

## **The ABC's of College Interviews**

In this article I will provide you with information and tips about the college interview process.

There are three main types of college interviews: evaluative, informational, and financial aid. A college's admissions office uses an evaluative interview to gather information to supplement the information provided in the student's application. Informational interviews are used to recruit students. Financial aid interviews are for discussing the student's financial obligations and aid options. Financial aid interviews occur only after a student is accepted at a college. Of the three types of interviews, only the evaluative interview affects the admissions decision.

Check with the schools to which you are applying to find out each school's specific interview policy. A growing number of colleges either no longer offer campus interviews or delegate that task to a network of alumni interviewers.

Don't stress out about your interview. The interview tends to confirm the overall impression you have provided in your application. One of the most important aspects of the interview is just being there for it. It is a measure of "demonstrated interest." In other words, it lets the admissions office know you are seriously considering attending the school. It is also a great opportunity for you to learn more about the school and determine if it's a good match for you.

Admissions committees realize high school students have little experience interviewing. Prepare for it and take it seriously, but don't overemphasize the importance of the interview. Take your cues from the interviewer. He may just want you to start off by telling him about yourself, your interests, and your passions. Be relaxed and conversational, as if you were talking to a friend. It should be a give-and-take conversation. Enthusiasm is important so be excited about what you've done and where you are going. And don't forget to enjoy yourself!

### **Possible Discussion Topics**

- Courses that interest you most
- AP or honors courses
- Awards and honors
- Sports, clubs, music, school government, community service (very important), etc.
- Make sure to discuss several of your interests, not just one
- Show that you are willing to take on responsibilities, and that people place their trust in you

Be prepared to answer the question "Why would you like to attend this school?" Learn about the college by taking a campus tour, visiting its website, and reading its brochures. Find out how many students attend, what the faculty to student ratio is, and what departments are its strong suits. If the school has well-known professors in the particular department you are interested in, mention that.

## **College Interview Tips**

- Be prompt for your interview. Arrive at least 5-10 minutes early.
- Dress appropriately (no jeans!).
- Bring a pen, a notepad, and a list of questions you want to ask.
- Discuss the achievements that are most important to you and include the reason for their importance.
- Be able to discuss honestly any facet of your record, such as grades, scores, recommendations, etc.
- Be able to discuss your interests, hobbies, and future plans.
- If you're not sure of your career or vocational choice, don't be afraid to say so.
- Write a note of thanks to the admissions officer as soon as you return home. (Be sure to write down his or her name in your notes!)

## **Sample Questions Asked by College Admissions Staff**

- What is it about our school that intrigues you?
- Name three characteristics that describe you.
- If you could do anything to change the world, what would you change and why?
- Where do you see yourself in ten years?
- What accomplishment are you most proud of?
- What is the biggest challenge you have faced?
- If you could have lunch with anyone in the world, who would it be?
- What are you interested in studying?
- What would you change about your school if you had the power to do so?
- Why do you think you are a good match for my college?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- If you had a time machine and could go back and change history, to what time period would you go and what would you do?
- What is your favorite book?
- What person, place, or book has influenced your life?

## **Some Sample Questions You Can Ask**

- What type of housing is available to freshmen?
- If there are fraternities or sororities, how important are they to the social life on campus and what percent of students belongs to them?
- Do all students eat in the college cafeteria? Is there a meal plan?
- How do you assign roommates?
- What kinds of special services are available to students? Health? Psychological? Educational and job placement?

I hope this information proves useful to you when it's your turn to apply to college.

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