

# College Interview Resources

## **What to expect when you show up for your interview:**

- Be ready to shake hands with the interviewer upon introduction. The interview will begin with the interviewer explaining the process of what needs to be accomplished during the next 45 minutes to an hour.
- If your interview takes place in a public location that serves coffee, tea or food the interviewer most likely offer to buy you something. Be polite and accept the offer for something small like coffee, tea or a soft drink.
- The interviewer will likely be ready to take notes regarding your interview. Many colleges want the interviewer to submit a written report to the admissions board. Each college has a format for the written report and some are highly structured and some are not. Some interviewers will choose to adhere strictly to the college's format while some will choose to take a more flexible approach.
- Most interviewers want to put you quickly at ease. They want to alleviate any tension, the most important reason is that they want to get to learn the best that you have the offer over the next 45 minutes to an hour. The people who volunteer to conduct these interviews tend to enjoy the process of assisting prospective applicants through the process of making good decisions. Many simply enjoy the experience of helping young people make a very important decision in their lives.

## **College Interview Standard Operating Procedures:**

- Arrive 5 minutes early to a college interview

The interviewer may have tightly scheduled several college interviews that day, typically on an hourly basis. If you arrive too early for an interview, it adds a degree of unnecessary stress to the situation. The most important rule is to never arrive late to a college interview. Arriving late to an interview creates an instantly negative impression that is very hard to overcome. Also, please make sure of the date, the time, exact location and travel directions in advance. Reply promptly to any communication and confirmations offered by the interviewer.

- Dress appropriately

Be sure to be well groomed and neatly dressed. If you dress too formally, you will look out of place and if you dress too casually, you'll provide the impression that the interview and the school you're applying to is not that important to you. It is easy to find the appropriate middle ground. Dress pants, button-down shirts tucked in, nice shoes and a belt is appropriate for men. For women, a sweater or blouse and a nice pair of pants or a nice skirt is appropriate. The style is often called business casual.

- Thank You Note

The last task is to send a thank you note or e-mail promptly after the college interview. A concise thank you note should express at minimum, gratitude for their time, an acknowledgment of your continued interest in the school and what you took away from the college interview.

## **College Interview Overview:**

- The interview should feel like an interesting and rewarding conversation between two people.

Interviewers are usually involved in the process because they are devoted and enthusiastic about their school, probably after a very successful college and post-college career. The school wants to project a positive image of itself by being represented by a passionate and successful alumnus. Your goal is to get the interviewer to share with you their reasons why they feel the school was such an outstanding and memorable experience in their life. Encourage your interviewer to speak about their experience. You also want to gain credibility with the interview by determining what interests you have in common. This leads to instant conversation.

- Be ready to tell concise and interesting stories in response to several of the key college interview questions.

The goal of a good interview is to make yourself memorable in a positive way. Answering several questions in the manner of relating a concise story helps make your responses very personal and interesting. People instinctively pay attention and are interested in what a good storyteller has to say especially if the story told is personal in nature. The college interview questions and answers section, will provide you a sampling of many of the most popular college interview questions along with how to answer them. Be prepared to tell several interesting, personal and concise stories as answers to a number of these questions. Be ready with pertinent stories that relate your interest in pursuing a specific major, involvement in extracurricular activities, achievements you're most proud of, hobbies and any special personal experiences, background information that is meaningful, describes you as a person or is positive nature. Be interesting and conversational on your interview.

- Research the interviewer's background by using the power of the Internet

One of the most powerful methods of connecting with the interviewer on a personal level is to be cognizant of the person's background. Use the Internet to determine a person's background including career and educational achievements and general information such as age, when they attended the college you interviewing for and if they have earned a graduate or advanced degree.

The objective of any successful interview is for it to evolve into a comfortable conversation between two people where each learns more about one another and the college.

- Be overly prepared for the “why” question

Be very knowledgeable about the school and the reasons you want to attend. A question that is guaranteed to be asked and can be asked more than once in several different ways during an interview is why you want to attend the given school you are interviewing for. Your answer has to be well researched, thoughtful and personal in nature. A wide range of responses are acceptable because authentic responses vary from candidate to candidate. Reasons centering on academics, the quality and type of student life offered, location and the college's reputation are all acceptable as long as they explain in a convincing fashion why the school is right for you. Clichés are not welcome and a longer and comprehensive response is appropriate for this question. Well researched and personal answers will help you earn a good report by the interviewer. In addition, Read the on-line version of a college's newspaper. This is a valuable resource to get a sense of the current state of a school.

- Have at least six questions ready to ask the interviewer

Having a number of good questions available can be used in several ways. Asking the interviewer good questions at key moments of the interview demonstrates interest on your part, and that you have conducted thorough research on the school and most importantly it enhances the conversation. One way or another, most interviews end with a segment where you're going to be asked if you have any questions, be ready. Keep in mind never ask an outright negative question. Keep your questions positive or objective.

**Over 40 of the most common college interview questions with answers including general college interview questions. This is the ultimate resource for preparing for your college admissions interviews.**

**What are your greatest strengths?**

- This question is designed to get to know the applicant. It is always better to give an answer and support your answer. Don't just say, for example, that you are diligent and focused, tell a story of a time or give an example of a time that demonstrates this to be true.

**What is your greatest weakness?**

- Turn the question around and make the weakness a strength if possible or describe how you've been working on your weakness. For example, you can describe how you have resolved your problem of procrastination that plagued you early in your high school career.

**Describe yourself.**

- This question is designed to get to know the applicant. However, you don't want to appear arrogant or unrealistic in your self-assessment. A good way to answer would be to describe how your teachers view you (for example, hardworking, self-motivated, intelligent, etc.), your friends view you (outgoing, fun to be around) and you can complete the answer by describing one or two of your basic interests.

**Where do you see yourself in ten years?**

- You probably don't yet know the answer to this, it is a very difficult question for a teenager to answer. However, it does have to be an all encompassing answer. You could say, for example, if you are interested in business, you see yourself completing your MBA. This shows thoughts about future plans and shows what you want to do with your undergraduate education.

**Who is your role model and why?**

- Try to avoid the cliché answer of saying your father or mother. Think a certain time you learned an important lesson from someone significant, describe that moment and that person and how your relationship with them has affected you.

### **What are you considering majoring in?**

- A simple question to learn more about you and your interests. If you are unsure, be truthful, don't make something up. If you are unsure, do share a few potential majors that you are considering and why.

### **Describe a time when you displayed leadership.**

- This is an important question; top colleges want people with leadership potential. Think of a story of a specific time that demonstrates your leadership ability.

### **What is your favorite book?**

- Answer truthfully and don't second guess about an acceptable answer. The interviewer just wants to learn more about you. Be ready to relate why the book made such a favorable impression on you.

### **What book do you wish you have written?**

- A slightly different question than what is your favorite book, even though the answer may be the same. Pick a book that you enjoyed, but make sure it had profound influence on you. A book whose story provoked strong feelings or a discussion among your family is a good choice.

### **Why do you want to attend \_\_\_\_\_ University?**

- This question can be phrased in a few different ways, but it is guaranteed to be asked in one form or another on all of your interviews. This is the "why" question, the most important

question of the interview. Your answer shows how serious you are about the school you are applying to. This answer requires preparation to master an answer. You would need to research the school, and really get an honest understanding of why you want to attend. A longer and comprehensive answer is appropriate for this question.

**What is your favorite class in high school?**

- A good way to approach this is by relating it to your potential college major. Another way is to focus on a favorable relationship you developed with a teacher.

**What is your least favorite class in high school?**

- Never blame a teacher for making it your least favorite and never say you dislike a class because you aren't good at the subject. Try to think of a time when you improved a poor situation in a class. An example is you felt a class was moving too slowly so you consulted the teacher and started doing extra work on your own.

**What activities do you participate in?**

- This question will lead to more in-depth questions about your activities. Be prepared to go into detail about all the activities you mention.

**Describe your high school.**

- You, as a student, represent your high school. Even if you have hated your high school experience, that is the last thing your interviewer wants to hear. You have to be loyal, but objective about your high school. Be prepared to say positive attributes about your high school.

**What makes you unique?**

- This could be having a unique interest, personal background or relationship in your life. Think outside the box to prepare for an answer to this question.

**Why does \_\_\_\_\_ University want you?**

- Describe what qualities and talents that you would bring to the university and how that would contribute to the university as a whole.

**Describe your biggest failure.**

- One of the toughest things to do is to objectively reflect upon yourself. Your interviewer wants to see if you can honestly reflect on your past experiences. Describe how you dealt with the failure, how you learned from the situation and how you improved as a result of the failure.

**Describe a time when you dealt with people with a different background than yourself.**

- Many top colleges pride themselves on diversity. Your interviewer wants to see how well you relate with people of different backgrounds, you will definitely have to do this in college. Think of a story of a time you did this and demonstrate sensitivity with your answer.

**What is the biggest challenge you faced in your life?**

- This is a very personal question that requires a personal answer. The answer should reveal much about your positive strengths and attributes.

**What is something you would like to change about \_\_\_\_\_ University?**

- This question tests how well you truly know the college. An answer to this question really requires research. Do not pick a major aspect of the school as something to change. Consider picking a current or specific issue by reading an online copy of the college newspaper before the interview.



**What do you do with your friends?**

- This question is designed to get to know you better as a person. Be honest in your answer but don't say anything controversial.

**What do you do in your free time?**

- This is designed to learn more about you. This is to see what you are interested in and what you would do with your free time in college.

**What do you want out of your time at \_\_\_\_\_ University?**

- This question requires knowledge of the school, what makes the school unique and specific programs it offers. You have to think about yourself in context of the school.

**What is something you wish you could change about your high school?**

- Consider picking an issue that you worked on to affect change. Tell the story of how you identified the issue and how you planned and worked to correct it. This is a better and more substantive approach than just describing an aspect you wish you could change.

**What classes do you currently take in high school?**

- Be prepared to talk about what you are currently doing in the classes. An interviewer might want to know more about what the course curriculum is like at your school.

### **How do you work under pressure?**

- Think of a story of a time when you worked well under pressure. This is an important question because the academics at top schools are very rigorous.

### **Is there anything that is not on your application that you want the admissions committee to know?**

- The answer could be almost anything, including describing your relationship with your family, an activity you completed before high school, expanding on an activity that you didn't get to talk enough about on your applications. This can be answered in a number of ways.

### **What do you think about your hometown?**

- This is an important question because many people move to a different location when they go to college. Your description of your hometown reflects and hints at what is important in your life.

### **Which teacher has been the most influential in your high school career?**

- Try to relate it to what you want to pursue in college or pick a teacher you had a personal relationship with or one that inspired you. This would allow you to talk about more than just the course material of the class.

### **How did you spend last summer?**

- Describe the various activities you participated in, especially community service activities. It is also appropriate to mention and discuss a vacation you took because it can make an interesting story or reveal something about your values.

**Tell me about your community service experiences.**

- Tell a story about your contributions to your community and talk about the lasting impact on you and the community or on any specific individuals.

**What do you do to follow the news?**

- Don't be political in nature or controversial when answering this question, but do talk about your interests without making judgments.

**Where else did you apply?**

- Talk about one or two schools that have similar characteristics to the school are interviewing for, but also describe one or two minor limitations of the schools to make a comparison.

**How do you define success?**

- True success is a combination of factors, success in career, success in family and leading a well rounded life. The time context is not important; it could be now or in the future. The importance is envisioning the life the way you want to lead it.

**If you could talk to one person, living or deceased, who would it be?**

- It is good if you relate your answer to what you want to study in college or have your answer reveal something about your interests or strengths.

**Does your transcript reflect your academic abilities?**

- You could potentially describe your outstanding work ethic as leading to your good grades if they are a valid reflection. If they are not a valid reflection of your academic abilities describe strives you made to improve. Never blame teachers for poor grades and never blame a school's

grading system. Extenuating circumstances such as a need to work or help the family are valid reasons that may influence grades in a negative way.

**What is the most important lesson you learned in high school?**

- The answer could relate to inside or outside the classroom. For example, your long commute forced you to learn better time management skills.

**How have you left your mark on your high school?**

- Prepare a story that demonstrates your impact on your school community. It could be through a leadership position within a club, sports team, student government, community service, in the classroom, there are many potential answers.

**If you could do high school over again, what might you have done differently?**

- Discuss an activity you wish you tried but never got around to it.

**Describe your best friend.**

- People's qualities and values are reflected in their friends. This question is designed to see that connection.

**What do think you will find challenging about transitioning to college?**

- There are great differences between high school and college in terms of academics and student life. But for many people, college is the first time they have to live on their own. This is often the most difficult part of the transition. Just make sure your answer is genuine and personal. There are many acceptable answers.

### **Potential Questions to Ask Your Interviewer:**

- At your school or any other school what are the most important factors in getting off to a fast start at college?
- Where do you remember most about your college experience?
- What did you find most appealing about your college?
- How did attending the school prepare you for life after college?
- What do you suggest to ease the transition to college?
- If you could change anything about the college what would that be?
- What are some of the activities you participated in at college?
- How would you rate the faculty at your college?
- What do you feel are the academic strengths of the school?
- How would you describe the social scene?

- What was the typical weekend like at your college?
- What do remember most about your time in college?
- What was your major?