



## Graduate School Interview Questions Practice Guide

The admissions interview for a grad school Program provides you with the opportunity to share your accomplishments, qualifications, and enthusiasm. This guide will first provide you with some tips for how to prepare for this type of interview and will then cover specific categories of questions you should prepare to answer. Next, you will find a list of recommended questions to ask at the end of the interview. In the final section, you will find a guide of what to include in your thank-you email and a sample of what a thank-you email should look like.

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### Preparing For Your Interview: Steps For Success

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- Set an interview time that works for you:**  
Think about what time of day you are most energized and try to schedule your interview then. You should also find out how long the interview will go for so you can arrange your daily schedule accordingly.
- Find out who your interviewer/s will be:**  
These types of interviews are generally conducted by an admissions representative, but could also include professors or current students. Knowing who will be interviewing you can help you tailor your answers to your audience.
- Research, research, and then research some more:**  
You will be expected to be able to talk about the specific reasons why you feel the school and Program are a great fit for you. If you can name specific courses, professors, or other components of the Program you find interesting you will be demonstrating your interest and enthusiasm for the opportunity to be a student there.
- Reflect on why grad school is right for you and be able to communicate that:**  
Ensure you can clearly communicate your reasons for choosing grad school and the Program you are applying for as these are among the first questions that will be asked.

Please note: These categories of sample interview questions are not a complete list of all potential questions that may be asked during an interview. Rather, these are samples of general questions you should be prepared to answer.

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### Biographical Questions: Who You Are

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The Program you are applying for is seeking to admit candidates they know, like, and believe will do well in their Program. These types of questions enable them to learn about your education, personal/work experience, values, and personality. You'll want to answer these questions in an honest and authentic manner that enables you to share the story of who you are. Sample questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your career goals? How will studying here help you achieve those goals?
- Tell me about a strength and weakness you have.

- What else have you done in college or work that may not be on your application?
- What is your plan B? If you were not accepted to the Program, what are your plans?
- What is your strongest personal asset?
- What would you change about yourself and why?
- What is the last book you read?

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## **Academic: Ensuring You Are Prepared**

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The Program you are applying for wants to ensure you have been prepared academically for the challenging classes that come with obtaining a high level degree. The Program representatives also expect you to have knowledge about the field you intend to study. These questions help them assess your readiness for these types of classes and your knowledge about your field of study.

- How has your undergraduate background prepared you for our program?
- What do you see as the major trends in your field of study?
- What is your research interest?
- If you could, would you have changed anything about your academic experience so far?

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## **Behavioral Questions: Assessing Your Problem Solving Skills**

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Your interviewers will ask you specific questions to evaluate your critical thinking and behavioral skills. They ask these questions to measure your ability to analyze, evaluate, and think independently about an issue. They want to see how you make logical connections between ideas and justify your conclusions.

- Tell us about a time you had to make a decision even though you didn't have all the necessary information.
- Give me an example of a time when you were under pressure.
- Tell me about a time you encountered a major problem and how you handled it.
- What would you consider to be your greatest accomplishment?
- Tell me about a situation in which you showed initiative or assumed a leadership role.
- Give me an example of a time you worked within a group. How did you contribute to make this group achieve a goal?
- Tell me about a time you had a disagreement with a fellow student, a professor, or a customer. How did you handle it to resolve the disagreement?

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## **Culture Fit: Ensuring Your Skills Fit With The Program**

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Your interviewers will ask questions to determine how much you know about their school and the values/vision of the school. They will be seeking to determine if you are a good fit for them and what you could provide their Program with.

- Why did you select this School and this graduate program?
- What do you bring to our Program that another student might not?
- How do your skills relate to the needs of our Program?

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## Questions to Ask Your Interviewer/s: Communicating Interest

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Asking questions will help you demonstrate your interest and enthusiasm for the school and Program you are applying for. This is your chance in the interview to ask questions that will help you determine if the Program is a good fit with your own academic and career goals.

- What is the selection timeline and when can candidates expect to be notified of their acceptance into the Program?
- Do most students publish an article/conduct research prior to graduation?
- What type of person is most successful in this Program?
- How closely do students work with faculty? Are there current research opportunities you can tell me about?
- What experiences are included in the Program, i.e. internships? Can you give examples of internship placements?
- How are mentoring and advising relationships established? Are advisors assigned?

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## Follow-Up: Send A Thank-You Note to Show Appreciation

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The best way to follow-up after an interview is to send an email thank-you within 24 hours after completing your interview. Sending a thank-you note will help you communicate your interest in the school and will show you take the application process seriously. You will also help your interviewer view you as an enthusiastic candidate for their Program. Include the following in your note:

- Express appreciation for having received the opportunity to interview
- Thank the interviewer for giving of their time
- Restate your interest in the school and specific Program you are applying for
- Give one fact about why you would make a good candidate

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## Example Graduate School Interview Email

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Dear [insert name of interviewer/s],

I want to thank you for generously considering me for [name of Program] at [name of University}. I know you have a busy schedule and I appreciate that you were able to go over some of the aspects of [name of Program] and share with me what I can expect in the Program.

I especially enjoyed discussing [name specific aspect of the Program] since one my goals is to [name specific goal] and develop further knowledge in [name certain area]. I believe my experience in [name specific experience] and my interest in [name of specific interest] align with the goals of [name of Program]. It would be a great honor to join [name of University] in the Fall.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you on your final decision.

Sincerely,  
[your name]