

The College Interview

What is an interview? An interview is a conversation with a purpose. Look at the college interview as not only an opportunity to impress your interviewer, but also a chance to get your questions answered by someone who represents a college in which you are interested. The interviews should be informative as well as evaluative. Keep in mind that interviewers interview students because they enjoy meeting young people who are interested in the institutions they represent. The best interviews are those that are comfortable, interesting, and fun!

1. Preparing for the Interview

- Wear something neat, clean, and comfortable that does not make you self-conscious. Jeans are, in most cases, too casual.
- Know the location of the interview and how to get there. Lateness shows a lack of regard for the interviewer's time. Call if you are unavoidably delayed. Be prepared to stay to complete the interview.
- Know what you want to get across to your interviewer before you walk in.

2. The Interview

- Smile and stand as you meet the interviewer. Give a firm handshake and state your name clearly. Make sure to introduce anyone else who has come to the interview with you, pronouncing their names and offering their relation to you.
- Use the interviewer's name, addressing the person as Mr., Miss, Ms., Dr., etc. Unless invited, do not use the interviewer's first name.
- Keep eye contact while speaking; this is another way of "connecting" with your interviewer.
- Nervousness is understandable. If you become aware that it is showing, don't overreact. Breathe deeply and concentrate on the conversation. Be confident—you know what you are talking about!
- Be truthful, honest, and sincere. Neither exaggerate nor discount your qualifications. Exaggeration is often obvious and reflects poorly on your credibility. Minimizing what you have accomplished may not be seen as humility but rather as a missed opportunity.
- Speak clearly with confidence and enthusiasm. Listen to the interviewer's questions and do not interrupt. Give thoughtful and complete answers.
- Offer more than is asked of you. Interviewers do not know you before you arrive. Questions are used as prompts to allow you to share yourself. Simple yes and no answers or one-line responses make the interview more difficult for the interviewer, hence less enjoyable.
- Have a few questions to ask at the end of the interview. Make sure the answers are not found readily in the college literature, or else it is obvious that you have not done enough research. Take notes if you like.

3. After the Interview

- Write some quick notes to yourself about how you thought the interview went and what kind of impression you made with the interviewer. Pay attention to “gut feelings.” Send a thank-you note to the person who conducted your interview.

4. Questions to ask yourself to prepare for an interview...

1. How have I liked high school? If I could change one thing, what would it be?
2. What are my academic strengths and interests? Why?
3. What are my personal strengths and interests? Why?
4. How do I spend my free time? In what sorts of activities am I engaged in when I “lose track of time”?
5. What do I like to read? Why?
6. With what kinds of people do I like to spend my time?
7. How do I feel about people who are different from me?
8. How do I feel about competition?
9. What do I expect to get out of college besides a degree?
10. Why do I feel that I am a good fit for this college? Why would they want me?
11. If I could go anywhere or do anything I wanted for a year, what would I do?
12. What would I like others to know about me that isn’t always obvious?

5. Questions you may want to ask your interviewer...

You can ask any question that is on your mind, but it is best to ask questions that are not easily answered in a brochure. This is a chance to “read between the lines.” Use this opportunity to ask the interviewer about his or her “sense” of the institution.

1. Academic Standards and Policies

1. What are the strongest programs or majors?
2. What percentage of graduates go directly to graduate school? Professional schools?
3. What percentage of the faculty hold a Ph.D. degree?
4. How large is the library? Does it have open stacks? Any special features?
5. What is the SAT® range of the middle 50% of the applicant pool?
6. Do graduate students teach courses?

7. What are the required freshman courses? Is there a core curriculum?
8. What computer facilities are available? In the library? In the dorms?
9. Ask about transfer and AP[®] credits if they apply to you.

2. Student Body

1. What is the geographical distribution of the student body?
2. How many international students attend the college? Students of color?
3. What is the average size of the freshman class?
4. What percentage return for sophomore year? Why do students leave the college?

3. Campus Regulations

1. May freshmen have cars on campus? May upperclassmen have cars on campus?
2. Are parking facilities available?
3. Are there curfews in the dormitories?

4. Housing

1. What percentage of students live in the dorms? Is housing guaranteed?
2. What are the dorms like?
3. Is there preferred housing for freshman/upperclassmen? Are the classes mixed in each dorm?
4. Are the dorms co-ed?
5. Are laundry facilities available in the dorms?
6. Are there fraternities and sororities on campus? What percentage of students is involved?

5. Extracurricular Activities and Social Life

1. What is the form of student government? Is it active?
2. What percentage of students remains on campus during weekends? What do they do?
3. Ask specifically about activities, events, and clubs that interest you.

6. Support and Personal Services

1. Are academic advisors assigned to entering freshmen?
2. Is there an orientation program for freshmen?
3. Does the college have 24-hour infirmary/health center service?
4. What is religious life like on campus?
5. Ask specifically about any concerns you may have.

6. Financial Aid

1. What percentage of the student body receives grant aid from the college?
2. What percentage works to meet tuition costs?
3. Ask any specific questions that you may have.

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