

Hosting Pro Tips

I pulled from my experience + asked some of our best hosts all around the country what they would recommend as hosting "Pro Tips" to make the ultimate trivia host! The best trivia hosts not only put on a good show for players, but also get emails to build the crowds, and have a ton of fun themselves!

If something has quotations around it, that means it came directly from a host. If it doesn't have quotes, that means it is coming from me. Enjoy and I hope this helps!

Crowd Interaction

Pull the "fake-out" move when multiple teams put the same wrong answer. For example: If the correct answer to a question is "George Washington," but multiple teams put "Thomas Jefferson" as their answer, when I read the answer out loud, I will say "Thomas Jefferson..... is NOT the right answer!" People go crazy and it is a lot of fun!

"Give shoutouts to fun team names and always promote emails, social media posts and veterans. Invigorate your own style, jokes and FUN into the game because that's what it's all about, having all the teams and hosts have fun!" -- Gilbert in Knoxville

Make fun of silly answers. If a team puts an answer that is clearly absurd, feel free to make fun of it in a fun-loving way. Don't be rude, but make people laugh. For example: If the question is "name the largest planet" and someone put "the moon" as their answer, that is definitely one that you could make a joke about. It can be as simple as "the answer definitely isn't the moon as one team put!"

"-Since there's only one of you compared to tons of players, and they see you week after week, they'll feel like they know you even though they might not seem that familiar to you. Trying to learn team names and players' names goes a LONG way.

-Lots of hosts feel like they need to be super funny and smart and it ends up coming off as unnatural or disingenuous. 'Just be yourself' sounds like a cliché, but it's really true in this case!

-Don't say things like "obviously" or "everyone knows" or "this is an easy one." If someone doesn't know, they'll feel stupid and that's not fun for players!" -- Kelsey in Asheville

"If I've got teams I know I can joke around with, if they're late turning answers in I make them do some kind of punishment. (5 jumping jacks, the cabbage patch dance, hop on one foot while they walk to me etc.)." -- Dani in Knoxville

Introduce yourself EVERY TIME.

You think your regulars will know who you are. But do they really? I had someone who plays every week think my name is Alex Abernathy because of the hint emails sent out.

I like to introduce myself with a silly/fun fact about me -

“Hi! I’m Becca. My favorite color is orange and I’m afraid of popping toasters.

OR sometimes I pull out a super random adjective that changes every week -

“Hi, I’m your spunky yet funky host, Becca - welcome to trivia!”

“Hi, I’m your Jersey Mikes-loving host, Becca - welcome to trivia!”

-Becca in Asheville

Interacting with the staff

“Make friends with the staff. More often than not, the person in charge will ask the staff how trivia went if they didn’t go. It can’t hurt for them to give a good review. So I just make a habit of getting names of staff members who work each Tuesday at my location and just give them a nice hello, goodbye, how are you, etc.” -- Matthew in Dallas

- This tip was echoed by multiple hosts around the country.

Towards the end of the game, remind people over the microphone to tip their wait staff. Will this actually make people tip more? Probably not. But will it make the staff appreciate you A TON? Oh yeah! I usually say “Just a quick reminder to everyone to tip your wait staff tonight, I can see how hard they are working and know they would appreciate it!”

Create a Playlist

Multiple hosts said they will look at the game beforehand and create a playlist for it. Some even get really creative and will add clues with the songs. For example, if an answer is “Mars” they might play a Bruno Mars song. Or if there is a question about New York, they might play “Empire State of Mind” by Jay-Z.

Most hosts play songs that are 4 minutes or longer for each round. This makes sure that you are never rushed when scoring. Especially during round 1, I always play a longer song (even 5 or 6 minutes) just to let myself settle in and get all the team names plugged into the sheet.

Starting the Game

When I host, I like to show up 15-20 minutes early so I don't feel rushed while setting up. If the game is supposed to start at 7:00, I will always start playing music and make an announcement at 6:55, then start introducing the game (going over the rules, etc.) by 7:05. If I do that, I usually have the first round up and running by 7:10. This allows some late people to jump in the game, while also buying you an easy 10 minutes right off the bat!

"Walk around. Especially when you first start out, don't be afraid to walk around to introduce yourself and pass out materials." -- Rebecca in Asheville

"Emphasize that it's free to play. My favorite line to say is "Totally free to play - you actually get PAID to be a nerd or if you're just plain lucky. Have fun and make sure you win so you can pay off that tab." -- Becca in Asheville

Tie Game

If I have a tie at the end of the game for a position that wins gift cards, here is how I separate the two teams. I will announce that each of the two teams needs to pick their smartest team member and send them up to my table. This puts all the pressure on one person and makes it feel like a game show.

After the two people come up, I will give them each a slip of paper and name a super well-known celebrity. They will each have to guess the age of that celebrity. They don't get to consult their teams; they have to answer on their own on the piece of paper. Whoever gets closest to the actual age wins.

Get Your Pens Back

Many hosts lose a lot of pens while hosting. If you want to retain more of them, have teams turn in their pens along with their final answer.

- “My pen retention rate has skyrocketed” -- Zach in Dallas

Get More Emails

Our email campaigns are the lifeblood of the business. They keep people coming back each week for trivia! If you are struggling to collect a lot of emails, here are a couple of super-moves that can help.

1. Instead of offering bonus points for one email per team. Offer one point per email, but cap it at five emails per team. So teams can give you five email addresses and earn up to 5 points.
2. Some hosts will also put out a sheet of paper on the table where they sat up where people can sign up for clues. If someone puts their email on the paper at the beginning of the game, the host will give them three clues for that night's game and we get the email!

“Enter player emails RIGHT AFTER the game. If you're anything like me, you WILL forget to send emails to admins on time. Just make it a task to do during half time or after the end of the game.” -- Becca in Asheville

Test Your Speakers Beforehand

This should be common sense. But if you have new speakers, set them up in your house one time and give them a whirl before you go host in person.

Watch the Videos

Colin will send you a link to the training videos that walk through everything step-by-step. Take about 20-30 minutes to thoroughly watch the videos to have a firm understanding of how everything works!

Have Fun!

“Invite your friends to come play as they will hype you up!” -- Nyssa in Dallas

“I’d say my biggest thing that I have to do every time I host is feel out the audience and know what’s going to hit with them. A younger crowd is going to like different music and different humor than an older crowd so know your crowd and adjust. Don’t be afraid of crowd work- talk to your teams over the speakers, crack jokes. Even if you’re making fun of them, they love it. Don’t worry about screwing something up, most of the time the people playing won’t notice and if they do, just call out your own mistake and joke about it, laugh with them. Most important thing is to have fun because if you’re not having a good time, the people playing probably aren’t either.” -- Maggie in Knoxville

“I would say most importantly make sure everyone is enjoying the game. It’s not the World Series of Trivia. We just want people to continue to come out week after week. I’m relatively lenient with answers in that way.” -- Chris in Knoxville

“Shoutout the venue. At the end of the day, you are there to make them money. If you see a server carrying some food, stop midway through your question and ooh and ahh over how good XYZ looks. Talk about whatever beer or cocktail you are drinking. Or if one of your teams gets a really pretty cocktail, comment on that! Make it seem like you are in love with their food and drinks.” -- Dani in Knoxville

“Don’t be afraid to interject your sense of humor into the game. The best games are ones that make people smile/have fun beyond just answering the questions. That’s how you engage the audience, boost attendance, and get regulars coming back.” - Matt in Dallas

“Make it your own!

People come for the good questions and fun format, but people STAY when hosts put their own twists to the game.

For example, I make some rounds “sponsored” by my cats. In the Entertainment Trivia question 3 with the Guess That Song, I call it “Milo’s Music Madness” and Round 7 is “Mixing Things Up with Mark”.

Before I begin Final Trivia I say “Hold on, let me set the mood...” then queue up Final Countdown by Europe to play in the background while I explain how to bid. Then sometimes, if a final question seems like it will be easy to most, I give them 36 seconds via the Jeopardy Think Music to get their final answers in after I read the question twice.” -- Becca in Asheville