

The College Guidance Interview / Meeting

A student-friendly guide to preparing for your college guidance interview.

A: What is it and why do I need to go?

After you have applied to one or more colleges, you may be invited to a college guidance interview. This is usually much more relaxed than a job interview. The college wants to find out whether you are well suited to college life and whether your chosen course is a good match for you. It should feel more like a discussion than a formal interview.

The interview will generally last about 20 minutes. It will most likely be led by subject tutors, with support from college admissions staff, and may take place in person or online.



Top tip: Preparing in advance will help you feel calmer, more confident and ready to talk about yourself.

B: What can I do before the interview?

1. **Review the course, entry level and college info.** Make sure you have looked closely at the college website/ prospectus. Think about what they might ask and write questions to ask them.
2. **Review your application.** Before your interview, save a draft of your college application. The interviewer may ask you about something you wrote, such as: "You mentioned in your application that you coach a junior football team – can you tell me about it?"
3. **Prepare what you need to bring and what to expect.** Ideally, bring your questions/a notebook, any letters of recommendation, your CV or a portfolio of your work (if relevant, i.e. art) or for example, prepare for a numeracy test if applicable. Make sure you are well rested.
4. **Practise how you will answer questions** with a friend or family member or even look in a mirror to help you plan what to say and how to present your answer.
5. **Plan your journey.** If attending an interview at college think about how you will travel, look at bus/train timetables and plan your route. Allow plenty of time, as it is always better to be early and allow for traffic delays.
6. **Think about how to make the best first impression.** Smart casual dress is usually the safest option, but the main thing is to look neat, clean and tidy. Be polite, use the interviewer's name where appropriate, and introduce your parents or carers if they are in the waiting area. If the interview is online, check your background, test the technology and arrive on time.



Interview day: what to do

C: What do I do during the interview?

Be yourself. Some students may feel they need to exaggerate to impress the interviewer, just be yourself. Your interviewer wants to get to know you, so practise answering some of the interview questions on this page.

Mobile phones. Switch off your mobile phone before the interview. If you forget and it rings, apologise, but do not answer it. If you need to leave it on for emergencies, let the interviewer know at the start.

Be polite. Try to address your interviewer by name (Mr, Ms, Miss or Mrs and their surname). Introduce your parents if they are in the waiting area. Do thank your interviewer at the end of the interview.



D: What are they going to ask me?

They may ask questions relating to:

- **Personal hobbies, interests:** what makes you unique?
- **Academics:** what is your understanding of your subjects beyond GCSEs?
- **Your subjects and reasons for choosing them:** how do they relate to your future?
- **Current affairs:** how do events affect your future?
- **Discussion:** can you provide a well-reasoned argument/response?



Some possible questions:

Personal

- How would your friends describe you?
- What do you bring to the college community?
- What part of yourself would you most like to improve?
- Describe your strengths and discuss your weaknesses?
- What do you think your biggest challenge at college will be?

Interests / discussion

- What are your most important extra-curricular activities?
- What is the last book you have read?
- What magazines and newspapers do you read regularly?

School / academics

- Why are you interested in this college?
- What do you know about the course you are applying for?
- What have you liked and disliked about school?
- What makes you think this is the right college for you?

Subjects / future

- What skills have you been developing that will help you on this course?
- What academic/subject areas are you interested in exploring?
- What are your long-term goals? How do you think this course will help you achieve them?
- What do you hope to get out of the college experience?

E: Example questions and answers

Remember: there is no single perfect answer. Use the examples below to help you think about what you might say, then adapt them so they sound like you.

1. Tell me about yourself.

How do you explain your whole life in a few sentences? Of course, you want to demonstrate that you are friendly and studious but try also to say something memorable here that really makes you different from other college applicants.

Examples: I play football/netball and enjoy being part of the team, I like to spend quality time with my family and friends, we go walking, fishing etc. I am hoping to be able to make some new friends at college.



2. Why are you interested in our college?

Be specific when answering this and show that you have done your research. What specifically about the college distinguishes it from others you are considering? The interviewer is hoping that you are interested in the college for reasons other than peer pressure or convenience. Similarly, if you say you applied entirely because of a parent or teacher's recommendation or because your friends are going to this college, you will be suggesting that you lack initiative and have few thoughts of your own. **Examples:** You could say that you have heard great feedback about the college, family members have attended here and passed on their experiences, tried a taster day, and you visited on their open days, felt really welcomed by them and liked the facilities.



3. Who in your life has most influenced you?

You may be asked: "Who is your hero?" or "What character would you most like to be like, and why?" This can be an awkward question if you have not thought about it, so consider how you would answer. The interviewer may want to see whether you can think on your feet, think creatively or reveal more about your character. Think of a few people or characters you admire and be ready to explain why.



4. What do you do for fun in your free time?

"Hanging out" and "chilling" are weak answers to this question. College admissions staff want students who will do interesting and productive things even when they are not studying. **Examples:** Do you write, dance or play a sport? If you do not currently have many hobbies, you could say that you have looked into the college enrichment programme and would like to try a new activity, such as a writers' club, gaming club or sport.



5. Why do you want to studyXXX?

It is OK if you have not decided what course/s you want to study when you apply to college - your interviewer will not be disappointed if you say you have several interests and have not yet decided. However, if you have identified a course be prepared to explain why. Avoid saying that you want to study something because you will make a lot of money one day - your passion for a subject will make you a good college student, not your love of money. **Examples: I am interested in a career in journalism (e.g.) because I enjoy writing and would like to get into TV broadcasting one day OR I enjoy these subjects at school and have looked into the types of career paths I could get into by pursuing them further.**



6. Do your predicted grades accurately reflect your effort and ability?

In the interview or on your application, you often have an opportunity to explain a low grade. Be careful with this issue -- you do not want to come across as someone who blames others for a low grade.

However, if you really did have valid reasons, let the college know.

Depending on the level of the course, some interviews may also feature a set of online tests. These often test key skills in Literacy and Numeracy, which are designed to determine what level of the course you should be enrolled on, and whether or not you will require any extra support.

Equally, don't be afraid to highlight your high academic achievements as colleges have aspire and elite programmes, or your personal, practical or vocational skills and achievements where relevant (e.g. first aid certificate, refereeing qualification). **Don't be afraid to show aspirations and ambition, but show you understand the realities and have thought of different options too.**



7. What questions do you have about our college?

Your interviewer will give you an opportunity to ask questions. Prepare at least two or three questions that are relevant to the college, course or subject you have applied for. You could ask about student support, enrichment activities or workplace opportunities. **Examples:** What career paths did previous students go on to follow? What percentage of students pass? What support is available if I need help with my work?



This document has been collated by EBP South from information available in the public domain - September 2026. Should you require this document in a larger font or format, please contact your Career Practitioner or enquires@ebpsouth.co.uk