



KEYSTONE TUTORS TUTORING & EDUCATION ADVISORY

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11+ & 13+ Interviews for UK Independent Schools

11+ and 13+ interviews for UK independent schools can be a daunting prospect. The best and easiest way to approach these is remembering that the purpose of the interview is for the interviewer to learn more about you. They are not designed to catch you out and there are rarely right or wrong answers. Below is some advice which we hope will help to both prepare and relax you ahead of any upcoming interviews.

Preparation

- There is no way of knowing exactly which questions will come up, but many schools will abide by certain themes. For example, pupils are often asked why they want to go to the school they are interviewing for, what their hobbies are and whether they have recently come across anything interesting in the news. Give some thought to these areas and how you might answer these questions in the days prior to the interview.
- It is very important however to remember that there is a significant difference between *preparing* and *rehearsing*. It is tempting to learn an answer off by heart and recite this at each interview. Do not give into this temptation as it can be **very** obvious to the interviewer. Remember that the interview is designed to be a conversation not a rehearsed speech.
- On the morning of the interview it could be useful to read a few news articles, do a little bit of mental arithmetic or engage in conversation with a parent, sibling or friend about a particular interest of yours. This can get your mind ticking and ready for the interview ahead.

Presentation

- **Dress:** First impressions are key so ensure that you are dressed smartly - shirts tucked in, hair tidy and shoes polished. T-shirts and trainers are best left at home.
- **Eye contact:** When you are introduced to the interviewer, remember to look him or her in the eye, give them a firm handshake and introduce yourself. A smile will also go a long way – it is the best way to give a positive first impression!
- **Posture:** Set yourself up well from the start by sitting upright with your bottom to the back of the seat. If there is a table, tuck the chair in under the table. This will help to minimise fidgeting, leg swinging and slouching, all of which might distract the interviewer. Try and keep your hands clasped together in your lap to stop you playing with them.

Answering

- **Don't rush:** It can be tricky to think on your feet, especially if you are nervous, but do not feel rushed into answering. The interviewer would much prefer you to take some

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time to think about your answer rather than rushing in and losing the thread of your point, waffling to fill the gap and therefore not saying anything of substance. Pause and think about what you want to say before responding. Practice counting out 5 seconds on your hands. This is a good amount of time to gather your thoughts and think about your answer - don't be scared of the silence! Rushing in can often cause you to use a lot of 'ums' and 'ahs' which should be avoided and replaced with thinking time.

- **Clarify the question:** If you are not quite sure what the interviewer meant by a certain question or word, do not feel embarrassed to ask them to clarify or explain a bit further. This is better than answering a different question to the one which you were asked.
- **Avoid repetition:** Try to avoid the noticeable repetition of words. Similarly, if possible, it helps to use a wide range of words that demonstrate a good vocabulary. Remember adjectives that you have been taught at school and seek to find alternatives to words such as 'nice' and 'fun'.
- **Avoid answers that are too short – P.E.E:** Whenever possible, avoid giving just a monosyllabic answer (such as 'yes' or 'no'). Focus on the use of P.E.E (point, explanation, evidence). Give your answer, explain why that is your answer and attempt to give an example to prove this: 'Do you play any sports? 'Yes, I love many sports, but rugby is my favourite. I have played it since I was six and I play twice a week at my school where I am in the A team, and I also play at the weekends with my friends'. Remember that the interview is a short opportunity for you to tell the school a bit about yourself and to steer the conversation to highlight your strengths and achievements. This serves to give a fuller, more complete answer and prevents the interviewer from needing to ask further questions in order to get the information out.
- **Give balance to your answers:** Other than on certain academic questions, there is no right or wrong answer therefore you should not feel that it is necessary to choose one side or another in an open question. Instead, it can be good to talk through your logic and thought process, arguing both sides. "On the one hand, I think this. But on the other..."
- **Relaxed, but not too relaxed:** On occasion we meet interview candidates who appear a little too casual; the language can be a little laid back for the situation with slang or informal words. One suggestion is to approach the interviewer as though you were talking to a friend's parent; a little more measured, a little more polite, a little more focused.

Common Questions

- **Current Affairs:** You may well be asked about current affairs so remember to keep an eye on the news in the weeks running up to the interview. They will often ask if there is something that you have seen in the news that you found particularly exciting or interesting. Try to pick out a few stories in the lead up to the interview that you genuinely find interesting and that you would feel comfortable discussing.
- **Achievements:** You could be asked about your greatest achievement to date. It doesn't matter if this is big or small, as long as you can explain why it means so much to you. It

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can be anything from finishing a long book, to winning an art competition, to getting into a sports team.

- **Hobbies:** The interviewer wants to learn as much about you as possible so they will often ask what you enjoy outside of the classroom. It is good to have a few things that you can discuss with enthusiasm to show your interests.
- **Ambitions:** You could be asked what you would like to be when you grow up and the reasons behind this. Again, you do not want this answer to appear rehearsed, but it may be helpful to have thought of some potential answers for this and be able to talk about them.
- **Academic Tasks:** Some schools may give mental maths problems, pieces of literature or poems to discuss, or potentially ask some moral questions. You may well practice these at school but in the weeks leading up to an interview it can be useful to try a few at home so that they are a little more familiar to you.
- **Future School:** Towards the end of the interview you are likely to be asked if you have any questions about the school that you are interviewing for. As above, give some thought to this before your interview: what don't you know that you wish you did? Perhaps there is a specific sport, musical instrument or extra-curricular activity that you are interested in and you would like to know if the school offers. Have a look on the website and see what jumps out at you, and then ask more questions about this. Along with the website, it can be useful to talk to anyone that you know who either goes to the school, or used to go to the school, as it can help you get a better idea of the school. The interviewer will want to see that you are excited about the prospect of coming there and that you (not your parents) want to go there!

We offer practice interviews in the office so do [give the team a call](#) if you would like to schedule one of these.