

Self

1. Tell me about yourself.

This question seems easier than it is. How do you reduce your whole life to a few sentences? And it's hard to avoid commonplace answers like "I'm friendly" or "I'm a good student." Of course you want to demonstrate that you're friendly and studious, but try also to say something memorable here that really makes you different from other college applicants. Can you hold your breath longer than anyone in your school? Do you have a huge collection of Pez dispensers? Do you have unusual cravings for sushi?

2. Who in your life has most influenced you?

There are other variations of this question: Who's your hero? What historical or fictional character would you most like to be like? This can be an awkward question if you haven't thought about it, so spend a few minutes considering how you would answer. Identify a few real, historical, and fictional characters you admire, and be prepared to articulate WHY you admire them.

3. Tell me about a challenge that you overcame.

This question is designed to see what kind of problem solver you are. When confronted with a challenge, how do you handle the situation? College will be full of challenges, so the college wants to make sure they enroll students who can handle them.

4. What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
5. What has been your proudest achievement so far?
6. What events have been crucial in your life?
7. What about you is unique?
8. How would you describe yourself to someone who did not know you?
9. What has been the most important person or event in your own self-development?
10. Tell me about your family.

Activities

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

"Hangin' out and chillin'" is a weak answer for this question. College life obviously isn't all work, so the admissions folks want students who will do interesting and productive things even when they aren't studying. Do you write? hike? play tennis? Use a question such as this one to show that you are well-rounded with a variety of interests.

2. How do you manage your time?
3. What sort of things do you like to do outside of school?

High School

1. Does your high school record accurately reflect your effort and ability?

In the interview or on your application, you often have an opportunity to explain a bad grade or a bad semester. Be careful with this issue -- you don't want to come across as a whiner or as someone who blames others for a low grade. However, if you really did have extenuating circumstances, let the college know.

2. If you could do one thing in high school differently, what would it be?

A question like this can turn sour if you make the mistake of dwelling on things you regret. Try to put a positive spin on it. Perhaps you've always wondered if you would have enjoyed acting or music. Maybe you would have liked to give the student newspaper a try. Maybe, in retrospect, studying Chinese might have been more in line with your career goals than Spanish. A good answer shows that you didn't have the time in high school to explore everything that is of interest to you.

3. What is the most important thing you've learned in high school?
4. What have you liked or disliked about your school? What would you change?
5. What mark do you feel you've left on your school?
6. Tell me about your experiences at your high school. Is there a particular experience you had there that stands out?
7. What would you change about your school if you had the power to do so?
8. What might your teachers say is your greatest strength as a person and as a student, and what are your weaknesses in each area?

College

1. Why are you interested in our college?

Be specific when answering this, and show that you've done your research. Also, avoid answers like "I want to make a lot of money" or "Graduates of your college get good job placement." You want to highlight your intellectual interests, not your materialistic desires. What specifically about the college distinguishes it from other schools you're considering?

2. What can I tell you about our college?

You can almost guarantee that your interviewer will provide an opportunity for you to ask questions. Make sure you have some, and make sure your questions are thoughtful and specific to the particular college. Avoid questions like "when is the application deadline?" or "how many majors do you have?" This information is both uninteresting and readily available on the school's webpage. Come up with some probing and focused questions: "What would graduates of your college say was the most valuable thing about their four years here?" "I read that you offer a major in interdisciplinary studies. Could you tell me more about that?"

3. Why do you want to major in _____?

Realize that you don't need to have decided upon a major when you apply to college, and your interviewer will not be disappointed if you say you have many interests and you need to take more classes before choosing a major. However, if you have identified a potential major, be prepared to explain why. Avoid saying that you want to major in something because you'll make

a lot of money -- your passion for a subject will make you a good college student, not your greed.

4. What will you contribute to our campus community? You'll want to be specific when answering this question. An answer like "I'm hard-working" is rather bland and generic. Think about what it is that makes you uniquely you. What exactly will you bring to diversify the college's community?

5. What do you want to get out of your college experience?
6. What could you contribute to our college community?

Future

1. What do you see yourself doing 10 years from now?

You don't need to pretend that you have your life figured out if you get a question like this. Very few students entering college could accurately predict their future professions. However, your interviewer does want to see that you think ahead. If you can see yourself doing three different things, say so -- honesty and open-mindedness will play in your favor.

2. How do you define "success?"

Intellectual

1. Recommend a good book to me.

The interviewer is trying to accomplish a few things with this question. First, the question asks whether or not you have actually read much. Second, it asks you to apply some critical skills as you articulate *why* a book is worth reading. And finally, your interviewer might get a good book recommendation!

2. If you could talk with anyone living (or deceased) person, whom would it be and why?
3. What is the most creative thought you've ever had?
4. Who is your favorite author?
5. If you had a time machine and could go back anytime and change history, what time period would you go to and what would you do?
6. What books or articles have you read in the last year that have had special meaning for you?
7. What magazines and newspapers do you like to read?