

College Interviewing 101

Tips for Successful College Interviewing:

- **Do your research on the school.** Learn as much about the institution as you can—environment, student/teacher ratio, available majors, sports and activities you could be involved in, etc. You wouldn't want to mention your interest in studying Engineering if the school doesn't have engineering majors!
- **Always provide examples.** You can claim anything about your skills and abilities, but how does the interviewer know it is true if you do not provide a specific context? For example, if you are asked what your strengths are, don't just say "I have good time management." Provide an example of a specific time you managed time successfully.
- **Be yourself.** You want the college you end up at to be the best fit for you. You also never really know what the interviewer is looking for. If you pretend to be someone you are not, you may not get in when you otherwise would have. Conversely, you may get admitted but not be happy at that school when you are your true self.
- **Be your best self.** While letting the true you shine is good, be sure you are also presenting your most professional and mature self. Once admitted, colleges see you as a representative of their brand and they do not want to be represented negatively. Personality quirks and humor are fine, but be sure to dress appropriately and leave the crude language and/or jokes at home.
- **Prepare questions to ask your interviewer.** Your interviewer will expect you to ask questions about the school. Use this as an opportunity to interview your interviewer and determine if the school is a good fit for you. Ask about things that matter to you when deciding on a college—community, career services, food quality, whatever—and use the research you have done on the school to make the questions educated.
- **Practice makes perfect!** Interviewing is a skill that requires practice. Sit down with your college counselor, parents, or a friend and have the person ask you college interview questions.
- **Be thankful.** Send a thank-you note (email is fine) to your interviewer afterwards. Let them know if there was something about the interview that was helpful to you or mention something you two connected over personally in the interview. Be sure to express your continued interest in the school and thank them for taking the time to meet with you. If your interviewer is on the fence about recommending you for admission, the thank-you can push the decision in a positive direction.

The Most Common College Interview Questions:

(Adapted from prepscholar.com)

1. **Tell me about yourself.** Get beyond your resume and avoid clichés and common answers. Highlight what makes you a unique candidate and talk about your passions, hobbies, and interests.
2. **Why are you interested in this college?** Talk about your interest in the major, the cultural values, or the activities that drew you to the school. Don't talk about prestige, rankings, or being close to home.
3. **Why do you want to major in _____?** Colleges want to see that you are academically inclined, not that you want to make a lot of money.
4. **What are your academic strengths?** Don't forget to include examples!
5. **What are your academic weaknesses?** Choose a real weakness, but be sure to tell how you are actively improving on it.
6. **What do you plan to contribute to this school?** Be specific. Is there research you want to pursue or a leadership role you plan to assume? How do you want to make a difference?
7. **What do you plan to be doing in ten years?** Your interviewer does not expect for you to know every detail of your future, but they do want to see that you have some goals you are working towards. What impact do you hope to make?
8. **What would you change about your high school?** By learning what you would change, they can better understand what you are looking for in a college. Avoid trite answers like better food or teachers.
9. **Who do you most admire?** Be sure to include why!
10. **What is your favorite book?** Again, why?
11. **What do you like to do for fun?** These don't have to be only academic!
12. **What is an obstacle you have faced and how did you get through it?** This can be related to school, home, or extracurriculars. Just be sure to emphasize how you solved the problem.

What to Wear:

- Solid color, conservative suit if you have one
- Otherwise, a button down shirt and dress pants
- Conservative tie
- Dark socks
- Dress shoes
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Easy on the aftershave
- Neatly trimmed nails
- Portfolio or briefcase

