

Sample Questions and How to Prepare for College Interviews



1. Tell Me about Yourself

You need to paint a unique portrait of whom you are to separate yourself from other applicants. **Avoid clichés or descriptions that would be too common.** For example, do not just say you are hardworking—explain what has driven you to become as diligent as you have and why you feel, it is important. Try talking about your passions, hobbies, and interests. You can discuss what inspires you or what your friends like about you. Be specific. Again, **you want to**

make yourself memorable.

2. Why Are You Interested in This College?

This is an important question and one you should *prepare* for, since colleges want to see that you are taking the application process seriously and have a legitimate interest in attending the school. Talk about your interest in a major or academic program, the cultural values of the school, or extracurricular activities that drew you to the college. Again, be thorough and specific. Do not talk about prestige or rankings, and don't say you just want to go there because it's close to home; none of this shows genuine interest in *this* specific college!

Go online and research the college before the interview. You should be able to cite specifics when answering this question. Follow the same advice as if you were writing the answer to this question for your application essay.

3. Why Do You Want to Major in _____?

If you have indicated that you want to major in a certain subject, you might be asked *why* you are interested in that field. Colleges are interested in your academic goals and want to see that you are academically inclined. Talk about why a certain subject inspires you or why you are passionate about it. **Do not say that you are pursuing a certain major to make a lot of money or have job security.** That does not demonstrate genuine academic interest; it just makes you seem shallow. Think deeply about *why* you want to pursue a specific major. Why do you find it fascinating? What experiences provoked your interest in the subject? How will the major enable you to reach your future professional goals?

4. What Are Your Academic Strengths?

To get to know you as a student, colleges are interested in getting your perspective on where you excel academically. Do not make this answer too short. Do not just say, "I'm good at science." When discussing your academic strengths, **explain how you have capitalized on your strengths.** If you are an excellent writer, for example, how have you used your writing skills to excel in school? How do you plan to continue to use your strengths? Make sure you know your academic strengths. You should be able to explain how you recognized your strengths, how you are currently using them, and how you plan to use them in the future.

Give examples of how your chosen adjectives describe you. Talk about how you have used your strengths to accomplish something. Talk about how you overcome your weaknesses. For example, you can say, "I have a hard time learning new languages, so I set aside more time to study them."

5. What Are Your Academic Weaknesses? How Have You Addressed Them?

Colleges want to admit good students, but they are aware everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Colleges want to see that you have the persistence and work ethic to succeed despite your challenges. Schools want students who can demonstrate their ability to confront and overcome challenges. Try revealing strategies or specific approaches you have taken to improve your academic

weaknesses. You could also tell a specific story about how you managed to do well in a subject that was especially difficult for you. Be aware of your academic weaknesses and how you have addressed them. **It is not good to say that you do not have any weaknesses.** That is not very believable, and you will come off as arrogant.

6. What Do You Plan to Contribute to This School?

Colleges want to admit students who will make positive contributions to campus and academic life. Essentially, they are looking for students who will make the school better. Do not limit your answer to vague positive traits. **Do not just say you will contribute a good work ethic and a regard for others.** Is there specific research you wish to pursue? Do you want to have a leadership position in an extracurricular activity? Are there specific community service projects you want to do? How will your presence on campus and in the classroom make a difference? Know the specific contributions you want to make to the school. Identify your college goals as well as the activities you want to pursue while you are in college.

7. What Do You Expect to Be Doing 10 Years from Now?

Colleges understand that you probably will not have everything decided and your plans are likely to change. What they *do* want is students with **direction**. Colleges want students who are motivated to achieve their goals. The bad, general answer is to only say you expect to have a fulfilling career and be making a positive impact on the world. What are some specific activities you would like to do? How do you plan to affect the world? You do not have to limit your plans to professional goals. Do you want to take your mom on a vacation? You can write down some detailed notes answering this question. Paint a picture of the life you want to have in 10 years. **That picture should reveal your uniqueness.**

8. What Would You Change About Your High School?

With this question, colleges are looking for your ability to identify problems and get a better understanding of what you are looking for in a school. **By learning what you would change, they get a chance to learn more about what matters to you.** Colleges want a thoughtful response. Be specific and respectful. Do not say, "I'd get better teachers." Say that you would allocate more resources to the music department so that more students can have the opportunity to learn how to play new instruments. Discuss how learning an instrument helped you and describe the current state of the music department. Try to make it clear that you want to **improve your school to benefit the personal and academic growth of all of its students.**

Think about the strengths and weaknesses of your high school. What are some specific problems it has? What are the consequences of those problems? What steps would you take to make improvements?

9. Whom Do You Most Admire?

From this question, colleges can get a sense of your values. If the person you most admire is Justin Bieber, for example, colleges might wonder about your priorities.

Do not limit your answer just to naming the person. **Why do you admire that person?** For instance, many people say that the person they most admire is a parent. However, what *specifically* has that parent done that you admire so much? In short, do not forget the details.

Think deeply about your response to this question. If the person you admire is somebody you know, practice by giving your answer to that person. You will know you have answered the question well if you are rewarded with a hug or even a few tears from your audience.

10. What Is Your Favorite Book?

This question is designed to help schools learn more about your interests and to determine if you read. Do not limit your answer to the name of a book; think about why you like the book so much. How did it inspire you? Did a particular character resonate with you? Did you learn something from the book that influenced your opinions or behavior? Did this book help shape your perspective or values? Really think about books you have read that you connected with and why. I have also seen similar questions asking about a news article you recently read, so try to stay up to date with the news, too!

11. Why Do You Want to Go to College?

Schools are trying to understand why you are motivated to pursue higher education. Colleges want to see you have clear goals you are trying to accomplish by attending college. Obviously, they do not want to hear that you want to go to college because your parents are making you or so you can attend wild parties. In your answer, **emphasize how college will allow you to pursue your passions, aid in your personal development, and enable you to fulfill your future goals.** Be specific. What are your passions and goals? How will college give you an opportunity to pursue these passions? What college activities will increase your awareness and facilitate your intellectual and emotional growth?

12. What Do You Like to Do for Fun?

Your answer does not only have to include activities that are academic. After all, you probably would not be believed if you said all you do for fun is read science textbooks and do math problems. If some of what you do for fun *is* intellectual, though, explain why you find these activities fun. Finally, **try to avoid general answers such as "hang out with friends."**

You should not have to prepare much for this question since I assume you already know what you like to do for fun. However, spend some time thinking about *why* you enjoy these activities.

13. What is an Obstacle You Have Faced and How Did You Get through It.

Colleges want to know if you have faced (and overcome) any significant challenges in your life. They also want to see that you are persistent and willing to work hard in order to overcome these obstacles.

Its fine if you have not had some awful, incredibly difficult obstacle in your life. Think of a time when you faced a problem that challenged you, and you put in a lot of effort to solve it. Your obstacle could be related to your home life, school, or an extracurricular activity. In your response, explain how the obstacle challenged you and emphasize what *exactly* you did to

14. What Makes You Unique?

This question is essentially, what all the other questions above are meant to determine. We are all unique, but it can be hard to put into words exactly what separates you from other people.

Schools ask this question because they want to get to know you better. You can discuss a trait or multiple traits you possess. Give examples and stories that demonstrate these qualities. Do you have any uncommon interests or goals? Is your background unique?

I recommend doing some serious brainstorming to address this question. Write out specific attributes and anecdotes you can share that demonstrate your uniqueness. When do you feel most comfortable? What makes you the proudest?

How to Prepare for College Interview Questions

For each of these questions, **I recommend jotting down some notes so that you can remember key points or details.** Do not try to completely write out your answers and memorize them. The way you speak in an interview is supposed to appear conversational and not rehearsed. In addition, if you

try to memorize your answers and forget your script during the interview, you will end up looking confused and unsure of yourself.

Practice your responses by having somebody ask you these questions and then answering them as if you were in the interview. **Remember that you want to be as specific and detailed as possible.** Learn to separate yourself from all the other applicants being interviewed.

Be yourself. Do not try to answer questions based on what you think the interviewer wants to hear.

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