

Woolf College Consulting



HOW TO ACE AN INTERVIEW

Preparation Ensures Success

By Betsy F. Woolf

Good morning. It's 8 a.m., and your interview with McDreamy College is only an hour away. Better take inventory before you go:

- Are you a mini-expert on the college?
- Do you have a list of intelligent questions to ask at the interview?
- Did you ditch your New York Giants Sweatshirt and your Ben Folds T-shirt for the morning?
- Have you left enough time to get to the interview early?
- Have you thought about yourself – what you care about personally, intellectually and outside the classroom?
- Have you thought about how this college fits in with your interests and talents?

It's 9.a.m, and Cathi Counselor has just ushered you into her office. She's almost as nervous as you are, because it's her job to make sure she makes you comfortable and gets to know you during the interview. She's also drafted a list of questions to ask. Maybe she'll get to all of them; maybe not. It depends on how the conversation progresses.

- *Tell me about yourself.*
- *Why are you considering this college?*
- *Which classes have you enjoyed the most?*

- *Which classes have you found to be the most difficult? Challenging? Easiest?*
- *How did you overcome the challenges of your most difficult class?*
- *Describe your favorite teacher.*
- *What is the most significant contribution you have made at your school?*
- *How do you spend a typical day after school?*
- *What do you expect to be doing ten years from now?*
- *If you didn't go to college, what would you do instead?*
- *Do you ever become indignant about anything happening in the world? If you were President of the United States, what would you do about it?*
- *What is the best book you've ever read? Why?*
- *What person, living or dead, would you most like to have dinner with? What would you discuss?*
- *How would your friends describe you?*

It's 9:40 a.m. Now you can relax. You go over the interview in your mind:

- *Did you look Cathi Counselor in the eye?*
- *Did you sit up straight during the interview?*
- *Did you smile?*
- *Were you honest?*
- *Did you ask for and get Cathi Counselor's business card?*
- *Did you thank her before you left?*

You're home from your college visit.

- *Have you written some notes about what you learned at the interview?*
- *Have you written a thank-you note to Cathi Counselor?*

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Just like a job interview, it's usually impossible to anticipate every question that will be asked during a college interview. But preparation -- knowing the college, thinking about issues, thinking about yourself -- will all help create a more successful interview.

Some students find it helpful to attend an information session and/or the college tour before interviewing. It's another opportunity to become familiar with the college and its culture that may prompt yet another question that can be asked at the interview.

Students and parents often ask whether interviews matter. That depends on the college. Most schools don't conduct interviews. Those that do may offer interviews on campus, usually with admissions personnel but sometimes with other students. Some colleges schedule interviews around the country, and some rely on their network of alumni to do the interviewing. Some colleges use the interview in the admissions process; it's often called an evaluative interview. And some simply use the interview as an opportunity for students to learn more about the college; that's an informational interview.

Although you want to make a good impression at an interview, it's important not to forget that a main purpose of the interview is to learn more about a college. That knowledge will help you make the right college choices.