

The College Interview

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Many colleges allow you to interview with an admissions representative, either on campus or in your hometown. Not all schools grant interviews, and you shouldn't freak out if your local admissions rep is too busy to interview you. It doesn't mean you won't be admitted! If you do score an interview, take it seriously. But rest assured that it will not make or break you. Admissions officers will consider it when evaluating your application, although they'll be much more interested in your grades, test scores and essays.

Prepare specific questions.

Your interviewer will expect you to ask some questions about the school and talk about why you want to go there. Think about why the school appeals to you, what you want to study and what you might do after graduation (you don't need a fifty-year plan). Challenge yourself to come up with creative questions *the answers to which cannot be easily found on the college's website*. Bizarre or obvious questions will not impress the interviewer; thoughtful and specific inquiries will.

Practice like a prizefighter.

Being interviewed is a skill, and it requires practice. Sit down with one of your parents, a teacher or a friend and have him or her ask you questions. Answer them honestly and seriously. Then ask your "interviewer" how you came across. The practice interview is a great way to become aware of little things you might not have known you were doing. Do you talk like a stuttering valley girl? If so, cut down on "ums" and "likes" and make sure to answer in complete sentences.

Be yourself.

Don't pretend to be someone you're not. Remember, the key to getting admitted (and being happy at college) is matchmaking. You want to be yourself so that the person interviewing you can discern if you would be a good fit. But remember that you have many sides. Don't show up looking like you peeled yourself off the couch, brushed the crumbs off your belly and rolled on in. Showcase the side of yourself that is professional, mature and confident. Smile, use your sense of humor and remember your interviewer wants the interview to go well too! They'll feel comfortable if you are comfortable.

Schedule wisely.

You'll get better each time you interview. Try to arrange your schedule so that your first interviews are with the schools you care about least (or those most likely to accept you). You can even schedule interviews at schools in which you have no interest at all, just for the practice. You'll be much more comfortable with the process by the time you get to your top choice schools.

Stop looking at the clock.

Most interviews last approximately 30 minutes. Occasionally they'll run as long as an hour. Students are sometimes told that the sign of a good interview is a long one. But most colleges schedule interviews back-to-back, so your interviewer is likely on a tight schedule. If you notice them checking the time, it's not (necessarily) because they think you're boring.

Be thankful.

Send a thank-you note. If there's something about the interview that was helpful to you, let your interviewer know. If you connected with your interviewer over a book, common experience, band you're both into, etc., then mention it! Otherwise, simply express your continued interest in the school and thank your interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.

Potential Interview Questions

1. Why are you considering this college?
2. What makes you think that this college would be a good match?
3. Where else are you applying and why?
4. What do you hope to major in?
5. What do you expect to be doing ten years from now?
6. How do you define “success?”
7. What have you liked or disliked about your school? What would you change?
8. How would you describe yourself to someone who did not know you?
9. What newspapers and magazines do you read?
10. What books not required for school have you read recently?
11. What television shows do you watch?
12. Tell us about your family.
13. How do you spend a typical afternoon after school? Evening? Weekend?
14. What extracurricular activities have you found most satisfying?
15. What are your strengths? Weaknesses? What has been your proudest achievement so far?
16. If you could talk with anyone living (or deceased) person, whom would it be and why?
17. What events have been crucial in your life?
18. What is the most important thing you’ve learned in high school?
19. What mark do you feel you’ve left on your school?
20. What do you want to get out of your college experience?
21. What about you is unique? What could you contribute to our college community?
22. Talk about a significant challenge you have encountered.
23. Is there anything you’d like to tell us about your transcript?
24. What is your greatest passion?
25. How would your friends describe you?
26. If you had high school to do over again, what might you have done differently?
27. What are your goals for your senior year?

College Visits

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When it comes to researching potential schools, there is nothing better than the college visit.

If possible, visit every college that you are strongly considering. No website, guidebook or testimonial will give you a better feel for a school than you'll get by showing up. Many students change their minds after a college visit. This is obviously preferable to changing it after you enroll!

Get the most out of your college visit with these tips:

Mind the calendar.

Schedule your visit while school is in session. You won't get a realistic idea of student life in August (or if you attend during a special event like Spring Fling).

Meet the experts.

Talk to the current students – they may soon be your peers. If they have a problem or grievance, they will probably share it with you. If they love their school, they won't be shy about it either. Specific questions yield far more interesting (and helpful) answers.

Meet the other experts.

Stop by the admissions office and introduce yourself. Let them know what interests you about the school so they can direct you to the best place for further investigation. Collect contact information and send a brief, friendly email thanking them for taking the time to talk to you.

If there is a sign-up sheet, add your name! Colleges do keep track of which applicants have demonstrated genuine interest in the school. A visit is a great way to demonstrate your interest.

Some schools will let you interview with an admissions rep during your campus visit. If this opportunity is available, don't pass it up.

Take the campus tour...

Although it's the most obvious thing to do, the official campus tour *is* worth your while. (Find out if you need to register to get a spot.) It gives the school a chance to show its best face, like the spankin' new theater or their rooftop planetarium. While you're walking around, check out the flyers and bulletin boards and pick up a school newspaper to get a sense of what's going on.

...then venture out on your own.

The official tour will probably steer you clear of the school's less attractive features, like the shoddy dining hall or the tiny gymnasium. Take your own un-official tour by wandering around campus. If there are any facilities that are important to you, find them and have a look for yourself. Make sure your destinations include the freshmen dormitories.

Be a student for a day (or night).

Some schools sponsor overnight programs in which you can stay with a current student. This is a great opportunity to get a deeper sense of campus life and interact with your potential future friends and roommates. Even if you don't stay over, most schools will allow you to sit in on lectures. Browse the course catalogue before you arrive, or ask the admissions office what classes are in session that day.

Save the best for last.

You'll get better at visiting colleges with practice. As you compare schools, you pick up on the aspects you like and the aspects you're not so fond of. You also figure out the right questions to ask, as well as the best campus spots to gauge student life. For that reason, visit your favorite schools last, so you'll be in the best position to make comparisons to the others on your list.

Keep a record of every college visit.

If you visit many schools, your memories of them are bound to overlap. Keep track of the details you like and the stuff that you don't like. When more questions arise (as they most definitely will) you can fire off an email for an answer rather than visiting a second time.

Don't rush to judgment.

Be careful not to rush to judgment if the weather's bad or the class you attended is boring. There are bound to be sunny days and more interesting classes.

At the same time, trust your gut. Sometimes it's love at first sight. Other times, something feels wrong (even if you can't put your finger on it).

College Visits: 31 Questions you need to ask

<http://thecollegesolutionblog.com/2010/03/29/college-visit-31-questions-you-need-to-ask/>

March 29th, 2010

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College visit. Yes, it's that time of year when high school seniors and juniors are planning college visits during spring break.

You can learn a lot during a college visit so you need to make the most of the opportunity. During a campus visit, here are **31 questions** that you should ask:

College Graduation Track Record

- What is your four-year graduation rate.
- What is your five-year graduation rate?
- What does it take to graduate in four years at this school?
- What percentage of freshmen return for sophomore year?

Academics

- What is the average class size of introductory classes?
- How widely used are teaching assistants on your campus?
- What is the average class size of upper-division courses?
- Will a professor act as my advisor?
- How much time do students typically spend on homework?
- How much writing and reading are expected?

Academic Perks

- What opportunities are there for undergraduate research?
- How many students participate in undergraduate research?
- Is there a culminating senior year experience?
- Do you have an honors college?
- Do you have a learning community or other freshman experience?

Financial Aid

- What is your average financial aid package?
- What is the typical breakdown of loans versus grants?
- What is the average merit award?
- What percentage of students receive college grants?
- What is the average college debt that students leave with?
- What work-study opportunities are there?

Academic Support

- How do you provide academic advice to students?
- Do you have a writing center and how do I access it?
- What kind of learning disability resources do you have?
- What type of tutoring services do you have?

Student Life

- What kind of dorm choices are there?
- How many students live on campus?
- What percentage of the study body belongs to a sorority or fraternity?

Outside Opportunities

- How many students at the college get internships?
- What percentage of students study abroad?
- What type of career services do you have?