



Interview Tips for On Campus and Alumni Interviews:



Admissions interviews can be both an exciting and nerve-wracking part of the college application process. By becoming informed about the interviewing processes, you can ace your admissions interviews and come across in the best possible light. Interviews can be an important tool for admissions officers to see a two-dimensional application in "3-D" and confirm what is already in the student's file.

In the past few years, most schools have eliminated on-campus interviews so as not to waste time interviewing thousands of applicants who never end up applying. Many colleges now exclusively offer alumni interviews, in which students who have already submitted their applications are interviewed by local alumni volunteers. You will find that most Ivies and many other top colleges offer alumni interviews only; this list includes Princeton, Yale, Stanford, MIT, Columbia, and Dartmouth.

However, many top colleges, including Harvard, University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins, and Pomona College, offer both on-campus interviews and alumni interviews. By offering both, these colleges can give students who visit the college or live nearby the opportunity to interview on campus, while still allowing students who live far away to interview with alumni in their area.

When researching the interview options at a college of interest, be sure to note if their interviews are "evaluative" (in which case they count) or "informational" in which case they don't formally count, but can be helpful as a two-way exchange of information. Are interviews required or suggested? Often students turn down alumni interviews because they think they are unnecessary but that is a mistake. Always say YES to an alumni interview as admission offices would wonder why, if you were offered an interview, you turned it down.

Be careful how you dress – you want to match the level of dress of the time/place. If the alum who interviews you works in a law firm, you would want to "blend" with that environment if the interview were going to take place in the office where the person works. However, if you are meeting Saturday morning at Starbucks, it's perfectly fine to dress like a student. It's super awkward when students come in wearing a suit and tie when the interviewer is in jeans and a t-shirt. So, take your cue from the time and place of the interview and the person who is conducting the interview.

Keep in mind alumni interviewers get NO information beyond your name/address/phone and high school before they meet you, so be prepared to let them know your scores, grades, etc... You may want to bring a copy of your activity sheet to leave with the interviewer (but, of course, ask if they'd like a copy) to help them do their write up.





Our Top 7 Interview Tips for On Campus and Alumni Interviews:



1) Don't be afraid to hone in on and expound on a subject that interests you. You do not have to cover EVERYTHING, as admissions officers will also have your complete file when they read your application and alums are going to simply write up notes on you so they'll appreciate some precise information. That's why it's OK to spend 20 minutes talking about your love of Greek and Latin, especially if your interviewer happens to share that passion. If you find a common bond, follow up! There are no rules on what must be covered. The interview is not simply a laundry list of all that you've done - think of it as "highlights" of your most notable achievements and interests.

2) Look the interviewer in the eye -- it's off-putting to stare down at your feet.



3) Make sure you have substantive questions, not just typical questions you could find the answers to on the college website. If the interviewer attended the school, ask pointed questions about what they liked and didn't like about the school or what they might change if they could address any campus issues.

4) After the interview, write a brief thank you note and try to mention something specific that you talked about so the interviewer can remember who you are. Though you can email a note, we still prefer the old fashioned touch of mailing one to the interviewer.

5) Make sure you do your research about the school BEFORE the interview so you're not caught asking embarrassing questions about a program that doesn't exist or a major that is no longer a real program. Read the school newspaper to prepare and study the website; most newspapers are now online!

6) Make sure to be on time for your interview! This means 5 minutes early. This one may seem obvious, but it is very important. You want to make a good first impression by showing you are responsible and respect your interviewer's time. Leave yourself plenty of extra time to find the location of your interview, since it may take longer than expected.

7) For on-campus admissions interviews, note that at top-tier institutions, the assistant behind the reception desk is sometimes asked to take notes from the moment you arrive. This means it's not a good idea to chat loudly on your cell phone while you wait to see the admissions officer you are meeting with. While you are in the admissions office, assume someone is watching you and taking notes that will soon be added right into your applicant file. This will certainly not always be the case, but it's something that occasionally happens, so we want you to be aware. Be polite to everyone.

As you prepare for your admissions interviews, whether on campus with an admissions representative, or locally with an alum, be aware of the image you project. Now is a good time to grandparent-proof your Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter accounts!

Ensure that you reflect a positive image and your true self to the colleges you are touring.