

## How to Prepare for the College Interview

You've applied to your favorite colleges, and now you are getting ready for face-to-face interviews. Need some advice? Our college intern, Kristina Zhang, put together this great information based on her experiences with the college interview process:

### **Attire:**

Interviews are usually pretty laid back. I would say dressing business casual is a really safe bet. Jeans, depending on the location of the interview are also potentially acceptable. For a few interviews, I had to go to my interviewer's place of work. In those situations business casual is the best option.



### **How to prepare for the college interview**

Men: A nice dress shirt (no tie), polo, sweater, and khakis, sometimes jeans

Women: A nice blouse or shirt, nice trouser like pants or dark jeans. Dresses are fine, but I would try to avoid them, because modesty standards vary from person to person.

### **Etiquette:**

Allow the interviewer to initiate the handshake. If you arrive first and are already seated when your interviewer arrives, make sure to stand while shaking his/her hand and make introductions before sitting down. Handshake etiquette is quite important, and is the first step of a first impression. Make sure to maintain eye contact when handshaking. The handshake should last the duration of a short greeting such as, "Ms. Jones, it's a pleasure to meet you". Make sure your grip is firm but not crushing.

During the interview, maintain eye contact and an open posture. Align your shoulders with those of the interviewer. Keep both feet flat on the floor, sit straight, don't fidget, and avoid putting your hands in your lap. Instead place your hands on either the armrest or the table.

Most importantly smile every so often during the interview! It creates a more personable vibe.

### **Interview:**

I recommend bringing a small notebook and pen to take notes with. *The interviewer is not only trying to gauge your personality. He/she is also trying to sell their alma mater to you.* Jot down qualities of the institution you find special or things that stand out every once in a while. This will let the interviewer know that you are interested in their school.

Make sure you do some research prior to your interview. One of my Northwestern classmates during his interview mispronounced the name of the journalism school, which he was applying to. Needless to say, the rest of the interview was quite awkward after the interviewer corrected him. Look up the various programs and activities of the institution and inquire about them during the interview. Understand the academic structure of the institution so you have a better understanding of what the interviewer is describing when they talk about academics. Prepare some questions to ask during and

after the interview. Remember the interviewer was once a student too. Don't be too apprehensive about asking questions about campus life. During my Northwestern interview, which I thought was my best, I asked my interviewer about the party culture of the school and its prevalence. It made the entire interview much more relaxed and personal, and it gave me more insight about the school, which ultimately helped me make my decision.

### **Questions:**

Make sure you can answer these questions, and make sure you **really think about them**. They will not only help you understand yourself better, but will also help with interviewing.

**Why are you going to college?**

**What do you want to get out of college?**

**Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

**Why do you want to go to \_\_\_\_\_?**

### ***Other questions that may pop up:***

**What are you interested in majoring in?**

If you are undecided, it's perfectly fine. Entering college, most students are. Instead tell about your interests, and potential majors that may interest you.

If you are decided, tell them why you are interested in the major of your choice.

**What can you contribute to \_\_\_X\_\_\_ University?**

What makes you stand out? Why are you different than all the other applicants? What can you offer that others can't? This question is your chance to stand out among all the applicants.

**What is your greatest weakness?**

For this question, a lot of people try to come up with a masked strength. Something like, "I am too much of a perfectionist, I need to be more satisfied with almost perfect" or "I always try do too many things at once. I need to delegate more." Interviewers can see right through these responses.

Instead, say something you genuinely need to improve on like, "I'm a little disorganized" or "I tend to procrastinate." Then, list the things you are doing to improve your weaknesses.

**What is your greatest strength?**

**What are your hobbies?**

**What's your favorite book and why?**

**What are your favorite subjects in school?**

**Tell me about yourself.**

**What kind of learner are you?**

**Talk about a time when you failed.**

**What achievement makes you the proudest?**

**What extracurriculars are you involved in?**

**What are you passionate about?**