

College Essay Guy's Ultimate Interview Guide: The 90-Second Version

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Got a few more minutes? [Click here](#) for the entire guide.

Are college interviews important and should I do one even if it's optional?

Their importance in admissions depends on the school, but you should do an optional interview if you can because doing so can only help you in the admissions process. Why interview? It often counts toward [demonstrated interest](#).

How do I prepare for a college interview?

1. Answer the following questions for the school you're applying to in 250-500 words (or bullet-point answers to save time):

- Why do you want to attend this school? ([Here's a guide](#), btw.)
- What do you want to study and why? ([See essay types A & B at this link for examples](#).)
- What is the most important extracurricular activity you've been a part of? ([Here's a guide](#) for writing that.)

2. Come up with three good questions for your interviewer:

- DO be specific, DO make sure your answer isn't easily Googleable, and DO build a connection, and DO have a list of 3-4 questions to ask.
- DON'T be afraid to ask the interviewer personal questions about what he or she likes and dislikes about their alma mater and DON'T bombard them with questions.

3. Develop your Message Box--the 3-4 points you definitely want to hit in the interview. Here's how:

- Complete the [21 Details exercise](#). How? Take a blank piece of paper and spend 15-20 minutes filling the page with everything you'd want a college rep to know about you. Fill it with adjectives. Doodles. Memories. Everything that makes you, well, you. Ask your family or friends: What's your favorite thing about me? What's the most impressive thing about me? Then pick 3-4 of those things. That's your message box.



3. Practice segueing to your message box. Here's how:

- Email the [The Ultimate List Of College Interview Questions](#) to yourself and so you can reference it on your phone.
- Find someone you're comfortable with and sit with that person in a quiet space where you won't be interrupted.
- Have your partner ask you a random question from the list and try to answer the question while segueing to an item in your message box.
- Organize your answers to the three questions you answered in #1 (above) and the questions you'd like to ask the interviewer and then send them to yourself (for quick review on your phone before you head into the interview).
- Meditate because meditation is awesome.

Do you have any advanced techniques for answering specific questions?

- The "Tell me about your reading life" question: Be prepared for this question by reading an interesting book that you can speak eloquently about. Might be nice if it's in your future area of study (if you have one).
- How to answer the "What current event has caught your attention?" question: Be prepared by keeping up-to-date on one particular development in your area of interest that you can speak about in detail.
- The hardest question you'll ever be asked: "Tell me about yourself." To prep for this question, consider a way of gently outlining the elements of your Message Box in a way that's natural. Don't prep a monologue because chances are your interviewer will interrupt you.
- What to do if you have no idea how to answer a question: Politely say "I'm sorry. I don't know" and then be quiet. Don't try to answer a question that you can't.

What else should I know about the college interview?

- What to wear: You don't have to dress up, but you don't want to look sloppy either. Jeans are fine as long as they're not torn and you wear a nice shirt on top.
- Handshakes and body language: Give a firm handshake and offer eye contact when answering or being asked a question.
- What to take: A resume.

