



# DERBY ACADEMY

## Interviewing

Most students anticipate interviews with dread. They imagine hostile strangers grilling them with impossible questions about the Peloponnesian War. Students will discover that admissions counselors are interested in discovering a student's strengths, not in trapping them. They are professionals who know how to allay a student's nervousness and apprehension. They're interested in spontaneity, not in polished performances.

The interview will focus on two areas –the student and the school. Students should be prepared to discuss their academic history, extracurricular activities and involvement, and personal attributes. They may be asked about a book they would recommend, their families, or their future plans. Students should also be prepared to discuss and explain why they are considering that particular institution. Consequently, a thorough review of the school's literature is essential.

There will also come the time when the interviewer will ask the student if s/he has any questions about the school. The student should be ready with questions that are not readily answered by the school's literature. We have included a list of questions students may be asked, as well as questions they may want to ask during a typical interview.

The interviewing policy at each school varies. Whatever the policy, plan well in advance. We also practice interviewing skills with students, both in class and in one-on-one meetings with students and their secondary school counselors.

Make your requests for interviews and visits early in September for October and November dates. Boarding schools have a limited number of Saturdays dedicated to campus visits. Ask if there is an Admissions Open House you might attend if you are not certain that you will make a formal visit or application to a particular school. Use Derby's school holidays to arrange visits, so as not to miss too many school days during the fall term – for example, most boarding schools remain open during Columbus Day and Veterans Day holidays.

Finally, students should **always** write thank you notes; therefore, the student should remember their interviewer's name, as well as that of the tour guides. Most Admissions Officer names and contact information can be found on the school's website.

## Parent Interview/Tour

- Arrive on time for the appointment
- Read the school's mission carefully
- Do NOT oversell your child
- Ask questions which encourage the Admissions Office to discuss culture, priorities and 'mission':
  - What type of student thrives in your school?
  - What were the 'burning issues' last year that caught the attention of students?
  - Why do your teachers choose to work at your school?
- Be pleasant and gracious (especially to support staff)
- Let your child speak for him/herself. Don't 'grill' the student tour guide about a particular school
- Unless asked, do not try to impress with contacts, connections, etc.
- Be forthcoming with all schools about important information
- Do not expect or insist on an interview with the Director of Admissions
- Do not disparage the school you are visiting, your child's current school, or any other school
- Do not send videotapes/CD's or a portfolio to the school unless specifically asked to do so
- Do not send gifts to admissions officers or coaches
- Parents who are courteous, prompt, thorough, pleasant, kind, respectful and honest can do a great deal to enhance their child's application

## Tips for Students Before Visiting Schools

### Preparation

- Preview the school through the catalogue/website
- Take Notes
- Think about your strengths, your interests, your needs
- Keep an open mind – you are looking for the best school for you
- Dress neatly – conform to each school's dress code. If you are not sure, give the Admissions Office a call
- Present a firm handshake, maintain eye contact, and say something gracious
- Ask questions, and listen...Be natural and observant
- Be alert!
  - To people - Students, teachers, tour guides
  - To places - Classrooms, student centers, sports fields, arts facilities,
  - To pace - The energy of a place, how people walk, talk, smile, etc.

### Onsite

- Take notes right away – keeping notes on your visit is important. Always note the date, the weather and your initial 'gut' reaction, in addition to the pros and cons.
- Talk with parents, teachers or your secondary school counselor
- Be an independent thinker – form your own opinions
- Write thank you notes for the opportunity to visit.

## Questions You May Want to Ask

- What were your impressions of the tour?
- In what ways could you contribute to the school?
- Why are you considering this school?
- Where else are you applying, and why? Which is your first choice?
- Are you and this school a good match?
- How would your teachers describe you?
- Describe a favorite teacher; what admirable qualities does this person have?
- What is your favorite subject?
- What have you liked or disliked about your elementary and middle school?
- What would you like to change?
- What leadership roles or opportunities have you experienced?
- In what extracurricular activities are you involved?
- What extracurricular activities have you found most satisfying?
- What are your special interests?
- What are your strengths?
- Who are your heroes?
- Are you a leader?
- What do you like to do with your free time?
- What newspapers and magazines do you read?
- What do you like to read?
- What's your favorite book and movie? Why?
- Tell us about your family
- How do you spend your summers?
- What are your future plans?
- Where do you expect to be in 10 years?
- How would you handle the following situation?
- What is the most important decision you've had to make?
- What event or person has had a profound effect on your life?
- Think of someone you like or dislike and tell me why you feel that way.

## Questions Students May Want to Ask

- Tell me about your advising system. Is a freshman automatically assigned an advisor?
- How many students does each advisor have?
- Describe student access to music/athletic fields
- For boarding schools: How is housing assigned? What are my options as an upperclassman?
- What is the usual course load?
- How does the school help with college guidance?
- How many students are there in introductory freshman courses? In junior year English/Math/History courses?
- How often are AP courses offered in English/U.S. History/Math?
- How do clubs and electives work in the schedule?