

Tips for a Successful Trivia Night

- Create a set of rules ahead of time and make sure you cover those rules at the beginning of the game.
- Try to avoid ambiguity with the questions you choose. For example, “How many strings does a guitar have” is not a good question because even though an average guitar has six strings, there are lots of different guitars and according to Wikipedia they can have up to 18 strings.
- Avoid questions that can have more than one answer.
- Decide how specific of an answer you want and if you’re prepared to accept something more vague. For the question “What connects the eye to the brain”? the specific answer is “the optic nerve” and a more general answer is “nerves” or “a nerve.”
- Decide how complete of an answer you require. For the question “Who composed the 1812 Overture” will you accept Tchaikovsky or must they come up with his full name?
- Be prepared to accept several iterations of an answer. One of my questions had the answer of “The Black Death” and I was prepared to accept “Bubonic Plague” since it was the same thing. I did not accept “The Plague” because it wasn’t specific enough to answer the question I had asked.
- Be prepared for some participants to question your answers. At least once per game I have to do a search on my iPhone to confirm the answer. I try to prevent these situations whenever possible by stats and a source ready, especially for questions where the answer is really unexpected. For example the answer to “Which country produces the most olive oil?” is Spain, even though most people answered Italy (#2 on the list) or Greece (#3).
- Double-check your answers on an authoritative site beforehand. For example, I went to NASA’s site to confirm the length of a day on Jupiter.
- Remind everyone that this is just for fun. Sometimes players get competitive and I’ve even had a few people approach me at the Information Desk days or weeks after Trivia Night to “argue” over an answer.
- If there are any words whose pronunciation you’re unsure of, look it up ahead of time.

Trivia Sources

If you have a Trivial Pursuit game laying around, that's a great place to start. But if you don't, or if you need additional inspiration, try these sources:

The Amazing 10,000 Quiz Challenge, by Roy Preston (2005)
The Best Bar Trivia Book Ever, by Michael O'Neill (2014)
The Big Book of American Trivia, by J. Stephen Lang (2012)
Ken Jennings's Trivia Almanac, by Ken Jennings (2008)
The Ultimate Trivial Pursuit Question & Answer Book, by HASBRO (2009)

These books are also useful:

1,227 Quite Interesting Facts to Blow Your Socks Off (2013)
The Book of Useless Information (2006)
The Amazing Book of Useless Information (2008)
The World's Greatest Book of Useless Information (2009)

Some good websites include:

Fun Trivia: <http://www.funtrivia.com/>
Random Trivia Generator: <http://www.randomtriviagenerator.com/>
Plants and animals: <http://www.dkfindout.com/us/animals-and-nature/>
Trivia Quiz Generator: <http://www.triviaquizgenerator.com/>