

**Department of Residence Services  
The University of Iowa**

**"Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Interviewing for the RA  
Position, But Were Afraid to Ask"**

Despite the importance of the interview in an application process, not many people prepare for it. Only a few have the vaguest idea of what they are going to say. Toward the other extreme, there are those who have thought SO much that by the time they walk into the interviewing room, they have worked themselves into a frenzy. As an applicant, you can avoid the pitfalls of inexperience by learning a little bit about the basics of interviewing and by preparing yourself accordingly.

**HOW TO GET READY FOR AN INTERVIEW**

1. Know all that you can about the RA position and the residence hall system. (Resources - *Residence Halls Guidebook*, resident assistants, etc.)
2. Find out what the RA position is really like from current and past RA's.
3. Think of some questions that YOU would like to ask of the interviewers. Good interviewers always leave time at the end of an interview for an applicant to ask questions. Don't miss this opportunity to gather more valuable information.
4. Make a list of possible questions that you may be asked in the process. How would you respond to these questions? Think about your past experiences, strengths, weaknesses, values, etc.
5. BE ON TIME. Nothing will hurt your candidacy more than being late or missing an interview.

**WHAT THE INTERVIEWER IS LOOKING FOR IN AN APPLICANT**

1. What you are LIKE: Interviewers are looking for an overall picture of you, not a deep psychological profile. They will be looking at your poise, personal skills, and your ability to communicate.
2. What you WANT: They will want to know the reasons you are applying for the RA position. BE HONEST. They will also want to know what reservations you may have about becoming an RA.
3. What you have DONE: Make a mental note of the experiences you have had, especially those that will be of value to you as an RA (floor government, hall government, other leadership positions). Be able to demonstrate areas of personal responsibility.
4. What you MIGHT DO: Interviewers are looking for skills you currently possess. They are also looking at your potential to develop into the RA position and your ability to listen and be trained as a solid staff member.

## THE INTERVIEW

1. Be prepared (beyond yes and no responses) for questions concerning:
  - a. your perceptions of the RA role (leader, resource person, etc.)
  - b. your perceptions of the skills needed to do the job
  - c. your personal characteristics
  - d. your knowledge of University resources
  - e. your interest/commitment level
  - f. your programming ideas (both social and educational)
2. THE HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION: You may be asked about a hypothetical residence hall situation (i.e.: you may be asked to explain how you might intervene in a roommate conflict).
3. DON'T OVERDO IT: Be yourself. Do not try to "over sell" yourself or miss an opportunity to accentuate your strong points.
4. TELL IT LIKE IT IS: Present yourself in an open and honest manner. When asked questions pertaining to your LACK of success or limitations in certain areas, it is often discouraging to answer.
5. HANG IN THERE: If you get the impression that the interview is not going well, continue on with confidence and determination. REMEMBER: the last few minutes of the interview can be as important as the first three quarters in terms of leaving a lasting impression. *Whatever the outcome of the selection process, the interview can be a valuable and enjoyable learning experience for you. Good luck!*

### Additional Resources:

1. Career Development Services, 315 CALH
2. *Residence Halls Guidebook*
3. Past/present resident assistants
4. Job Service of Iowa

Adapted from: What You Should Know About Interviewing...For the Residence Assistant Position in The Ohio State University Residence Halls

The Interviewing Manual (University of Vermont)