

Music Trivia Questions for Adults

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

Host guide / Letter / 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.

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.

CARDS / Music Trivia Questions for Adults

<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-001 / Jazz</p> <p>Which U.S. city is strongly associated with the early development of jazz?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-002 / Classical composers</p> <p>Which composer wrote the music for the finale of Symphony No. 9, setting Friedrich Schiller's "Ode to Joy" poem?</p>
<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-003 / Classical composers</p> <p>Who wrote the poem commonly known in English as "Ode to Joy"?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-004 / Classical composers</p> <p>Who composed the music for the ballet The Nutcracker?</p>
<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-005 / Instruments</p> <p>Which of these orchestral woodwind instruments uses a double reed: flute, clarinet, or oboe?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-006 / Music terms</p> <p>In standard music notation, what does forte (f) tell a performer?</p>

CARDS / Music Trivia Questions for Adults

<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-007 / Music terms</p> <p>What musical term describes the speed of a piece or passage?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-008 / Music terms</p> <p>Which term asks musicians to connect notes smoothly, without gaps between them?</p>
<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-009 / Rock and pop</p> <p>Which four musicians are known together as the Beatles' "Fab Four"?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-010 / Rock and pop</p> <p>Which instrument was central to Jimi Hendrix's sound and performance style?</p>
<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-011 / Hip-hop</p> <p>Which New York City borough is closely associated with hip-hop's emergence in the 1970s?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-012 / Global traditions</p> <p>Reggae is most closely associated with which Caribbean country?</p>

CARDS / Music Trivia Questions for Adults

<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-013 / Global traditions</p> <p>In flamenco, what three performance elements are called cante, baile, and toque?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-014 / Global traditions</p> <p>Gamelan is a traditional musical ensemble from which country?</p>
<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-015 / American roots</p> <p>Which instrument did Earl Scruggs help establish as a featured lead voice in bluegrass?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-016 / Global traditions</p> <p>Name two instruments commonly heard in a modern mariachi ensemble.</p>
<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-017 / Global traditions</p> <p>Tango developed in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, cities in which two countries?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-018 / Global traditions</p> <p>Which Cuban music-and-dance tradition may combine chants, handclapping, gestures, and percussion?</p>

CARDS / Music Trivia Questions for Adults

<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-019 / Music terms</p> <p>What is the musical texture called when two or more independent melodic lines sound at the same time?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-020 / Instruments</p> <p>How many strings does each instrument in the standard violin, viola, cello, and double-bass families normally have?</p>
<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-021 / Rock and pop</p> <p>At what age did Stevie Wonder sign a recording contract with Motown's Tamla label?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-022 / Rock and pop</p> <p>By age nine, name one instrument Stevie Wonder had learned to play.</p>
<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-023 / American roots</p> <p>Who composed the ragtime piece Maple Leaf Rag?</p>	<p>R_TRIVIA_MUSIC-024 / Classical composers</p> <p>Who composed the six Brandenburg Concertos?</p>

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.

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.

<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.iso.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.