New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day Trivia

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. During the famous Times Square countdown, which illuminated object descends toward midnight?
   - A. A ball
   - B. An hourglass
   - C. A ring
   - D. A lantern shaped like a moon

   Correct answer: A. A ball
   Times Square’s countdown is marked by an illuminated ball lowered from a pole.

2. You are invited to a New Year’s Eve countdown in Madrid. Which fruit is traditionally eaten to the sound of the midnight chimes?
   - A. Olives
   - B. Cherries
   - C. Grapes
   - D. Raspberries

   Correct answer: C. Grapes
   The tradition is to eat a grape with each of the twelve chimes.

3. Which Scottish song associated with Robert Burns has become a New Year’s sing-along?
   - A. The Skye Boat Song
   - B. Auld Lang Syne
   - C. My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean
   - D. Loch Lomond

   Correct answer: B. Auld Lang Syne
   Auld Lang Syne is closely associated with New Year celebrations. Manuscripts and early printed versions connect it with Robert Burns.

4. A photo of New Year’s Eve shows fireworks over the arch of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Which country hosted the celebration?
   - A. South Africa
   - B. New Zealand
   - C. Canada
   - D. Australia

   Correct answer: D. Australia
   Sydney is in Australia. The bridge is a landmark of the city’s harbor celebrations.

5. Which California city began the New Year’s Day parade now known as the Rose Parade?

A. Santa Barbara
B. Pasadena
C. Sacramento
D. Palm Springs

Correct answer: B. Pasadena
Pasadena’s Valley Hunt Club organized the first parade in 1890.

6. At a Scottish Hogmanay gathering, which guest counts as the first-footer?

A. The first person to enter the home after midnight
B. The last person to leave before midnight
C. The guest who arrives first in the afternoon
D. The guest who sends the first greeting by mail

Correct answer: A. The first person to enter the home after midnight
First-footing is the tradition of being the first visitor to enter a home in the new year.

7. Which dish is traditionally served in Japan as toshikoshi soba on New Year’s Eve?

A. Sweet chestnut paste
B. Grilled rice cakes
C. Steamed red beans
D. Buckwheat noodles

Correct answer: D. Buckwheat noodles
Toshikoshi soba means year-crossing soba. The long noodles are associated with wishes for a long life.

8. Japanese temple bells sounded for Joya no Kane traditionally ring how many times in total?

A. 60
B. 24
C. 108
D. 100

Correct answer: C. 108
The New Year’s bell tradition calls for 108 tolls. Individual temples can differ in when they begin ringing.

9. The Vienna Philharmonic’s New Year’s Concert has a long tradition of featuring music by which family of composers?

A. The Strauss family
B. The Schumann family
C. The Mendelssohn family
D. The Scarlatti family

Correct answer: A. The Strauss family
Music by Johann Strauss and other members of the Strauss family is central to the concert’s tradition.

10. A venue uses 24-hour time on its ticket. Which entry identifies midnight at the start of New Year’s Day?

A. 23:59 on January 1
B. 00:00 on December 31
C. 12:00 on January 1
D. 00:00 on January 1

Correct answer: D. 00:00 on January 1
The entry 00:00 is midnight at the beginning of the stated date. At 12:00 the same day, it is noon.

11. Times Square hosted a New Year’s Eve celebration in 1904. The first ball drop marked the end of 1907. How many years apart are those December 31 events?

A. Four
B. Two
C. Three
D. Seven

Correct answer: C. Three
The celebrations and the ball drop have different starting dates. The difference between December 31, 1904 and December 31, 1907 is three years.

12. A fictional station’s local clock is two hours ahead of UTC. A signal arrives at 22:30 UTC on December 31. What local date and time should the log show?

A. 00:30 on December 31
B. 00:30 on January 1
C. 20:30 on December 31
D. 22:30 on January 1

Correct answer: B. 00:30 on January 1
Adding two hours crosses midnight. The local clock reads 00:30 and the local calendar has advanced to January 1.

13. Early Rose Parade organizers covered carriages with fresh blooms in January. What feature of Pasadena were they highlighting?

A. Its hills naturally display red flowers all year without cultivation.
B. Its winters reliably produce the deepest snow in California.
C. Its winter festival always coincides with summer elsewhere in the state.
D. Its mild winters can support fresh flowers.

Correct answer: D. Its mild winters can support fresh flowers.
The organizers used winter blooms to show visitors how mild Pasadena’s winter climate was.

14. The Greenwich Time Ball was in use decades before the first Times Square ball drop. Who used the Greenwich signal to set timepieces?

A. Crews aboard ships on the Thames
B. Paris railway crews timing the first train
C. Viennese musicians tuning for the new year
D. Spanish grape growers checking harvest times

Correct answer: A. Crews aboard ships on the Thames
The observatory dropped its ball at a known time so that mariners could set their clocks and chronometers from the visible signal.

15. A researcher finds an English record from before the 1752 calendar change. Under the old legal rule, on which date did the year begin?

A. March 21
B. January 1
C. March 25
D. December 25

Correct answer: C. March 25
The English legal year used to begin on March 25, also called Lady Day. The 1752 change moved the legal start to January 1.