

1. Tell me about yourself.

This question seems easier than it is. How do you reduce your whole life to a few sentences? And it's hard to avoid commonplace answers like "I'm friendly" or "I'm a good student." Of course you want to demonstrate that you're friendly and studious, but try also to say something memorable here that really makes you different from other college applicants. Did you teach your dog to play the piano? Do you make a killer wild strawberry pie? Do you do your best thinking when on a 100-mile bike ride? Do you read books late at night with a flashlight?

2. Why are you interested in our college? Be specific when answering this, and show that you've done your research. What specifically about the college distinguishes it from others you are considering? The interviewer is hoping that you are interested in the college for reasons other than peer pressure or convenience. Similarly, if you say you applied entirely because of a parent or teacher's recommendation, you'll be suggesting that you lack initiative and have few thoughts of your own.

3. What can I tell you about our college?

You can almost guarantee that your interviewer will provide an opportunity for you to ask questions. Make sure you have some, and make sure your questions are thoughtful and specific to the particular college. Avoid questions like "when is the application deadline?" or "how many majors do you have?"

4. Who in your life has most influenced you?

There are other variations of this question: Who's your hero? What historical or fictional character would you most like to be like? This can be an awkward question if you haven't thought about it, so spend a few minutes considering how you would answer. Identify a few real, historical, and fictional characters you admire, and be prepared to articulate WHY you admire them.

5. Why do you want to study _____ ?

Realise that you don't need to have decided on a particular course when you apply to college, and your interviewer will not be disappointed if you say you have several interests and have not yet decided. However, if you have identified a course, be prepared to explain why. Avoid saying that you want to study something because you'll make a lot of money one day -- your passion for a subject will make you a good college student, not your greed.

6. What do you do for fun in your free time?

"Hangin' out and chillin'" is a weak answer for this question. College life obviously isn't all work, so the admissions folks want students who will do interesting and productive things even when they aren't studying. Do you write? Fish? Play a sport? Use a question such as this one to show that you are well-rounded with a variety of interests.

7. Do your predicted grades accurately reflect your effort and ability?

In the interview or on your application, you often have an opportunity to explain a bad grade or a bad year at school. Be careful with this issue -- you don't want to come across as a moaner or as someone who blames others for a low grade. However, if you really did have extenuating circumstances, let the college know.

During the interview, **DO NOT...**

1. Be Late

Your interviewers are busy people. Interviewers are probably taking time out of their full-time jobs to meet with you, and admissions folks often have back-to-back appointments scheduled. Lateness disrupts schedules and shows irresponsibility on your part.

2. Underdress

Business casual is your safest bet, but the main thing is to look neat and put-together. You'll look like you don't care if you show up wearing ripped jeans or low cut top.

3. Talk Too Little

Your interviewer wants to get to know you. If you answer every question with a "yes," "no," or a grunt, you're not impressing anyone, and you're not demonstrating that you can contribute to the intellectual life of the campus.

4. Chew Gum

It's distracting and annoying.

5. Show Disinterest

This should be a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised what some students will say. A comment like "you're my back-up school" or "I'm here because my parents told me to apply" is an easy way to lose points during the interview.

6. Fail to Research the College

If you ask questions that could easily be answered by the college's website, you'll send the message that you don't care enough about the school to do a little research.

7. Lie

This should be obvious, but some students do get themselves in trouble by fabricating half-truths or exaggerating during the interview.

8. Be Rude

Good manners go a long way. Shake hands. Address your interviewer by name. Say "thank you." Introduce your parents if they are in the waiting area. Say "thank you" again.

9. Mobile Phones

Switch off your mobile phone before the interview. If you forget and it rings, apologise but don't answer it!!

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