



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.** Don't 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. Also, if you try to memorize your answers, and you forget your script during the interview, you'll end up looking confused and unsure of yourself.

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

For some of these questions, it may be helpful for you to review your [personal statement](#). Your personal statement probably has some details or stories that you can incorporate into some of your answers.

Question #1: Tell Me About Yourself or How Would You Describe Yourself to a Stranger?

This isn't even actually a question, but it's something you may be asked to do in an interview. Because it's so general, you may not know where to begin.

Why they're asking: Colleges are asking you to do this because they really do want to know more about you. That's one of the primary purposes of the interview.

What they're looking for: Paint a unique portrait of who you are to separate yourself from the other applicants. You should attempt to **avoid cliches or descriptions that would be too common.** Don't just say you're hard-working.

How to prepare: Rehearse answering this question. Talk 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.**

Question #2: Why Are You Interested in This College?

Why they're asking: This is an important question and one you should definitely prepare for because colleges want to see that you're taking the application process seriously and have a legitimate interest in attending their school.

What they're looking for: 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. Don't talk about prestige, rankings, or say that you just want to go there because it's close to home. That doesn't show genuine interest in that specific college.

How to prepare: To answer this question well, you should **do extensive [college research](#) before the interview.** You should be able to cite specifics in answering this question. Follow the same advice as if you were writing the answer to this question for your application [essay](#).

Question #3: Why Do You Want to Major in _____?

If you indicate that you want to major in a certain subject, you may be asked why you're interested in that field.

Why they're asking: Colleges are interested in your academic goals and want to see that you're academically inclined.

What they're looking for: Talk about why a certain subject inspires you or why you're passionate about it. **Don't say that you're pursuing a certain major to make a lot of money or have job security.** That doesn't demonstrate genuine academic interests.

How to prepare: Think deeply about why you want to pursue a specific major. Why do you find it fascinating? What experiences have you had that provoked your interest in the subject? How will that major enable you to reach your future professional goals?

Question #4: What Are Your Academic Strengths?

Why they're asking: In an effort to get to know you as a student, colleges are interested in getting your perspective on where you excel academically.

What they're looking for: Don't make this answer too short. Don't just say, "I'm good at science." **When discussing your academic strengths, explain how you've capitalized on your strengths.** If you're an excellent writer, how have you used your writing skills to excel in school? How do you plan on continuing to use your strengths?

How to prepare: Make sure you know your academic strengths. You should be able to explain how you recognized your strengths, how you're currently using them, and how you plan to use them in the future.

Question #5: What Are Your Academic Weaknesses? How Have You Addressed Them? Or What Sort of Challenges Have You Faced In Life So Far?

Why they're asking: Colleges want to admit good students, but they're aware that we all have strengths and weaknesses. Colleges want to see that you have the persistence and work ethic to succeed despite difficulties.

What they're looking for: Students who can demonstrate their ability to confront and overcome challenges. You can reveal strategies or specific approaches you've taken to improve your academic weaknesses. Also, you can tell a specific story about how you managed to do well in a subject that challenges you.

How to prepare: Be aware of your academic weaknesses and how you've specifically addressed them. **It's not good to say that you don't have any weaknesses.** That's not very believable, and you'll come off as arrogant.

Question #6: What Do You Plan to Contribute to This School?

Why they're asking: Colleges want to admit students who will positively contribute to campus and academic life. They're looking for students who will make the school better.

What they're looking for: In short, specifics. Don't limit your answer to vague positive traits. **Don't just say that you'll 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?

How to prepare: You should know the specific contributions you want to make to the school. Identify your college goals and activities you want to do while you're in college.

Question #7: What Do You Expect to Be Doing Ten Years From Now?

Why they're asking: You don't need to have your future completely figured out. Colleges understand that you probably won't have everything figured out, and your plans are likely to change. However, they're looking for students with direction.

What they're looking for: They want students who are motivated to achieve their goals. The bad, general answer is to only say that you expect to have a fulfilling career and be making a positive impact on the world. What are some specific activities you'd like to do? How do you plan on impacting the world? You don't have to limit your plans to professional goals. Do you want to take your mom on a vacation? Do you want to have weekly gatherings with your best friends from high school?

How to prepare: You can write down some detailed notes answering this question. Paint a picture of the life you want in 10 years. **That picture should reveal your uniqueness.**

Question #8: What Would You Change About Your High School?

Why they're asking: With this question, colleges are looking for your ability to identify problems and get a better understanding of what you're looking for in a school. **By learning what you'd change, they get a chance to learn more about what matters to you.**

What they're looking for: They're looking for a thoughtful response. Be specific and respectful. Don't say, "I'd get better teachers." For example, you can say that you'd allocate more resources to the music department so that more students are given the opportunity to learn how to play new instruments. Then, you can discuss how learning an instrument helped you and describe the current state of the music department. In your answer, try to demonstrate that you want to improve your school to benefit the personal and academic growth of all your school's students.

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

Question #9: Whom Do You Most Admire?

Why they're asking: From this question, colleges can get a sense of your values. If the person you most admire is Justin Bieber, colleges may wonder about your priorities.

What they're looking for: Don't limit your answer just to naming the person. **Why do you admire that person?** For example, many people may say that the person they most admire is a parent. What specifically has that parent done that you admire so much? Don't forget the details.

How to prepare: Think about your response to this question. If your answer is somebody you know, practice by giving your answer to the person. If you answer the question well, you should be able to get some tears or a hug.

Question #10: What Is Your Favorite Book?

Why they're asking: This question is designed to help schools learn more about your interests, and colleges probably also want to make sure that you actually read books.

What they're looking for: Don't limit your answer to the name of a book. Why do you like this book so much? How did it inspire you? Did a particular character resonate with you? Did you learn something from this book that influenced your opinions or behavior? Did this book help shape your perspective or values?

How to prepare: Really think about things you've read that you connected with and why. I've also seen similar questions that ask about a news article you recently read.

Question #11: Why Do You Want to Go to College?

Why they're asking: For this question, colleges are trying to get an idea of why you're motivated to pursue higher education.

What they're looking for: Schools want to see that you have clear goals that you're trying to accomplish by attending college. Obviously, they don't want to hear that you want to go to college because your parents are making you or so you can go to good parties. **Emphasize how college will allow you to pursue your passions, aid in your personal development, and enable you to reach your future goals.** Again, be specific. What are those passions and goals? How will college give you an opportunity to pursue your passions? What activities that you plan to do in college will increase your awareness and facilitate your intellectual and emotional growth?

Question #12: What Do You Like to Do for Fun? And/Or What Are Your Top Extracurricular Activities, and Why Do You Like Them? And/Or

How Did You Spend Your Time Last Summer and What Did You Learn From It?

Why they're asking: This question is designed to get a better sense of your interests and personality.

What they're looking for: Your answer doesn't only have to include activities that are academic. You probably wouldn't be believed if you said all you do for fun is read science textbooks and do math problems. However, it's commendable if some of what you do for fun is intellectual. Explain why you find those activities fun. **Try to avoid general answers like "hang out with friends."**

How to prepare: You shouldn't have to prepare much for this question because I assume you know what you like to do for fun. However, think about why you enjoy those activities.

Question #13: What Was an Obstacle You Have Faced and How Did You Get Through It?

Why they're asking: Here, colleges want to learn if you've faced any significant challenges that you've had to overcome. Also, they want to see if you're persistent and willing to work hard to overcome obstacles.

What they're looking for: It's fine if you haven't 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 significant effort to solve it. **Your obstacle can be related to your home life, school, or an extracurricular activity.** Explain how the obstacle challenged you and emphasize what exactly you did to overcome it.

How to prepare: Think of a significant challenge you had in your life and how you dealt with it. What did you learn from the obstacle? How did you solve it?

Question #14: What Makes You Unique?

Why they're asking: Basically, this question is what all the other questions are meant to determine. This is another general question that can be difficult to answer. We're all unique, but it can be difficult to put into words exactly what separates you from other people.

What they're looking for: Schools ask this question because they want to get to know you better. You can discuss a trait or multiple traits that you possess. Give examples or stories that demonstrate these traits. Do you have unique interests? Goals? Is your background very unique?

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

How Do You Answer Questions That You Didn't Prepare For?

Undoubtedly, the questions I described above aren't the only possible interview questions. **Regardless of how much you prepare, you'll almost definitely be asked a question that you weren't expecting.** There's no need to be too nervous, though. Just try to give honest, detailed answers. As long as you're thoughtful and professional, you don't have too much to worry about.

Also, you may be able to incorporate some of the details from the other questions you prepared for in your responses. For example, for any question related to academics, you may be able to include details from your response to "what are your academic strengths?".

If you want to get more comfortable with the interview process, have somebody ask you questions about yourself, and respond as if you were in the interview (Mock Interview)