

Preparing for a College Interview

Research. The more you know ahead of time, the more in-depth your conversation can be. Look at the list of courses for the programs you are interested in. Prepare a list of questions not easily answered by searching their website.

Think about how you might answer questions that come up. Remember, you won't be graded on your responses; you don't need to have a full presentation prepared. It's better to be prepared generally, so that you don't panic when the interview begins.

Optional: Bring along a copy of your most recent high school transcript or prepare a high school resume. Include a list of your extracurricular activities, community service and jobs as well as a list of your special skills and accomplishments.

Keep in mind that the interview is NOT a test and there are no trick questions. The purpose of the interview is to give the admissions officer a chance to learn more about you beyond what is included in your application. Try to relax and just be yourself!

Here are some possible topics and questions the interviewer may bring up:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your favorite subjects?
- Why are you interested in this particular major/field (if applicable)?
- What is your favorite book and why?
- Why did you choose the clubs/activities you've been involved in?
- Tell me about an extracurricular activity that has been particularly important to you and why.
- If I asked your family or friends, how would they describe you?
- If you gave a speech at your graduation, what would your message be?
- What are you most looking forward to in college?
- What specifically draws you to our college?
- What kind of roommate would you be? What kind of roommate would you not like to have?
- Where do you see yourself in 10 years? 30?
- If you had only a few minutes to tell me about yourself, what would you say?
- Do you have any questions we have not yet discussed?

Here are some examples of questions you may want to ask (Remember, you don't want to ask questions that are easily answered by reviewing the literature or visiting the website!):

- What are the most important campus issues to students at this school?
- What is the most popular department or major here? The most popular course?

- What do students consider the most challenging courses/major/department?
- How many introductory courses are taught by faculty members and how many are taught by graduate students/teaching assistants?
- If you are applying for a specific program (art, music, drama, pre-med, business, etc.) will you be considered for general admission if you are not accepted into that specific program?
- How has this college changed in the last five years?
- What do you feel sets your school apart when compared to peer institutions?
- Are there any plans for improvements or changes in the future?
- What kind of internship opportunities are available to students? What kind of advising or support is available to access them?
- What career resources and support do you offer students?
- What characteristics do you value most in applicants?

THE INTERVIEW

- **Try to arrive a bit early to compose yourself.**
- **Listen to the question, then answer.** Don't get ahead of yourself and start planning your answer before you've heard the whole question. By taking time to listen, you will also give yourself a few extra seconds to form your response.
- **If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification.**
- **If necessary, ask for a moment:** "Do you mind if I take a minute to think about that . . ." or "Let me think about that for a minute . . ."
- **Answer questions candidly.** Don't say what you think they want to hear, say what you mean.
- **Be yourself!**
- **Bring along your list of questions.** It's absolutely fine to refer to it; it will show the interviewer that you have come prepared.
- **Make eye contact.** You don't have to stare into the interviewer's eyes, but you should make eye contact particularly when you want to emphasize a point. If you are shy or are uncomfortable making eye contact with a stranger, practice with friends or teachers.
- **Try not to give one-word answers.** If you are asked a "yes or no" question, follow up your "yes or no" with an explanation. After all, you've come to the interview to show the interviewer who you really are.

- **Say “yes” or “no” not “yeah,” “uh-huh,” “nah,” or “nuh-huh” and never say “you know” or “whatever” in response to a question or to finish a thought.**
- **Don’t mumble.** Enunciate your words. Speak with your head up. If you have a soft voice, make an effort to speak up. **Practice.** Take a cue from the interviewer—if he or she is leaning forward and seems to be straining to understand you, **speak up.**
- **Be sure to get contact information from the interviewer. Write a thank you card or e-mail to them.** Use that as an opportunity to ask any additional questions if you have any.
- **Even if you can’t travel to visit the actual campus,** many colleges are very happy to schedule an interview over zoom or with an alumnus who lives in your local area. Many colleges also participate in college fairs or high school visits in the fall and may offer the opportunity to interview when they are in town.

Remember, colleges may keep track of each time you contact them. If you demonstrate your interest by setting up an interview, calling or emailing for extra information and taking the time to write a thank you note, the Admissions Office will think you are a more serious candidate than someone who has not contacted them.

