

# College Admissions: 6 Ways to Impress Your Interviewer



Fall is peak season for high school seniors to do college interviews. Today, most large schools don't offer interviews, **but small to medium size colleges do**. Some are evaluative, meaning they factor into an admission decision; others are informational, meaning they do not. Both demonstrate your interest in the college, which is often taken into consideration. Whether you are traveling to campus to meet with an Admissions Representative or having an alumni interview in your hometown, there are important things that you should do to get ready.

## 1. Do your homework

**Spend 1-2 hours the day before your interview thoroughly perusing the college web site.** Read about new buildings, professors who have won awards and student projects. Delve into your desired major or explore the majors offered. Make notes on things that interest you and questions you want to ask. Being well-versed in the university's offerings and recent news makes the interviewer feel you are a student who takes initiative and cares. Perhaps the most important question you are likely to get is "Why do you want to attend our college?" You should be ready to be very specific when answering this question. Don't focus on the city the school is in, the winning sports teams, "connections" they will help you make, or the pretty campus. Talk about the educational philosophy, expertise in a major you want to declare, research opportunities, clubs you want to join, community service initiatives you want to be a part of, and unique aspects of the university. For sample interview questions, check out the Bates College .

## 2. Dress for success, manners matter

Now is not the time to wear your tattered jeans, controversial t-shirt, or low-cut blouse. You don't need to wear a suit, but you should **wear a nice pair of pants and a shirt and sweater, or a dress**. Unless you are interviewing at an art school and want to express your personality, you want the interviewer to focus on you, not on your clothing.

Interviewers are looking for mature students. When he or she greets you, put your hand out first, look him/her in the eye and introduce yourself. Make sure that you have a firm handshake and maintain eye contact throughout your meeting. It may sound simple, but most students don't do one or more of these things.

You also want to sit upright in your meeting and display positive body language. Smile, lean into the conversation and present an upbeat image of yourself and your background. **Leave any negative comments about your school, friends or family at home.**

## 3. Have a plan

Come prepared with three things that you want to get across about yourself in the interview; things that can't be seen on your application. When the interviewer asks you a question, don't give a one or two word answer; back it up with an example or a proof point. So, if you have just been asked what your best quality is and you said "determination", then back your statement up with, "When I wanted to start a business club at my school, some students and administrators said that no one would be interested. But I put up posters, promoted speakers and three years later, we now have over 100 members." Don't be shocked if the interviewer asks you why the college should pick you, or what you would say about yourself if you had five minutes with the Dean of Admissions.

#### 4. Demonstrate intellectual curiosity

Interviewers, especially at more competitive colleges, are likely to ask you what you read outside of school. It doesn't matter if you are a science geek who reads mostly physics journals, a Jane Austen fan, or a news junkie. But be prepared to talk about what you read for pleasure, and be ready to answer the question "What issue concerns you most in the world?"

#### 5. Know what to ask

You will ALWAYS be asked what you would like to know about the university. Make sure that you have 3-5 great questions which can't be answered by reading the college website. Ask about the most popular extra-curricular activities on campus, a new lab facility that is under construction or internships in your field of interest. If the interviewer is an alumni, ask what s/he liked most, what they would change, and what they think is most unique about their college

#### 6. Finally...

When you leave, shake the interviewer's hand again, thank him/her and tell them that you are very interested in being a part of the university. Then when you get home, write a thank-you note. And, if the interviewer comes to your school in the coming months, make sure to stop by and say hello!

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