

Example Trivia Questions

These are questions that we have asked the students in our Watson School Team Trivia Challenge. Students teams are typically given 20 questions per challenge. Some questions are genuine trivia; many of them require students to estimate values or apply their knowledge of physics, chemistry and mathematics.

Occasionally we add “canary” questions, basic tests of prerequisite knowledge such as calculus, in order to verify that students have retained material from their first year.

1. What is “contrail” a contraction of?
2. What is a zoonosis?
3. What is the most common metal in the earth’s crust?
4. What is the boiling temperature of water atop Mount Everest?
5. What code was mandated by the federal zone improvement plan?
6. What is oology the study of?
7. If an A is 440 Hz, what is an A#?
8. An equilateral triangle has three equal sides. An isosceles triangle has two equal sides. What type of triangle has no equal sides?
9. What chemical element is named after a state?
10. Write the longest word you can consisting entirely of dots in morse code. You will get 1 point per dot.
11. What is the fundamental frequency of the highest note on an 88-key piano?
12. What day of the year did Broome County have its highest water consumption?
13. In the *Hitchhiker’s guide to the Galaxy*, What is a hoolooovoo?
14. Surjections and bijections are two types of what?
15. What color is the black box flight recorder on airplanes?
16. What is the ANSI standard RGB values for safety orange?
17. What video game manufacturer was originally called the “Connecticut Leather Company?”
18. What element is added to steel to make it stainless steel?
19. What is the pdf for a Gaussian random variable?
20. Decimal is base 10, octal base 8. What is base 20 called?
21. Name a bridge going into Manhattan that isn’t a suspension bridge.
22. What movie’s title is a string of nucleotide bases?
23. Which color is refracted more by a prism, red or blue?
24. What’s the most common gas in the Jovian atmosphere?
25. What is bigger, an exabyte, a yottabyte, or a zettabyte?
26. How many constellations are there?
27. On a P-N diode, which end is the cathode?
28. How heavy does a bowling ball have to be to sink in water? Assume no finger holes.
29. Biology: is malaria caused by a virus or bacteria?
30. Charles Babbage and Alan Turing are both famous for breaking ciphers. Which ones, 5 points each?

31. If I roll six dice, which is more likely: that I get each number once, or all even numbers?
32. Which is more lard: enough lard to cover the continental United States 1 inch, or the annual US consumption of lard (in food)?
33. What are shadow, speedy, bashful and pokey?
34. FORTRAN is a contraction of "Formula Translator." What is LISP a contraction of?
35. What is the antiderivative of $\sin(x)\cos(x)$?
36. In the *Hitchhiker's guide to the Galaxy*, what is used as a universal translator?
37. Name a reverse-Polish programming language.
38. What is the most common compound in Portland cement powder (before mixing and hardening)?
39. What is 30MPG in inverse-acres?
40. Which grows faster, 2^n or $n!$?
41. Video games: what was the first video game to contain the Budweiser logo?
42. Which president held a US patent?
43. What printable character has the highest ASCII value? (points to the highest)
44. Why was the UNABOMBER called the UNABOMBER?
45. Which was invented first, the match or the lighter?
46. Argiria, or permanent blue skin, is caused by exposure to what chemical element?
47. What does a sphygmomanometer measure?
48. How high must you be in Binghamton to see the ocean?
49. What South American country is named after a chemical element?
50. How far away from Earth is the farthest human-made object?
51. What's the molar mass of table sugar (sucrose)?
52. In what state is the centroid of the continental US?
53. HHG2G: what was the name of Zaphod Beeblebrox's father?
54. On circuit diagrams, all the units are written in capital letters. Why?
55. What was the first human-made invention to break the sound barrier?
56. What is the Earth's orbital speed?
57. What does the Saffir-Simpson scale measure?
58. The first cryptosystem to use a key was published in what book?
59. True or false: Quicksort is $O(n^2)$.
60. How many zip codes add up to 8? (13902 adds up to 15.)
61. The rate of change of position is velocity, and the rate of change of velocity is acceleration. What is the rate of change of acceleration called?
62. What was the name of the ship that took Charles Darwin to the Galapagos islands?
63. What video game was so bad that Atari dumped hundreds of thousands of unsold copies in a New Mexico landfill and covered it with concrete? Hint: it was based on a movie.
64. What is the first fruit in Pac-Man?
65. Which came first? The electric sewing machine or AM radio?
66. Draw an exclusive-or gate made entirely out of NAND gates.
67. What does VGA stand for?
68. The word "galaxy" comes from the Greek word for what substance?