# Music Trivia Questions for Adults

Bring a mix of familiar artists, musical terms, instruments, and traditions to your next gathering.

Host guide / A4 / Adult trivia / 25–40 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 teams of two to five or play individually.
2. Read each prompt and allow 20–30 seconds for answers.
3. Award one point for a correct answer; accept equivalent wording.
4. Reveal the answer and read the concise explanation.
5. For a shorter round, select a balanced mix across at least six categories.
6. Keep the answer key with the host, separate from player-facing prompts.

## A broad musical mix

The round covers classical composers, orchestral instruments, music vocabulary, rock and pop artists, American roots styles, and traditions from Jamaica, Indonesia, Spain, Cuba, Mexico, Argentina, and Uruguay. A few familiar names give teams an entry point; other cards widen the conversation without requiring specialist knowledge.

- Classical composers and works
- Instrument families and expressive terms
- Popular music and American roots
- Global traditions and performance contexts

## How to host the round

Read one card at a time and give teams a short moment to discuss. Accept equivalent wording when an answer names the correct musical idea or instrument. After revealing an answer, invite a one-sentence explanation or a favorite listening example, but keep the explanation optional so the quiz stays lively.

- Mix the cards for a general round or take turns choosing a category.
- For a relaxed group, allow hints after the first guess.
- Use the short explanations to turn a correct answer into a conversation starter.

1 inch / print at 100%

25 mm / print at 100%

## Scope and sourcing

Questions focus on stable, documented facts and plain-language musical concepts. Cultural traditions are identified by their recognized community and region, without implying that one description captures every local variation. The cited institutional, cultural-heritage, and artist sources support the specific fact on each card. The set does not reproduce lyrics and makes no claims of playtesting.

- No audio equipment or screen is required.
- Song and work titles are named without quoting lyrics.
- Each answer links to a source for host review.

1 inch / print at 100%

25 mm / print at 100%

## CARDS / Music Trivia Questions for Adults

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-001 / Jazz

Which U.S. city is strongly associated with the early development of jazz?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-002 / Classical composers

Which composer wrote the music for the finale of Symphony No. 9, setting Friedrich Schiller’s “Ode to Joy” poem?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-003 / Classical composers

Who wrote the poem commonly known in English as “Ode to Joy”?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-004 / Classical composers

Who composed the music for the ballet The Nutcracker?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-005 / Instruments

Which of these orchestral woodwind instruments uses a double reed: flute, clarinet, or oboe?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-006 / Music terms

In standard music notation, what does forte (f) tell a performer?

1 inch / print at 100%

25 mm / print at 100%

## CARDS / Music Trivia Questions for Adults

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-007 / Music terms

What musical term describes the speed of a piece or passage?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-008 / Music terms

Which term asks musicians to connect notes smoothly, without gaps between them?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-009 / Rock and pop

Which four musicians are known together as the Beatles’ “Fab Four”?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-010 / Rock and pop

Which instrument was central to Jimi Hendrix’s sound and performance style?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-011 / Hip-hop

Which New York City borough is closely associated with hip-hop’s emergence in the 1970s?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-012 / Global traditions

Reggae is most closely associated with which Caribbean country?

1 inch / print at 100%

25 mm / print at 100%

## CARDS / Music Trivia Questions for Adults

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-013 / Global traditions

In flamenco, what three performance elements are called cante, baile, and toque?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-014 / Global traditions

Gamelan is a traditional musical ensemble from which country?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-015 / American roots

Which instrument did Earl Scruggs help establish as a featured lead voice in bluegrass?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-016 / Global traditions

Name two instruments commonly heard in a modern mariachi ensemble.

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-017 / Global traditions

Tango developed in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, cities in which two countries?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-018 / Global traditions

Which Cuban music-and-dance tradition may combine chants, handclapping, gestures, and percussion?

1 inch / print at 100%

25 mm / print at 100%

## CARDS / Music Trivia Questions for Adults

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-019 / Music terms

What is the musical texture called when two or more independent melodic lines sound at the same time?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-020 / Instruments

How many strings does each instrument in the standard violin, viola, cello, and double-bass families normally have?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-021 / Rock and pop

At what age did Stevie Wonder sign a recording contract with Motown’s Tamla label?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-022 / Rock and pop

By age nine, name one instrument Stevie Wonder had learned to play.

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-023 / American roots

Who composed the ragtime piece Maple Leaf Rag?

R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-024 / Classical composers

Who composed the six Brandenburg Concertos?

1 inch / print at 100%

25 mm / print at 100%

# Host answer key

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

## 01. New Orleans.

The National Park Service describes New Orleans as a key setting in jazz's early development, shaped by community traditions and musical exchange.

## 02. Ludwig van Beethoven.

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony closes with a choral setting of Schiller's poem, a landmark use of voices in a symphonic work.

## 03. Friedrich Schiller.

Schiller wrote "An die Freude"; Beethoven later set the poem in the finale of his Ninth Symphony.

## 04. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

Tchaikovsky's ballet is based on a story adapted from E.T.A. Hoffmann's The Nutcracker and the Mouse King.

## 05. The oboe.

The oboe produces sound through two reeds vibrating against one another; it has a conical bore.

## 06. To play loudly.

Forte is a dynamic marking for a loud sound. Dynamics describe how soft or loud the music should be.

## 07. Tempo.

Tempo is the speed of the music, often described with a pace marking or measured in beats per minute.

## 08. Legato.

Legato means notes should flow smoothly into one another; staccato is the contrasting detached style.

## 09. John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr.

The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame identifies the quartet as Lennon, McCartney, Harrison, and Starr.

## 10. The electric guitar.

Hendrix became known for expressive electric-guitar playing and for expanding how the instrument could sound onstage and in recordings.

## 11. The Bronx.

The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture traces hip-hop's early community scene to the Bronx.

1 inch / print at 100%

25 mm / print at 100%

## 12. Jamaica.

UNESCO recognizes reggae music of Jamaica as a living cultural tradition with roots in the island's musical history.

## 13. Singing, dance, and instrumental music or guitar playing.

UNESCO describes flamenco through cante (song), baile (dance), and toque (the art of playing, especially guitar).

## 14. Indonesia.

Gamelan refers to Indonesian ensembles and their instruments, commonly including gongs, metallophones, and drums.

## 15. The banjo.

The Country Music Hall of Fame credits Scruggs with making the banjo a lead instrument in bluegrass, using a distinctive picking approach.

## 16. Any two of: trumpets, violins, vihuela, guitarrón, or guitar.

UNESCO lists trumpets, violins, vihuela, and guitarrón among the instruments used in modern mariachi groups.

## 17. Argentina and Uruguay.

UNESCO describes tango as an Argentinian and Uruguayan tradition developed around the Río de la Plata region.

## 18. Rumba.

UNESCO describes Cuban rumba as a festive practice in which performers and audiences communicate through music, movement, and gesture.

## 19. Polyphony.

Columbia University's Sonic Glossary defines polyphony as a texture with multiple independently meaningful melodies sounding together.

## 20. Four strings each.

These four common orchestral string instruments each normally use four strings, though alternate tunings and special instruments exist.

## 21. At age 11.

The Recording Academy's artist biography notes that Wonder signed with Motown's Tamla label at 11.

## 22. Harmonica, piano, or drums.

The Library of Congress biography notes that Wonder learned harmonica, piano, and drums while still very young.

## 23. Scott Joplin.

Joplin's 1899 composition became one of the best-known works of classic ragtime.

## 24. Johann Sebastian Bach.

Bach wrote the six concertos during his time in Cöthen; the Library of Congress describes them as concertos for several instruments.

## Hosting questions

## Does the game require music knowledge?

No. The set mixes familiar instruments, artists, and terms with a few deeper history questions.

## Are song lyrics included?

No. The questions use titles and music history without reproducing lyrics.

## Can this be used as an icebreaker?

Yes. The host can invite players to share a favorite style after each category.

## References


National Park Service overview of jazz roots and New Orleans context.

https://www.nps.gov/articles/jazz.htm

Library of Congress record and description for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and its setting of Schiller's Ode to Joy.

https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcwdl.wdl_15063/?sp=10&st=list

Library of Congress National Library Service discussion of The Nutcracker and Tchaikovsky.

https://blogs.loc.gov/nls-music-notes/2019/01/hoffmans-tales/

Philharmonia Orchestra instrument guide describes the oboe as a double-reed woodwind.

https://philharmonia.co.uk/resources/instruments/oboe/

Carnegie Hall learning resource defines forte, tempo, legato, and related expressive terms.

https://www.carnegiehall.org/Education/Programs/Link-Up/National-Program/The-Orchestra-Moves/Explore-Expressive-Qualities-in-Music-and-Movement

Rock & Roll Hall of Fame identifies the Beatles quartet.

https://rockhall.com/inductees/beatles/

Rock & Roll Hall of Fame biography of Jimi Hendrix and his electric-guitar approach.

https://rockhall.com/inductees/jimi-hendrix-experience/

Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture on hip-hop's Bronx origins.

https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/hip-hop-bronx

UNESCO description of reggae music of Jamaica.

https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/reggae-music-of-jamaica-01398

UNESCO describes flamenco through cante, baile, and toque.

https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/flamenco-00363

UNESCO source describes Indonesian gamelan and its instruments.

https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/53491-EN.pdf

Country Music Hall of Fame on Earl Scruggs and the banjo in bluegrass.

https://www.countrymusichalloffame.org/hall-of-fame/flatt-scruggs

UNESCO account of mariachi and modern ensemble instruments.

https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/mariachi-string-music-song-and-trumpet-00575

UNESCO description of tango as an Argentine and Uruguayan tradition.


1 inch / print at 100%

25 mm / print at 100%

https://ich.unesco.org/en/rl/tango-00258

UNESCO description of Cuban rumba performance and its music, dance, chants, and gestures.

https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/rumba-in-cuba-01185

Columbia University Sonic Glossary definition of polyphony.

https://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/sonicg/terms/polyphony.html

London Symphony Orchestra educational guide to orchestral instruments and their strings.

https://playapi.lso.co.uk/download/6/berlioz_inset_PDF.pdf

Recording Academy biography states Stevie Wonder signed to Motown’s Tamla at age 11.

https://www.grammy.com/artists/stevie-wonder/8257

Library of Congress biography of Stevie Wonder and early instruments.

https://www.loc.gov/item/n50013801/steve-wonder/

Library of Congress identifies Scott Joplin and Maple Leaf Rag.

https://blogs.loc.gov/nls-music-notes/2019/03/american-composers-and-musicians-from-a-to-z-j-part-1-joplin-scott/

Library of Congress concert program describes Bach’s six Brandenburg Concertos.

https://www.loc.gov/radioconcerts/programs/2009/program07.html

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

1 inch / print at 100%

25 mm / print at 100%