

Common College Interview Questions – Why they ask them, What they are looking for in an answer, How to prepare answers.

Tell Me About Yourself

Why? Colleges truly want to know more about you and how you may fit in with their overall student body.

What? Demonstrate that you are unique to separate yourself from other applicants. Avoid common descriptions – do not just say you're hardworking—explain what has driven you to become diligent and why you believe it is important.

How? Talk about your passions, hobbies, and interests and practice talking about them with others. You can discuss what inspires you or what your friends/family/boss/coworkers like about you. When do you feel most comfortable? What makes you the proudest? Be specific and try to make yourself memorable.

Why Do You Want to Go to College?

Why? For this question, schools are trying to understand why you're motivated to pursue higher education.

What? Colleges want to see that you have clear goals that you're trying to accomplish by attending college. They certainly do not want to hear that you want to go to college because your parents are making you or so you can attend wild parties.

How? Emphasize how college will allow you to pursue your passions, aid in your personal development and enable you to fulfill your future goals. Be specific. What are your passions and goals? How will college give you an opportunity to pursue your passions? What college activities will increase your awareness and facilitate your intellectual and emotional growth?

Why Are You Interested in This College?

Why? This is important and one in which you should prepare, since colleges want to see that you're taking the application process seriously and have a genuine interest in attending *their* school.

What? Discuss your interest in a major, the cultural values of the school, or extracurricular activities that drew you to the college. Be thorough and specific. Do not talk about prestige or rankings (they already know how they are ranked, etc.), and do not say you just want to go there because it's close to home, friends, etc.; none of this shows genuine interest in *their* institution.

How? To answer this question well, research the college. Take advantage of the wealth of information provided on college websites and visit the campus if possible. You should be able to cite specifics when answering this question.

Why Do You Want to Major in XXX?

Why? Colleges are interested in your academic and career goals and want to see that you are academically inclined.

What? Discuss why a certain subject inspires you or why you're passionate about it. Avoid saying that you're interested in a certain major to one day make a lot of money or have job security. This does not demonstrate genuine academic interest and will make you appear shallow.

How? Think about *why* you want to pursue a specific major. Why do you find it fascinating? What experiences provoked your interest in the subject? How will the major help you to reach your professional goals?

What Are Your Academic Strengths?

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

What? Avoid simple answers such as, "I'm great at math." When discussing your academic strengths, explain *how* you've capitalized on your strengths. If you're an excellent writer, for example, how have you used your writing skills to excel in school? How do you plan on continuing to use your strengths?

How? Know your academic strengths. Explain how you currently use them and how you plan to use them in the future.

What Are Your Academic Weaknesses?

Why? Colleges want to admit good students, but they're aware everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Colleges want to see that you have the persistence and work ethic to succeed despite your challenges and know how you have addressed any weaknesses.

What? Schools want students who can demonstrate their ability to confront and overcome challenges. Try revealing strategies or specific approaches you've taken to improve upon your academic weaknesses. Perhaps you have a story to share about how you managed to do well in a subject that was especially difficult for you.

How? Be aware of your academic weaknesses and how you've addressed them. **Do not state that you do not have any weaknesses.** We all have weaknesses and one should avoid coming off as arrogant.

What Do You Plan to Contribute to This School?

Why? Colleges want to admit students who will make positive contributions to campus and academic life. They're looking for students who will make the school even better.

What? Avoid limiting your answer to vague positive traits. Don't just say you'll demonstrate a good work ethic. 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 would like to do? How will your presence on campus and in the classroom make a difference?

How? Know the specific contributions you want to make to the school. Identify your college goals as well as the activities you want to pursue while you're in college.

What Do You Like to Do for Fun?

Why? This question is designed to get a better sense of your general interests and overall personality. Colleges want to see that you engage in healthy activities during your down time and/or to balance your work/school/personal life.

What? Your answer doesn't only have to include activities that are academic. After all, you probably wouldn't be believed if you said all you do for fun is read science textbooks and do math problems. If some of what you do for fun *is* intellectual, though, explain why you find these activities fun. Finally, try to avoid general answers such as "hang out with friends."

How? Spend some time thinking about *why* you enjoy the activities in which you participate.

What Is an Obstacle You've Faced and How Did You Get Through It?

Why? Colleges are interested in knowing if you have faced and overcome any significant challenges in your life. They also want to see that you're persistent and willing to work hard in order to overcome obstacles. This information is telling of how you will handle yourself and challenges you may face as a college student.

What? 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; one in which you put in a lot of effort to solve it. Your obstacle could be related to your home life, school, or an extracurricular activity. In your response, explain how the obstacle challenged you and emphasize what *you* did to overcome it.

How? Think of a significant challenge you've had in your life and how you dealt with it. What did you learn from the problem? How did you solve it? Did it change or influence the way you address similar problems?

What Do You Expect to Be Doing In 10 Years?

Why? You do not need to have your entire future figured out. Colleges understand that you probably won't have everything decided and your plans may likely change. What they *do* want is students with direction.

What? Colleges want students who are motivated to achieve their goals. Avoid a generic answer such as saying you expect to have a fulfilling career and make 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 family on a vacation or have weekly gatherings with your friends?

How? You can write down some detailed notes answering this question. Paint a picture of the life you want to have in 10 years. That picture will reveal how unique you are.