

How to Answer the 10 Most Common Interview Questions

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Gen and Kelly Tanabe can answer your question in [Expert Advice](#).

Let's start with some good news. If you are asked to do an interview for a scholarship competition, it means that you are a serious contender for the award. The same can also be true for college interviews. While many colleges interview every applicant, others only select their top prospects. But regardless of the situation, the interview means you are one step closer to winning a scholarship or getting into the college of your dreams. The bad news, of course, is that you will now undergo the nerve-wracking scrutiny of face-to-face communication with one or more interviewers. If the thought of this makes your palms moisten or you get a sinking feeling in your stomach, you are not alone.

The best way to overcome a fear of the interview is to have an idea what you will be asked. In this guide, we will share with you how to answer the ten most common questions. Having sat on both sides of the table, we can attest to the fact that an interview can provide significant insight into an applicant's persona. It's really important that you invest the time to prepare. Let's get started.



How have you been a leader or displayed leadership?

When you are asked to explain your leadership capabilities, you don't want to only list off a bunch of titles and positions. Instead focus on a specific leadership position or activity and give enough detail to show the depth of your commitment. Citing concrete accomplishments like getting half of the dorm to participate in a scavenger hunt or giving toys to more than 200 families also helps the interviewer gauge the significance of your achievement. Remember that you don't have to hold an official title or elected position in order to show leadership. Describing how you organized something or motivated a group of people is just as impressive as any official title.



What is your greatest strength and weakness?

It's easy to say that your strength is that you work hard. But what will really prove this to the judges is an example. Use a particular instance to illustrate your strength so that the judges can see what you mean. It's not enough to say that you have leadership qualities. You must share incidents that show how you have led. What kind of results have come from your leadership? Why do you do it? Help the judges understand why you believe this to be your strength.

When talking about a weakness, be honest—but realize that it's important to show what actions you are taking to address what you consider to be a flaw. There is nothing wrong with acknowledging a failing, but it is very impressive to see that you are also taking steps to minimize and perhaps overcome that weakness. Certainly, you want the interviewers to believe that your weakness will not keep you from being successful as a college student.



Who is a role model for you?

When interviewers ask this question, their intent is to learn something about you through your answer. In other words, whom you admire says something about you. So be careful to explain your role model choice. If you just say that your role model is golfing superstar Tiger Woods but offer no explanation, you aren't sharing much about yourself. The judges won't know if Tiger is your role model because he's a good golfer, a Stanford graduate or something else. No matter whom you choose as a hero, be sure to know enough about him or her to explain what specific quality you want to emulate. Also, know that person's shortcomings (and how he or she doesn't let it interfere

with success) since you may be asked about that as a follow-up question.



What is your favorite book?

Don't give a book report when you answer this question. What the interviewer really wants to learn is who you are. What you say about the importance of reading the book is indicative of your interests, beliefs, goals, likes and dislikes.

When thinking about which book to choose, ask yourself if your selection made you think differently or compelled you to take a certain action. Ask yourself what specifically made you relate to a particular character. Also don't feel that you have to select a classic. It's fine to say that your favorite book is *Charlotte's Web* or *Green Eggs and Ham*. What's important is not your book choice but why it is meaningful to you.



Why did you choose this college?

This is an excellent opportunity to reveal something about yourself through your answer. You don't want to be a tour guide, describing the well-known assets of the college. It is better to explain why the college's features are important to you. Instead of saying that you chose the school because of its research facilities, explain how you plan to make use of the facilities. The more details and specifics you can give, the better. If it is applicable and appropriate, walk the interviewers through the thought process you went through when selecting the college. This will help them understand what is important to you and it will also show them how seriously you considered your choice of a college and the education you hope to attain there.



What is your favorite subject in school and why?

It would be easy just to name a favorite subject and leave it at that. But the interviewer is trying to understand why you like what you like. When answering a question like this, give reasons or examples for your selection. Don't state the obvious. If you are asked why English is your favorite subject, give more than "Because I like it" or "Because I'm good at it."

You can also use a question like this as an opportunity to talk about an achievement or award. If you say that your favorite subject is English, you can speak about a writing competition that you won or the reading marathon that you started. This is a good springboard question that you can expand to bring your impressive achievements into the conversation.



What's a meaningful academic class, project or other experience?

A question like this is a great opportunity to showcase an impressive project or achievement. Be sure to give a lot of detail and explain the significance of the experience. Use your answer to show a little more about you by stating why the project or class was meaningful to you and give examples of incidents that were memorable. If you can, select a subject or project that relates to the scholarship since it will help demonstrate why you deserve to win the award.



Why do you want to enter this career?

When interviewers ask this kind of question, they really want to know what inspires you. They want to see that you have a rationale for entering a profession. More than that, they want to find you enthusiastic about your choice. Be sure to give a reason for selecting your career (don't say, "I don't know!"), even if it is something as simple as being influenced by a school speaker, book or TV

show. Help the interviewers feel your inspiration by using lots of examples. You want them to understand why you want to work in this job field and what motivates you in general.



With what activities are you most involved?

Fight the urge to answer this question by spouting off a laundry list of activities. Instead of telling all 12 clubs that you are a member of, select a handful in which you've made significant contributions. This will be more meaningful to the selection committee and will better capture their attention. For scholarship interviews, be sure to highlight activities that match the goal of the awards. If you are applying for a writing award, speak about your journalism experience. If you are applying for an award in medicine, speak about your medical-related experience, studies or volunteer work. Make the activities relevant to the interview committee.



Is there anything else you want to add?

Don't be shy about bringing up something important that the interviewer didn't ask you. If you've forgotten to speak about something or a topic never came up during the conversation, now is the time to say so. Use this question to bring up a strong point or two that weren't discussed. The last impression you leave is often the strongest. If you think you've already left a strong impression, then you don't have to say anything. But if you think you need to reemphasize an important point, this is the time to make a final statement.



Final Thoughts ...

Practicing for these questions will not only make your answers better, but it will help to give you confidence before the actual interview. During your interviews, try to relax and have a real conversation with your interviewers. The interview is not designed to be an interrogation. After you complete the interview, follow up with a thank-you note or email. Remember that interviewers are typically volunteers and have made the time to meet with you. If you feel that there is some important piece of information that you forgot to share in the interview, mention it briefly in your thank-you note. If not, a simple thank you will suffice.