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Let's Get Small

By [Pearl Chen](#)

New Yorkers love their pop culture minutia, and their efforts to show off that knowledge drive some of the most entertaining bar nights in town. Pearl Chen introduces us to the hottest places to show off your trivia acumen.

Which monarch is widely cited as having coined the golf term “caddy?” Secret Service agents took bullets for which two presidents in 1981 and 1950? On the TV show “Friends,” what day, month, and year did Phoebe say she’s going to die?

If questions like these get your wheels spinning, (answers below, BTW), you belong at trivia night. As home to some of the smartest people in the world, New York has no shortage of

bars and restaurants where people can test their wits through regular competitions. But for a select crop of organizers, taking the contest to the next level has become a passion — and, serious business. From marathon tournaments to multimedia clues to singles-mingling rounds, these events aren't just for trivia buffs — they can also be some of the most mind-twisting entertainment the city has to offer. The following trivia nights, three of the city's best, are all rotating events, occurring in varying locations. Check the websites for locations and dates.

Trivia, A.D.



Winners at Trivia, A.D. enjoying their prizes of "Seinfeld" memorabilia.

In creating their Trivia, A.D. night, Amy Gerson and David Oliver took inspiration from their mutual love of television and films from the 80s and 90s, and their events are an excellent way to relive those eras. Competitions are built around iconic television shows such as "Friends," "Seinfeld," "Saved by the Bell," "Sex and the City," "Full House," and "90210." Dana Baron of "90210" fame once dropped by, and in June, more than 115 teams competed in a "Seinfeld" tournament.

Trivia, A.D. stokes nostalgia in other ways as well, as many of its events takes place at themed venues throughout the city. Big Daddy's in Gramercy, for instance, features 80s cereal boxes on its shelves, and the venues give away prizes like gift certificates and sitcom memorabilia to the winners.

Oliver and Gerson are also happy to add to their quiz repertoire if a fan presents a quality idea, so don't be surprised if recent shows — like "LOST," "Glee," and "How I Met Your Mother" — find their way into the mix.

COST: Free to play, \$20 food/drink minimums at some venues

SAMPLE QUESTION: In "Saved by the Bell," what is the letter and number of Zack and Kelly's song on the jukebox at the Max?



Noah Tarnow hosts the Big Quiz Thing.

[The Big Quiz Thing](#)

With video puzzles, audio games, music, and comedy, the Big Quiz Thing is not just a contest; it's a "completely original, full-on multimedia entertainment experience," says founder and host Noah Tarnow, who's also the copy chief at "Time Out New York." "I felt that New York needed something more in a live trivia show," says Tarnow, who founded the event in 2002. "I had been a stand-up comic and a trivia geek, so I figured I was the ideal person to do it."

Questions are not necessarily about "absurdly obscure knowledge," but more about "lateral thinking and knowledge puzzles," explains Tarnow. "The best questions are 'figureoutable,' I like to say — a New Yorker with a decent cultural education always has a shot to do well, if not win." And even if you can't fathom the answer, you might still be able to pick up "Smart Ass" points for wrong but funny guesses. Prizes can go as high as \$200, and in September, the grand prize was \$1,000 for the "Clash of the Trivia Champions" competition, held at the Highline Ballroom for the top teams from the city's best bar trivia nights.

In addition to New York events, Tarnow has expanded the trivia business throughout the East Coast, thanks in large part to a dedicated fan base. "I'm most proud of the people who never win," he says, "yet come back again and again because they love the show."

COST: \$7 to play (more for special events), two-item minimum at most venues

SAMPLE QUESTION: What Hollywood star's name is the inverse of a casino game?

[TriviaTryst](#)



Chelsea Galen plays both host and DJ at TriviaTryst.

"People can expect a much more social game playing TriviaTryst than other types of bar trivia," says founder Bryce Galen, an entrepreneur and real estate professional who wanted to expand trivia's appeal beyond niche quiz shows in local bars. Singles may find a unique twist in the event's "Tryst Rounds." "You get to work with people across the bar who aren't directly part of your team . . . and you never know who you'll meet," explains Galen, while noting that TriviaTryst attracts the attached as well. "It's not a bad date idea, because a lot of conversation topics naturally come up, and you can see how smart your date is."

Given this social aspect, TriviaTryst can feel more like a club than a typical brainy contest. Pop and hip-hop music between questions keeps the atmosphere energetic (though also quite loud for discussions), and the event attracts a professional, after-work crowd. Weekly contests run throughout Manhattan, with questions covering topics like movies, music, fashion, sports, business, history, science, and food — and may include a super-tough letter-unscrambling round. Each team assigns point values to their answers depending on how confident they feel about them, and extra points are awarded for funny team names (like "Horsedrawn Miscarriage"). "It's usually the most conservative-looking business people that come up with the freakiest team names," says Galen. At the end, top teams win \$50, \$25, or \$10 off their check (or, depending on the venue, other prizes, like a free brunch or a private movie screening).

COST: Free to play, no food/drink minimums

SAMPLE QUESTION: In what month does the government's fiscal year begin?

Answers to trivia questions, in order — from introduction: Mary Queen of Scots; Presidents Reagan and Truman; October 15, 2032. Sample questions, in order: A12, Jack Black, October

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