

For Students

The Interview

Some colleges require an interview, some recommend one, and others leave the matter up to the candidate. In all cases, if the school does offer interviews, it is a good idea to have one. Some institutions may not offer one-on-one interviews, but only group information sessions. If this is the case at one of your schools, schedule yourself for one. You can then plan your campus tour around the information session. Some other advice:

Be punctual

Make sure that you have allowed enough of a time cushion to accommodate missed turns, traffic jams, or foul weather. If, despite your best efforts, you are still going to be late, call the admission office to inform them of your situation. Assuming you are on time, an admission officer will probably come out to the waiting room to meet you. Shake hands while maintaining eye contact. If your parents are with you, *you* should introduce them clearly by saying, “This is my mother, Dr. Grant, and my father, Mr. Grant.” They will, in all likelihood, *not* be asked to accompany you into the interview. Going by yourself is normal.

Relax

Admission officers are experienced interviewers. They expect some students to be nervous. Relax. Be yourself. Do not try to show confidence with a false display of nonchalance. You will probably find, after the first few minutes, that you are quite at home in the presence of the man or woman who is eager to help you think soundly about your future education. If, afterward, you do not think the interview went well, you could write the admission officer who interviewed you and explain why you think it did not go as well as you had hoped. Regardless of how an interview goes, *you must write your interviewer a thank-you note: hand-written on note paper and sent in the mail.*

Be prepared

Interviews are not only an opportunity for the admission officer to see what you are like and take your measure, but they are also an excellent way for you to learn more about a specific school. You should have read the college’s viewbook or visited its website before you go. Avoid asking for information that is easily attainable in the school’s literature. Try to ask questions for which there are no straightforward “yes” or “no” answers. As you read a college’s material, write down any questions to which you cannot find an answer. A favorite question of college admission officers is, “Why are you interested in attending this college?” While it is a rather general question, you should have prepared a more specific answer than, “I know of the school’s reputation for academic excellence.” This statement might be true, but you will need to strengthen your answer with specifics such as, “I am interested in child psychology, and I know the department is very strong here.” Try, in a word, to articulate to your interviewer why this college is a good fit for you. As in classroom discussions, it will be obvious if you are not prepared.

Be yourself

An interview is a chance for you to showcase who you are and add more personality to your folder. Dress neatly, but not so out of character that you feel awkward. Do not answer questions with simple “yes” or “no” responses. It is fine to offer opinions, as detailed and extended as possible, but, as with dress, they should be in character. Interviewers are likely to press a line of questioning as far it will possibly go. Thus, if you indicate that your favorite hobby is building computers, be prepared to talk about that topic in detail. Also, you are not there to make excuses; you are there to help an admission officer get to know you as a human being. Colleges understand that none of us is perfect, that we all make mistakes and see the world differently.

Speak your piece

Interviews provide excellent opportunities for you to present to the school what type of candidate you are. If any ambiguities or unusual circumstances appear in your application—one low grade or an unusual number of courses in one department, for example—this is a good time to clarify them. For instance, if family problems have affected your studies, you can mention this. You could describe why you moved from an honors section to a regular section in a course. You can highlight unique interests and achievements, such as involvement in the IIP. Never be defensive, and by all means avoid a tone of complaint. Let the facts speak for themselves. You are who you are.

Take notes and say thank you

Never take notes while the interview is in progress, but certainly shortly thereafter, jot down your impressions, ideas, and reactions to the school tour and the interview. If you wait too long, you will recall less. If you take no notes, all the colleges you visit will start to blend together. These immediate reactions often prove invaluable as you ponder your options later on. *Include in these notes your interviewer's name so that you can send a thank-you note upon your arrival home.* Do not be afraid to ask him or her for a business card before you leave. You might even want to encourage your parents to take their own set of notes to use as a point of comparison.

Alumni interviews

Many colleges rely on alumni around the country for help in conducting interviews. If you are given the name of a graduate and told to contact that person or to expect that he or she will contact you, do your best to make the connection—two or three honest tries. If, after that, there is still no response, call or e-mail the college's admission office and explain your situation to them. For alumni interviews, you should follow all the same steps you would for an on-campus interview: be prepared, be yourself, be on time, and remember the interviewer's name. This person will be passing along his or her impressions of you as a person, and those, as we have said, can be very important.

Questions a college interviewer might ask you

1. How do you like Lawrence Academy? What has been the most positive experience you have had? The most negative? What would you like to change about Lawrence Academy?
2. What is your role in the school community? What would your teachers say about you as a person? As a student?
3. What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?
4. What are you looking for in a school? How did you become interested in _____?
5. What are some of your goals - personal and career - for the future?
6. Tell me about a particular class or assignment in which you found yourself most stimulated intellectually.
7. What is your reason for participating in athletics (or student government, or the newspaper, or the theater, etc.)? What are the satisfactions?
8. Since you are interested in science or math (where appropriate), why are you interested in a liberal arts college rather than a more technical institution?

9. How and in what ways do you expect, plan or hope to transfer your secondary school contributions, achievements, and/or activities to the college level?
10. What has been your favorite subject in high school? Why?
11. What might you study in college?
12. What books or authors have made a lasting impression on your way of thinking? Have you read deeply in any one author or field?
13. What events, if any, would you deem critical in your life thus far? Who has most influenced you? Why? Explain.
14. What pressures to conform do you feel operating on you at Lawrence Academy? Describe ways in which you “go your own way.”
15. How have you spent your summers?
16. What are your reactions to current events—for example, the war in Afghanistan?
17. Describe something about which you have become indignant during the past year.
18. How would you describe yourself as a person?
19. Have you ever thought of not going to college? What would you do?
20. How do you spend your free time?
21. Why do you think you are a good match for this college?
22. Many qualified students apply to our school. What characteristics single you out from others?
23. What should we keep in mind when reading your application? What are you particularly proud of? Any events or grades that you are not proud of? Why?
24. Do you have any questions? (Have some in mind!)