

# CCO.MKA

## COLLEGE INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

- The interview is simply a conversation between two individuals, an exchange of information between admissions officer and student. Rarely does the interview make or break your chances for admission. At the same time, the interview can be an opportunity for you to further elaborate on the information provided on your application. The important thing to do is prepare.
- Come to the interview ready to talk about yourself, your interests and aspirations. Where you've been, what you've done, where you hope to go, and what you hope to do. Think about your strengths and weaknesses - be honest, be positive, be an active participant, and keep up your end of the conversation.
- Be sure to do some research prior to your visit. Check out the college's website, read the guidebooks, and come up with a list of questions to ask that reveal your depth of interest and knowledge of the school, not questions that can be easily answered by reviewing the college's literature.
- It's perfectly natural to be somewhat nervous, so go ahead and admit it, out loud, to the interviewer. Remember that admissions officers are people too! Typically they go out of their way to put you at ease and make the interview a positive experience. Try to relax and be yourself. If it will make you more comfortable, "practice" at a few colleges that are not particularly high on your list before you sit down with a staff member at your top choice schools.
- Arrive a few minutes early and wear neat, comfortable clothing. Greet your interviewer with a firm handshake and introduce him or her to your parent(s). As you and the admissions officer make your way to his or her office, your parents will make themselves comfortable in the reception area for the next half an hour or so. At most schools, mom and dad will have a chance to ask a few questions at the conclusion of the interview session, if they'd like.
- After saying goodbye and breathing a sigh of relief as you walk out the door, remember to write a short and simple handwritten thank-you note to your interviewer as soon as you get home.

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## QUESTIONS COLLEGES ASK....

1. How did you first hear about "X" College?
2. What are your career goals - long and short range?
3. Why are you interested in majoring in \_\_\_\_\_ ?
4. What kinds of things do you do outside of school?
5. What accomplishments have you achieved or activities have you participated in that had a particular effect on you and your life?
6. What might you be interested in as a future profession?
7. What are your academic strengths and weaknesses?
8. How familiar are you with this college and its programs?
9. Which of your activities has given you the most satisfaction?
10. If you had high school to do all over again, would you do anything differently?
11. What particular "life goals" are you seeking to achieve or pursue?
12. What are your priorities in selecting a college?
13. How would you describe your high school and how would you change it?
14. Where do you see yourself in four years?
15. Discuss your most stimulating intellectual experience.
16. Tell me about something you have really wanted which you had to go after on your own.
17. Discuss your most significant contribution you have made to your school?
18. What book or articles have made a lasting impression on your way of thinking? Have you read deeply into any one author or field?
19. Have you ever thought of not going to college? What would you do?

## Ten Tips for a Successful College Interview

### 1. Know what the interview means at each college.

Is it purely informational or intended to help evaluate you as a candidate? Here at Skidmore the interview is evaluative and the discussion allows you to introduce yourself in a way that can distinguish you from the many other candidates applying for admission. You and your interviewer engage in a relaxed and friendly conversation during which you will be encouraged to discuss your school, your courses, your activities, and your academic and personal goals. You will also be encouraged to ask any questions you have about the college and the application process. The interview summary written by the interviewer after your discussion describes your individual qualities and ability to contribute to the Skidmore community. It becomes part of your application file when you apply.

On the other hand, an informational interview requires you to direct the conversation. The interviewer's questions may be as general as, "What can I tell you about this school?" or "What questions do you have about the application process?" Ordinarily, no written evaluation is included in your application file after an informational interview. As the name suggests, the sole purpose of the interview is to raise and answer questions that will help you distinguish differences among colleges and which ones "fit" you best.

### 2. Know something about the college before you visit.

Do your homework. You are not expected to be an expert on the college, but you should know basic facts before your interview. Viewbooks, catalogues, and college guides are all good sources of basic information. The interviewer's questions will help you clarify the qualities you hope to find in a college and will help you understand how different colleges satisfy those expectations. Be prepared to talk about your college search. What are you looking for in a college? What is important to you? What is your vision of the ideal college? How did you decide to visit this specific campus?

### 3. Think about your high school years.

Be introspective. What do you do with your "free" time? How would your parents describe you? What would your favorite teacher say? Your friends? Make a list of extracurricular interests and hobbies that have been important to you. How have you spent your summers? Have you ever worked, either on a volunteer basis or for pay? How have you changed during your high school years?

### 4. Know your high school.

The colleges you apply to will assess your achievements within the context of your high school. Are honors courses offered? AP's? An IB program? How large is your high school? How many students are in your senior class? You should be able to describe your school, the courses you have taken and the level of competition you have faced. What course in high school has been toughest for you? Do you regret any course choices? Try not to complain about "bad" teachers! How diverse is your high school population? Your community? Don't assume your interviewer can picture your school. Try to describe it as vividly as possible.

### 5. Watch your language!

Avoid slang and don't say "you know," "like," and "um." Stop and think before you speak. The interviewer wants to get to know you as an individual and to evaluate you as a potential student. Listen carefully to the questions, think before you respond, and express your ideas clearly.

## **6. Be aware of your body language.**

Establish good eye contact with the interviewer. When people look at each other they communicate more effectively. Be aware of how you act when you are nervous. Do you tap your foot? Twist or flip your hair? Look at the floor? Say "you know" or "like" a lot? If you can identify your nervous habits ahead of time you can address them in the interview.

## **7. Be prepared to ask questions.**

Ask questions regarding academic requirements or special services offered by the college, but avoid basic questions that should have been answered in your preliminary research. Do not waste time asking questions that are easily answered in the viewbook or catalogue. Examples: "How many students attend your school?" or "Do you have a major in psychology?" Use your time wisely by asking about things that interest you. You might ask about internship opportunities, accessibility of professors, athletic facilities and sports traditions, artistic performance opportunities on campus, leadership positions for students, or social life on campus. Ask questions that will help you distinguish qualitative differences between similar colleges. It's a good idea to bring your list of questions to the interview.

## **8. Dress "comfortably."**

Most admission interviewers recommend that you wear clothes that are comfortable for you and make you feel good about yourself. You don't have to "dress up" in a skirt or necktie unless that's how you're most comfortable. Be neat, but be yourself.

## **9. Be honest. Don't pretend.**

If you really read science fiction, then don't pretend that you like Dickens. Share any serious personal difficulty that has affected your record with your interviewer. Don't try to guess "the right answer" to the questions. What you have done is not nearly so important as why you did it, why it was important to you, and how it has helped you to grow. If you have a weakness in your record (for example, a poor grade or semester of poor grades) try to put it into perspective for the interviewer. Be honest. If this is your first interview and you're nervous, share those feelings with your interviewer. If you're afraid that some aspect of the college might not be right for you, share your concern. Feel good about yourself and convey that feeling to the interviewer. You can be positive about your accomplishments without sounding conceited. Interviewers expect you to say good things about yourself.

## **10. Be sure to follow-up after the interview.**

Interviewers, like everyone else, appreciate being thanked for their time. Write down the name of your interviewer as well as the date (many will give you a business card) and send a personal thank you note after returning home. Colleges notice the gesture and it helps to reinforce a positive impression. If you enjoyed your interview and visit, find out about opportunities for you to return and to stay overnight on campus, sit in on classes, or attend upcoming special programs.

Remember that every college or university wants you to leave your visit feeling good about the experience. If you take the time to research colleges, and then do a little thinking about how you've spent your time and what is important to you, you'll find your visits both informative and enjoyable.

**Good Luck!**