women, Bondi launched into a passionate defense for President Trump, stating, "You sit here and you attack the President and I'm not going to have it," adding, "I am not going to put up with it." While the survivors of Epstein's crimes sat behind her in the hearing room, Bondi forcefully defended the department's handling of the files. She accused the Democrats of using the Epstein files to distract from Trump's success. Chairman Jim Jordan called on Representative Becca Balint, a Vermont Democrat, used her five minutes of time to talk about how a child in the United States is sexually abused every nine minutes and how a majority of survivors never get the justice they deserve. She goes on to talk about the Epstein files and how "the powerful are protected and the survivors rarely get any accountability." Balint reminds everyone that, "this isn't a game, these are real people, people who have suffered, who are sitting here today." The Congressmen and women were given access to the unredacted version of the Epstein files, which have clearly shown names of various people, such as President Trump, Howard Lutnik, Secretary of Commerce, John Failen, Secretary of the Navy, and Steven Fineberg, Deputy Secretary of Defense, all who have been appointed to senior positions in the Trump administration, all who have ties to Jeffery Epstein.

Rep. Balint asked Bondi about each individual Cabinet member and whether or not they spoke to the Department of Justice about their clear connections to Jefferey Epstein. As Balint continued to ask questions, Bondi refused to answer, responding, "I'm stunned that you want to continue talking about this." Balint said, "Oh my gosh, I'm reclaiming my time. I am not asking you a trick question, a simple question...we have evidence that three senior officials within the Trump administration have clear ties to Jeffery Epstein." Bondi cut her off to ask, "What does ties mean?" Balint says, "I can conclude that from what you are saying, that you have not talked to them," as Bondi continues to ask what ties mean. Balint continues to ask questions as Bondi interrupts her to say, "Shame on you," with Balint dismissing Bondi's comments saying, "For goodness' sake. This is pathetic. This is pathetic, Mr. Chair... I am not asking trick questions here." Balint was visibly disturbed by the look on Bondi's face, disgusted and angry at the fact that there were three officials other than Trump named in the Epstein files saying, "This is not a game, Secretary" with Bondi replying, "I'm Attorney General." Balint clapped back, "My apologies; I couldn't tell." Before yielding the floor, Balint asked Bondi to meet with the survivors as they had been asking to do so for years and to do the right thing. Bondi then asked for 20 seconds of time to accuse Balint of anti-Semitic voting in 2022. Balint asks if Bondi really wanted to go there, stating, "Are you seriously talking about anti-Semitism to a woman who lost her grandfather in the Holocaust?" Bondi muted her microphone, pulled back, and walked out of the room.

OPINION

DOES JOURNALISM MATTER IN THIS ERA?

Written By Hanson Lakhum, Student Reporter
February 9, 2026

When I joined my journalism class and became a journalist (or something) I thought I was doing something. I was told that journalists find and bring stories into light to show corruption, to get the government to do something, to shift the public opinion. But recently, I've come to realize that none of it is really happening.

Recently more of the Epstein files were released. Hundreds of celebrities were found to be scums. The president was found to be in the files, yet we're not out here protesting our

government or boycotting the media cover up. Luigi Mangione kills a healthcare CEO, yet insurance practices still remain shady. Charlie Kirk gets capped and everyone forgets about it in a day.

These events and incidents are all covered by journalists and our iPhones but yet we do nothing about these problems. Nixon's Watergate lead to his resignation and a lack of trust in the government, yet today we have the President being involved with Epstein and Epstein's island and the whole world runs just smoothly. My teacher once told me that if Trump gets reelected after his insurrection of January 6, that "all hell's going to break loose." Yet Trump won a second term despite all of the controversies he's been in; no one gives a damn.

And I think that's the problem with journalism. The point of journalism is to tell the public information that can hold individuals accountable, yet with today's technology we can see crimes committed from the other side of the world and still not give a single damn about it. We're too busy scrolling, chasing money or continuing our addictions. And when we do "protest," it's not worth a d***. If we compare the ICE school walk-outs to the walk-outs during the Vietnam War it's a ****-ing joke. What in h*** do we think we can achieve if we "protest ICE" by walking out of school for one single d*** day?

Journalism isn't dead; it's just that the public doesn't care anymore about the situations in our school, in our country, in the world. Journalists are too busy typing words that no one will read and the public doesn't want to feel uncomfortable and protest the wrongdoings. This world is turning into a 1980s dystopian society because we are just letting it happen.



Image from Daily Bruin

THE DAY OF LOVE

Written by Isabella Alegria, Staff Reporter
February 12, 2026

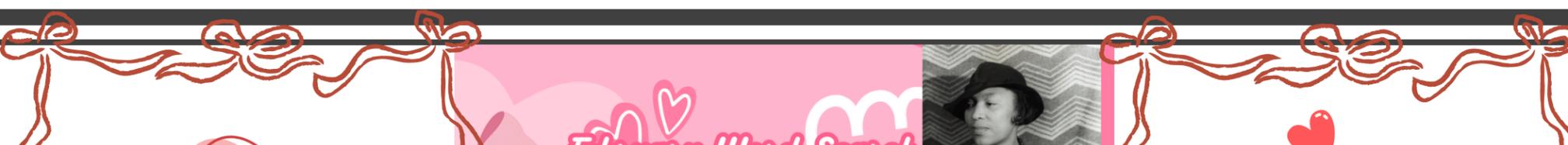


Image from History.com

Now everyone knows that if there is a day to tell someone you love them, it has to be Valentine's Day, February 14, what some consider to be the most romantic day of the year, filled with chocolate, flowers, stuffed animals, and hearts. But how many of us actually know the origin of Valentine's Day and why we celebrate it? The word valentine comes from the Latin word *valentinus*, meaning strong, and the Old French word *valentin* of the same meaning. In the story, Christian and Ancient Roman traditions are mixed together. In the Catholic Church, there are different saints who go by Valentine or something similar, and

because of this, there isn't one agreed-upon origin. But we do have a story that is most agreed upon. In Third Century Rome, Emperor Claudius II wanted men to not get married and instead become better soldiers. At this time, being Christian was considered to be worthy of persecution, but a priest by the name of Valentine married lovers in private without anyone's knowledge. Except that Claudius found out and sent Valentine to be imprisoned. Valentine was sent to be executed on February 14, 270 AD, but before this could happen and while he was still in jail, he had fallen in love with a blind woman, the daughter of his own jailer, named Julia. The priest had helped Julia through her blindness, and it was said that before he was executed, he sent a letter to Julia signed "From your Valentine." This is why many believe we celebrate Valentine's Day: to honor Valentine's death as a Pagan festival. By the 1840s, Ester A. Howland started producing Valentine's cards. She formed her own company called the New England Valentine Company. As a result, handwritten cards became more common by the early 1900s.

MONTHLY GAME: WORD SEARCH

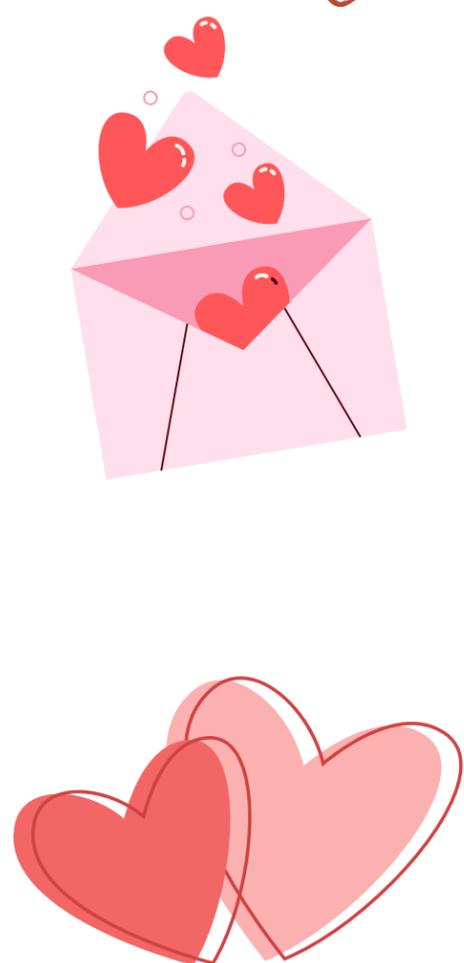


February Word Search



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- Black History
- Blues
- Charles Drew
- George W Carver
- Groundhog
- Hearts
- Jazz
- MLK
- Valentines
- W.E.B DuBois
- Zora Neale Hurston



See answers page 12

NATIONAL EATING DISORDER AWARENESS MONTH

Written by Zharlin Pallchizaca, Staff Reporter

February 5, 2026



February is Eating Disorder Awareness Month

Every February, we celebrate National Eating Disorder Awareness Month throughout the whole United States. The day is to bring awareness to a disorder that affects more than 30 million people in the country. A person affected by an eating disorder (ED) has severe disturbance when eating, being driven by unhealthy emotions and thoughts about food. Although these disorders have distinct characteristics on how they affect the person, they all have the same affect on how the person's physical health and emotional health are. That's why it's important for the topic to be highly talked about, and by doing that you can take action and help those around you who suffer from an ED.

While eating disorders are serious mental health conditions, they are also treatable, but unfortunately research indicates that many people who suffer from an ED don't seek help or treatment, and when they do, there's delays in receiving the help they need, which is why eating disorders are frequently misunderstood. Many factors can influence and lead to the development of an ED, including genetics, mental health, struggles with identity, self image, and body dysmorphia. Regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, and background, anyone can get an eating disorder; it's not only for specific people and does not come with a specific look. The most important thing to do in this situation is to help the person facing this challenge by supporting them through the difficult times and recommend professional help to recognize that food is not something bad but rather something they need to survive that can be eaten in moderation but not to the point of starvation or overconsumption. It's important to not shame the person about their decisions, as you take into consideration the problem they're facing.

A few ways you can help someone who is suffering from an ED is to show personal support and how much you care, avoid comparisons or anything that can trigger the problem, and listen to their feelings, make sure to avoid guilt or self blame directed at the person, and make them feel heard and listened to. By helping and learning more about eating disorders, you can help spread the awareness and bring more attention to the topic, as it's often overlooked and misinterpreted.

68TH ANNUAL GRAMMY AWARD WINNERS

Jovanna Aguilera, Media Editor
February 2, 2026

In the Los Angeles' Crypto.com Arena on February 1, the 68th annual Grammy Awards was held. Trevor Noah hosted for the sixth and final time after more than half a century. The night was marked by historic firsts and standout winners. Puerto Rican artist Bad Bunny made history by winning Album of the Year for *Debí Tirar Más Fotos*, the first primarily Spanish-language album to take home the night's top honor, along with additional recognition in urban and global music categories. Kendrick Lamar led the field with nine nominations and walked away with multiple trophies, including Record of the Year for "Luther" (featuring SZA) and Best Rap Album for *GNX*, reinforcing his prominence in hip-hop.



Image of Trevor Noah, host of the 68th Annual Grammy Awards



Rising British singer Olivia Dean was named Best New Artist, while established stars such as Billie Eilish (Song of the Year), Lady Gaga, Kehlani, and genre-spanning acts also picked up key awards. The night kicked off with electric live sets that set the tone for the evening: Rosé teamed up with Bruno Mars for a high-energy performance of their hit "APT," while a wide array of artists — from hip-hop innovators to pop icons took the stage throughout the show. Sabrina Carpenter, Justin Bieber, Tyler, the Creator, and Lady Gaga all delivered memorable moments, each bringing distinct styles and artistic flair to the Grammy stage. The ceremony also served as a platform for powerful messages and social commentary. Bad Bunny, in particular, used his acceptance speeches to make heartfelt statements about immigration

and unity, calling for compassion and solidarity while dedicating his historic Album of the Year win to those who leave their homelands to chase dreams. Other winners, including Billie Eilish and Olivia Dean, echoed themes of resilience and cultural pride in their remarks, reflecting broader conversations happening across music and society.

Amid the excitement, there were also lighter and at times chaotic moments that became instant talking points. Legendary artist Cher, presenting Record of the Year, had a humorous onstage mishap, mixing up the announcement and prompting host Trevor Noah to gently steer the ceremony back on course; performers and awards alike embraced the moment with good humor.

Beyond the awards, the night featured touching tributes to music icons lost in the past year. A standout "In Memoriam" segment included a tribute to Ozzy Osbourne with a performance by Post Malone, Slash, and others, as well as ensemble honorees celebrating the legacies of D'Angelo and Roberta Flack. These moments served as poignant reminders of music's enduring impact across generations. Overall, the 68th Grammys balanced celebration and reflection, marking historic firsts, especially for Spanish-language music, while showcasing the diversity and dynamism of the global music landscape.



Bad Bunny accepting his Grammy

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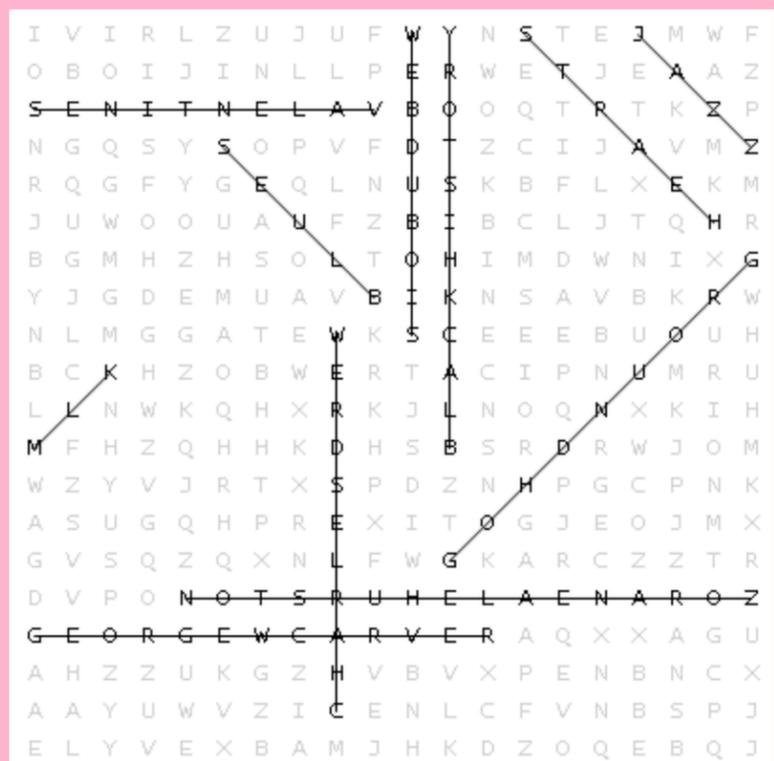
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Word Search Answers



Answer Sheet