

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Who?

Make sure you know not only where and when the interview will take place, but also who will be interviewing you. If possible, research the interviewer. What is his/her background? What do you have in common with him/her? Is there any way in which you could establish a connection?

Where?

Make sure you know in advance how to get to the location where the interview will take place. Have a backup plan in case something unforeseen happens. What would I do in case of an unavoidable delay? Do I have a way to communicate with my interviewer and notify him I will not be on time?

Interview content

1. Research the University

It is very important to research the university before the interview.

You should try to know the general facts:

- Size of the school
- Location
- Single-sex or co-ed
- Liberal arts college or research universities
- Public vs private

Also research specific things that you find interesting and exciting:

- Clubs
- Classes
- Professors
- Study abroad opportunities

2. Prepare for Questions

Expect these anticipating likely questions:

- Why X university?
- Could you tell me about yourself?
- What are your academic interests?

Reflecting/preparing for these questions is crucial. It is important however, not to fall into a **generic answer trap** and **memorize** your answer. Your answer should sound natural.

★ **Why X university?**

Think about specific things that make X university a good fit for you, and think about how you are a good fit for the university. Something must have had to come out of your laborious research!

★ **Could you tell me about yourself?**

Make sure to carefully think about how you want to convey your story. You will need to be concise, so pin down what you want to highlight.

★ **What are your academic interests?**

When you talk about your academic interests, it is a good idea to draw connections with your personal experiences. As you prepare, you might want to ask yourself questions such as:

- What sparked my interest in this specific major?
- How does this relate to my personal goal? Long term professional goals?

If you are undecided, do not fear! It is completely okay to not know your dream job. Do try to reflect on your idea of interests.. When thinking about them, ask yourself the questions previously mentioned questions, as well as:

- How do these areas of interest relate to each other?
- Can I identify a pattern of my preferences?

Besides preparing for the expected questions, spend some time thinking outside of the box.

One of these outside the box questions could be for instance, “take a moment to think about an issue you are particularly passionate about... please defend your position.”

To make the exercise more interesting, they could then ask you “to please argue against your own position this time.”

Exercises

With a partner, read the questions and answers. Decide whether it is a good answer. If not, how would you change the answer? How would you ask the question?

Q: What subject in high school did you find most challenging?

A: I found English to be my most challenging class. My essays were not the greatest. My teachers always wrote in the comments that I need to work on my grammar. I didn't understand what they were saying because I understood what I was writing. Maybe my main points were too complicated for them to understand. Slowly, I did improve my grammar, but I still didn't get the best grades in English.

Q: Who do you most admire?

A: I admire my mom because she is very caring and responsible. She drives a school bus, so she has a responsibility to take care of the students when she is driving.

Q: What is your favorite book and why?

A: My favorite book is *The Hunger Games* because it is one of the rare books that I have read that has a strong female character. In many other books, the female characters are the damsels in distress or the hero's lover. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss courageously volunteers for her younger sister because she would rather sacrifice her life than have her sister killed. I thought that was a powerful moment in the book, especially because it set the tone for the trilogy. Did you see the movie? I thought it was fantastic! The costumes for the movie were amazing. I didn't think anyone could look as funny as the people of the Capital did. I mean, they looked like clowns! I think the movie did a great adaptation of the book. I actually saw the movie before I read the book to see if it was worth reading.

3. Choose an Appropriate Attire

Do not forget to plan your attire! Try to infer what the interview will be like from the email you receive from the interviewer. Casual? Formal? If you do not know, strive for business casual.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Make sure that you take good care of yourself that day.

- Have a good meal before the interview
- Arrive early at the place where the interview will take place
- Solid handshake, eye contact and a smile (Remember that first impressions do matter)
- Have questions for the interviewer

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Take a deep breath! You finished!

- Send a thank you email. In such, you should talk about specific highlights of the interview. This will convey that had an enjoyable time with the interviewer rather than a stressful one.
- Find a way to re-state not only why this university is a great fit for you, but why you are a great fit with the university.