

FROM: Mr. Clayton Ketchum  
TO: VII<sup>th</sup> Form Students and Parents/Guardians  
RE: Secondary School Interviews ~ Class of 2025



The following is some information I will be sharing with your child before Senior Visitation Days (Monday, Oct. 21 – Saturday, Oct. 26). I thought it might be helpful for you to see it, too. Please note that all academic and athletic commitments must be met before leaving campus on Saturday, October 19.

## **HOW TO MAKE YOUR SECONDARY SCHOOL VISIT AND INTERVIEW SUCCESSFUL**

It is important to understand the purpose of the interview. Obviously it gives the admission officer of the school a chance to know something about you; the better he/she knows you, the better the decision he/she will be able to make about your application. The interview situation also gives you a chance to learn more about the school so that you can evaluate it more thoroughly.

There are many ways in which you can make a good impression, and since your interview takes a relatively short time, these first impressions are very important. Consider your visit to the secondary school as an opportunity to sell yourself.

First of all, **dress neatly and formally**. All should wear clean clothes, and have combed and neat hair. *Gentlemen, though I appreciate the individuality your longer hair may provide, I feel it essential that you receive a haircut prior to your visits.* Formal school dress is absolutely appropriate. School dress is required! Even if the school you are visiting has an informal dress code, you cannot lose by being overdressed. For boys, a coat and tie are a necessity. This hint also applies to shoes; wear good shoes, not sneakers.

**Good manners are a must**; greeting the admissions officer with a firm handshake and looking him/her straight in the eye help to create a favorable first impression. The use of “Mr. /Ms.” and the avoidance of “yeah”, “like”, or other slang expressions is a very good idea. If possible, learn the names of the admissions officers ahead of time so that you are familiar with them. Do not worry if you are interviewed by one of the assistants; your chances of a good interview are by no means diminished.

During the interview itself, **be relaxed and let your true personality emerge**; the interviewer can easily spot a “phony,” so do not lie or build yourself up beyond what is true. **Be prepared for anything** such as a few math problems to solve, a passage in a book to read aloud or an essay to write. When you are asked questions about yourself, remember that you are trying to sell yourself. **Be able to talk intelligently about a book that you have read.** You will surely be asked about what you did this past summer and you should **be prepared for an inquiry about your future plans.** You should have some thoughts to **share about your hobbies, interests and school activities.** You need not have something earth shattering to say as long as it is meaningful and sincere. **Avoid if at all possible the simple “yes” or “no” answers**; try to turn the interviewer’s question into a short discussion or dialogue. For example, if you were asked if you play tennis, an answer like “Yes, but I made only the fourth position on the junior varsity team at school because of difficulty with my backhand” is better than just a simple “yes.”

**Use the opportunity to ask questions about the school.** Do not ask basic questions that are answered in the catalog, on their website, or that are obvious. Do your homework by reading through the website (Catalog and Course of Study, if there is one) prior to the visit; as you do so, jot down questions that are meaningful to you. Focus your questions on topics of personal interest and on a variety of subjects. An interviewer would not get a

good impression of you if your questions all concerned sports or the students' social life. A question such as "How many girls are there?" at an all-boys school would indicate a total ignorance of the school; you would look like a fool to the admissions officer.

**If your schedule permits, ask to sit in on a class in your area of interest.** If appropriate, pre-select one from the catalog; it should be a class for ninth or tenth graders. While in the class, be observant of the attitude of the students. Are they enthusiastic and interested? Do they freely contribute to class discussion? Is the teacher's approach interesting? Is there a healthy student/faculty respect? How large is the class? When the experience is over, try to evaluate if you would be comfortable in such an educational environment.

**At the time of your interview, you will be given a tour of the school.** When school is in session (try to visit when students are there), a student will show you the campus. Ask the student many questions and try to maintain a dialogue. Try to gauge his/her attitudes. Be sure the guide shows you a dorm or two. Keep your eyes and ears open to catch student attitudes and appearances. Be careful not to judge the student body by the one student guide. Tour guides are assigned randomly during their free periods, not matched to your interests. Check the bathroom for cleanliness. Observe the dining hall and what is going on. How do students treat each other? If you see a friend from home or Rumsey, do not spend all of your time catching up on the latest news. Use him/her as a valuable source of information.

**Leave your cell phone in the car!** Same for Mom and Dad. You really will have little need for them during this visit. At no time will using a cell phone have a place during this visit and it will only give a negative impression.

Try not to let the weather influence your impressions about the school. Very few schools look exciting on a dreary or rainy day; very few people are enthralled with a cloudy day. Take the weather into consideration.

**At all times, act as if you really want to go there.** Be enthusiastic but do not go overboard and do not be indifferent. Show your appreciation to the interviewer for his/her time and interest. Ask him/her for a business card. When you get home or back to school, **a thank-you note** (with some questions you forgot, or a specific program that is of particular interest to you) **is absolutely necessary**. The same holds true for the student guide. Very often they are asked for their evaluation of you after they complete the tour. Your attitude and manners toward them are important.

A hand written thank-you note to the person who interviewed you is not the same as an email! A physical note sent in the mail makes a better impression. Think, how many emails do you get in a day? How many handwritten notes? Exactly.

Try to avoid being brainwashed, either by an admissions officer, student guide, a friend or your parents! Remember that you are the one who will be going to school there. Also, most schools' campuses and facilities are big and beautiful. **Do not be over-awed by gymnasiums, theaters, etc. Concentrate foremost on the people at the school.**

**Keep a log. As soon as you leave the campus, begin to write down your thoughts and impressions, both positive and negative.** This is important if another school is to be visited later in the day. It is easy to confuse things later on unless you take the time to jot down notes. List things such as location, facilities, observations about students and faculty. Save these notes for later reference; they might help you make a wise decision in your final selection of a school for the next three years.

## **QUICK “DO’S and DONT’S” FOR SCHOOL INTERVIEWS**

### **DO:**

Be yourself  
Wear Rumsey Hall school dress  
Present a firm handshake  
Maintain eye contact  
Do your homework; research the school  
Take an active role in the conversation  
Ask refreshing questions  
Give more than “yes” or “no” answers  
Talk freely about yourself  
Listen; be thoughtful and introspective  
Leave your cell phones in your car  
Write a “thank you” note to the interviewer & guide  
Boys – if needed, get a haircut before your visits

### **DON’T**

Lie or exaggerate  
Sound negative  
Yawn, slouch or stretch  
Chew gum, nails or play with your hair  
Ask questions answered in the catalog or on their website  
Interrupt the interviewer  
Criticize your teachers, schools or friends  
Bring an elaborate portfolio, resume or display  
Ask about leaving campus and holidays  
Wear other school’s clothing on revisits  
Use words such as “yeah”, “like”, “you guys” or other slang words

## **QUESTIONS SCHOOL INTERVIEWERS FREQUENTLY ASK**

- How is your school year going?
- What do you hope to gain from your secondary school experience?
- How did you like your tour?
- What is your role in the school community? What will your teachers say are your greatest strengths as a person? As a student? What are your greatest challenges or shortcomings?
- Do you have any contemporary or historical heroes?
- What will be “success” for you twenty years from now?
- What books or articles have made a lasting impression on your way of thinking?
- What are your reactions to current events? Politics, sports, world events, if you are interested in them.
- How would you describe yourself as a person? How would your best friend describe you?
- If I could hand you my telephone and let you talk to any one person living, to whom would you like to talk? Why?
- If you were just chosen as the head of your school, what would be your first move? What would you change?
- If you could have dinner with any historical figure, whom would it be and why?