New Year's trivia questions and answers

50 questions in 5 rounds. The answer key is on the last page.

Round 1: Traditions and customs

1. Which song is traditionally sung at midnight on New Year's Eve in English-speaking countries?

A. Happy Birthday
B. Auld Lang Syne
C. Jingle Bells
D. Danny Boy

2. What does the title Auld Lang Syne mean in plain English?

A. Happy new year
B. Farewell, my friend
C. Cheers to you
D. Times gone by

3. What is lowered in Times Square in New York City at midnight on December 31?

A. A lighted ball
B. A giant star
C. A giant clock
D. A glowing apple

4. January is named after Janus, the Roman god of what?

A. War
B. The harvest
C. The sea
D. Doors and beginnings

5. Which ancient people are among the first known to make promises to their gods at the start of a new year?

A. Babylonians
B. Vikings
C. Aztecs
D. Ancient Greeks

6. Which food is traditionally eaten on New Year's Day for luck in the American South?

A. Baked beans
B. Black-eyed peas
C. Lima beans
D. Chickpeas

7. In Spain, how many grapes are eaten at midnight, one for each chime of the clock?

A. 7
B. 10
C. 12
D. 24

8. Which of these is a traditional first-footing gift for the first visitor of the year in Scotland?

A. A feather
B. A lump of coal
C. A horseshoe
D. A bar of soap

9. What is the name of the Jewish New Year?

A. Rosh Hashanah
B. Yom Kippur
C. Hanukkah
D. Purim

10. Lunar New Year moves each year, but always falls in January or which other month?

A. March
B. December
C. February
D. April

Round 2: Around the world

11. Which city's harbor fireworks, over a famous bridge and opera house, are shown on TV around the world every year?

A. Rio de Janeiro
B. Hong Kong
C. Sydney
D. Dubai

12. In Brazil, which color do many people wear on New Year's Eve for peace?

A. Red
B. White
C. Yellow
D. Green

13. In which country do people smash old plates against friends' doors on New Year's Eve?

A. Denmark
B. Norway
C. Poland
D. Ireland

14. In Japan, how many times are temple bells rung on New Year's Eve?

A. 100
B. 12
C. 108
D. 365

15. What is the Scottish name for New Year's Eve celebrations?

A. Samhain
B. Hogmanay
C. Beltane
D. Burns Night

16. Which food do Italians eat at New Year because the small round shapes look like coins?

A. Lentils
B. Pasta
C. Polenta
D. Artichokes

17. Songkran, a water-splashing new year festival in mid-April, is best known in which country?

A. Thailand
B. Japan
C. Spain
D. Peru

18. Which Pacific island nation includes Kiritimati, one of the first places on Earth to reach each new year?

A. Fiji
B. Kiribati
C. Samoa
D. Tonga

19. In Chinese New Year tradition, what color are the envelopes that hold gifts of money?

A. Green
B. White
C. Blue
D. Red

20. Which animal comes first in the Chinese zodiac cycle?

A. Ox
B. Tiger
C. Dragon
D. Rat

Round 3: History and dates

21. The Gregorian calendar, used by most of the world, is named after which pope?

A. Pius V
B. Gregory XIII
C. Leo X
D. Urban VIII

22. Who introduced the Julian calendar in 45 BC?

A. Augustus
B. Nero
C. Julius Caesar
D. Constantine

23. How many days does a leap year have?

A. 365
B. 366
C. 364
D. 367

24. What was the name of the computer bug feared at midnight on December 31, 1999?

A. The Y2K bug
B. Heartbleed
C. Stuxnet
D. Code Red

25. In which year did euro coins and notes enter circulation?

A. 1999
B. 2000
C. 2004
D. 2002

26. On January 1, 1863, which US president's Emancipation Proclamation took effect?

A. Andrew Johnson
B. Ulysses Grant
C. James Buchanan
D. Abraham Lincoln

27. Ellis Island opened to immigrants on January 1 of which year?

A. 1886
B. 1892
C. 1901
D. 1924

28. On January 1, 1801, astronomer Giuseppe Piazzi discovered Ceres. What is it classed as today?

A. A comet
B. A moon
C. A dwarf planet
D. A star

29. On January 1, 1983, which early network switched to the TCP/IP protocols the internet still uses?

A. ARPANET
B. Ethernet
C. Usenet
D. BITNET

30. What was the first month of the old Roman calendar?

A. March
B. January
C. February
D. September

Round 4: Songs, movies and culture

31. Which 1989 romantic comedy ends at a New Year's Eve party?

A. Sleepless in Seattle
B. When Harry Met Sally...
C. Pretty Woman
D. Splash

32. In which 1972 disaster film is a ship turned upside down by a giant wave on New Year's Eve?

A. The Towering Inferno
B. Airport
C. Earthquake
D. The Poseidon Adventure

33. Which band recorded the song Happy New Year, released in 1980?

A. ABBA
B. Bee Gees
C. Queen
D. Wham!

34. Which band had a 1983 hit called New Year's Day?

A. Duran Duran
B. U2
C. The Police
D. Genesis

35. Which artist's 1982 song says to party like it's 1999?

A. Prince
B. Michael Jackson
C. Madonna
D. David Bowie

36. Which TV host created New Year's Rockin' Eve in 1972?

A. Ed Sullivan
B. Johnny Carson
C. Merv Griffin
D. Dick Clark

37. Which bandleader's version of Auld Lang Syne became a fixture of New Year's Eve broadcasts in America?

A. Glenn Miller
B. Benny Goodman
C. Guy Lombardo
D. Duke Ellington

38. Which famous bell in London is heard on TV at midnight to mark the new year?

A. Bow Bells
B. Great Paul
C. Big Ben
D. Tom Tower

39. The Rose Bowl, usually played on New Year's Day, is a game of which sport?

A. American football
B. Baseball
C. Rugby
D. Basketball

40. Which is the Spanish way to say Happy New Year?

A. Bonne année
B. Feliz Año Nuevo
C. Buon anno
D. Frohes neues Jahr

Round 5: Food, drink and mixed bag

41. Champagne takes its name from a region of which country?

A. France
B. Italy
C. Spain
D. Germany

42. Champagne's bubbles come from a second what, in the bottle?

A. Fermentation
B. Filtration
C. Freezing
D. Pressing

43. Which brunch drink mixes sparkling wine with orange juice?

A. Bellini
B. Mimosa
C. Kir Royale
D. Spritz

44. A Bellini is made of Prosecco and the purée of which fruit?

A. Strawberry
B. Mango
C. Peach
D. Pear

45. Which deep-fried dough balls, often dusted with sugar, do the Dutch eat on New Year's Eve?

A. Stroopwafels
B. Poffertjes
C. Speculaas
D. Oliebollen

46. Which leafy greens are eaten at New Year in the American South because they look like folded money?

A. Iceberg lettuce
B. Endive
C. Collard greens
D. Watercress

47. What does Dry January mean giving up for the month?

A. Sugar
B. Meat
C. Caffeine
D. Alcohol

48. Which gemstone is the traditional birthstone for January?

A. Garnet
B. Ruby
C. Emerald
D. Sapphire

49. Which zodiac sign covers January 1 on most calendars?

A. Aquarius
B. Capricorn
C. Sagittarius
D. Pisces

50. In which hemisphere does New Year's Day fall in summer?

A. Northern
B. Southern
C. Eastern
D. Western

Answer key

Round 1: Traditions and customs

1. B. Auld Lang Syne (The Scots poet Robert Burns wrote down the words in 1788.)
2. D. Times gone by (Literally it is Scots for "old long since".)
3. A. A lighted ball (The first ball drop was held in 1907.)
4. D. Doors and beginnings (Janus had two faces, one looking back and one looking forward.)
5. A. Babylonians (Their Akitu festival marked the new year.)
6. B. Black-eyed peas (They are often served in a dish called Hoppin' John.)
7. C. 12 (Each grape stands for one month of the coming year.)
8. B. A lump of coal (Shortbread and whisky are also traditional.)
9. A. Rosh Hashanah (It falls in early autumn, not on January 1.)
10. C. February (It lands between about January 21 and February 20.)

Round 2: Around the world

11. C. Sydney (The Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House form the backdrop.)
12. B. White (Many also jump seven waves at the beach for luck.)
13. A. Denmark (A big pile of broken china on your step means many friends.)
14. C. 108 (In Buddhist belief the number matches human worldly desires.)
15. B. Hogmanay (Edinburgh holds one of the best-known Hogmanay street parties.)
16. A. Lentils (They are often served with sausage.)
17. A. Thailand (People splash water on each other to wash away bad luck.)
18. B. Kiribati (Kiritimati sits in a time zone 14 hours ahead of UTC.)
19. D. Red (Red stands for good luck. The envelopes are called hongbao.)
20. D. Rat (The Rat leads a cycle of 12 animals that repeats every 12 years.)

Round 3: History and dates

21. B. Gregory XIII (He introduced it in 1582.)
22. C. Julius Caesar (It had 365 days with a leap day every fourth year.)
23. B. 366 (The extra day is February 29.)
24. A. The Y2K bug (Systems were fixed beforehand and few serious problems followed.)
25. D. 2002 (The euro existed as an accounting currency from 1999.)
26. D. Abraham Lincoln (It declared enslaved people in Confederate-held areas free.)
27. B. 1892 (The first person processed was Annie Moore from Ireland.)
28. C. A dwarf planet (It was first called a planet, later an asteroid.)
29. A. ARPANET (The date is often called the internet's birthday.)
30. A. March (That is why September to December mean seventh to tenth.)

Round 4: Songs, movies and culture

31. B. When Harry Met Sally... (Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan star.)
32. D. The Poseidon Adventure (The survivors climb up toward the hull.)
33. A. ABBA (It appears on their album Super Trouper.)
34. B. U2 (Bono has linked it to Poland's Solidarity movement.)
35. A. Prince (The song's title is simply 1999.)
36. D. Dick Clark (He was nicknamed America's oldest teenager.)
37. C. Guy Lombardo (His band played it on New Year's Eve for decades.)

38. C. Big Ben (Big Ben is the nickname of the Great Bell of the clock tower.)
39. A. American football (It is played in Pasadena, California.)
40. B. Feliz Año Nuevo (Spain and Latin America share it.)

Round 5: Food, drink and mixed bag

41. A. France (Under EU law only sparkling wine from there may be called champagne.)
42. A. Fermentation (Yeast turns added sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide.)
43. B. Mimosa (A Bellini uses peach purée.)
44. C. Peach (It was created in Venice at Harry's Bar in the 1940s.)
45. D. Oliebollen (Raisins are a common addition.)
46. C. Collard greens (They often share the plate with black-eyed peas.)
47. D. Alcohol (A public campaign started it in the UK in 2013.)
48. A. Garnet (Garnets are most often deep red.)
49. B. Capricorn (Capricorn runs roughly from December 22 to January 19.)
50. B. Southern (Australians celebrate with beach days and barbecues.)