

Project: Totally Stumped!

Company: BinaryLabs, Inc.

Challenge: Ensure that trivia questions submitted by a team of remote contractors have the “cool” factor required to keep tweens engaged.

My solution: Write a “Tips and Tricks” job aid to guide the team.

Trivia Questions—Tips and Tricks

1. The “Did you know...?” Factor

Questions that have the “Did you know...?” factor illicit these responses:

“I should have known that!”

“No WAY!”

“That’s cool!”

“Whoa...”

“Wait till I tell...”

The bottom line is that our questions need to be based on cool stuff that kids will find interesting—whether they know the answer or not. They should want to share these fascinating bits of trivia with their friends.

2. Make it Personal

When appropriate, use the word “you” to make the questions more personal and relevant.

Generic

True or False: Cactus juice is a good source of liquid for desert survival.

vs.

Personal

True or False: You can survive for days in the desert by drinking cactus juice.

3. Interesting Approaches

Find different approaches to asking questions that make them sound less like dictionary definitions and more like cool stuff to know.

Standard

A thespian is:

- a. an actor
- b. a lawyer
- c. a dancer
- d. a bird doctor

Different

Who was a famous thespian?

- a. Marilyn Monroe
- b. Ben Franklin
- c. Florence Nightingale
- d. Babe Ruth

Or...

Where does a thespian work?

- a. hospital
- b. theater
- c. farm
- d. accounting firm

4. The Impossible

- a. Don't ask questions that kids won't know because the content is outdated.

Don't Ask

Which was a character on *Cheers*?

- a. Bobby
- b. Norm
- c. Charles
- d. Horton

Kids in our target age group are not familiar with *Cheers*.

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b. Do ask questions that kids won't know the answer to if the information is something they would enjoy knowing.

Do Ask

What was found inside a computer that started the term "bug"?

- a. cockroach
- b. fly
- c. moth
- d. spider

Or...

True or False: Bill Gates was a college dropout?

5. Pop Culture

Incorporate pop culture as much as possible... without including fads or other information that will soon be outdated.

6. Humor

When appropriate, incorporate humor into your question and/or answer choices.

Funny

What do you call a female ferret?

- a. Betty
- b. Jill
- c. Jean
- d. Sue

Or...

What is slang for the lowest gear on a mountain bike?

- a. flat gear
- b. granny gear
- c. slow poke gear
- d. zero gear

7. Keep it Casual

The language and feel of our questions should be casual vs. encyclopedic. Our questions should also be straightforward, clear, and concise. We do not want to be extra hip or trendy, nor do we want to sound too straight-laced and highbrow.

Highbrow

Which one of the following is the definition of zoophobia?

- a. the fear of animals
- b. the fear of zoos
- c. the fear of veterinarians
- d. the fear of movies

Casual

If you have Xenophobia, what do you fear?

- a. strangers
- b. suffocation
- c. copy machines
- d. travel

8. Dialog

Remember that these questions are audio-only, not text. Read all of your questions out loud to make sure they sound good. You are really writing dialog, and it is important that the language sounds natural.

9. Just the Facts

All of the information in our questions must be true and valid. Please double-check all information for accuracy. Also, please keep track of your source(s) of information for each question.

10. Concatenation

Our goal is to fit as many trivia questions as we possibly can onto the cartridge for our game. To do this, we want to write our questions with efficient concatenation in mind.

We are willing to sacrifice variety in the wording of our questions for the sake of good concatenation.

Please review and follow the guidelines presented in the Trivia Question Concatenation document.

11. Formats

The following formats may be used:

- a. Multiple Choice
 - i. A full question stem
 - ii. A partial question stem
- b. True/False

Multiple Choice – Full Question Stem

What's the name of Bart Simpson's dog?

- a. Always Comes in Second
- b. Mr. Mutt
- c. Santa's Little Helper
- d. The Runt

Multiple Choice – Partial Question Stem

A gaffer works in a:

- a. greenhouse
- b. laundromat
- c. movie studio
- d. construction site

True/False

True or False? The tongue of a blue whale weighs more than a full-grown elephant.