

The DO's and DON'T's of College Interviews: Wisdom from College Admissions Representatives and High School Counselors

DO:

- Be prepared to offer a few different dates and times when you call to schedule your interview. This simple detail shows your ability to manage your time, as well as your respect for your interviewer's busy schedule.
- If you would like to meet a specific professor or sit in on a class, make that request when you schedule your interview, *not when you appear at the admissions office*.
- Conduct research about the college or university before you appear on campus. Using the school's website or a college guide, familiarize yourself with the following things:
 - Testing requirements
 - General curriculum
 - Grading system
 - Majors, minors and concentrations
 - Current admissions statistics
 - Financial aid availability and procedures
- Dress appropriately. There's no need to dazzle but you should not wear jeans, flip-flops, gym clothes(!), t-shirts or ball caps. Shorts? Sure, as long as you wear a nice shirt.
- Be on time -- or, better yet, five minutes early. Call if you will be late for any reason.
- Be respectful of everyone you come across on campus: the admissions receptionist, student panelists, your tour guide, the guy in the Student Center who points you toward a restroom...
- Turn off your cell phone. OFF not vibrate.
- Extend your hand to the admissions counselor; introduce him or her to your parents and siblings.
- Arrive prepared for a **conversation**.
- Practice *answering* questions like:
 - Why do you want to attend this college? (Do your research!)
 - What is your intended major, and why?
 - What are your long-term goals and dreams?
 - What do you like to read, and why?
 - Whom do you admire?
 - How would your friends and family describe you?
 - What's your favorite academic subject?
 - What's your favorite extracurricular?
 - What do you do for fun?
 - What are you most proud of?
- Think about *asking* thoughtful, qualitative questions such as:
 - What do students consider to be the biggest pros and cons of your college?
 - What do students like most and least about the surrounding town?
 - What draws students to your college?
 - If you had to generalize, how would you describe your student body?
 - What's the social scene? What do students do on weekends?
 - What's the housing situation? Do students live off campus? Are there a lot of commuter students?
 - Can you tell me more about X, a major/extracurricular that I'm interested in?
- Make eye contact and listen attentively.
- Thank your interviewer, shake his or her hand and request contact information; mail or email a formal thank you within 48 hours.
- Relax and have fun. You are the only real expert on *you* so show it. Enjoy the opportunity to share who you are with someone who is genuinely interested in getting to know you better.

Note: Everything you present to the admissions office – emails, questionnaires, notes – should be composed with care. Use proper grammar, spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

DON'T:

- Ask your parents to schedule your interview for you.
- Design your outfit around school colors; it's not impressive or cute.
- Roll in late; if it's unavoidable, call.
- Slouch, chew gum, yawn or litter your speech with *umm's* or *like, you know's*; avoid slang and off-color language.
- Answer your phone or text during your interview. Your parents shouldn't either.
- Expect (or permit) your parents to answer questions asked of you. The admissions counselor wants to hear from you, not your parents.
- Be negative about everything in your life; conversely, don't overwhelm your interviewer with insincere enthusiasm about everything.
- Recite your resume and think you've helped your interviewer know you better.
- Give answers you think the admissions counselor wants to hear. Give your own, honest answers.
- Show up without thoughtful questions about the college or university (see DO's).
- Ask questions you could easily answer on your own if you checked the school's website or a college guide (see DO's).
- Ask about College A's graduation requirements when you're interviewing at College B.
- Let a question like, "What doesn't the school know about you after reading your application?" slip by without a good answer; answer with "Nothing" or "I covered everything" and you miss a plumb opportunity to share something new – and memorable – about yourself.
- Hug your admissions counselor. It's too forward and uncomfortable for everyone.
- Let more than 48 hours pass before you send a formal thank you to the person who interviewed you. It is courteous and helps the admissions counselor remember you. Note: You may not receive a response to your note but you must send one anyway.
- Forget that the interview is just one part of a collection of materials that will help the admissions staff evaluate you. Your future does not hinge on the stellar or pedestrian quality of your interview.