

13 ways to screw up a college interview

13 ways to screw up a college interview can be a critical insight for prospective students aiming to secure admission. College interviews are pivotal moments where applicants can make a strong impression or, conversely, damage their chances by making avoidable mistakes. This article explores common pitfalls and errors that applicants often commit during these interviews. Understanding these blunders helps candidates prepare effectively, presenting themselves in the best possible light. From inadequate preparation to inappropriate behavior, each factor plays a significant role in the interview outcome. This comprehensive guide will outline thirteen specific ways to undermine a college interview, enabling applicants to recognize and avoid these traps.

- Failing to Research the College
- Arriving Late or Unprepared
- Poor Communication Skills
- Inappropriate Attire
- Being Overly Casual or Disrespectful
- Not Answering Questions Clearly
- Overemphasizing Extracurriculars Without Academics
- Negative Talk About Past Experiences or People
- Failing to Ask Questions
- Exaggerating or Dishonesty
- Ignoring Body Language and Nonverbal Cues
- Not Following Up After the Interview
- Being Distracted or Using Technology Inappropriately

Failing to Research the College

One of the most fundamental mistakes in a college interview is showing up without adequate knowledge about the institution. Interviewers expect candidates to be familiar with the college's programs, values, and culture. A lack of research signals disinterest and can make the applicant appear unprepared or indifferent.

Understanding the College's Mission and Programs

Applicants who do not take time to understand the college's academic offerings and mission statement miss the opportunity to tailor their responses. Demonstrating alignment with the college's values and strengths is critical in making a positive impression.

Impact of Poor Preparation on Interview Performance

Without prior research, candidates may struggle to answer questions about why they chose the school or how they would contribute to the campus community. This gap often results in vague or generic answers that do not resonate with interviewers.

Arriving Late or Unprepared

Punctuality and preparedness are essential components of professionalism during a college interview. Arriving late or without necessary documents can create an immediate negative impression that is difficult to overcome.

Consequences of Tardiness

Being late disrupts the interviewer's schedule and suggests a lack of respect for their time. It may also increase applicant anxiety, negatively affecting performance.

Bringing Required Materials

Applicants should bring a copy of their resume, transcripts, or any requested documents. Failure to do so can make the interview seem disorganized and unprofessional.

Poor Communication Skills

Effective communication is critical in conveying an applicant's qualifications and personality. Poor speaking habits, such as mumbling, excessive filler words, or rambling, can detract from the overall impression.

Clarity and Conciseness

Answers should be clear and to the point, demonstrating the applicant's ability to articulate thoughts logically. Overly long or confusing responses may frustrate interviewers.

Active Listening

Failing to listen carefully to questions or interrupting the interviewer can signal disrespect or inattentiveness. Good communication includes active listening and thoughtful responses.

Inappropriate Attire

The way an applicant dresses for a college interview contributes significantly to the first impression. Wearing casual or sloppy clothing can undermine the seriousness of the interview.

Dress Code Expectations

Applicants should aim for business casual or professional attire unless otherwise specified. Proper grooming and neat clothing convey respect and preparedness.

Impact of Poor Attire Choices

Inappropriate dress can distract the interviewer and suggest a lack of understanding of professional norms.

Being Overly Casual or Disrespectful

Maintaining a respectful and professional demeanor throughout the interview is essential. Being too informal or displaying disrespectful behavior can severely damage an applicant's chances.

Examples of Disrespectful Behavior

Examples include using slang, interrupting, or making negative comments about the interviewer or institution. Such behavior is unprofessional and off-putting.

Maintaining Professionalism

Politeness, attentiveness, and courteous language create a positive atmosphere and demonstrate maturity.

Not Answering Questions Clearly

Clear and relevant answers are vital to convey competence and fit for the college. Evasive

or off-topic responses suggest a lack of preparation or confidence.

Understanding the Question

Applicants should ensure they fully comprehend each question before answering. Asking for clarification when needed shows engagement and thoughtfulness.

Structuring Answers Effectively

Using a structured approach, such as the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result), can help deliver concise and impactful answers.

Overemphasizing Extracurriculars Without Academics

While extracurricular activities are important, focusing exclusively on them at the expense of academic achievements can be detrimental. Colleges seek well-rounded students who excel academically and contribute to campus life.

Balancing Academics and Extracurriculars

Applicants should highlight academic strengths alongside extracurricular involvement to present a balanced profile.

Demonstrating Academic Passion

Expressing enthusiasm for learning and academic goals shows motivation and suitability for college rigor.

Negative Talk About Past Experiences or People

Speaking negatively about previous schools, teachers, or peers reflects poorly on the applicant. It raises concerns about attitude and interpersonal skills.

Maintaining a Positive Tone

Even when discussing challenges, framing experiences constructively demonstrates resilience and maturity.

Impact on Interviewer Perception

Negative comments can create doubts about the applicant's character and ability to adapt to new environments.

Failing to Ask Questions

Interviews are two-way interactions. Not asking questions can be interpreted as a lack of genuine interest or curiosity about the college.

Preparing Thoughtful Questions

Applicants should prepare relevant questions about academic programs, campus culture, or opportunities to show engagement.

Benefits of Asking Questions

Thoughtful questions demonstrate initiative and help applicants assess if the college is the right fit for them.

Exaggerating or Dishonesty

Honesty is crucial during the college interview. Exaggerating achievements or providing false information can have severe consequences if discovered.

Risks of Dishonesty

Dishonest behavior can lead to immediate rejection or later revocation of admission offers.

Presenting Authenticity

Being truthful about strengths and weaknesses builds trust and credibility with interviewers.

Ignoring Body Language and Nonverbal Cues

Nonverbal communication significantly influences the impression an applicant makes during an interview. Ignoring body language can convey disinterest or nervousness.

Positive Body Language

Maintaining eye contact, offering a firm handshake, and sitting upright demonstrate confidence and engagement.

Recognizing Interviewer Cues

Being attentive to the interviewer's nonverbal signals allows applicants to adjust their responses and interaction style appropriately.

Not Following Up After the Interview

Failing to send a thank-you note or email after the interview can miss an opportunity to reinforce interest and appreciation.

Importance of Follow-Up

A timely follow-up message shows professionalism and keeps the applicant fresh in the interviewer's mind.

Content of a Follow-Up Message

Express gratitude, briefly reiterate interest, and mention any key points discussed during the interview.

Being Distracted or Using Technology Inappropriately

Using a phone or other devices during the interview, or appearing distracted, can be interpreted as rude and unprofessional.

Maintaining Focus

Applicants should silence devices and give full attention to the interviewer throughout the meeting.

Impact of Distractions

Distractions reduce the quality of interaction and can cause missed opportunities to make a strong impression.

Summary of Common Interview Mistakes

Awareness of these thirteen common mistakes in college interviews empowers applicants to prepare thoroughly and present themselves effectively. Avoiding these pitfalls increases the likelihood of a successful interview and favorable admission decisions.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are common mistakes to avoid during a college interview?

Common mistakes include being late, dressing inappropriately, not researching the college, giving vague answers, appearing disinterested, interrupting the interviewer, using slang, failing to ask questions, exaggerating achievements, and not practicing beforehand.

How can being unprepared screw up a college interview?

Being unprepared can lead to awkward silences, inability to answer questions confidently, and showing a lack of genuine interest in the school, all of which can negatively impact the interviewer's impression of you.

Why is showing a lack of enthusiasm harmful in a college interview?

Showing a lack of enthusiasm can make the interviewer think you are not genuinely interested in their institution, which reduces your chances of admission since colleges want motivated and engaged students.

Can poor body language affect the outcome of a college interview?

Yes, poor body language such as avoiding eye contact, slouching, or fidgeting can make you appear disinterested or nervous, undermining the positive impression you want to make.

How does failing to ask questions during a college interview cause problems?

Failing to ask questions can signal to the interviewer that you are not curious or invested in learning more about the college, which can hurt your chances of admission.

What impact does exaggerating or lying during a college interview have?

Exaggerating or lying can lead to loss of trust if discovered, and may result in rejection from the college or rescinding of offers if dishonesty is uncovered later.

Why is arriving late considered a major screw-up in college interviews?

Arriving late shows disrespect for the interviewer's time and poor time management skills, immediately creating a negative first impression that can be difficult to overcome.

How can inappropriate attire affect your college interview?

Dressing inappropriately can make you appear unprofessional or not serious about the interview, which can distract from your qualifications and hurt your chances of admission.

What role does overconfidence play in ruining a college interview?

Overconfidence can come across as arrogance, making interviewers less likely to view you as a good fit for their college community, which values humility and willingness to learn.

How does interrupting the interviewer negatively impact a college interview?

Interrupting the interviewer can be perceived as rude and disrespectful, disrupting the flow of conversation and making a poor impression on the interviewer.

Additional Resources

1. Mastering the College Interview: Strategies for Success

This book offers comprehensive guidance on how to prepare and excel in college interviews. It covers common questions, effective communication techniques, and ways to showcase your strengths. With practical tips and real-life examples, it helps students present their best selves confidently.

2. The College Interview Survival Guide

Focused on avoiding common pitfalls, this guide highlights mistakes students often make during college interviews. It provides advice on body language, answering tricky questions, and managing nerves. Readers learn how to turn potential blunders into opportunities to impress admissions officers.

3. First Impressions Matter: Acing Your College Interview

This book emphasizes the importance of making a positive first impression in college

interviews. It discusses preparation, appropriate attire, and how to engage interviewers effectively. The author includes anecdotes and expert insights to help students stand out.

4. *Interviewing for College Admissions: What Not to Do*

A candid look at the common errors that can derail a college interview, this book serves as a cautionary resource. It outlines behaviors and responses that can harm your chances and suggests better alternatives. The tone is straightforward, helping readers learn from others' mistakes.

5. *From Awkward to Awesome: Navigating College Interviews*

This book is designed for students who feel anxious or unsure about interviews. It offers step-by-step advice on building confidence, practicing responses, and handling unexpected questions. The approachable style makes it a helpful companion for nervous interviewees.

6. *13 Ways to Shine in Your College Interview*

Complementing the theme of avoiding mistakes, this book focuses on positive actions to take during an interview. It highlights how to communicate passion, articulate goals, and connect with interviewers. Readers gain actionable tips to leave a memorable impression.

7. *The Do's and Don'ts of College Interviews*

Presented in a clear, checklist format, this book breaks down essential behaviors to adopt or avoid in interviews. It covers everything from punctuality to follow-up etiquette. Ideal for quick reference, it helps students prepare effectively and avoid common errors.

8. *Interview Etiquette for College Applicants*

This guide explores the social and professional norms expected in college interviews. It details how to dress, greet, and converse respectfully, ensuring candidates present themselves well. The book also addresses cultural considerations and virtual interview tips.

9. *Turning Interview Mistakes into Opportunities*

A motivational book that encourages students to learn and grow from interview missteps. It shares stories of applicants who recovered from initial errors and ultimately succeeded. Readers are inspired to maintain resilience and improve their interview skills over time.

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13 ways to screw up a college interview: *13 Ways to Screw Up Your College Interview* Ian McWethy, 2009-08-11 When two college recruiters at a prestigious university need to fill one last spot to keep their jobs, thirteen eccentric, dimwitted and slightly-insane high school seniors are eager to come in for an interview. What seems like a simple task turns into a nightmare when the applicants turn out to be a reality TV star, a practicing vampire, an amateur magician, and others

that are much, much worse. Each applicant's interview hilariously illustrates what NOT to do at a college interview.

13 ways to screw up a college interview: *14 More Ways to Screw Up Your College Interview* Ian McWethy, 2010-10-13 When the Dean orders two college recruiters to find one more student to fill out next year's class, they find themselves revisiting the dreaded Wait List. Packed with wacky characters from a beat poet to an amateur bodybuilder, a super hero to a wanted criminal, this sequel to 13 Ways to Screw Up Your College Interview is a comedic ride through the college application process as two recruiters sort through the crazies in hope of finding one sane candidate.

13 ways to screw up a college interview: *Don't Stalk the Admissions Officer* Risa Lewak, 2010 A lighthearted handbook for students and parents shares informative inside information while covering key topics, from choosing standardized tests and obtaining beneficial teacher recommendations to writing a stand-out essay and interviewing successfully. Original.

13 ways to screw up a college interview: *Creative Writing in Post-Secondary Education* Lisa Martin, 2025-02-20 A blend of memoir and scholarly review, this book explores the kinds of thinking creative writing as a distinctly practical subject makes possible within post-secondary education. Taking the idea that creative writing should be grounded in practice, Lisa Martin explores how the nature of the subject gives permission to think specifically, locally, from one's own position, and in a necessarily limited way — without having one's thinking discounted as lacking rigour as a result. Modelling the deep and essential connection between practice and research in the field, this book considers post-secondary creative writing in its three key aspects — artistic practice, pedagogical practice, and practice-led research — in order to articulate the distinctive contributions creative writing makes to what "thinking" means (and whose thinking gets included). Drawing on Martin's own artistic practice as well as more than a decade of pedagogical experience in creative writing, this book braids together disciplinary history, research-informed autobiographical analysis of artistic practice and pedagogy, and scholarly research in adjacent fields such as creativity studies and educational psychology. Connecting creative writing's central commitment to artistic practice and local, material, embodied thinking with the development of learner-centred pedagogies, *Creative Writing in Post-Secondary Education* is timely, important and will spark spirited discussion within a debate that has been simmering since the inception of creative writing.

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13 ways to screw up a college interview: *How to Raise an Adult* Julie Lythcott-Haims, 2015-06-09 New York Times Bestseller! A provocative manifesto that exposes the harms of helicopter parenting and sets forth an alternate philosophy for raising preteens and teens to self-sufficient young adulthood. Julie Lythcott-Haims is a national treasure. . . . A must-read for every parent who senses that there is a healthier and saner way to raise our children. -Madeline Levine, author of the New York Times bestsellers *The Price of Privilege* and *Teach Your Children Well* In *How to Raise an Adult*, Julie Lythcott-Haims draws on research, on conversations with admissions officers, educators, and employers, and on her own insights as a mother and as a student dean to highlight the ways in which overparenting harms children, their stressed-out parents, and society at large. While empathizing with the parental hopes and, especially, fears that lead to overhelping, Lythcott-Haims offers practical alternative strategies that underline the importance of allowing children to make their own mistakes and develop the resilience, resourcefulness, and inner determination necessary for success. Relevant to parents of toddlers as well as of twentysomethings-and of special value to parents of teens-this book is a rallying cry for those who wish to ensure that the next generation can take charge of their own lives with competence and confidence. For parents who want to foster hearty self-reliance instead of hollow self-esteem, *How to*

Raise an Adult is the right book at the right time. -Daniel H. Pink, author of the New York Times bestsellers *Drive* and *A Whole New Mind*

13 ways to screw up a college interview: The Process of Social Research Jeffrey C. Dixon, Royce Singleton, Bruce C. Straits, 2016 *The Process of Social Research* successfully meets two major challenges of teaching social science methods: to make the material interesting and accessible to students, and to provide them with the tools necessary to understand, evaluate, and conduct research. Authors Jeffrey C. Dixon, Royce A. Singleton, Jr., and Bruce C. Straits employ a conversational writing style that is engaging and student-friendly. Using everyday examples to introduce chapters and clarify complex concepts, they provide current research examples on such cutting-edge topics as immigration, family composition, prosecutorial misconduct, organized racism, homelessness, social inequality and education, and alcohol consumption and grades. Placing a unique emphasis on the research process, the book helps students understand the logic and mechanics of social research, giving them the tools and the power to evaluate the research of others and to conduct their own research. Beginning with the introduction, every chapter contains flowcharts of research processes. As each diagram is presented, the authors relate the specific method to the overall research process. Then, over the course of the chapter or section, they flesh out each step. This way, they convey information about the nuts and bolts of research while ensuring that students do not lose sight of the logic of inquiry. Comprehensive and up-to-date without attempting to be encyclopedic in its coverage, *The Process of Social Research* provides a balance between qualitative and quantitative research, taking a more integrated approach to describing the relationship between theory and research.

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Davis recounts the dramatic story of how two legendary players--Earvin Magic Johnson and Larry Bird--burst on the scene in a 1979 NCAA championship that gave birth to modern basketball.

13 ways to screw up a college interview: Break the Stigma: Autism Nichole E Scheerer , April Hargreaves , Catalina Sau Man Ng , Matthew Daniel Lerner, 2024-12-17 While awareness of neurodiversity and specific forms of neurodivergence, such as autism, has increased over the last few years, autism stigma and prejudice against autistic people remains a critical issue that warrants further attention and investigation. The experience of stigma and prejudice, such as discriminatory actions and attitudes towards autistic individuals on both a personal and public level, can have many negative impacts across one's lifetime. These experiences can lead people on the autism spectrum and their families to avoid seeking help, which can delay diagnosis and access to supportive services of not only autism itself but also co-occurring physical and psychological health needs. Prejudiced beliefs against autistic people may lead to many forms of discrimination, including but not limited to medical, education, and employment discrimination. These attitudes can be built into society, at a systemic level, and influence policies that govern access to supports and our communities. Additionally, autism stigma and prejudice against autistic people, such as stereotypical portrayals of autistic people in media and the language we use to describe autistic people, can be invalidating to a person's autistic identity and to autistic culture. Further, the impacts of stigma and prejudice can be internalized by autistic individuals, which may not only have poor effects on their wellbeing but also increase the want and/or need to "mask" or "camouflage" to pass as non-autistic. Masking or camouflaging can reduce a person's sense of belonging, self-esteem, sense of self-worth, and close relationships - all of which are associated with poor outcomes. It can also lead to avoidance of opportunities, such as connection with other autistic individuals, that could increase quality of life. This Research Topic aims to showcase evidence on why the stigma surrounding autism and the prejudice against autistic people are so detrimental. It hopes to provide insights into research and interventions on how stigma and prejudice can be tackled as well as awareness, understanding, and

acceptance raised, in the hope that the research presented will translate to best practice applications in clinical, public health, policy, and community settings. We invite researchers to submit a range of articles, including but not limited to original research articles, reviews, meta-analyses, opinions, perspectives, and case reports to provide new evidence on the following: - Harmful impacts of stigma and prejudice on autistic people - Interventions on reducing stigma surrounding and prejudice against autistic people - Health promotion in autism (i.e., approaches that increase the mental and physical well-being of autistic people) - Interventions targeted at increasing understanding of autism and neurodiversity as well as increasing acceptance and advocacy of – as well as allyship with - autistic people - Examining intersectionality in autism stigma and/or prejudice towards autistic people of diverse backgrounds

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