

Humility

An Uncertain Trivia Game, for an Uncertain World

The hard thing with trivia games, I find, is that you have to *know* things. Like, actual *facts*. It's very confrontational of the world, to expect me to know things about it. Instead, I offer you this trivia game, specifically designed so that you don't need to know a single fact.

At least, not exactly.

What you will need, though, is a big dose of the titular virtue. An overly precise guess (even a fairly accurate one!) will spell defeat. The secret is to know what you know—and, even more important, what you don't.

The Rules

How many players? Three to eight. (See the end of the document for a two-player variant.)

What do you need? Pencils, paper, and—at least for the first few minutes—the internet.

Have everybody take five minutes to come up with a few trivia questions whose answers are (a) numbers, and (b) easily Googled.



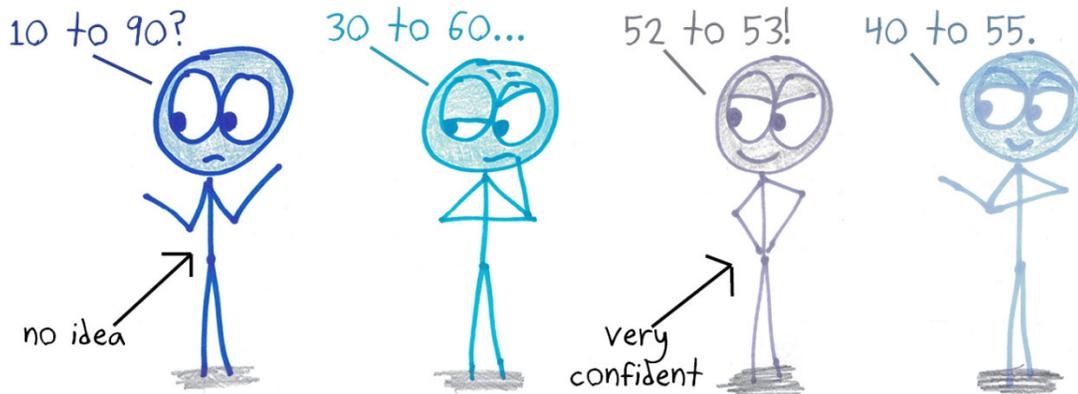
What's the goal? With these trivia questions, you won't know the precise answers. Instead, you'll guess a range, trying to make it as narrow as possible while still including the true answer.

What are the rules?

1. One player—the judge for the round—announces the trivia question. The other players act as guessers, each writing down a range of values.



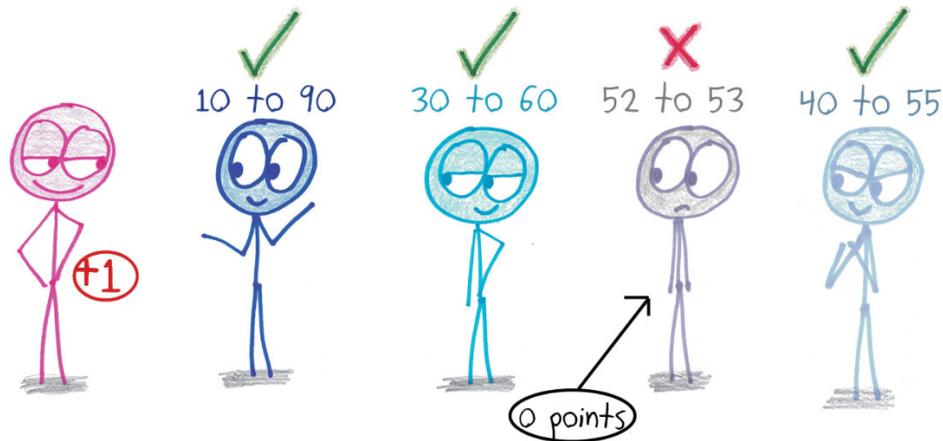
2. When everyone is ready, the guesses are revealed. The goal is to **capture the true value**, while keeping your range as **narrow as possible**.



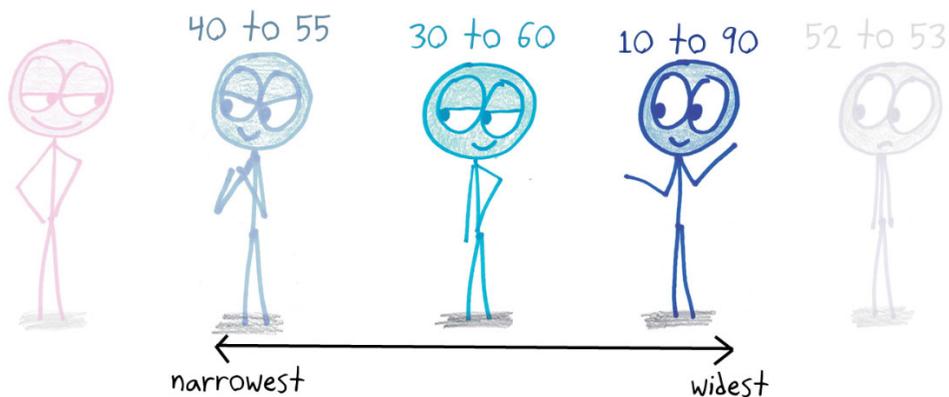
3. The judge reveals the true answer.



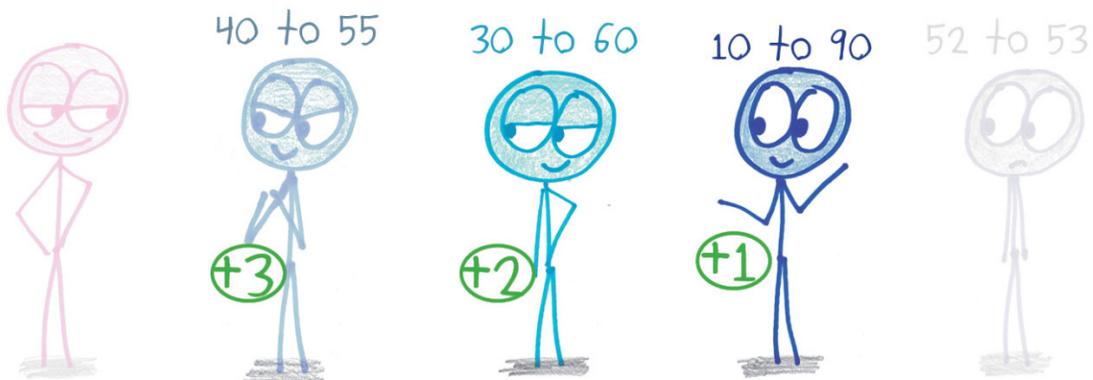
4. **Anyone who missed the answer**—no matter how painfully close they came—**receives zero points**. Instead, the **judge receives one point per wrong guess**, as a reward.



5. Then, among the players with the correct answer, **order them from “narrowest range”** (i.e., most impressive guess) **to “widest range”** (i.e., least impressive guess.)



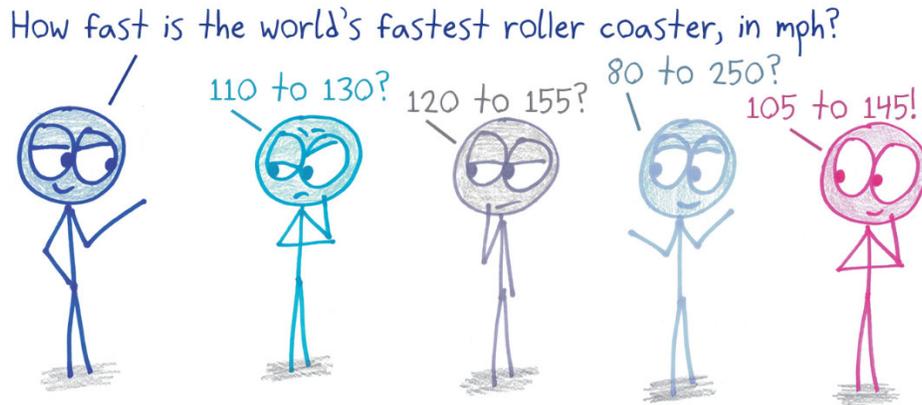
6. These players receive **one point per guesser that they beat**.



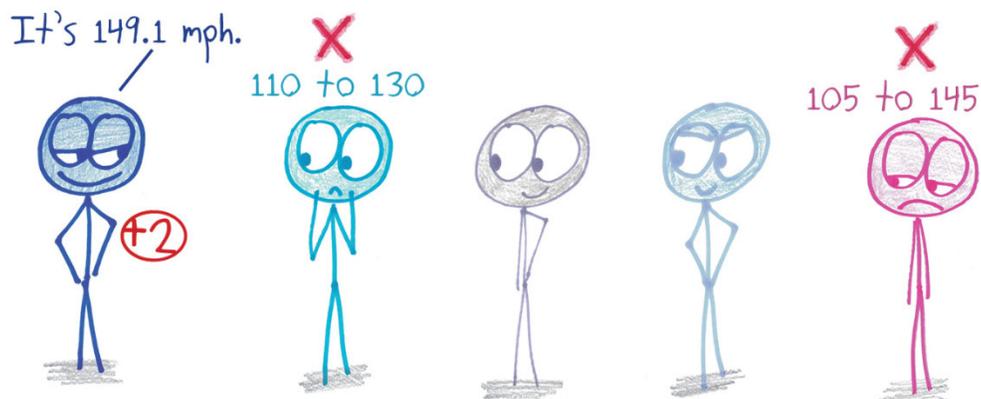
7. Play enough rounds so that each person has the same number of chances to be judge. At the end, the player with the most points is the winner.

Can I see another sample round?

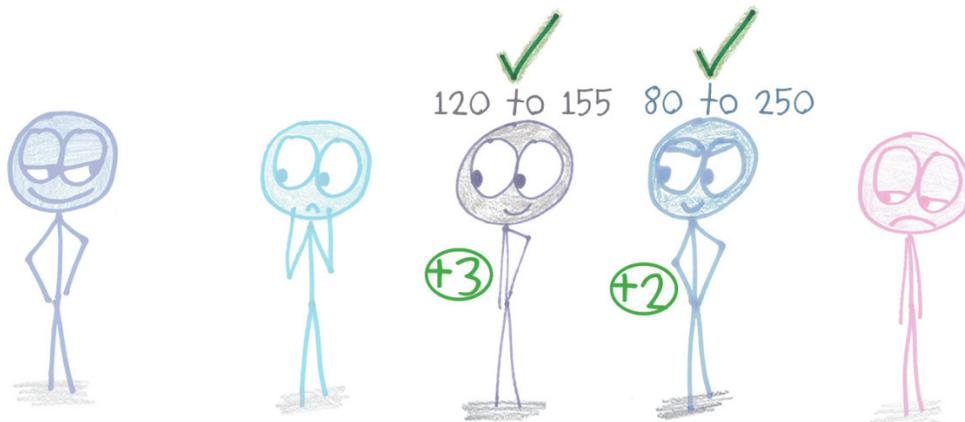
Sure. Here's the question, and the guesses:



Now, the judge reveals the answer. Two guessers missed this one.



Finally, points are awarded to the accurate guessers. The winner beat all three rival guessers; hence, three points. The runner-up beat the two wrong guessers; hence, two points.



Two-Player Variant

1. Each round, agree on a **fair, easily Googled trivia question** with a numerical answer.
2. Secretly **estimate a range** in which you believe this value will fall.
3. Look up the answer.
4. If you capture the truth, and your opponent does not, then you score a point.
5. If you both capture the truth, then the point goes to **whoever had the narrower range**.
6. If neither player captures the truth, then no one scores a point.

Advice for Writing Questions

Spend five minutes on Google and/or Wikipedia before the game begins, so that by the time it's your turn to judge, you've got 2-3 questions ready to roll.

Avoid ridiculously hard questions. Everyone will just shrug and give ranges like “zero to a trillion.” Thus, you score no points as judge, *and* you destroy fun. Shame on you.

Instead, seek **tempting questions that will catch overconfident folks**—things you feel like you *should* know, but actually you don't.

Some ideas, if you're feeling stuck:

- Age of Jamie Foxx
- Age at which Abraham Lincoln died
- Age of the oldest-ever manatee
- Amount of money Judge Judy makes per year
- Distance to the moon in miles
- Length of Bohemian Rhapsody
- Length of Canada's coastline
- Length of Nelson Mandela's prison term
- Length of the longest fingernails ever (i.e., Guinness world record holder)
- NBA season record for rebounds per game
- NFL single-season record for most interceptions thrown
- Number of episodes to date of Sesame Street
- Number of lakes in Minnesota
- Number of novels by Nora Roberts
- Number of studio albums by Enrique Iglesias
- Number of U.S. states with wild alligators
- Percentage of the presidential vote won by Ross Perot in 1992
- Percentage of the U.S. that identifies as Black or African-American
- Percentage of the U.S. that identifies as male
- Population of Bolivia
- Population of Boston (city, not metro area)
- Population of Europe
- Pounds of trash generated per day by the average U.S. citizen
- Price for which the most recent Van Gogh painting sold
- Price for which the first ever Van Gogh painting sold
- Total box office for “Avengers: Endgame”
- Total value of the Disney Corporation
- Year in which the last French king was born
- Year in which the first Nobel prizes were given
- Year the first Harry Potter book was published