

College Admissions Interview Guidelines

By Susanna de Chenonceau, M.Ed., College Counselor

General Tips

- Always call early to schedule these, as appointments fill up.
- It is almost always to your advantage to interview because it puts a face to a name.
- DO spend time prepping for the interview. Practice is priceless.
- You may be interviewed by: a student (on campus), an alumni (in your town in person, or by phone), an admissions officer (on campus, or by phone), an admissions officer in an info session small group (on campus or off), a coach (for athletes), or audition (for art/music).
- You may not be accustomed to talking about yourself, so prepare by: analyzing your personality, consider your strengths and weaknesses, assess your academic experience, evaluate your outside interests and activities, examine your values and goals, clarify what's important to you. Do not discuss any of your weaknesses unless asked, and if asked say you are working on work-life balance to be healthy or taking more calculated risks with your learning.
- **Make a list of 3 important factors you want the interviewer to know about you before the interview ends. Identify anecdotes/examples that will convey each factor. Come up with a key adjective that best describes each factor and weave a story around each factor. Try to get these three factors and their anecdotes into the interview somehow. Practice this first!!**
- Get feedback from parents, teachers and friends.

Interview Topics

Interviewers will cover three areas while talking with you:

- You and your high school experience (have 3 anecdotes ready)
- Their college and why you like it (have 10 proper nouns ready)
- Your questions for them (have 3-5 Qs ready)

Topics to help you prepare

Getting ready: Academic self-assessment

- Is the student body at your school homogeneous or diverse?
- What are your strongest subjects? Weakest?
- Has there been a course that was difficult for you? How did you handle it?
- Would you say you are an above average, average or below average student?

Getting ready: Non-academic self-assessment

- Where have you put most of your energies and talents?
- What activities have meant the most to you?
- Have you contributed to your school or community?
- How have you spent your summer vacations?
- Have you won any honors or awards?
- What have you gained from community service?

20 Questions You Might Be Asked

1. What three adjectives would your best friend use to describe you?
2. What have you enjoyed the most about your high school years?
3. How have you grown or changed?
4. What activities have you found most satisfying?
5. What things do you do well? What are your talents?
6. What strengths would you most like to develop?

7. Have any of your courses challenged you? Which? How?
8. What achievements have given you satisfaction?
9. How do you respond to academic pressure or competition?
10. What would you change about your school if you had the chance?
11. What do you do for relaxation? For fun?
12. How do you define success?
13. How would you describe your family? Community?
14. What do you want to accomplish in the years ahead?
15. What issues concern you?
16. Has any book, article, or creative work had an impact on you?
17. Is there any author, activity, or field you've explored in depth?
18. Have you had any stimulating intellectual experiences recently?
19. How do you spend your summers?
20. If you had a year to do anything you wanted, what would you do?

DOs and DON'Ts in Your Interview

- Do not boast/brag. Do not be so humble that you mumble. Do not be a comedian, or hot-shot or arrogant.
- Express only your good qualities. Be your own advocate. Avoid any

negative words at all.

- Be honest, upfront, and positive at all times. Do not air dirty laundry.
- Discuss what things "mean" to you.
- Do not cut the interviewer off while he/ she is speaking. Wait patiently until they are finished. Do not interrupt. Do not whisper. Do not memorize.
- Do not feel the need to fill up silence by rambling, babbling. Silence is ok.
- THINK BEFORE YOU RESPOND. It's perfectly acceptable to take a few seconds to decide what you will say.
- **Remember that you are interviewing them, too. You need to know if this school is a good fit for you!**
- Make a good first impression with your clothes. CLOTHES COUNT. The rule is: neat and clean. Dress for a business meeting or church function, not a dance or a party.
- Don't look sloppy or too artsy. Look like you care. No need to wear a suit.
- **Be prepared: know as much about the college beforehand as possible. Make a list of proper nouns you like from the website.**
- Be prompt. This means 5-10 minutes early
- Be polite. Make eye contact and shake hands, if a hand is offered. Sit only when you are asked. Do not lounge. Sit up, comfortably.
- Do not smoke, swear or chew gum.
- **ASK QUESTIONS! Take a prepared list of questions from your research of that school.**
- Don't complain, about anything. ANYTHING. Do not correct the interviewer.
- You may not hit it off with the interviewer; don't panic. It may be them who's having an off day, not you.
- When the interviewer signals the end of the interview (WATCH BODY LANGUAGE), follow their lead. Do not start a new conversation. If you have more questions, ask if you might pose them in a letter or email. Get their business card.
- Give a good firm handshake and say thank you.
- **When you get home write a thank you - written or email, immediately.**

Asking Questions

At the end of the interview, it's likely they will ask if you have any questions for them. Yes, you do! Take advantage of this time! You can get valuable information from your interviewer, and having good prepared questions makes you stand out. Ask about:

- The students
- Social life and campus activities
- Campus facilities
- Community off campus
- Academics and faculty

Some example questions are:

- Off-campus, what cultural or recreational opportunities are available in the area?
- What is the social and political atmosphere of the surrounding community? Do students ever become involved in town life? Are there opportunities for service?
- Can you characterize the personality or atmosphere of this college as you see it?
- What kind of student is happy here? And what kind is not happy?
- What kind of freshman orientation program is offered? How long is it and when does it occur? What activities take place?
- How is the advising system set up for freshmen and who does the advising?
- How large are typical freshman courses?
- How difficult is it to get into upper-level courses as a freshman?
- I am considering majoring in biology. How large are its freshman and upperclass courses?
- Is there opportunity for independent study or advanced research within most majors?
- What kinds of internship (or study abroad) experiences would be possible if I majored in biology?

- How many students from last year's senior class went on to graduate or professional schools?
- Does this college give credit for courses taken on other campuses? Does this college accept credit from only those campuses abroad where it has its own programs?

Be sure to send a thank you email within 24 hours!