FREE PRINTABLE

Thanksgiving Turkey Trivia

35 questions for the table, easy to hard. Read them aloud, or pass the page around.

TEAM _____

SCORE _____ out of 35

ROUND 1 · EASY *One point each*

1. What is a male turkey called?
2. What is a female turkey called?
3. What is a baby turkey called?
4. True or false: wild turkeys can fly.
5. Where do wild turkeys usually spend the night?
6. True or false: turkeys stare up at the rain until they drown.
7. True or false: Benjamin Franklin proposed the turkey as the national bird.
8. True or false: the turkey is what makes you sleepy after Thanksgiving dinner.
9. Which president proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving in 1863?
10. What does the president grant one lucky turkey at the White House each Thanksgiving?
11. Is a Turkey Vulture a kind of turkey?



John James Audubon, Wild Turkey (Great American Cock), The Birds of America, plate 1 (1827)

HOW TO PLAY

One person is the quizmaster and keeps pages 3 and 4, the answers.

Everyone else plays alone or in teams: write an answer on each line, or just call them out.

Round 1 is worth one point a question, round 2 two points, round 3 three.

After each answer, the quizmaster reads out the story behind it.

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ROUND 2 · MEDIUM *Two points each*

12. What is a group of turkeys called?

13. What is a young male turkey called?

14. What is a turkey's snood?

15. What is a turkey's wattle?

16. What is a turkey's “beard” made of?

17. What makes a male turkey's head change color?

18. How fast can a wild turkey run?

19. From how far away can a wild turkey's gobble be heard?

20. You can tell a male wild turkey from a female by the shape of what?

21. The turkey is an American bird. What is it believed to be named after?

22. The editor who spent decades asking for a national Thanksgiving also wrote which nursery rhyme?

23. Under which president did the Thanksgiving turkey pardon become a formal yearly tradition, in 1989?

ROUND 2 · MEDIUM *continued*

24. In 1921 a turkey named Supreme II set out for the White House by airplane. How did the trip end?

25. About how many turkeys do Americans eat at Thanksgiving?

26. Which state raises the most turkeys?

27. Which bird is plate 1 of John James Audubon's The Birds of America?

28. About how many wild turkeys live in the United States today?

29. Which is the only state with no wild turkeys?

30. A big dark bird soars overhead with its wings in a V, tilting from side to side. Wild Turkey or Turkey Vulture?

ROUND 3 · HARD *Three points each*

31. What is a young female turkey called?

32. In his 1784 letter, Benjamin Franklin wrote that the turkey would not hesitate to attack whom?

33. Which president moved Thanksgiving a week earlier in 1939, worried about a short Christmas shopping season?

34. The net that helped bring wild turkeys back was first designed to catch which birds?

35. About how many feathers does an adult wild turkey have?

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The answers, and the story behind each one

1. **A tom, or a gobbler**
   The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service uses both names for the same bird. He is not the only one who shows off, either: some hens strut and fan their tail feathers, too.

2. **A hen**
   A grown female is a hen, the Illinois Natural History Survey says. Gobbler is its general word for any male, and a tom is a grown male of two years or more.

3. **A poult**
   Poults eat insects like candy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says. They only develop more of a taste for plants after they are four weeks old.

4. **True**
   A wild turkey can fly 35 to 50 miles per hour for up to a mile, University of Illinois Extension says, and it can swim when it needs to. Farm turkeys are another story: domestic turkeys don't fly well.

5. **Up in tall trees**
   They get around mostly by walking or running, the Audubon field guide says, but they can fly strongly, and they typically roost overnight in tall trees.

6. **False**
   Some turkeys do have a genetic condition that can make them look up at the sky. But no turkey with it has ever been documented drowning in a rainstorm, University of Illinois Extension says.

7. **False**
   He never proposed it, the National Wild Turkey Federation says. In a letter he did call the turkey "a much more respectable Bird" than the eagle, and a true native of America.

8. **False**
   Chicken, pork, beef and salmon all have more of the amino acid tryptophan than the same amount of turkey breast. It is probably the overindulgence that makes us sleepy, University of Illinois Extension says.

9. **Abraham Lincoln**
   The proclamation of October 3, 1863, set the last Thursday of November as a day of Thanksgiving. Lincoln issued it, but his Secretary of State, William Seward, wrote the words, the National Park Service says.

10. **A pardon**
    Abraham Lincoln is credited with the first one, though it was for Christmas: his son Tad spoke up for a live turkey that had been brought home for dinner, the White House Historical Association says.

11. **No, it is a vulture**
    It was named for its red head, which reminded people of a turkey's, the National Park Service says. It eats carrion, and its wings can span up to six feet.

12. **A rafter, or a gang**
    The U.S. Geological Survey gives both words. The same page clears up the male's long "beard": it is really a tuft of special feathers growing from the center of his chest.

13. **A jake**
    A jake is an immature male, usually one to two years old, with a shorter beard. A tom is two or older, with a beard of six inches or more, the Illinois Natural History Survey says.

14. **The flap of skin that hangs down over its beak**
    It matters more than it looks. Females prefer to mate with long-snooded males, and male turkeys defer to males with longer snoods, Indiana's Department of Natural Resources says.

15. **The flap of skin from its beak to its neck**
    That is how the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service defines it. The bumps of flesh that cover a turkey's neck and head have a name of their own: caruncles.

16. **Feathers**
    It is a bundle of feathers sprouting from the chest, and it gets longer as the bird ages. Some females grow beards as well, and scientists don't yet know why, Audubon magazine says.

17. **His mood**
    The colors change as a bird becomes excited or agitated, a wildlife ecologist told the National Wild Turkey Federation. What each color means is not fully understood; hunters generally take red as a sign of irritation or fear.

18. **About 18 miles per hour**
    That is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's figure for a turkey on foot. In the air, it says, the same bird can reach up to 50 miles per hour.

19. **Up to a mile**
    Males often gobble from their treetop roosts, the National Wild Turkey Federation says. The call does two jobs: it attracts females and answers other males.

20. **Its droppings**
    A male's droppings are J-shaped and a female's are spiral-shaped, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says. They tell age as well: the larger the diameter, the older the bird.

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21. **The country of Turkey**
Linguists think early Europeans connected the American bird with the African guinea fowl, a bird they associated with Turkey, and the name carried over, Audubon magazine says.

22. **Mary Had a Little Lamb**
Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of Godey's Lady's Book, began writing essays for the holiday in 1827. On September 28, 1863, she wrote directly to President Lincoln, and her 36-year quest was fulfilled, the National Park Service says.

23. **George H. W. Bush**
He assured "this fine tom turkey" that it would not end up on anyone's dinner table, the White House Historical Association says, and he pardoned every turkey of his administration. John F. Kennedy had spared one in 1963.

24. **The turkey got airsick and went on by train**
The bird was dressed for it: an aviation helmet, goggles, and a black and gold sweater held on by a pink bow. "Turkeys are not well suited for flight," the White House Historical Association notes.

25. **Nearly 30 million**
That was the National Turkey Federation's estimate for Thanksgiving 2025, from its consumer poll. In the same poll, 94 percent of Americans said they planned to celebrate the holiday.

26. **Minnesota**
Minnesota raised 33.5 million turkeys in 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's figures show, ahead of North Carolina with 28 million and Arkansas with 21.5 million. The whole country raised 193.5 million.

27. **The Wild Turkey**
Audubon had his birds printed life-sized, on the largest paper available at the time, the McClung Museum says. Its print of the male Wild Turkey, plate 1, is dated 1827.

28. **About 6.5 million**
That is the National Wild Turkey Federation's count, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says, for a bird that was on the brink of extinction in the early 1900s.

29. **Alaska**
By 1920 the wild turkey was lost from 18 of the 39 states where it had once been abundant. Restoration brought turkey populations back to all states except Alaska, the National Wild Turkey Federation says.

30. **Turkey Vulture**
A soaring Turkey Vulture holds its wings in a V and often tilts from side to side, the Missouri Department of Conservation says. It has a small, red, featherless head and finds its food by smell as well as by sight.

31. **A jenny**
Indiana's Department of Natural Resources lists it among its turkey terms: a jenny is a juvenile female and a jake is a juvenile male. About 5 percent of adult hens, it adds, have beards.

32. **A British grenadier in a red coat**
Writing to his daughter Sarah Bache on January 26, 1784, Franklin called the turkey "a little vain and silly" but "a Bird of Courage," ready to take on a soldier who invaded his farmyard.

33. **Franklin D. Roosevelt**
Thirty-two states went along and 16 refused, the National Archives says. Congress settled it in 1941 by making Thanksgiving the fourth Thursday of November; Roosevelt signed the resolution on December 26.

34. **Waterfowl**
The cannon net let states trap wild turkeys and move them into restored habitat. The first turkeys caught with one were in the Francis Marion National Forest in South Carolina in 1951, the National Wild Turkey Federation says.

35. **About 5,000 to 6,000**
That is the National Wild Turkey Federation's count. The male's well-known tail fan takes only a few of them: 18 large quill feathers.

The source for every answer: mybirdfolio.com

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