

# **11 Tips To Prepare For College Interviews**

Many students tell me that the interview is the most nerve-racking part of the admissions process. No longer are you hidden behind a computer screen or manila envelope; it's just you and the interviewer. You don't even get to bring 3x5 note cards!

With proper preparation, you can ace the interview and leave an impression that can make the difference between a thin envelope and that glossy folder delivered by the FedEx truck. Here are 10 tips to reduce your anxiety and help you shine:

## **1. Practice, practice, practice.**

You may have plenty of interview experience if you've applied for many summer jobs or internships, or this may be your first time in the interview chair. Either way, you will come across as more confident and articulate if you've practiced beforehand. Let a friend, sibling, or parent be your interviewer and grill you with their toughest questions. You'll thank them later.

## **2. Brainstorm possible questions you may be asked.**

Of course there may be some unexpected questions, but much of what the interviewer asks you shouldn't be a surprise. Think up some possible questions and you'll be comfortable and prepared when they come up.

## **3. Think about ways to answer those questions.**

Write your answers out as if they were like any other part of the application. Edit your answers, think them over, and rewrite.

## **4. Don't try to memorize the answers from #3.**

You don't want to sound like a tape recording. It's okay to pause and think before answering a question, and you will sound more natural than if you're repeating back a speech you prepared and memorized.

## **5. Make sure you're familiar with the school.**

In most cases, the interviewer will be a proud alumnus of the school who volunteers his time as a service to his alma mater. He wants to help the school by playing a role in selecting the best applicants, but he also wants to help you get in if you can convince him that the college he loves so much is the perfect fit for your aspirations. Learn as much as you can about the college and talk about how excited you are to experience particular things that make the school special.

## **6. Prepare questions to ask the interviewer.**

You don't want to sit there silently when the interviewer asks if you have any questions for him. Prepare 2-3 things that you'd like to know, and make sure they're not straight-out facts listed on the front page of the college's website. Also, don't ask something that's not particularly important or relevant to your college experience (i.e. "How many books are in the college's library?"). The best questions to ask are ones that involve the interviewer's own experience at the college. Since he's a proud alumnus, he'll enjoy telling you what he loved most about his experience there. Turn things around and let him try to sell \*you\* on the school!

## **7. Practice that firm handshake.**

It shows confidence, maturity, and professionalism.

## **8. Take a deep breath.**

You've made it through the hardest parts of the application process already. Your GPA, test scores, teacher recommendations, and essays are all done. Along the way, you've been involved in extracurricular activities, maybe had some summer jobs or internships, and you've learned a lot about yourself and about the world along the way. All you have to do now is tell the interviewer things you already know and about which you've already written. If you can be relaxed, that's great, but also know that they're used to nervous students. If that's you, you won't be alone.

## **9. Just be yourself.**

In most cases, the interviewer writes a few paragraphs to the admissions committee sharing his thoughts about you. He doesn't usually make any actual decision as to whether or not you'll be accepted. Don't worry about trying to prove anything or explaining deficits in your application. Instead, let the interviewer get to know you. Share experiences and accomplishments that you're really proud of. Talk about your future plans and goals. Let your excitement be contagious.

## **10. Smile.**

Someone who knows your dream school very well is taking the time to speak with you and learn about your best qualities. They love meeting students and getting to know them. Enjoy the experience!

## **11. Dress Appropriately.**

Business attire is your best option. Never wear informal outfits that include jeans or sports outfits. Your overall appearance is important.