

Quick Guide - Acing the College Interview

Before the Interview

An interview provides you with an opportunity to explain, in your own words, the ways in which your experiences, knowledge, skills, and aspirations combine to make you a desirable candidate for the given college. Additionally, the interview allows you to demonstrate your interpersonal skills, professionalism, and personal style.

Attire:

-) A suit is not necessary; business casual is recommended. It is best to dress conservative/preppy.
-) Male
 - o dress pants, khaki pants, collared shirt, tie optional, blazer optional, belt, dress shoes.
 - o avoid: bright colors, flashy jewelry, wild patterns, baseball caps, polo shirt, facial hair, long hair, cologne.
-) Female
 - o dress pants, knee-length skirt or dress, collared shirt or cardigan, dress shoes.
 - o avoid: short skirts, tight fitting clothing, flashy jewelry, heavy makeup, very high heels, open toe shoes, perfume.

Arrive early:

-) Plan to arrive 15-20mins early on the day of the interview. Make sure to give yourself plenty of time to account for traffic or delays. You can always sit in your car for a few minutes and read over your answers to the common interview questions.
-) If the interview is online (via Skype or similar) make sure you are in a quiet location with a strong internet connection. Be familiar with the Skype (or other) software before the interview day. It is recommended to use a headset instead of the speaker on your computer; your voice will sound sharper.

First impressions:

-) Shake hands when you meet the interviewer and thank them for their time. If they do not extend their hand; you take the initiative and extend yours.
-) If your parents are present, introduce them.
-) Bring a notepad and pen with you to write down important items. Ask the interviewer if they mind if you take notes.
-) Bring a bottle of water with you. You will be talking a lot and your throat may get dry.

Nonverbal communication:

-) You are being evaluated on more than what you say. Be mindful of your gestures, posture, facial expressions, and eye contact.
-) Do not play with your pen or your fingernails while talking.
-) No gum chewing.
-) Look at interviewer's face; not at the floor, table, or ceiling.

Do your homework:

-) Go to the college website and make sure you are familiar with the programs offered, clubs, activities, and special events hosted by the school.
-) Be able to discuss the clubs you are interested in joining. Know them by name.
-) Be familiar with the specific department your major falls within.
-) Type your answers to the common interview questions listed below. Full sentences and paragraphs are not needed; bullet points and short-hand is fine.
-) Read over your answers a few times so you are comfortable discussing them at length.

During the Interview

Everyone experiences some type of stress during the interview process. The best way to combat this stress is to be prepared and practice your responses.

Questions for the interviewer:

-) Prepare 4 - 6 questions to ask the interviewer.
-) People love talking about themselves; the interviewer is no different. Do not spend the whole time talking about yourself and answering questions; get the interviewer talking.
-) When asked: "Do you have any questions for me?" The answer is always yes.
-) Do not interrupt the interviewer; always wait for them to finish their sentence before responding.
-) Try to find commonality between you and the interviewer; spark a conversation from this.
-) Try to ask a question based on something the interviewer has told you during the interview; it shows you are listening.
-) **Top 5 questions to ask the interviewer:**
 1. What prompted you to select your major? After working for a few years; would you still pick same major/minor?
 2. What was a typical day like for you on the campus of "University A"?
 3. What are the advantages of "University A" alumni network?
 4. What advice can you offer me as an incoming freshman?
 5. I read about (insert popular on-campus event or tradition). Have you participated? What's it like?
-) **Avoid these types of questions:**
 - o Don't ask about your chances of gaining admission.
 - o Don't ask about any information that can be easily obtained from the college website or by a simple Google search.
 - o Don't ask about rankings or the college's "prestigious" reputation.
 - o Don't ask anything too personal; keep your questions strictly focused on the college.

Questions for the student:

-) There are many variations to the questions below. These questions are a good starting point for preparing for your interview and feeling comfortable talking about yourself.
-) Keep in mind, you are trying to show your value. You want to highlight how you are an asset to the university and how you will make a positive impact on campus.
-) Do not panic if you cannot think of an answer immediately. Take a moment and formulate your response. You can also ask the interviewer to rephrase the questions. Silence is not a bad thing and it is a natural part of the conversation.
-) **Top 20 interview questions:**
 1. Tell me about yourself.
 2. What three adjectives best describe you?
 3. What are your strengths?
 4. What is your biggest weakness?
 5. What was an obstacle you have faced and how did you get through it?
 6. What activities do you find most rewarding?
 7. Why do you want to attend our college?
 8. What can our college offer you that another college can't?
 9. Why did you select this major?
 10. What can you contribute to our college campus?
 11. What is your favorite book? movie?
 12. What have you done to show initiative and innovation?
 13. What subject in high school did you find the most challenging?
 14. What subject in high school was your favorite?
 15. What would you change about your high school experience?
 16. What do you want to do after graduating from college?
 17. Where do you see yourself in 10 years? 20 years?
 18. Who do you most admire?
 19. If you had a thousand dollars to give away, what would you do with it?
 20. How do you define success?

After the Interview

You are done with the interview. Your first response might be to feel relieved. Your second response should be to send a thank you note.

Follow-up:

-) Send a thank you email within 24 hours of your interview. Do not delay and wait a week to send it.
-) The email should not be generic. Thank the interviewer for their time. Mention specific items you discussed, during the interview, that you found enlightening. Make it personal.
-) Always check for spelling and grammar before sending the email.

