

Thanksgiving Trivia for Adult Gatherings

Add a broad, carefully sourced Thanksgiving trivia round to an adult gathering, club meeting, or community event.

Host guide / Letter / holiday trivia / 15–25 minutes

Read the guide privately first if this activity has hidden answers. Print single-sided at Actual size / 100%. Cut only sheets marked CARDS. Keep answer keys with the host.

What you need

- Printed question cards or a host screen
- Pens and score sheet
- A timer (optional)
- One host or a reader for each team

How to run it

1. Choose a host and keep the key out of sight.
2. Make teams of two to five or play individually.
3. Read the prompt and allow 20–30 seconds for discussion.
4. Award one point for a correct answer and accept equivalent wording.
5. Read the explanation after scoring.
6. Play all cards or choose a section for a shorter round.

Dates and civic history

The U.S. and Canadian dates differ, and the U.S. date changed before Congress fixed it. These questions separate Washington's 1789 proclamation, Lincoln's 1863 action, and the 1941 federal rule.

- Name the country in each date question.
- Use the answer notes to keep the milestones distinct.

Food and agriculture

Corn, pumpkins, and cranberries have histories beyond a holiday menu. The source notes also discourage treating a modern plate as a complete record of 1621.

- Accept maize as corn.
- Invite guests to name a local harvest food.

The 1621 harvest account

The two questions about the harvest gathering rely on the limits and details stated by Plimoth Patuxet: a three-day celebration and an eyewitness account naming venison and wildfowl.

- Avoid adding unsupported details.
- Use the source note if a team raises a familiar menu myth.

Parades and football

Macy's parade and NFL Thanksgiving games are separate modern traditions. The cards focus on recognizable beginnings and one broadcast milestone.

- Keep the sports and parade questions light.
- Accept "Lions" or "Detroit Lions" in context.

White House traditions

Turkey gifts and pardons have different histories. The explanations distinguish an annual public pardon from earlier stories about individual turkeys.

- Avoid calling an uncertain anecdote a formal tradition.
- Accept George H. W. Bush for the annual pardon.

Host and print notes

Play the questions as a team game or a discussion activity. The card sources are there for context and verification after the round.

- Keep the answer sheet host-only.
- Let guests pass.
- Do not assume a single family menu.

CARDS / Thanksgiving Trivia for Adult Gatherings

<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-001 / Calendar</p> <p>On which Thursday in November is U.S. Thanksgiving fixed by federal law?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-002 / Calendar</p> <p>On which Monday in October does Canada observe Thanksgiving?</p>
<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-003 / U.S. history</p> <p>Which president designated November 26, 1789 as a national day of thanksgiving?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-004 / U.S. history</p> <p>Which president's 1863 proclamation helped establish an annual nationwide Thanksgiving observance?</p>
<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-005 / U.S. history</p> <p>Which editor campaigned for a national Thanksgiving holiday and appealed to Abraham Lincoln in 1863?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-006 / Parades</p> <p>Which retailer organized the parade that began in 1924 as Macy's Christmas Parade?</p>

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<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-007 / Parades</p> <p>Which cartoon character was the first balloon in Macy's parade in 1927?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-008 / Sports</p> <p>Which NFL team began its annual Thanksgiving game tradition in 1934?</p>
<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-009 / Sports and media</p> <p>Which team defeated Detroit in the Lions' first Thanksgiving Day game, which was also nationally broadcast on radio?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-010 / 1621 harvest history</p> <p>What two foods appear in the only eyewitness account of the 1621 Plymouth harvest celebration?</p>
<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-011 / 1621 harvest history</p> <p>How long did the 1621 harvest celebration last?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-012 / Food and agriculture</p> <p>Where was maize domesticated more than 8,000 years ago?</p>

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<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-013 / Food and agriculture</p> <p>Where was the orange pumpkin lineage first domesticated, according to the Smithsonian?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-014 / Indigenous traditions</p> <p>According to the Smithsonian's Native Perspectives resource, Cranberry Day is significant to which Wampanoag group?</p>
<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-015 / Calendar history</p> <p>Why did President Franklin D. Roosevelt move Thanksgiving a week earlier in 1939?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-016 / Calendar history</p> <p>On what date did President Roosevelt sign the law designating the fourth Thursday in November as the federal Thanksgiving holiday?</p>
<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-017 / Literature</p> <p>Which nursery rhyme did Sarah Josepha Hale write?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-018 / White House customs</p> <p>Which president made the White House turkey pardon an annual tradition?</p>

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<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-019 / White House customs</p> <p>The story of Lincoln sparing a turkey involved which holiday meal?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-020 / Food customs</p> <p>Which fish does the White House Historical Association list as coming from the Potomac River on historic Thanksgiving menus?</p>
<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-021 / White House customs</p> <p>To which decade does the White House Historical Association trace presidential turkey gifts from Rhode Island poultry dealer Horace Vose?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-022 / Community customs</p> <p>What Thanksgiving activity involved disguises and masks before Halloween trick-or-treating became widespread?</p>
<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-023 / Sports</p> <p>Since when has the NFL played Thanksgiving Day games, according to the league?</p>	<p>EXT_TRIVIA_THANKSGIVING-024 / Food and language</p> <p>Why did European settlers call the cranberry a “craneberry”?</p>

Host answer key

Keep this section separate from player cards. Accept equivalent wording where the meaning matches.

01. The fourth Thursday.

Title 5 of the U.S. Code sets Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday in November.

02. The second Monday.

Library and Archives Canada lists Canadian Thanksgiving as the second Monday in October.

03. George Washington.

The National Archives identifies Washington's 1789 proclamation and its date.

04. Abraham Lincoln.

The National Archives and White House Historical Association describe Lincoln's 1863 proclamation during the Civil War.

05. Sarah J. Hale (Sarah Josepha Hale).

The Library of Congress identifies Hale as an editor of Godey's Lady's Book and describes her campaign and appeal to Lincoln. The rhyme she wrote is a separate fact.

06. Macy's.

The Library of Congress says Macy's employees organized the original parade to promote its new store and holiday season.

07. Felix the Cat.

The Library of Congress identifies Felix as the first parade balloon.

08. The Detroit Lions.

The NFL traces Detroit's annual holiday game tradition to 1934.

09. The Chicago Bears.

The NFL reports that the Bears beat Detroit in the 1934 Thanksgiving game, the first nationally broadcast NFL game.

10. Venison and wildfowl.

Plimoth Patuxet stresses that the only eyewitness account names these foods; much else about the menu is uncertain.

11. Three days.

Plimoth Patuxet describes the celebration as a three-day gathering and cautions against assuming modern menu details.

12. Mexico.

The Smithsonian says maize was domesticated in Mexico and later spread north.

13. Mexico, about 10,000 years ago.

The Smithsonian's food-history overview traces this pumpkin lineage to Mexico.

14. The Aquinnah Wampanoag.

The resource specifically names the Aquinnah Wampanoag and notes that Indigenous traditions are distinct and specific to each nation.

15. To extend the Christmas shopping period and boost retail sales.

The White House Historical Association says Roosevelt moved the 1939 date forward by a week to lengthen Christmas shopping and boost retail sales.

16. December 26, 1941.

The White House Historical Association dates Roosevelt's signing of H.J. Res. 41 to December 26, 1941.

17. "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

The Library of Congress identifies Hale as creator of the rhyme.

18. George H. W. Bush.

The White House Historical Association says the pardon became an annual press tradition during Bush's administration.

19. Christmas dinner.

The White House Historical Association traces the anecdote to Lincoln's son Tad asking to spare a turkey meant for Christmas.

20. Rockfish.

The association's overview lists Potomac River rockfish among regional dishes served on historic White House Thanksgiving menus.

21. The 1870s.

The association says reports of turkeys as presidential gifts go back to the 1870s.

22. Masking or dressing up for amusement.

The Library of Congress describes Thanksgiving masking as an older U.S. custom than modern trick-or-treating.

23. Since the league began in 1920.

The NFL says Thanksgiving games date to the league's first season; Detroit's tradition followed in 1934.

24. They thought the plant resembled a crane.

The USDA National Agricultural Library explains the name's association with the crane's appearance.

Hosting questions

Can we play without scoring?

Yes. Use the explanations to guide a relaxed group discussion.

Is this made for adults?

Yes. Familiar traditions and a few harder details suit adult gatherings and clubs.

Can the host verify an answer?

Yes. Each factual card has a source URL and explanation.

How can we shorten the game?

Choose one section and play 8–12 questions.

References

U.S. Code lists Thanksgiving as the fourth Thursday in November.

<https://uscode.house.gov/us/usc/119-124/t5/s6103/>

Library and Archives Canada lists Thanksgiving Day as the second Monday in October.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/library-archives/services/public/visit/holiday-closures.html>

National Archives says Washington designated Nov. 26, 1789 as a national day of thanksgiving and describes Lincoln's 1863 proclamation.

<https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/thanksgiving>

Library of Congress says Sarah Josepha Hale campaigned for a national holiday and wrote Mary Had a Little Lamb.

https://www.loc.gov/lcm/pdf/LCM_2024_1112.pdf

Library of Congress describes the 1924 Macy's Christmas Parade and Felix the Cat as the first balloon in 1927.

<https://guides.loc.gov/this-month-in-business-history/november/macys-thanksgiving-parade>

NFL says its Thanksgiving games date to the league's start in 1920 and Detroit's annual tradition began in 1934 against Chicago.

<https://www.nfl.com/news/why-do-we-play-on-thanksgiving-day>

NFL states the 1934 Bears-Lions game was the first nationally broadcast NFL game on NBC radio.

<https://operations.nfl.com/media/2405/week-12-thanksgiving.pdf>

Plimoth Patuxet says the only 1621 eyewitness account names venison and wildfowl; its celebration lasted three days and many menu claims are uncertain.

<https://plimoth.org/yath/unit-4/what-did-they-eat-at-the-1621-harvest-celebration>

Smithsonian food-history material traces maize domestication and the orange pumpkin lineage to Mexico.

<https://www.si.edu/spotlight/thanksgiving/thanksgiving-foods>

White House Historical Association documents the 1939 shopping-period date change, Roosevelt's 1941 signing date, and historic menus including Potomac River rockfish.

<https://www.whitehousehistory.org/press-room/press-timelines/thanksgiving-at-the-white-house>

White House Historical Association says George H. W. Bush made turkey pardons annual and the Lincoln anecdote involved a Christmas turkey.

<https://www.whitehousehistory.org/press-room/press-backgrounders/history-of-white-house-thanksgiving-traditions>

Library of Congress article describes Thanksgiving masking as a custom predating widespread modern Halloween trick-or-treating.

<https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2020/11/masking-and-mumming-for-the-holidays-thanksgiving-style>

USDA says the cranberry's name derives from "craneberry"; settlers saw a resemblance to a crane.

<https://www.nal.usda.gov/collections/stories/cranberries>

Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian identifies Cranberry Day as significant to the Aquinnah Wampanoag and emphasizes the specificity of Indigenous traditions.

<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/pdf/Rethinking-Thanksgiving-Celebrations-Native-Perspectives-2024-r.pdf>

Original AI-assisted resource with AI editorial review. Independent human playtesting and physical printing have not been completed. Answer, listen, or pass.